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THE  
HORSE-STEALERS  
AND OTHER STORIES

BY  
ANTON CHEKHOV

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THE HORSE-STEALERS





# THE HORSE-STEALERS AND OTHER STORIES

## THE HORSE-STEALERS

A HOSPITAL assistant, called Yergunov, an empty-headed fellow, known throughout the district as a great braggart and drunkard, was returning one evening in Christmas week from the hamlet of Ryepino, where he had been to make some purchases for the hospital. That he might get home in good time and not be late, the doctor had lent him his very best horse.

At first it had been a still day, but at eight o'clock a violent snow-storm came on, and when he was only about four miles from home Yergunov completely lost his way.

He did not know how to drive, he did not know the road, and he drove on at random, hoping that the horse would find the way of itself. Two hours passed; the horse was exhausted, he himself was chilled, and already began to fancy that he was not going home, but back towards Ryepino. But at last above the uproar of the storm he heard the far-away barking of a dog, and a murky red blur came into sight ahead of him: little by little, the outlines of a high gate could be discerned, then a long fence on which there were nails with their points uppermost,

and beyond the fence there stood the slanting crane of a well. The wind drove away the mist of snow from before the eyes, and where there had been a red blur, there sprang up a small, squat little house with a steep thatched roof. Of the three little windows one, covered on the inside with something red, was lighted up.

What sort of place was it? Yergunov remembered that to the right of the road, three and a half or four miles from the hospital, there was Andrey Tchirikov's tavern. He remembered, too, that this Tchirikov, who had been lately killed by some sledge-drivers, had left a wife and a daughter called Lyubka, who had come to the hospital two years before as a patient. The inn had a bad reputation, and to visit it late in the evening, and especially with someone else's horse, was not free from risk. But there was no help for it. Yergunov fumbled in his knapsack for his revolver, and, coughing sternly, tapped at the window-frame with his whip.

"Hey! who is within?" he cried. "Hey, granny! let me come in and get warm!"

With a hoarse bark a black dog rolled like a ball under the horse's feet, then another white one, then another black one—there must have been a dozen of them. Yergunov looked to see which was the biggest, swung his whip and lashed at it with all his might. A small, long-legged puppy turned its sharp muzzle upwards and set up a shrill, piercing howl.

Yergunov stood for a long while at the window, tapping. But at last the hoar-frost on the trees near the house glowed red, and a muffled female figure appeared with a lantern in her hands.

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girl is getting supper ready . . .” answered Kalashnikov.

Silence followed. Yergunov, shivering and gasping, breathed on his hands, huddled up, and made a show of being very cold and exhausted. The still angry dogs could be heard howling outside. It was dreary.

“You come from Bogalyovka, don’t you?” he asked the peasant sternly.

“Yes, from Bogalyovka.”

And to while away the time Yergunov began to think about Bogalyovka. It was a big village and it lay in a deep ravine, so that when one drove along the highroad on a moonlight night, and looked down into the dark ravine and then up at the sky, it seemed as though the moon were hanging over a bottomless abyss and it were the end of the world. The path going down was steep, winding, and so narrow that when one drove down to Bogalyovka on account of some epidemic or to vaccinate the people, one had to shout at the top of one’s voice, or whistle all the way, for if one met a cart coming up one could not pass. The peasants of Bogalyovka had the reputation of being good gardeners and horse-stealers. They had well-stocked gardens. In spring the whole village was buried in white cherry-blossom, and in the summer they sold cherries at three kopecks a pail. One could pay three kopecks and pick as one liked. Their women were handsome and looked well fed, they were fond of finery, and never did anything even on working-days, but spent all their time sitting on the ledge in front of their houses and searching in each other’s heads.



But at last there was the sound of footsteps. Lyubka, a girl of twenty, with bare feet and a red dress, came into the room. . . . She looked sideways at Yergunov and walked twice from one end of the room to the other. She did not move simply, but with tiny steps, thrusting forward her bosom; evidently she enjoyed padding about with her bare feet on the freshly washed floor, and had taken off her shoes on purpose.

Kalashnikov laughed at something and beckoned her with his finger. She went up to the table, and he showed her a picture of the Prophet Elijah, who, driving three horses abreast, was dashing up to the sky. Lyubka put her elbow on the table; her plait fell across her shoulder—a long chestnut plait tied with red ribbon at the end—and it almost touched the floor. She, too, smiled.

“A splendid, wonderful picture,” said Kalashnikov. “Wonderful,” he repeated, and motioned with his hand as though he wanted to take the reins instead of Elijah.

The wind howled in the stove; something growled and squeaked as though a big dog had strangled a rat.

“Ugh! the unclean spirits are abroad!” said Lyubka.

“That’s the wind,” said Kalashnikov; and after a pause he raised his eyes to Yergunov and asked: “And what is your learned opinion, Osip Vassilyitch—are there devils in this world or not?”

“What’s one to say, brother?” said Yergunov, and he shrugged one shoulder. “If one reasons from science, of course there are no devils, for it’s

a superstition; but if one looks at it simply, as you and I do now, there are devils, to put it shortly. . . . I have seen a great deal in my life. . . . When I finished my studies I served as medical assistant in the army in a regiment of the dragoons, and I have been in the war, of course. I have a medal and a decoration from the Red Cross, but after the treaty of San Stefano I returned to Russia and went into the service of the Zemstvo. And in consequence of my enormous circulation about the world, I may say I have seen more than many another has dreamed of. It has happened to me to see devils, too; that is, not devils with horns and a tail—that is all nonsense—but just, to speak precisely, something of the sort.”

“Where?” asked Kalashnikov.

“In various places. There is no need to go far. Last year I met him here—speak of him not at night—near this very inn. I was driving, I remember, to Golyshino; I was going there to vaccinate. Of course, as usual, I had the racing droshky and a horse, and all the necessary paraphernalia, and, what’s more, I had a watch and all the rest of it, so I was on my guard as I drove along, for fear of some mischance. There are lots of tramps of all sorts. I came up to the Zmeinoy Ravine—damnation take it—and was just going down it, when all at once somebody comes up to me—such a fellow! Black hair, black eyes, and his whole face looked smutted with soot. . . . He comes straight up to the horse and takes hold of the left rein: ‘Stop!’ He looked at the horse, then at me, then dropped the reins, and without saying a bad word, ‘Where

are you going?' says he. And he showed his teeth in a grin, and his eyes were spiteful-looking. . . . 'Ah,' thought I, 'you are a queer customer!' 'I am going to vaccinate for the smallpox,' said I. 'And what is that to you?' 'Well, if that's so,' says he, 'vaccinate me.' He bared his arm and thrust it under my nose. Of course, I did not bandy words with him; I just vaccinated him to get rid of him. Afterwards I looked at my lancet and it had gone rusty."

The peasant who was asleep near the stove suddenly turned over and flung off the sheepskin; to his great surprise, Yergunov recognized the stranger he had met that day at Zmeinoy Ravine. This peasant's hair, beard, and eyes were black as soot; his face was swarthy; and, to add to the effect, there was a black spot the size of a lentil on his right cheek. He looked mockingly at the hospital assistant and said:

"I did take hold of the left rein—that was so; but about the smallpox you are lying, sir. And there was not a word said about the smallpox between us."

Yergunov was disconcerted.

"I'm not talking about you," he said. "Lie down, since you are lying down."

The dark-skinned peasant had never been to the hospital, and Yergunov did not know who he was or where he came from; and now, looking at him, he made up his mind that the man must be a gypsy. The peasant got up and, stretching and yawning loudly, went up to Lyubka and Kalashnikov, and sat down beside them, and he, too, began looking at

the book. His sleepy face softened and a look of envy came into it.

“Look, Merik,” Lyubka said to him; “get me such horses and I will drive to heaven.”

“Sinners can’t drive to heaven,” said Kalashnikov. “That’s for holiness.”

Then Lyubka laid the table and brought in a big piece of fat bacon, salted cucumbers, a wooden platter of boiled meat cut up into little pieces, then a frying-pan, in which there were sausages and cabbage spluttering. A cut-glass decanter of vodka, which diffused a smell of orange-peel all over the room when it was poured out, was put on the table also.

Yergunov was annoyed that Kalashnikov and the dark fellow Merik talked together and took no notice of him at all, behaving exactly as though he were not in the room. And he wanted to talk to them, to brag, to drink, to have a good meal, and if possible to have a little fun with Lyubka, who sat down near him half a dozen times while they were at supper, and, as though by accident, brushed against him with her handsome shoulders and passed her hands over her broad hips. She was a healthy, active girl, always laughing and never still: she would sit down, then get up, and when she was sitting down she would keep turning first her face and then her back to her neighbour, like a fidgety child, and never failed to brush against him with her elbows or her knees.

And he was displeased, too, that the peasants drank only a glass each and no more, and it was awkward for him to drink alone. But he could not

refrain from taking a second glass, all the same, then a third, and he ate all the sausage. He brought himself to flatter the peasants, that they might accept him as one of the party instead of holding him at arm's length.

"You are a fine set of fellows in Bogalyovka!" he said, and wagged his head.

"In what way fine fellows?" enquired Kalashnikov.

"Why, about horses, for instance. Fine fellows at stealing!"

"H'm! fine fellows, you call them. Nothing but thieves and drunkards."

"They have had their day, but it is over," said Merik, after a pause. "But now they have only Filya left, and he is blind."

"Yes, there is no one but Filya," said Kalashnikov, with a sigh. "Reckon it up, he must be seventy; the German settlers knocked out one of his eyes, and he does not see well with the other. It is cataract. In old days the police officer would shout as soon as he saw him: 'Hey, you Shamil!' and all the peasants called him that—he was Shamil all over the place; and now his only name is One-eyed Filya. But he was a fine fellow! Lyuba's father, Andrey Grigoritch, and he stole one night into Rozhnovo—there were cavalry regiments stationed there—and carried off nine of the soldiers' horses, the very best of them. They weren't frightened of the sentry, and in the morning they sold all the horses for twenty roubles to the gypsy Afonka. Yes! But nowadays a man contrives to carry off a horse whose rider is drunk or asleep, and has no fear of God, but



will take the very boots from a drunkard, and then slinks off and goes away a hundred and fifty miles with a horse, and haggles at the market, haggles like a Jew, till the policeman catches him, the fool. There is no fun in it; it is simply a disgrace! A paltry set of people, I must say."

"What about Merik?" asked Lyubka.

"Merik is not one of us," said Kalashnikov. "He is a Harkov man from Mizhiritch. But that he is a bold fellow, that's the truth; there's no gain-saying that he is a fine fellow."

Lyubka looked slyly and gleefully at Merik, and said:

"It wasn't for nothing they dipped him in a hole in the ice."

"How was that?" asked Yergunov.

"It was like this . . ." said Merik, and he laughed. "Filya carried off three horses from the Samoylenka tenants, and they pitched upon me. There were ten of the tenants at Samoylenka, and with their labourers there were thirty altogether, and all of them Molokans. . . . So one of them says to me at the market: 'Come and have a look. Merik; we have brought some new horses from the fair.' I was interested, of course. I went up to them, and the whole lot of them, thirty men, tied my hands behind me and led me to the river. 'We'll show you fine horses,' they said. One hole in the ice was there already; they cut another beside it seven feet away. Then, to be sure, they took a cord and put a noose under my armpits, and tied a crooked stick to the other end, long enough to reach both holes. They thrust the stick in and dragged it

through. I went plop into the ice-hole just as I was, in my fur coat and my high boots, while they stood and shoved me, one with his foot and one with his stick, then dragged me under the ice and pulled me out of the other hole."

Lyubka shuddered and shrugged.

"At first I was in a fever from the cold," Merik went on, "but when they pulled me out I was helpless, and lay in the snow, and the Molokans stood round and hit me with sticks on my knees and my elbows. It hurt fearfully. They beat me and they went away . . . and everything on me was frozen, my clothes were covered with ice. I got up, but I couldn't move. Thank God, a woman drove by and gave me a lift."

Meanwhile Yergunov had drunk five or six glasses of vodka; his heart felt lighter, and he longed to tell some extraordinary, wonderful story too, and to show that he, too, was a bold fellow and not afraid of anything.

"I'll tell you what happened to us in Penza Province . . ." he began.

Either because he had drunk a great deal and was a little tipsy, or perhaps because he had twice been detected in a lie, the peasants took not the slightest notice of him, and even left off answering his questions. What was worse, they permitted themselves a frankness in his presence that made him feel uncomfortable and cold all over, and that meant that they took no notice of him.

Kalashnikov had the dignified manners of a sedate and sensible man; he spoke weightily, and made the sign of the cross over his mouth every time he

yawned, and no one could have supposed that this was a thief, a heartless thief who had stripped poor creatures, who had already been twice in prison, and who had been sentenced by the commune to exile in Siberia, and had been bought off by his father and uncle, who were as great thieves and rogues as he was. Merik gave himself the airs of a bravo. He saw that Lyubka and Kalashnikov were admiring him, and looked upon himself as a very fine fellow, and put his arms akimbo, squared his chest, or stretched so that the bench creaked under him. . . .

After supper Kalashnikov prayed to the holy image without getting up from his seat, and shook hands with Merik; the latter prayed too, and shook Kalashnikov's hand. Lyubka cleared away the supper, shook out on the table some peppermint biscuits, dried nuts, and pumpkin seeds, and placed two bottles of sweet wine.

"The kingdom of heaven and peace everlasting to Andrey Grigoritch," said Kalashnikov, clinking glasses with Merik. "When he was alive we used to gather together here or at his brother Martin's, and—my word! my word! what men, what talks! Remarkable conversations! Martin used to be here, and Filya, and Fyodor Stukotey. . . . It was all done in style, it was all in keeping. . . . And what fun we had! We did have fun, we did have fun!"

Lyubka went out and soon afterwards came back wearing a green kerchief and beads.

"Look, Merik, what Kalashnikov brought me to-day," she said.

She looked at herself in the looking-glass, and tossed her head several times to make the beads

jingle. And then she opened a chest and began taking out, first, a cotton dress with red and blue flowers on it, and then a red one with flounces which rustled and crackled like paper, then a new kerchief, dark blue, shot with many colours—and all these things she showed and flung up her hands, laughing as though astonished that she had such treasures.

Kalashnikov tuned the balalaika and began playing it, but Yergunov could not make out what sort of song he was singing, and whether it was gay or melancholy, because at one moment it was so mournful he wanted to cry, and at the next it would be merry. Merik suddenly jumped up and began tapping with his heels on the same spot, then, brandishing his arms, he moved on his heels from the table to the stove, from the stove to the chest, then he bounded up as though he had been stung, clicked the heels of his boots together in the air, and began going round and round in a crouching position. Lyubka waved both her arms, uttered a desperate shriek, and followed him. At first she moved sideways, like a snake, as though she wanted to steal up to someone and strike him from behind. She tapped rapidly with her bare heels as Merik had done with the heels of his boots, then she turned round and round like a top and crouched down, and her red dress was blown out like a bell. Merik, looking angrily at her, and showing his teeth in a grin, flew towards her in the same crouching posture as though he wanted to crush her with his terrible legs, while she jumped up, flung back her head, and waving her arms as a big bird does its wings, floated across the room scarcely touching the floor. . . .

“What a flame of a girl!” thought Yergunov, sitting on the chest, and from there watching the dance. “What fire! Give up everything for her, and it would be too little. . . .”

And he regretted that he was a hospital assistant, and not a simple peasant, that he wore a reefer coat and a chain with a gilt key on it instead of a blue shirt with a cord tied round the waist. Then he could boldly have sung, danced, flung both arms round Lyubka as Merik did. . . .

The sharp tapping, shouts, and whoops set the crockery ringing in the cupboard and the flame of the candle dancing.

The thread broke and the beads were scattered all over the floor, the green kerchief slipped off, and Lyubka was transformed into a red cloud flitting by and flashing black eyes, and it seemed as though in another second Merik’s arms and legs would drop off.

But finally Merik stamped for the last time, and stood still as though turned to stone. Exhausted and almost breathless, Lyubka sank on to his bosom and leaned against him as against a post, and he put his arms round her, and looking into her eyes, said tenderly and caressingly, as though in jest:

“I’ll find out where your old mother’s money is hidden, I’ll murder her and cut your little throat for you, and after that I will set fire to the inn. . . . People will think you have perished in the fire, and with your money I shall go to Kuban. I’ll keep droves of horses and flocks of sheep. . . .”

Lyubka made no answer, but only looked at him with a guilty air, and asked:

“And is it nice in Kuban, Merik?”

He said nothing, but went to the chest, sat down, and sank into thought; most likely he was dreaming of Kuban.

“It’s time for me to be going,” said Kalashnikov, getting up. “Filya must be waiting for me. Good-bye, Lyuba.”

Yergunov went out into the yard to see that Kalashnikov did not go off with his horse. The snow-storm still persisted. White clouds were floating about the yard, their long tails clinging to the rough grass and the bushes, while on the other side of the fence in the open country huge giants in white robes with wide sleeves were whirling round and falling to the ground, and getting up again to wave their arms and fight. And the wind, the wind! The bare birches and cherry-trees, unable to endure its rude caresses, bowed low down to the ground and wailed: “God, for what sin hast Thou bound us to the earth and will not let us go free?”

“Wo!” said Kalashnikov sternly, and he got on his horse; one half of the gate was opened, and by it lay a high snowdrift. “Well, get on!” shouted Kalashnikov. His little short-legged nag set off, and sank up to its stomach in the drift at once. Kalashnikov was white all over with the snow, and soon vanished from sight with his horse.

When Yergunov went back into the room, Lyubka was creeping about the floor picking up her beads; Merik was not there.

“A splendid girl!” thought Yergunov, as he lay down on the bench and put his coat under his head. “Oh, if only Merik were not here.” Lyubka ex-



cited him as she crept about the floor by the bench, and he thought that if Merik had not been there he would certainly have got up and embraced her, and then one would see what would happen. It was true she was only a girl, but not likely to be chaste; and even if she were—need one stand on ceremony in a den of thieves? Lyubka collected her beads and went out. The candle burnt down and the flame caught the paper in the candlestick. Yergunov laid his revolver and matches beside him, and put out the candle. The light before the holy images flickered so much that it hurt his eyes, and patches of light danced on the ceiling, on the floor, and on the cupboard, and among them he had visions of Lyubka, buxom, full-bosomed: now she was turning round like a top, now she was exhausted and breathless. . . .

“Oh, if the devils would carry off that Merik,” he thought.

The little lamp gave a last flicker, spluttered, and went out. Someone, it must have been Merik, came into the room and sat down on the bench. He puffed at his pipe, and for an instant lighted up a dark cheek with a patch on it. Yergunov's throat was irritated by the horrible fumes of the tobacco smoke.

“What filthy tobacco you have got—damnation take it!” said Yergunov. “It makes me positively sick.”

“I mix my tobacco with the flowers of the oats,” answered Merik after a pause. “It is better for the chest.”

He smoked, spat, and went out again. Half an hour passed, and all at once there was the gleam of

a light in the passage. Merik appeared in a coat and cap, then Lyubka with a candle in her hand.

"Do stay, Merik," said Lyubka in an imploring voice.

"No, Lyuba, don't keep me."

"Listen, Merik," said Lyubka, and her voice grew soft and tender. "I know you will find mother's money, and will do for her and for me, and will go to Kuban and love other girls; but God be with you. I only ask you one thing, sweetheart: do stay!"

"No, I want some fun . . ." said Merik, fastening his belt.

"But you have nothing to go on. . . . You came on foot; what are you going on?"

Merik bent down to Lyubka and whispered something in her ear; she looked towards the door and laughed through her tears.

"He is asleep, the puffed-up devil . . ." she said.

Merik embraced her, kissed her vigorously, and went out. Yergunov thrust his revolver into his pocket, jumped up, and ran after him.

"Get out of the way!" he said to Lyubka, who hurriedly bolted the door of the entry and stood across the threshold. "Let me pass! Why are you standing here?"

"What do you want to go out for?"

"To have a look at my horse."

Lyubka gazed up at him with a sly and caressing look.

"Why look at it? You had better look at me . . ." she said, then she bent down and touched with her finger the gilt watch-key that hung on his chain.

"Let me pass, or he will go off on my horse," said



Yergunov. "Let me go, you devil!" he shouted, and giving her an angry blow on the shoulder, he pressed his chest against her with all his might to push her away from the door, but she kept tight hold of the bolt, and was like iron.

"Let me go!" he shouted, exhausted; "he will go off with it, I tell you."

"Why should he? He won't." Breathing hard and rubbing her shoulder, which hurt, she looked up at him again, flushed a little and laughed. "Don't go away, dear heart," she said; "I am dull alone."

Yergunov looked into her eyes, hesitated, and put his arms round her; she did not resist.

"Come, no nonsense; let me go," he begged her. She did not speak.

"I heard you just now," he said, "telling Merik that you love him."

"I dare say. . . . My heart knows who it is I love."

She put her finger on the key again, and said softly: "Give me that."

Yergunov unfastened the key and gave it to her. She suddenly craned her neck and listened with a grave face, and her expression struck Yergunov as cold and cunning; he thought of his horse, and now easily pushed her aside and ran out into the yard. In the shed a sleepy pig was grunting with lazy regularity and a cow was knocking her horn. Yergunov lighted a match and saw the pig, and the cow, and the dogs, which rushed at him on all sides at seeing the light, but there was no trace of the horse. Shouting and waving his arms at the dogs, stumbling over the drifts and sticking in the snow, he ran out at the

gate and fell to gazing into the darkness. He strained his eyes to the utmost, and saw only the snow flying and the snowflakes distinctly forming into all sorts of shapes; at one moment the white, laughing face of a corpse would peep out of the darkness, at the next a white horse would gallop by with an Amazon in a muslin dress upon it, at the next a string of white swans would fly overhead. . . . Shaking with anger and cold, and not knowing what to do, Yergunov fired his revolver at the dogs, and did not hit one of them; then he rushed back to the house.

When he went into the entry he distinctly heard someone scurry out of the room and bang the door. It was dark in the room. Yergunov pushed against the door; it was locked. Then, lighting match after match, he rushed back into the entry, from there into the kitchen, and from the kitchen into a little room where all the walls were hung with petticoats and dresses, where there was a smell of corn-flowers and fennel, and a bedstead with a perfect mountain of pillows, standing in the corner by the stove; this must have been the old mother's room. From there he passed into another little room, and here he saw Lyubka. She was lying on a chest, covered with a gay-coloured patchwork cotton quilt, pretending to be asleep. A little ikon-lamp was burning in the corner above the pillow.

“Where is my horse?” Yergunov asked.

Lyubka did not stir.

“Where is my horse, I am asking you?” Yergunov repeated still more sternly, and he tore the quilt off her. “I am asking you, she-devil!” he shouted.

She jumped up on her knees, and with one hand holding her shift and with the other trying to clutch the quilt, huddled against the wall. . . . She looked at Yergunov with repulsion and terror in her eyes, and, like a wild beast in a trap, kept cunning watch on his faintest movement.

"Tell me where my horse is, or I'll knock the life out of you," shouted Yergunov.

"Get away, dirty brute!" she said in a hoarse voice.

Yergunov seized her by the shift near the neck and tore it. And then he could not restrain himself, and with all his might embraced the girl. But hissing with fury, she slipped out of his arms, and freeing one hand—the other was tangled in the torn shift—hit him a blow with her fist on the skull.

His head was dizzy with the pain, there was a ringing and rattling in his ears, he staggered back, and at that moment received another blow—this time on the temple. Reeling and clutching at the doorposts, that he might not fall, he made his way to the room where his things were, and lay down on the bench; then after lying for a little time, took the matchbox out of his pocket and began lighting match after match for no object: he lit it, blew it out, and threw it under the table, and went on till all the matches were gone.

Meanwhile the air began to turn blue outside, the cocks began to crow, but his head still ached, and there was an uproar in his ears as though he were sitting under a railway bridge and hearing the trains passing over his head. He got, somehow, into his coat and cap; the saddle and the bundle of his pur-

chases he could not find, his knapsack was empty: it was not for nothing that someone had scurried out of the room when he came in from the yard.

He took a poker from the kitchen to keep off the dogs, and went out into the yard, leaving the door open. The snow-storm had subsided and it was calm outside. . . . When he went out at the gate, the white plain looked dead, and there was not a single bird in the morning sky. On both sides of the road and in the distance there were bluish patches of young copse.

Yergunov began thinking how he would be greeted at the hospital and what the doctor would say to him; it was absolutely necessary to think of that, and to prepare beforehand to answer questions he would be asked, but this thought grew blurred and slipped away. He walked along thinking of nothing but Lyubka, of the peasants with whom he had passed the night; he remembered how, after Lyubka struck him the second time, she had bent down to the floor for the quilt, and how her loose hair had fallen on the floor. His mind was in a maze, and he wondered why there were in the world doctors, hospital assistants, merchants, clerks, and peasants instead of simple free men? There are, to be sure, free birds, free beasts, a free Merik, and they are not afraid of anyone, and don't need anyone! And whose idea was it, who had decreed that one must get up in the morning, dine at midday, go to bed in the evening; that a doctor takes precedence of a hospital assistant; that one must live in rooms and love only one's wife? And why not the contrary—dine at night and sleep in the day? Ah, to jump on

a horse without enquiring whose it is, to ride races with the wind like a devil, over fields and forests and ravines, to make love to girls, to mock at everyone. . . .

Yergunov thrust the poker into the snow, pressed his forehead to the cold white trunk of a birch-tree, and sank into thought; and his grey, monotonous life, his wages, his subordinate position, the dispensary, the everlasting to-do with the bottles and blisters, struck him as contemptible, sickening.

“Who says it’s a sin to enjoy oneself?” he asked himself with vexation. “Those who say that have never lived in freedom like Merik and Kalashnikov, and have never loved Lyubka; they have been beggars all their lives, have lived without any pleasure, and have only loved their wives, who are like frogs.”

And he thought about himself that he had not hitherto been a thief, a swindler, or even a brigand, simply because he could not, or had not yet met with a suitable opportunity.

\* \* \* \*

A year and a half passed. In spring, after Easter, Yergunov, who had long before been dismissed from the hospital and was hanging about without a job, came out of the tavern in Ryepino and sauntered aimlessly along the street.

He went out into the open country. Here there was the scent of spring, and a warm caressing wind was blowing. The calm, starry night looked down from the sky on the earth. My God, how infinite the depth of the sky, and with what fathomless immensity it stretched over the world! The world is created well enough, only why and with what right

do people, thought Yergunov, divide their fellows into the sober and the drunken, the employed and the dismissed, and so on. Why do the sober and well fed sleep comfortably in their homes while the drunken and the hungry must wander about the country without a refuge? Why was it that if anyone had not a job and did not get a salary he had to go hungry, without clothes and boots? Whose idea was it? Why was it the birds and the wild beasts in the woods did not have jobs and get salaries, but lived as they pleased?

Far away in the sky a beautiful crimson glow lay quivering, stretched wide over the horizon. Yergunov stopped, and for a long time he gazed at it, and kept wondering why was it that if he had carried off someone else's samovar the day before and sold it for drink in the taverns it would be a sin? Why was it?

Two carts drove by on the road; in one of them there was a woman asleep, in the other sat an old man without a cap on. . . .

"Grandfather, where is that fire?" asked Yergunov.

"Andrey Tchirikov's inn," answered the old man.

And Yergunov recalled what had happened to him eighteen months before in the winter, in that very inn, and how Merik had boasted; and he imagined the old woman and Lyubka, with their throats cut, burning, and he envied Merik. And when he walked back to the tavern, looking at the houses of the rich publicans, cattle-dealers, and blacksmiths, he reflected how nice it would be to steal by night into some rich man's house!

WARD NO. 6





## WARD NO. 6

### I

IN the hospital yard there stands a small lodge surrounded by a perfect forest of burdocks, nettles, and wild hemp. Its roof is rusty, the chimney is tumbling down, the steps at the front-door are rotting away and overgrown with grass, and there are only traces left of the stucco. The front of the lodge faces the hospital; at the back it looks out into the open country, from which it is separated by the grey hospital fence with nails on it. These nails, with their points upwards, and the fence, and the lodge itself, have that peculiar, desolate, God-forsaken look which is only found in our hospital and prison buildings.

If you are not afraid of being stung by the nettles, come by the narrow footpath that leads to the lodge, and let us see what is going on inside. Opening the first door, we walk into the entry. Here along the walls and by the stove every sort of hospital rubbish lies littered about. Mattresses, old tattered dressing-gowns, trousers, blue striped shirts, boots and shoes no good for anything—all these remnants are piled up in heaps, mixed up and crumpled, mouldering and giving out a sickly smell.

The porter, Nikita, an old soldier wearing rusty

good-conduct stripes, is always lying on the litter with a pipe between his teeth. He has a grim, surly, battered-looking face, overhanging eyebrows which give him the expression of a sheep-dog of the steppes, and a red nose; he is short and looks thin and scraggy, but he is of imposing deportment and his fists are vigorous. He belongs to the class of simple-hearted, practical, and dull-witted people, prompt in carrying out orders, who like discipline better than anything in the world, and so are convinced that it is their duty to beat people. He showers blows on the face, on the chest, on the back, on whatever comes first, and is convinced that there would be no order in the place if he did not.

Next you come into a big, spacious room which fills up the whole lodge except for the entry. Here the walls are painted a dirty blue, the ceiling is as sooty as in a hut without a chimney—it is evident that in the winter the stove smokes and the room is full of fumes. The windows are disfigured by iron gratings on the inside. The wooden floor is grey and full of splinters. There is a stench of sour cabbage, of smouldering wicks, of bugs, and of ammonia, and for the first minute this stench gives you the impression of having walked into a menagerie. . . .

There are bedsteads screwed to the floor. Men in blue hospital dressing-gowns, and wearing night-caps in the old style, are sitting and lying on them. These are the lunatics.

There are five of them in all here. Only one is of the upper class, the rest are all artisans. The one nearest the door—a tall, lean workman with

shining red whiskers and tear-stained eyes—sits with his head propped on his hand, staring at the same point. Day and night he grieves, shaking his head, sighing and smiling bitterly. He rarely takes a part in conversation and usually makes no answer to questions; he eats and drinks mechanically when food is offered him. From his agonizing, throbbing cough, his thinness, and the flush on his cheeks, one may judge that he is in the first stage of consumption. Next him is a little, alert, very lively old man, with a pointed beard and curly black hair like a negro's. By day he walks up and down the ward from window to window, or sits on his bed, cross-legged like a Turk, and, ceaselessly as a bullfinch whistles, softly sings and titters. He shows his childish gaiety and lively character at night also when he gets up to say his prayers—that is, to beat himself on the chest with his fists, and to scratch with his fingers at the door. This is the Jew Moiseika, an imbecile, who went crazy twenty years ago when his hat factory was burnt down.

And of all the inhabitants of Ward No. 6, he is the only one who is allowed to go out of the lodge, and even out of the yard into the street. He has enjoyed this privilege for years, probably because he is an old inhabitant of the hospital—a quiet, harmless imbecile, the buffoon of the town, where people are used to seeing him surrounded by boys and dogs. In his wretched gown, in his absurd night-cap, and in slippers, sometimes with bare legs and even without trousers, he walks about the streets, stopping at the gates and little shops, and begging for a copper. In one place they will give him some kvass, in an-

other some bread, in another a copper, so that he generally goes back to the ward feeling rich and well fed. Everything that he brings back Nikita takes from him for his own benefit. The soldier does this roughly, angrily turning the Jew's pockets inside out, and calling God to witness that he will not let him go into the street again, and that breach of the regulations is worse to him than anything in the world.

Moiseika likes to make himself useful. He gives his companions water, and covers them up when they are asleep; he promises each of them to bring him back a kopeck, and to make him a new cap; he feeds with a spoon his neighbour on the left, who is paralyzed. He acts in this way, not from compassion nor from any considerations of a humane kind, but through imitation, unconsciously dominated by Gromov, his neighbour on the right hand.

Ivan Dmitritch Gromov, a man of thirty-three, who is a gentleman by birth, and has been a court usher and provincial secretary, suffers from the mania of persecution. He either lies curled up in bed, or walks from corner to corner as though for exercise; he very rarely sits down. He is always excited, agitated, and overwrought by a sort of vague, undefined expectation. The faintest rustle in the entry or shout in the yard is enough to make him raise his head and begin listening: whether they are coming for him, whether they are looking for him. And at such times his face expresses the utmost uneasiness and repulsion.

I like his broad face with its high cheek-bones, always pale and unhappy, and reflecting, as though

in a mirror, a soul tormented by conflict and long-continued terror. His grimaces are strange and abnormal, but the delicate lines traced on his face by profound, genuine suffering show intelligence and sense, and there is a warm and healthy light in his eyes. I like the man himself, courteous, anxious to be of use, and extraordinarily gentle to everyone except Nikita. When anyone drops a button or a spoon, he jumps up from his bed quickly and picks it up; every day he says good-morning to his companions, and when he goes to bed he wishes them good-night.

Besides his continually overwrought condition and his grimaces, his madness shows itself in the following way also. Sometimes in the evenings he wraps himself in his dressing-gown, and, trembling all over, with his teeth chattering, begins walking rapidly from corner to corner and between the bedsteads. It seems as though he is in a violent fever. From the way he suddenly stops and glances at his companions, it can be seen that he is longing to say something very important, but, apparently reflecting that they would not listen, or would not understand him, he shakes his head impatiently and goes on pacing up and down. But soon the desire to speak gets the upper hand of every consideration, and he will let himself go and speak fervently and passionately. His talk is disordered and feverish like delirium, disconnected, and not always intelligible, but, on the other hand, something extremely fine may be felt in it, both in the words and the voice. When he talks you recognize in him the lunatic and the man. It is difficult to reproduce on paper his insane talk.

He speaks of the baseness of mankind, of violence trampling on justice, of the glorious life which will one day be upon earth, of the window-gratings, which remind him every minute of the stupidity and cruelty of oppressors. It makes a disorderly, incoherent potpourri of themes old but not yet out of date.

## II

Some twelve or fifteen years ago an official called Gromov, a highly respectable and prosperous person, was living in his own house in the principal street of the town. He had two sons, Sergey and Ivan. When Sergey was a student in his fourth year he was taken ill with galloping consumption and died, and his death was, as it were, the first of a whole series of calamities which suddenly showered on the Gromov family. Within a week of Sergey's funeral the old father was put on his trial for fraud and misappropriation, and he died of typhoid in the prison hospital soon afterwards. The house, with all their belongings, was sold by auction, and Ivan Dmitritch and his mother were left entirely without means.

Hitherto in his father's lifetime, Ivan Dmitritch, who was studying in the University of Petersburg, had received an allowance of sixty or seventy roubles a month, and had had no conception of poverty; now he had to make an abrupt change in his life. He had to spend his time from morning to night giving lessons for next to nothing, to work at copying, and with all that to go hungry, as all his earnings were sent to keep his mother. Ivan Dmitritch could not



stand such a life; he lost heart and strength, and, giving up the university, went home.

Here, through interest, he obtained the post of teacher in the district school, but could not get on with his colleagues, was not liked by the boys, and soon gave up the post. His mother died. He was for six months without work, living on nothing but bread and water; then he became a court usher. He kept this post until he was dismissed owing to his illness.

He had never even in his young student days given the impression of being perfectly healthy. He had always been pale, thin, and given to catching cold; he ate little and slept badly. A single glass of wine went to his head and made him hysterical. He always had a craving for society, but, owing to his irritable temperament and suspiciousness, he never became very intimate with anyone, and had no friends. He always spoke with contempt of his fellow-townsmen, saying that their coarse ignorance and sleepy animal existence seemed to him loathsome and horrible. He spoke in a loud tenor, with heat, and invariably either with scorn and indignation, or with wonder and enthusiasm, and always with perfect sincerity. Whatever one talked to him about he always brought it round to the same subject: that life was dull and stifling in the town; that the townspeople had no lofty interests, but lived a dingy, meaningless life, diversified by violence, coarse profligacy, and hypocrisy; that scoundrels were well fed and clothed, while honest men lived from hand to mouth; that they needed schools, a progressive local paper, a theatre, public lectures,

the co-ordination of the intellectual elements; that society must see its failings and be horrified. In his criticisms of people he laid on the colours thick, using only black and white, and no fine shades; mankind was divided for him into honest men and scoundrels: there was nothing in between. He always spoke with passion and enthusiasm of women and of love, but he had never been in love.

In spite of the severity of his judgments and his nervousness, he was liked, and behind his back was spoken of affectionately as Vanya. His innate refinement and readiness to be of service, his good breeding, his moral purity, and his shabby coat, his frail appearance and family misfortunes, aroused a kind, warm, sorrowful feeling. Moreover, he was well educated and well read; according to the townspeople's notions, he knew everything, and was in their eyes something like a walking encyclopædia.

He had read a great deal. He would sit at the club, nervously pulling at his beard and looking through the magazines and books; and from his face one could see that he was not reading, but devouring the pages without giving himself time to digest what he read. It must be supposed that reading was one of his morbid habits, as he fell upon anything that came into his hands with equal avidity, even last year's newspapers and calendars. At home he always read lying down.

### III.

One autumn morning Ivan Dmitritch, turning up the collar of his greatcoat and splashing through the



mud, made his way by side-streets and back lanes to see some artisan, and to collect some payment that was owing. He was in a gloomy mood, as he always was in the morning. In one of the side-streets he was met by two convicts in fetters and four soldiers with rifles in charge of them. Ivan Dmitritch had very often met convicts before, and they had always excited feelings of compassion and discomfort in him; but now this meeting made a peculiar, strange impression on him. It suddenly seemed to him for some reason that he, too, might be put into fetters and led through the mud to prison like that. After visiting the artisan, on the way home he met near the post office a police superintendent of his acquaintance, who greeted him and walked a few paces along the street with him, and for some reason this seemed to him suspicious. At home he could not get the convicts or the soldiers with their rifles out of his head all day, and an unaccountable inward agitation prevented him from reading or concentrating his mind. In the evening he did not light his lamp, and at night he could not sleep, but kept thinking that he might be arrested, put into fetters, and thrown into prison. He did not know of any harm he had done, and could be certain that he would never be guilty of murder, arson, or theft in the future either; but was it not easy to commit a crime by accident, unconsciously, and was not false witness always possible, and, indeed, miscarriage of justice? It was not without good reason that the age-long experience of the simple people teaches that beggary and prison are ills none can be safe from. A judicial mistake is very possible as legal proceedings are conducted nowa-

days, and there is nothing to be wondered at in it. People who have an official, professional relation to other men's sufferings—for instance, judges, police officers, doctors—in course of time, through habit, grow so callous that they cannot, even if they wish it, take any but a formal attitude to their clients; in this respect they are not different from the peasant who slaughters sheep and calves in the back-yard, and does not notice the blood. With this formal, soulless attitude to human personality the judge needs but one thing—time—in order to deprive an innocent man of all rights of property, and to condemn him to penal servitude. Only the time spent on performing certain formalities for which the judge is paid his salary, and then—it is all over. Then you may look in vain for justice and protection in this dirty, wretched little town a hundred and fifty miles from a railway station! And, indeed, is it not absurd even to think of justice when every kind of violence is accepted by society as a rational and consistent necessity, and every act of mercy—for instance, a verdict of acquittal—calls forth a perfect outburst of dissatisfied and revengeful feeling?

In the morning Ivan Dmitritch got up from his bed in a state of horror, with cold perspiration on his forehead, completely convinced that he might be arrested any minute. Since his gloomy thoughts of yesterday had haunted him so long, he thought, it must be that there was some truth in them. They could not, indeed, have come into his mind without any grounds whatever.

A policeman walking slowly passed by the windows: that was not for nothing. Here were two

men standing still and silent near the house. Why were they silent? And agonizing days and nights followed for Ivan Dmitritch. Everyone who passed by the windows or came into the yard seemed to him a spy or a detective. At midday the chief of the police usually drove down the street with a pair of horses; he was going from his estate near the town to the police department; but Ivan Dmitritch fancied every time that he was driving especially quickly, and that he had a peculiar expression: it was evident that he was in haste to announce that there was a very important criminal in the town. Ivan Dmitritch started at every ring at the bell and knock at the gate, and was agitated whenever he came upon anyone new at his landlady's; when he met police officers and gendarmes he smiled and began whistling so as to seem unconcerned. He could not sleep for whole nights in succession expecting to be arrested, but he snored loudly and sighed as though in deep sleep, that his landlady might think he was asleep; for if he could not sleep it meant that he was tormented by the stings of conscience—what a piece of evidence! Facts and common sense persuaded him that all these terrors were nonsense and morbidity, that if one looked at the matter more broadly there was nothing really terrible in arrest and imprisonment—so long as the conscience is at ease; but the more sensibly and logically he reasoned, the more acute and agonizing his mental distress became. It might be compared with the story of a hermit who tried to cut a dwelling-place for himself in a virgin forest; the more zealously he worked with his axe, the thicker the forest grew. In the end

Ivan Dmitritch, seeing it was useless, gave up reasoning altogether, and abandoned himself entirely to despair and terror.

He began to avoid people and to seek solitude. His official work had been distasteful to him before: now it became unbearable to him. He was afraid they would somehow get him into trouble, would put a bribe in his pocket unnoticed and then denounce him, or that he would accidentally make a mistake in official papers that would appear to be fraudulent, or would lose other people's money. It is strange that his imagination had never at other times been so agile and inventive as now, when every day he thought of thousands of different reasons for being seriously anxious over his freedom and honour; but, on the other hand, his interest in the outer world, in books in particular, grew sensibly fainter, and his memory began to fail him.

In the spring when the snow melted there were found in the ravine near the cemetery two half-decomposed corpses—the bodies of an old woman and a boy bearing the traces of death by violence. Nothing was talked of but these bodies and their unknown murderers. That people might not think he had been guilty of the crime, Ivan Dmitritch walked about the streets, smiling, and when he met acquaintances he turned pale, flushed, and began declaring that there was no greater crime than the murder of the weak and defenceless. But this duplicity soon exhausted him, and after some reflection he decided that in his position the best thing to do was to hide in his landlady's cellar. He sat in the cellar all day and then all night, then another day,

was fearfully cold, and waiting till dusk, stole secretly like a thief back to his room. He stood in the middle of the room till daybreak, listening without stirring. Very early in the morning, before sunrise, some workmen came into the house. Ivan Dmitritch knew perfectly well that they had come to mend the stove in the kitchen, but terror told him that they were police officers disguised as workmen. He slipped stealthily out of the flat, and, overcome by terror, ran along the street without his cap and coat. Dogs raced after him barking, a peasant shouted somewhere behind him, the wind whistled in his ears, and it seemed to Ivan Dmitritch that the force and violence of the whole world was massed together behind his back and was chasing after him.

He was stopped and brought home, and his landlady sent for a doctor. Doctor Andrey Yefimitch, of whom we shall have more to say hereafter, prescribed cold compresses on his head and laurel drops, shook his head, and went away, telling the landlady he should not come again, as one should not interfere with people who are going out of their minds. As he had not the means to live at home and be nursed, Ivan Dmitritch was soon sent to the hospital, and was there put into the ward for venereal patients. He could not sleep at night, was full of whims and fancies, and disturbed the patients, and was soon afterwards, by Andrey Yefimitch's orders, transferred to Ward No. 6.

Within a year Ivan Dmitritch was completely forgotten in the town, and his books, heaped up by his landlady in a sledge in the shed, were pulled to pieces by boys.

## IV

Ivan Dmitritch's neighbour on the left hand is, as I have said already, the Jew Moiseika; his neighbour on the right hand is a peasant so rolling in fat that he is almost spherical, with a blankly stupid face, utterly devoid of thought. This is a motionless, gluttonous, unclean animal who has long ago lost all powers of thought or feeling. An acrid, stifling stench always comes from him.

Nikita, who has to clean up after him, beats him terribly with all his might, not sparing his fists; and what is dreadful is not his being beaten—that one can get used to—but the fact that this stupefied creature does not respond to the blows with a sound or a movement, nor by a look in the eyes, but only sways a little like a heavy barrel.

The fifth and last inhabitant of Ward No. 6 is a man of the artisan class who has once been a sorter in the post office, a thinnish, fair little man with a good-natured but rather sly face. To judge from the clear, cheerful look in his calm and intelligent eyes, he has some pleasant idea in his mind, and has some very important and agreeable secret. He has under his pillow and under his mattress something that he never shows anyone, not from fear of its being taken from him and stolen, but from modesty. Sometimes he goes to the window, and turning his back to his companions, puts something on his breast, and bending his head, looks at it; if you go up to him at such a moment, he is overcome with confusion and



snatches something off his breast. But it is not difficult to guess his secret.

“Congratulate me,” he often says to Ivan Dmitritch; “I have been presented with the Stanislav order of the second degree with the star. The second degree with the star is only given to foreigners, but for some reason they want to make an exception for me,” he says with a smile, shrugging his shoulders in perplexity. “That I must confess I did not expect.”

“I don’t understand anything about that,” Ivan Dmitritch replies morosely.

“But do you know what I shall attain to sooner or later?” the former sorter persists, screwing up his eyes slyly. “I shall certainly get the Swedish ‘Polar Star.’ That’s an order it is worth working for, a white cross with a black ribbon. It’s very beautiful.”

Probably in no other place is life so monotonous as in this ward. In the morning the patients, except the paralytic and the fat peasant, wash in the entry at a big tub and wipe themselves with the skirts of their dressing-gowns; after that they drink tea out of tin mugs which Nikita brings them out of the main building. Everyone is allowed one mugful. At midday they have soup made out of sour cabbage and boiled grain, in the evening their supper consists of grain left from dinner. In the intervals they lie down, sleep, look out of window, and walk from one corner to the other. And so every day. Even the former sorter always talks of the same orders.

Fresh faces are rarely seen in Ward No. 6. The doctor has not taken in any new mental cases for a

long time, and the people who are fond of visiting lunatic asylums are few in this world. Once every two months Semyon Lazaritch, the barber, appears in the ward. How he cuts the patients' hair, and how Nikita helps him to do it, and what a trepidation the lunatics are always thrown into by the arrival of the drunken, smiling barber, we will not describe.

No one even looks into the ward except the barber. The patients are condemned to see day after day no one but Nikita.

A rather strange rumour has, however, been circulating in the hospital of late.

It is rumoured that the doctor has begun to visit Ward No. 6.

## V

A strange rumour!

Dr. Andrey Yefimitch Ragin is a strange man in his way. They say that when he was young he was very religious, and prepared himself for a clerical career, and that when he had finished his studies at the high school in 1863 he intended to enter a theological academy, but that his father, a surgeon and doctor of medicine, jeered at him and declared point-blank that he would disown him if he became a priest. How far this is true I don't know, but Andrey Yefimitch himself has more than once confessed that he has never had a natural bent for medicine or science in general.

However that may have been, when he finished his studies in the medical faculty he did not enter the priesthood. He showed no special devoutness,



and was no more like a priest at the beginning of his medical career than he is now.

His exterior is heavy, coarse like a peasant's, his face, his beard, his flat hair, and his coarse, clumsy figure, suggest an overfed, intemperate, and harsh innkeeper on the highroad. His face is surly-looking and covered with blue veins, his eyes are little and his nose is red. With his height and broad shoulders he has huge hands and feet; one would think that a blow from his fist would knock the life out of anyone, but his step is soft, and his walk is cautious and insinuating; when he meets anyone in a narrow passage he is always the first to stop and make way, and to say, not in a bass, as one would expect, but in a high, soft tenor: "I beg your pardon!" He has a little swelling on his neck which prevents him from wearing stiff starched collars, and so he always goes about in soft linen or cotton shirts. Altogether he does not dress like a doctor. He wears the same suit for ten years, and the new clothes, which he usually buys at a Jewish shop, look as shabby and crumpled on him as his old ones; he sees patients and dines and pays visits all in the same coat; but this is not due to niggardliness, but to complete carelessness about his appearance.

When Andrey Yefimitch came to the town to take up his duties the "institution founded to the glory of God" was in a terrible condition. One could hardly breathe for the stench in the wards, in the passages, and in the courtyards of the hospital. The hospital servants, the nurses, and their children slept in the wards together with the patients. They complained that there was no living for beetles, bugs,

and mice. The surgical wards were never free from erysipelas. There were only two scalpels and not one thermometer in the whole hospital; potatoes were kept in the baths. The superintendent, the housekeeper, and the medical assistant robbed the patients, and of the old doctor, Andrey Yefimitch's predecessor, people declared that he secretly sold the hospital alcohol, and that he kept a regular harem consisting of nurses and female patients. These disorderly proceedings were perfectly well known in the town, and were even exaggerated, but people took them calmly; some justified them on the ground that there were only peasants and working men in the hospital, who could not be dissatisfied, since they were much worse off at home than in the hospital—they couldn't be fed on woodcocks! Others said in excuse that the town alone, without help from the Zemstvo, was not equal to maintaining a good hospital; thank God for having one at all, even a poor one. And the newly formed Zemstvo did not open infirmaries either in the town or the neighbourhood, relying on the fact that the town already had its hospital.

After looking over the hospital Andrey Yefimitch came to the conclusion that it was an immoral institution and extremely prejudicial to the health of the townspeople. In his opinion the most sensible thing that could be done was to let out the patients and close the hospital. But he reflected that his will alone was not enough to do this, and that it would be useless; if physical and moral impurity were driven out of one place, they would only move to another; one must wait for it to wither away of itself. Be-

sides, if people open a hospital and put up with having it, it must be because they need it; superstition and all the nastiness and abominations of daily life were necessary, since in process of time they worked out to something sensible, just as manure turns into black earth. There was nothing on earth so good that it had not something nasty about its first origin.

When Andrey Yefimitch undertook his duties he was apparently not greatly concerned about the irregularities at the hospital. He only asked the attendants and nurses not to sleep in the wards, and had two cupboards of instruments put up; the superintendent, the housekeeper, the medical assistant, and the erysipelas remained unchanged.

Andrey Yefimitch loved intelligence and honesty intensely, but he had no strength of will nor belief in his right to organize an intelligent and honest life about him. He was absolutely unable to give orders, to forbid things, and to insist. It seemed as though he had taken a vow never to raise his voice and never to make use of the imperative. It was difficult for him to say "Fetch" or "Bring"; when he wanted his meals he would cough hesitatingly and say to the cook: "How about tea? . . ." or "How about dinner? . . ." To dismiss the superintendent or to tell him to leave off stealing, or to abolish the unnecessary parasitic post altogether, was absolutely beyond his powers. When Andrey Yefimitch was deceived or flattered, or accounts he knew to be cooked were brought him to sign, he would turn as red as a crab and feel guilty, but yet he would sign the accounts. When

the patients complained to him of being hungry or of the roughness of the nurses, he would be confused and mutter guiltily: "Very well, very well, I will go into it later. . . . Most likely there is some misunderstanding. . . ."

At first Andrey Yefimitch worked very zealously. He saw patients every day from morning till dinner-time, performed operations, and even attended confinements. The ladies said of him that he was attentive and clever at diagnosing diseases, especially those of women and children. But in process of time the work unmistakably wearied him by its monotony and obvious uselessness. To-day one sees thirty patients, and to-morrow they have increased to thirty-five, the next day forty, and so on from day to day, from year to year, while the mortality in the town did not decrease and the patients did not leave off coming. To be any real help to forty patients between morning and dinner was not physically possible, so it could but lead to deception. If twelve thousand patients were seen in a year it meant, if one looked at it simply, that twelve thousand men were deceived. To put those who were seriously ill into wards, and to treat them according to the principles of science, was impossible, too, because though there were principles there was no science; if he were to put aside philosophy and pedantically follow the rules as other doctors did, the things above all necessary were cleanliness and ventilation instead of dirt, wholesome nourishment instead of broth made of stinking, sour cabbage, and good assistants instead of thieves; and, indeed, why hinder people dying if death is the normal and legitimate end of everyone?

What is gained if some shopkeeper or clerk lives an extra five or ten years? If the aim of medicine is by drugs to alleviate suffering, the question forces itself on one: why alleviate it? In the first place, they say that suffering leads man to perfection; and in the second, if mankind really learns to alleviate its sufferings with pills and drops, it will completely abandon religion and philosophy, in which it has hitherto found not merely protection from all sorts of trouble, but even happiness. Pushkin suffered terrible agonies before his death, poor Heine lay paralyzed for several years; why, then, should not some Andrey Yefimitch or Matryona Savishna be ill, since their lives had nothing of importance in them, and would have been entirely empty and like the life of an amœba except for suffering?

Oppressed by such reflections, Andrey Yefimitch relaxed his efforts and gave up visiting the hospital every day.

## VI

His life was passed like this. As a rule he got up at eight o'clock in the morning, dressed, and drank his tea. Then he sat down in his study to read, or went to the hospital. At the hospital the out-patients were sitting in the dark, narrow little corridor waiting to be seen by the doctor. The nurses and the attendants, tramping with their boots over the brick floors, ran by them; gaunt-looking patients in dressing-gowns passed; dead bodies and vessels full of filth were carried by; the children were crying, and there was a cold draught. Andrey Yefimitch

knew that such surroundings were torture to feverish, consumptive, and impressionable patients; but what could be done? In the consulting-room he was met by his assistant, Sergey Sergeyitch—a fat little man with a plump, well-washed shaven face, with soft, smooth manners, wearing a new loosely cut suit, and looking more like a senator than a medical assistant. He had an immense practice in the town, wore a white tie, and considered himself more proficient than the doctor, who had no practice. In the corner of the consulting-room there stood a huge ikon in a shrine with a heavy lamp in front of it, and near it a candle-stand with a white cover on it. On the walls hung portraits of bishops, a view of the Svyatogorsky Monastery, and wreaths of dried corn-flowers. Sergey Sergeyitch was religious, and liked solemnity and decorum. The ikon had been put up at his expense; at his instructions some one of the patients read the hymns of praise in the consulting-room on Sundays, and after the reading Sergey Sergeyitch himself went through the wards with a censer and burned incense.

There were a great many patients, but the time was short, and so the work was confined to the asking of a few brief questions and the administration of some drugs, such as castor-oil or volatile ointment. Andrey Yefimitch would sit with his cheek resting in his hand, lost in thought and asking questions mechanically. Sergey Sergeyitch sat down too, rubbing his hands, and from time to time putting in his word.

“We suffer pain and poverty,” he would say,



“because we do not pray to the merciful God as we should. Yes!”

Andrey Yefimitch never performed any operations when he was seeing patients; he had long ago given up doing so, and the sight of blood upset him. When he had to open a child's mouth in order to look at its throat, and the child cried and tried to defend itself with its little hands, the noise in his ears made his head go round and brought tears into his eyes. He would make haste to prescribe a drug, and motion to the woman to take the child away.

He was soon wearied by the timidity of the patients and their incoherence, by the proximity of the pious Sergey Sergeyitch, by the portraits on the walls, and by his own questions which he had asked over and over again for twenty years. And he would go away after seeing five or six patients. The rest would be seen by his assistant in his absence.

With the agreeable thought that, thank God, he had no private practice now, and that no one would interrupt him, Andrey Yefimitch sat down to the table immediately on reaching home and took up a book. He read a great deal and always with enjoyment. Half his salary went on buying books, and of the six rooms that made up his abode three were heaped up with books and old magazines. He liked best of all works on history and philosophy; the only medical publication to which he subscribed was *The Doctor*, of which he always read the last pages first. He would always go on reading for several hours without a break and without being weary. He did not read as rapidly and impulsively as Ivan Dmitritch had done in the past, but slowly and with con-

centration, often pausing over a passage which he liked or did not find intelligible. Near the books there always stood a decanter of vodka, and a salted cucumber or a pickled apple lay beside it, not on a plate, but on the baize table-cloth. Every half-hour he would pour himself out a glass of vodka and drink it without taking his eyes off the book. Then without looking at it he would feel for the cucumber and bite off a bit.

At three o'clock he would go cautiously to the kitchen door, cough, and say: "Daryushka, what about dinner? . . ."

After his dinner—a rather poor and untidily served one—Andrey Yefimitch would walk up and down his rooms with his arms folded, thinking. The clock would strike four, then five, and still he would be walking up and down thinking. Occasionally the kitchen door would creak, and the red and sleepy face of Daryushka would appear.

"Andrey Yefimitch, isn't it time for you to have your beer?" she would ask anxiously.

"No, it is not time yet . . ." he would answer. "I'll wait a little. . . . I'll wait a little. . . ."

Towards the evening the postmaster, Mihail Averyanitch, the only man in the town whose society did not bore Andrey Yefimitch, would come in. Mihail Averyanitch had once been a very rich land-owner, and had served in the cavalry, but had come to ruin, and was forced by poverty to take a job in the post office late in life. He had a hale and hearty appearance, luxuriant grey whiskers, the manners of a well-bred man, and a loud, pleasant voice. He was good-natured and emotional, but hot-tempered.



When anyone in the post office made a protest, expressed disagreement, or even began to argue, Mihail Averyanitch would turn crimson, shake all over, and shout in a voice of thunder, "Hold your tongue!" so that the post office had long enjoyed the reputation of an institution which it was terrible to visit. Mihail Averyanitch liked and respected Andrey Yefimitch for his culture and the loftiness of his soul; he treated the other inhabitants of the town superciliously, as though they were his subordinates.

"Here I am," he would say, going in to Andrey Yefimitch. "Good-evening, my dear fellow! I'll be bound, you are getting sick of me, aren't you?"

"On the contrary, I am delighted," said the doctor. "I am always glad to see you."

The friends would sit down on the sofa in the study and for some time would smoke in silence.

"Daryushka, what about the beer?" Andrey Yefimitch would say.

They would drink their first bottle still in silence, the doctor brooding and Mihail Averyanitch with a gay and animated face, like a man who has something very interesting to tell. The doctor was always the one to begin the conversation.

"What a pity," he would say quietly and slowly, not looking his friend in the face (he never looked anyone in the face)—"what a great pity it is that there are no people in our town who are capable of carrying on intelligent and interesting conversation, or care to do so. It is an immense privation for us. Even the educated class do not rise above vulgarity; the level of their development, I assure you, is not a bit higher than that of the lower orders."

"Perfectly true. I agree."

"You know, of course," the doctor went on quietly and deliberately, "that everything in this world is insignificant and uninteresting except the higher spiritual manifestations of the human mind. Intellect draws a sharp line between the animals and man, suggests the divinity of the latter, and to some extent even takes the place of the immortality which does not exist. Consequently the intellect is the only possible source of enjoyment. We see and hear of no trace of intellect about us, so we are deprived of enjoyment. We have books, it is true, but that is not at all the same as living talk and converse. If you will allow me to make a not quite apt comparison: books are the printed score, while talk is the singing."

"Perfectly true."

A silence would follow. Daryushka would come out of the kitchen and with an expression of blank dejection would stand in the doorway to listen, with her face propped on her fist.

"Eh!" Mihail Averyanitch would sigh. "To expect intelligence of this generation!"

And he would describe how wholesome, entertaining, and interesting life had been in the past. How intelligent the educated class in Russia used to be, and what lofty ideas it had of honour and friendship; how they used to lend money without an IOU, and it was thought a disgrace not to give a helping hand to a comrade in need; and what campaigns, what adventures, what skirmishes, what comrades, what women! And the Caucasus, what a marvellous country! The wife of a battalion com-

mander, a queer woman, used to put on an officer's uniform and drive off into the mountains in the evening, alone, without a guide. It was said that she had a love affair with some princeling in the native village.

"Queen of Heaven, Holy Mother . . ." Dar-yushka would sigh.

"And how we drank! And how we ate! And what desperate liberals we were!"

Andrey Yefimitch would listen without hearing; he was musing as he sipped his beer.

"I often dream of intellectual people and conversation with them," he said suddenly, interrupting Mihail Averyanitch. "My father gave me an excellent education, but under the influence of the ideas of the sixties made me become a doctor. I believe if I had not obeyed him then, by now I should have been in the very centre of the intellectual movement. Most likely I should have become a member of some university. Of course, intellect, too, is transient and not eternal, but you know why I cherish a partiality for it. Life is a vexatious trap; when a thinking man reaches maturity and attains to full consciousness he cannot help feeling that he is in a trap from which there is no escape. Indeed, he is summoned without his choice by fortuitous circumstances from non-existence into life . . . what for? He tries to find out the meaning and object of his existence; he is told nothing, or he is told absurdities; he knocks and it is not opened to him; death comes to him—also without his choice. And so, just as in prison men held together by common misfortune feel more at ease when they are together, so one does not notice

the trap in life when people with a bent for analysis and generalization meet together and pass their time in the interchange of proud and free ideas. In that sense the intellect is the source of an enjoyment nothing can replace."

"Perfectly true."

Not looking his friend in the face, Andrey Yefimitch would go on, quietly and with pauses, talking about intellectual people and conversation with them, and Mihail Averyanitch would listen attentively and agree: "Perfectly true."

"And you do not believe in the immortality of the soul?" he would ask suddenly.

"No, honoured Mihail Averyanitch; I do not believe it, and have no grounds for believing it."

"I must own I doubt it too. And yet I have a feeling as though I should never die. Oh, I think to myself: 'Old fogey, it is time you were dead!' But there is a little voice in my soul says: 'Don't believe it; you won't die.'"

Soon after nine o'clock Mihail Averyanitch would go away. As he put on his fur coat in the entry he would say with a sigh:

"What a wilderness fate has carried us to, though, really! What's most vexatious of all is to have to die here. Ech! . . ."

## VII

After seeing his friend out Andrey Yefimitch would sit down at the table and begin reading again. The stillness of the evening, and afterwards of the night, was not broken by a single sound, and it

seemed as though time were standing still and brooding with the doctor over the book, and as though there were nothing in existence but the books and the lamp with the green shade. The doctor's coarse peasant-like face was gradually lighted up by a smile of delight and enthusiasm over the progress of the human intellect. Oh, why is not man immortal? he thought. What is the good of the brain centres and convolutions, what is the good of sight, speech, self-consciousness, genius, if it is all destined to depart into the soil, and in the end to grow cold together with the earth's crust, and then for millions of years to fly with the earth round the sun with no meaning and no object? To do that there was no need at all to draw man with his lofty, almost godlike intellect out of non-existence, and then, as though in mockery, to turn him into clay. The transmutation of substances! But what cowardice to comfort oneself with that cheap substitute for immortality! The unconscious processes that take place in nature are lower even than the stupidity of man, since in stupidity there is, anyway, consciousness and will, while in those processes there is absolutely nothing. Only the coward who has more fear of death than dignity can comfort himself with the fact that his body will in time live again in the grass, in the stones, in the toad. To find one's immortality in the transmutation of substances is as strange as to prophesy a brilliant future for the case after a precious violin has been broken and become useless.

When the clock struck, Andrey Yefimitch would sink back into his chair and close his eyes to think a little. And under the influence of the fine ideas

of which he had been reading he would, unawares, recall his past and his present. The past was hateful—better not to think of it. And it was the same in the present as in the past. He knew that at the very time when his thoughts were floating together with the cooling earth round the sun, in the main building beside his abode people were suffering in sickness and physical impurity: someone perhaps could not sleep and was making war upon the insects, someone was being infected by erysipelas, or moaning over too tight a bandage; perhaps the patients were playing cards with the nurses and drinking vodka. According to the yearly return, twelve thousand people had been deceived; the whole hospital rested as it had done twenty years ago on thieving, filth, scandals, gossip, on gross quackery, and, as before, it was an immoral institution extremely injurious to the health of the inhabitants. He knew that Nikita knocked the patients about behind the barred windows of Ward No. 6, and that Moiseika went about the town every day begging alms.

On the other hand, he knew very well that a magical change had taken place in medicine during the last twenty-five years. When he was studying at the university he had fancied that medicine would soon be overtaken by the fate of alchemy and metaphysics; but now when he was reading at night the science of medicine touched him and excited his wonder, and even enthusiasm. What unexpected brilliance, what a revolution! Thanks to the antiseptic system operations were performed such as the great Pirogov had considered impossible even *in spe*. Ordinary Zemstvo doctors were venturing to per-



form the resection of the kneecap; of abdominal operations only one per cent. was fatal; while stone was considered such a trifle that they did not even write about it. A radical cure for syphilis had been discovered. And the theory of heredity, hypnotism, the discoveries of Pasteur and of Koch, hygiene based on statistics, and the work of our Zemstvo doctors!

Psychiatry with its modern classification of mental diseases, methods of diagnosis, and treatment, was a perfect Elborus in comparison with what had been in the past. They no longer poured cold water on the heads of lunatics nor put strait-waistcoats upon them; they treated them with humanity, and even, so it was stated in the papers, got up balls and entertainments for them. Andrey Yefimitch knew that with modern tastes and views such an abomination as Ward No. 6 was possible only a hundred and fifty miles from a railway in a little town where the mayor and all the town council were half-illiterate tradesmen who looked upon the doctor as an oracle who must be believed without any criticism even if he had poured molten lead into their mouths; in any other place the public and the newspapers would long ago have torn this little Bastille to pieces.

“But, after all, what of it?” Andrey Yefimitch would ask himself, opening his eyes. “There is the antiseptic system, there is Koch, there is Pasteur, but the essential reality is not altered a bit; ill-health and mortality are still the same. They get up balls and entertainments for the mad, but still they don’t let them go free; so it’s all nonsense and vanity, and there is no difference in reality between the best

Vienna clinic and my hospital." But depression and a feeling akin to envy prevented him from feeling indifferent; it must have been owing to exhaustion. His heavy head sank on to the book, he put his hands under his face to make it softer, and thought: "I serve in a pernicious institution and receive a salary from people whom I am deceiving. I am not honest, but then, I of myself am nothing, I am only part of an inevitable social evil: all local officials are pernicious and receive their salary for doing nothing. . . . And so for my dishonesty it is not I who am to blame, but the times. . . . If I had been born two hundred years later I should have been different. . . ."

When it struck three he would put out his lamp and go into his bedroom; he was not sleepy.

### VIII

Two years before, the Zemstvo in a liberal mood had decided to allow three hundred roubles a year to pay for additional medical service in the town till the Zemstvo hospital should be opened, and the district doctor, Yevgeny Fyodoritch Hobotov, was invited to the town to assist Andrey Yefimitch. He was a very young man—not yet thirty—tall and dark, with broad check-bones and little eyes; his forefathers had probably come from one of the many alien races of Russia. He arrived in the town without a farthing, with a small portmanteau, and a plain young woman whom he called his cook. This woman had a baby at the breast. Yevgeny Fyodoritch used to go about in a cap with a peak, and in high



boots, and in the winter wore a sheepskin. He made great friends with Sergey Sergeyitch, the medical assistant, and with the treasurer, but held aloof from the other officials, and for some reason called them aristocrats. He had only one book in his lodgings, "The Latest Prescriptions of the Vienna Clinic for 1881." When he went to a patient he always took this book with him. He played billiards in the evening at the club: he did not like cards. He was very fond of using in conversation such expressions as "endless bobbery," "canting soft soap," "shut up with your finicking. . . ."

He visited the hospital twice a week, made the round of the wards, and saw out-patients. The complete absence of antiseptic treatment and the cupping roused his indignation, but he did not introduce any new system, being afraid of offending Andrey Yefimitch. He regarded his colleague as a sly old rascal, suspected him of being a man of large means, and secretly envied him. He would have been very glad to have his post.

## IX

On a spring evening towards the end of March, when there was no snow left on the ground and the starlings were singing in the hospital garden, the doctor went out to see his friend the postmaster as far as the gate. At that very moment the Jew Moiseika, returning with his booty, came into the yard. He had no cap on, and his bare feet were thrust into goloshes; in his hand he had a little bag of coppers.

"Give me a kopeck!" he said to the doctor, smiling, and shivering with cold. Andrey Yefimitch, who could never refuse anyone anything, gave him a ten-kopeck piece.

"How bad that is!" he thought, looking at the Jew's bare feet with their thin red ankles. "Why, it's wet."

And stirred by a feeling akin both to pity and disgust, he went into the lodge behind the Jew, looking now at his bald head, now at his ankles. As the doctor went in, Nikita jumped up from his heap of litter and stood at attention.

"Good-day, Nikita," Andrey Yefimitch said mildly. "That Jew should be provided with boots or something, he will catch cold."

"Certainly, your honour. I'll inform the superintendent."

"Please do; ask him in my name. Tell him that I asked."

The door into the ward was open. Ivan Dmitritch, lying propped on his elbow on the bed, listened in alarm to the unfamiliar voice, and suddenly recognized the doctor. He trembled all over with anger, jumped up, and with a red and wrathful face, with his eyes starting out of his head, ran out into the middle of the road.

"The doctor has come!" he shouted, and broke into a laugh. "At last! Gentlemen, I congratulate you. The doctor is honouring us with a visit! Cursed reptile!" he shrieked, and stamped in a frenzy such as had never been seen in the ward before. "Kill the reptile! No, killing's too good. Drown him in the midden-pit!"

Andrey Yefimitch, hearing this, looked into the ward from the entry and asked gently: "What for?"

"What for?" shouted Ivan Dmitritch, going up to him with a menacing air and convulsively wrapping himself in his dressing-gown. "What for? Thief!" he said with a look of repulsion, moving his lips as though he would spit at him. "Quack! hangman!"

"Calm yourself," said Andrey Yefimitch, smiling guiltily. "I assure you I have never stolen anything; and as to the rest, most likely you greatly exaggerate. I see you are angry with me. Calm yourself, I beg, if you can, and tell me coolly what are you angry for?"

"What are you keeping me here for?"

"Because you are ill."

"Yes, I am ill. But you know dozens, hundreds of madmen are walking about in freedom because your ignorance is incapable of distinguishing them from the sane. Why am I and these poor wretches to be shut up here like scapegoats for all the rest? You, your assistant, the superintendent, and all your hospital rabble, are immeasurably inferior to every one of us morally; why then are we shut up and you not? Where's the logic of it?"

"Morality and logic don't come in, it all depends on chance. If anyone is shut up he has to stay, and if anyone is not shut up he can walk about, that's all. There is neither morality nor logic in my being a doctor and your being a mental patient, there is nothing but idle chance."

"That twaddle I don't understand . . ." Ivan

Dmitri'tch brought out in a hollow voice, and he sat down on his bed.

Moiseika, whom Nikita did not venture to search in the presence of the doctor, laid out on his bed pieces of bread, bits of paper, and little bones, and, still shivering with cold, began rapidly in a singsong voice saying something in Yiddish. He most likely imagined that he had opened a shop.

"Let me out," said Ivan Dmitritch, and his voice quivered.

"I cannot."

"But why, why?"

"Because it is not in my power. Think, what use will it be to you if I do let you out? Go. The townspeople or the police will detain you or bring you back."

"Yes, yes, that's true," said Ivan Dmitritch, and he rubbed his forehead. "It's awful! But what am I to do, what?"

Andrey Yefimitch liked Ivan Dmitritch's voice and his intelligent young face with its grimaces. He longed to be kind to the young man and soothe him; he sat down on the bed beside him, thought, and said:

"You ask me what to do. The very best thing in your position would be to run away. But, unhappily, that is useless. You would be taken up. When society protects itself from the criminal, mentally deranged, or otherwise inconvenient people, it is invincible. There is only one thing left for you: to resign yourself to the thought that your presence here is inevitable."

"It is no use to anyone."

“So long as prisons and madhouses exist someone must be shut up in them. If not you, I. If not I, some third person. Wait till in the distant future prisons and madhouses no longer exist, and there will be neither bars on the windows nor hospital gowns. Of course, that time will come sooner or later.”

Ivan Dmitritch smiled ironically.

“You are jesting,” he said, screwing up his eyes. “Such gentlemen as you and your assistant Nikita have nothing to do with the future, but you may be sure, sir, better days will come! I may express myself cheaply, you may laugh, but the dawn of a new life is at hand; truth and justice will triumph, and—our turn will come! I shall not live to see it, I shall perish, but some people’s great-grandsons will see it. I greet them with all my heart and rejoice, rejoice with them! Onward! God be your help, friends!”

With shining eyes Ivan Dmitritch got up, and stretching his hands towards the window, went on with emotion in his voice:

“From behind these bars I bless you! Hurrah for truth and justice! I rejoice!”

“I see no particular reason to rejoice,” said Andrey Yefimitch, who thought Ivan Dmitritch’s movement theatrical, though he was delighted by it. “Prisons and madhouses there will not be, and truth, as you have just expressed it, will triumph; but the reality of things, you know, will not change, the laws of nature will still remain the same. People will suffer pain, grow old, and die just as they do now. However magnificent a dawn lighted up your

life, you would yet in the end be nailed up in a coffin and thrown into a hole."

"And immortality?"

"Oh, come, now!"

"You don't believe in it, but I do. Somebody in Dostoevsky or Voltaire said that if there had not been a God men would have invented him. And I firmly believe that if there is no immortality the great intellect of man will sooner or later invent it."

"Well said," observed Andrey Yefimitch, smiling with pleasure; "it's a good thing you have faith. With such a belief one may live happily even shut up within walls. You have studied somewhere, I presume?"

"Yes, I have been at the university, but did not complete my studies."

"You are a reflecting and a thoughtful man. In any surroundings you can find tranquillity in yourself. Free and deep thinking which strives for the comprehension of life, and complete contempt for the foolish bustle of the world—those are two blessings beyond any that man has ever known. And you can possess them even though you lived behind threefold bars. Diogenes lived in a tub, yet he was happier than all the kings of the earth."

"Your Diogenes was a blockhead," said Ivan Dmitritch morosely. "Why do you talk to me about Diogenes and some foolish comprehension of life?" he cried, growing suddenly angry and leaping up. "I love life; I love it passionately. I have the mania of persecution, a continual agonizing terror; but I have moments when I am overwhelmed by the thirst

for life, and then I am afraid of going mad. I want dreadfully to live, dreadfully!"

He walked up and down the ward in agitation, and said, dropping his voice:

"When I dream I am haunted by phantoms. People come to me, I hear voices and music, and I fancy I am walking through woods or by the seashore, and I long so passionately for movement, for interests. . . . Come, tell me, what news is there?" asked Ivan Dmitritch; "what's happening?"

"Do you wish to know about the town or in general?"

"Well, tell me first about the town, and then in general."

"Well, in the town it is appallingly dull. . . . There's no one to say a word to, no one to listen to. There are no new people. A young doctor called Hobotov has come here recently."

"He had come in my time. Well, he is a low cad, isn't he?"

"Yes, he is a man of no culture. It's strange, you know. . . . Judging by every sign, there is no intellectual stagnation in our capital cities; there is a movement—so there must be real people there too; but for some reason they always send us such men as I would rather not see. It's an unlucky town!"

"Yes, it is an unlucky town," sighed Ivan Dmitritch, and he laughed. "And how are things in general? What are they writing in the papers and reviews?"

It was by now dark in the ward. The doctor got up, and, standing, began to describe what was being



written abroad and in Russia, and the tendency of thought that could be noticed now. Ivan Dmitritch listened attentively and put questions, but suddenly, as though recalling something terrible, clutched at his head and lay down on the bed with his back to the doctor.

"What's the matter?" asked Andrey Yefimitch.

"You will not hear another word from me," said Ivan Dmitritch rudely. "Leave me alone."

"Why so?"

"I tell you, leave me alone. Why the devil do you persist?"

Andrey Yefimitch shrugged his shoulders, heaved a sigh, and went out. As he crossed the entry he said: "You might clear up here, Nikita . . . there's an awfully stuffy smell."

"Certainly, your honour."

"What an agreeable young man!" thought Andrey Yefimitch, going back to his flat. "In all the years I have been living here I do believe he is the first I have met with whom one can talk. He is capable of reasoning and is interested in just the right things."

While he was reading, and afterwards, while he was going to bed, he kept thinking about Ivan Dmitritch, and when he woke next morning he remembered that he had the day before made the acquaintance of an intelligent and interesting man, and determined to visit him again as soon as possible.

## X

Ivan Dmitritch was lying in the same position as on the previous day, with his head clutched in



both hands and his legs drawn up. His face was not visible.

“Good-day, my friend,” said Andrey Yefimitch. “You are not asleep, are you?”

“In the first place, I am not your friend,” Ivan Dmitritch articulated into the pillow; “and in the second, your efforts are useless; you will not get one word out of me.”

“Strange,” muttered Andrey Yefimitch in confusion. “Yesterday we talked peacefully, but suddenly for some reason you took offence and broke off all at once. . . . Probably I expressed myself awkwardly, or perhaps gave utterance to some idea which did not fit in with your convictions. . . .”

“Yes, a likely idea!” said Ivan Dmitritch, sitting up and looking at the doctor with irony and uneasiness. His eyes were red. “You can go and spy and probe somewhere else, it’s no use your doing it here. I knew yesterday what you had come for.”

“A strange fancy,” laughed the doctor. “So you suppose me to be a spy?”

“Yes, I do. . . . A spy or a doctor who has been charged to test me—it’s all the same——”

“Oh, excuse me, what a queer fellow you are really!”

The doctor sat down on the stool near the bed and shook his head reproachfully.

“But let us suppose you are right,” he said, “let us suppose that I am treacherously trying to trap you into saying something so as to betray you to the police. You would be arrested and then tried. But would you be any worse off being tried and in prison than you are here? If you are banished to a

settlement, or even sent to penal servitude, would it be worse than being shut up in this ward? I imagine it would be no worse. . . . What, then, are you afraid of?"

These words evidently had an effect on Ivan Dmitritch. He sat down quietly.

It was between four and five in the afternoon—the time when Andrey Yefimitch usually walked up and down his rooms, and Daryushka asked whether it was not time for his beer. It was a still, bright day.

"I came out for a walk after dinner, and here I have come, as you see," said the doctor. "It is quite spring."

"What month is it? March?" asked Ivan Dmitritch.

"Yes, the end of March."

"Is it very muddy?"

"No, not very. There are already paths in the garden."

"It would be nice now to drive in an open carriage somewhere into the country," said Ivan Dmitritch, rubbing his red eyes as though he were just awake, "then to come home to a warm, snug study, and . . . and to have a decent doctor to cure one's headache. . . . It's so long since I have lived like a human being. It's disgusting here! Insufferably disgusting!"

After his excitement of the previous day he was exhausted and listless, and spoke unwillingly. His fingers twitched, and from his face it could be seen that he had a splitting headache.

"There is no real difference between a warm,

snug study and this ward," said Andrey Yefimitch. "A man's peace and contentment do not lie outside a man, but in himself."

"What do you mean?"

"The ordinary man looks for good and evil in external things—that is, in carriages, in studies—but a thinking man looks for it in himself."

"You should go and preach that philosophy in Greece, where it's warm and fragrant with the scent of pomegranates, but here it is not suited to the climate. With whom was it I was talking of Diogenes? Was it with you?"

"Yes, with me yesterday."

"Diogenes did not need a study or a warm habitation; it's hot there without. You can lie in your tub and eat oranges and olives. But bring him to Russia to live: he'd be begging to be let indoors in May, let alone December. He'd be doubled up with the cold."

"No. One can be insensible to cold as to every other pain. Marcus Aurelius says: 'A pain is a vivid idea of pain; make an effort of will to change that idea, dismiss it, cease to complain, and the pain will disappear.' That is true. The wise man, or simply the reflecting, thoughtful man, is distinguished precisely by his contempt for suffering; he is always contented and surprised at nothing."

"Then I am an idiot, since I suffer and am discontented and surprised at the baseness of mankind."

"You are wrong in that; if you will reflect more on the subject you will understand how insignificant is all that external world that agitates us. One

must strive for the comprehension of life, and in that is true happiness."

"Comprehension . . ." repeated Ivan Dmitritch frowning. "External, internal. . . . Excuse me, but I don't understand it. I only know," he said, getting up and looking angrily at the doctor—"I only know that God has created me of warm blood and nerves, yes, indeed! If organic tissue is capable of life it must react to every stimulus. And I do! To pain I respond with tears and outcries, to baseness with indignation, to filth with loathing. To my mind, that is just what is called life. The lower the organism, the less sensitive it is, and the more feebly it reacts to stimulus; and the higher it is, the more responsively and vigorously it reacts to reality. How is it you don't know that? A doctor, and not know such trifles! To despise suffering, to be always contented, and to be surprised at nothing, one must reach this condition"—and Ivan Dmitritch pointed to the peasant who was a mass of fat—"or to harden oneself by suffering to such a point that one loses all sensibility to it—that is, in other words, to cease to live. You must excuse me, I am not a sage or a philosopher," Ivan Dmitritch continued with irritation, "and I don't understand anything about it. I am not capable of reasoning."

"On the contrary, your reasoning is excellent."

"The Stoics, whom you are parodying, were remarkable people, but their doctrine crystallized two thousand years ago and has not advanced, and will not advance, an inch forward, since it is not practical or living. It had a success only with the minority which spends its life in savouring all sorts of

theories and ruminating over them; the majority did not understand it. A doctrine which advocates indifference to wealth and to the comforts of life, and a contempt for suffering and death, is quite unintelligible to the vast majority of men, since that majority has never known wealth or the comforts of life; and to despise suffering would mean to it despising life itself, since the whole existence of man is made up of the sensations of hunger, cold, injury, loss, and a Hamlet-like dread of death. The whole of life lies in these sensations; one may be oppressed by it, one may hate it, but one cannot despise it. Yes, so, I repeat, the doctrine of the Stoics can never have a future; from the beginning of time up to to-day you see continually increasing the struggle, the sensibility to pain, the capacity of responding to stimulus."

Ivan Dmitritch suddenly lost the thread of his thoughts, stopped, and rubbed his forehead with vexation.

"I meant to say something important, but I have lost it," he said. "What was I saying? Oh, yes! This is what I mean: one of the Stoics sold himself into slavery to redeem his neighbour, so, you see, even a Stoic did react to stimulus, since, for such a generous act as the destruction of oneself for the sake of one's neighbour, he must have had a soul capable of pity and indignation. Here in prison I have forgotten everything I have learned, or else I could have recalled something else. Take Christ, for instance: Christ responded to reality by weeping, smiling, being sorrowful and moved to wrath, even overcome by misery. He did not go to meet

His sufferings with a smile, He did not despise death, but prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane that this cup might pass Him by."

Ivan Dmitritch laughed and sat down.

"Granted that a man's peace and contentment lie not outside but in himself," he said, "granted that one must despise suffering and not be surprised at anything, yet on what ground do you preach the theory? Are you a sage? A philosopher?"

"No, I am not a philosopher, but everyone ought to preach it because it is reasonable."

"No, I want to know how it is that you consider yourself competent to judge of 'comprehension,' contempt for suffering, and so on. Have you ever suffered? Have you any idea of suffering? Allow me to ask you, were you ever thrashed in your childhood?"

"No, my parents had an aversion for corporal punishment."

"My father used to flog me cruelly; my father was a harsh, sickly Government clerk with a long nose and a yellow neck. But let us talk of you. No one has laid a finger on you all your life, no one has scared you nor beaten you; you are as strong as a bull. You grew up under your father's wing and studied at his expense, and then you dropped at once into a sinecure. For more than twenty years you have lived rent free with heating, lighting, and service all provided, and had the right to work how you pleased and as much as you pleased, even to do nothing. You were naturally a flabby, lazy man, and so you have tried to arrange your life so that nothing should disturb you or make you



move. You have handed over your work to the assistant and the rest of the rabble while you sit in peace and warmth, save money, read, amuse yourself with reflections, with all sorts of lofty nonsense, and ” (Ivan Dmitritch looked at the doctor’s red nose) “ with boozing; in fact, you have seen nothing of life, you know absolutely nothing of it, and are only theoretically acquainted with reality; you despise suffering and are surprised at nothing for a very simple reason: vanity of vanities, the external and the internal, contempt for life, for suffering and for death, comprehension, true happiness—that’s the philosophy that suits the Russian sluggard best. You see a peasant beating his wife, for instance. Why interfere? Let him beat her, they will both die sooner or later, anyway; and, besides, he who beats injures by his blows, not the person he is beating, but himself. To get drunk is stupid and unseemly, but if you drink you die, and if you don’t drink you die. A peasant woman comes with toothache . . . well, what of it? Pain is the idea of pain, and besides ‘there is no living in this world without illness; we shall all die, and so, go away, woman, don’t hinder me from thinking and drinking vodka.’ A young man asks advice, what he is to do, how he is to live; anyone else would think before answering, but you have got the answer ready: strive for ‘comprehension’ or for true happiness. And what is that fantastic ‘true happiness’? There’s no answer, of course. We are kept here behind barred windows, tortured, left to rot; but that is very good and reasonable, because there is no difference at all between this ward and a warm, snug study.

A convenient philosophy. You can do nothing, and your conscience is clear, and you feel you are wise. . . . No, sir, it is not philosophy, it's not thinking, it's not breadth of vision, but laziness, fakirism, drowsy stupefaction. Yes," cried Ivan Dmitritch, getting angry again, "you despise suffering, but I'll be bound if you pinch your finger in the door you will howl at the top of your voice."

"And perhaps I shouldn't howl," said Andrey Yefimitch, with a gentle smile.

"Oh, I dare say! Well, if you had a stroke of paralysis, or supposing some fool or bully took advantage of his position and rank to insult you in public, and if you knew he could do it with impunity, then you would understand what it means to put people off with comprehension and true happiness."

"That's original," said Andrey Yefimitch, laughing with pleasure and rubbing his hands. "I am agreeably struck by your inclination for drawing generalizations, and the sketch of my character you have just drawn is simply brilliant. I must confess that talking to you gives me great pleasure. Well, I've listened to you, and now you must graciously listen to me."

## XI

The conversation went on for about an hour longer, and apparently made a deep impression on Andrey Yefimitch. He began going to the ward every day. He went there in the mornings and after dinner, and often the dusk of evening found



him in conversation with Ivan Dmitritch. At first Ivan Dmitritch held aloof from him, suspected him of evil designs, and openly expressed his hostility. But afterwards he got used to him, and his abrupt manner changed to one of condescending irony.

Soon it was all over the hospital that the doctor, Andrey Yefimitch, had taken to visiting Ward No. 6. No one—neither Sergey Sergeyitch, nor Nikita, nor the nurses—could conceive why he went there, why he stayed there for hours together, what he was talking about, and why he did not write prescriptions. His actions seemed strange. Often Mihail Averyanitch did not find him at home, which had never happened in the past, and Daryushka was greatly perturbed, for the doctor drank his beer now at no definite time, and sometimes was even late for dinner.

One day—it was at the end of June—Dr. Hobotov went to see Andrey Yefimitch about something. Not finding him at home, he proceeded to look for him in the yard; there he was told that the old doctor had gone to see the mental patients. Going into the lodge and stopping in the entry, Hobotov heard the following conversation:

“We shall never agree, and you will not succeed in converting me to your faith,” Ivan Dmitritch was saying irritably; “you are utterly ignorant of reality, and you have never known suffering, but have only like a leech fed beside the sufferings of others, while I have been in continual suffering from the day of my birth till to-day. For that reason, I tell you frankly, I consider myself superior to you and more com-

petent in every respect. It's not for you to teach me."

"I have absolutely no ambition to convert you to my faith," said Andrey Yefimitch gently, and with regret that the other refused to understand him. "And that is not what matters, my friend; what matters is not that you have suffered and I have not. Joy and suffering are passing; let us leave them, never mind them. What matters is that you and I think; we see in each other people who are capable of thinking and reasoning, and that is a common bond between us however different our views. If you knew, my friend, how sick I am of the universal senselessness, ineptitude, stupidity, and with what delight I always talk with you! You are an intelligent man, and I enjoy your company."

Hobotov opened the door an inch and glanced into the ward; Ivan Dmitritch in his night-cap and the doctor Andrey Yefimitch were sitting side by side on the bed. The madman was grimacing, twitching, and convulsively wrapping himself in his gown, while the doctor sat motionless with bowed head, and his face was red and look helpless and sorrowful. Hobotov shrugged his shoulders, grinned, and glanced at Nikita. Nikita shrugged his shoulders too.

Next day Hobotov went to the lodge, accompanied by the assistant. Both stood in the entry and listened.

"I fancy our old man has gone clean off his chump!" said Hobotov as he came out of the lodge.

"Lord have mercy upon us sinners!" sighed the

decorous Sergey Sergeych, scrupulously avoiding the puddles that he might not muddy his polished boots. "I must own, honoured Yevgeny Fyodoritch, I have been expecting it for a long time."

## XII

After this Andrey Yefimitch began to notice a mysterious air in all around him. The attendants, the nurses, and the patients looked at him inquisitively when they met him, and then whispered together. The superintendent's little daughter Masha, whom he liked to meet in the hospital garden, for some reason ran away from him now when he went up with a smile to stroke her on the head. The postmaster no longer said, "Perfectly true," as he listened to him, but in unaccountable confusion muttered, "Yes, yes, yes . . ." and looked at him with a grieved and thoughtful expression; for some reason he took to advising his friend to give up vodka and beer, but as a man of delicate feeling he did not say this directly, but hinted it, telling him first about the commanding officer of his battalion, an excellent man, and then about the priest of the regiment, a capital fellow, both of whom drank and fell ill, but on giving up drinking completely regained their health. On two or three occasions Andrey Yefimitch was visited by his colleague Hobotov, who also advised him to give up spirituous liquors, and for no apparent reason recommended him to take bromide.

In August Andrey Yefimitch got a letter from the mayor of the town asking him to come on very

important business. On arriving at the town hall at the time fixed, Andrey Yefimitch found there the military commander, the superintendent of the district school, a member of the town council, Hobotov, and a plump, fair gentleman who was introduced to him as a doctor. This doctor, with a Polish surname difficult to pronounce, lived at a pedigree stud-farm twenty miles away, and was now on a visit to the town.

"There's something that concerns you," said the member of the town council, addressing Andrey Yefimitch after they had all greeted one another and sat down to the table. "Here Yevgeny Fyodoritch says that there is not room for the dispensary in the main building, and that it ought to be transferred to one of the lodges. That's of no consequence—of course it can be transferred, but the point is that the lodge wants doing up."

"Yes, it would have to be done up," said Andrey Yefimitch after a moment's thought. "If the corner lodge, for instance, were fitted up as a dispensary, I imagine it would cost at least five hundred roubles. An unproductive expenditure!"

Everyone was silent for a space.

"I had the honour of submitting to you ten years ago," Andrey Yefimitch went on in a low voice, "that the hospital in its present form is a luxury for the town beyond its means. It was built in the forties, but things were different then. The town spends too much on unnecessary buildings and superfluous staff. I believe with a different system two model hospitals might be maintained for the same money."

"Well, let us have a different system, then!" the member of the town council said briskly.

"I have already had the honour of submitting to you that the medical department should be transferred to the supervision of the Zemstvo."

"Yes, transfer the money to the Zemstvo and they will steal it," laughed the fair-haired doctor.

"That's what it always comes to," the member of the council assented, and he also laughed.

Andrey Yefimitch looked with apathetic, lustreless eyes at the fair-haired doctor and said: "One should be just."

Again there was silence. Tea was brought in. The military commander, for some reason much embarrassed, touched Andrey Yefimitch's hand across the table and said: "You have quite forgotten us, doctor. But of course you are a hermit: you don't play cards and don't like women. You would be dull with fellows like us."

They all began saying how boring it was for a decent person to live in such a town. No theatre, no music, and at the last dance at the club there had been about twenty ladies and only two gentlemen. The young men did not dance, but spent all the time crowding round the refreshment bar or playing cards.

Not looking at anyone and speaking slowly in a low voice, Andrey Yefimitch began saying what a pity, what a terrible pity it was that the townspeople should waste their vital energy, their hearts, and their minds on cards and gossip, and should have neither the power nor the inclination to spend their time in interesting conversation and reading,

and should refuse to take advantage of the enjoyments of the mind. The mind alone was interesting and worthy of attention, all the rest was low and petty. Hobotov listened to his colleague attentively and suddenly asked:

“Andrey Yefimitch, what day of the month is it?”

Having received an answer, the fair-haired doctor and he, in the tone of examiners conscious of their lack of skill, began asking Andrey Yefimitch what was the day of the week, how many days there were in the year, and whether it was true that there was a remarkable prophet living in Ward No. 6.

In response to the last question Andrey Yefimitch turned rather red and said: “Yes, he is mentally deranged, but he is an interesting young man.”

They asked him no other questions.

When he was putting on his overcoat in the entry, the military commander laid a hand on his shoulder and said with a sigh:

“It’s time for us old fellows to rest!”

As he came out of the hall, Andrey Yefimitch understood that it had been a committee appointed to enquire into his mental condition. He recalled the questions that had been asked him, flushed crimson, and for some reason, for the first time in his life, felt bitterly grieved for medical science.

“My God . . .” he thought, remembering how these doctors had just examined him; “why, they have only lately been hearing lectures on mental pathology; they had passed an examination—what’s the explanation of this crass ignorance? They have not a conception of mental pathology!”



And for the first time in his life he felt insulted and moved to anger.

In the evening of the same day Mihail Averyanitch came to see him. The postmaster went up to him without waiting to greet him, took him by both hands, and said in an agitated voice:

“My dear fellow, my dear friend, show me that you believe in my genuine affection and look on me as your friend!” And preventing Andrey Yefimitch from speaking, he went on, growing excited: “I love you for your culture and nobility of soul. Listen to me, my dear fellow. The rules of their profession compel the doctors to conceal the truth from you, but I blurt out the plain truth like a soldier. You are not well! Excuse me, my dear fellow, but it is the truth; everyone about you has been noticing it for a long time. Dr. Yevgeny Fyodoritch has just told me that it is essential for you to rest and distract your mind for the sake of your health. Perfectly true! Excellent! In a day or two I am taking a holiday and am going away for a sniff of a different atmosphere. Show that you are a friend to me, let us go together! Let us go for a jaunt as in the good old days.”

“I feel perfectly well,” said Andrey Yefimitch after a moment’s thought. “I can’t go away. Allow me to show you my friendship in some other way.”

To go off with no object, without his books, without his Daryushka, without his beer, to break abruptly through the routine of life, established for twenty years—the idea for the first minute struck him as wild and fantastic, but he remembered the conversation at the Zemstvo committee and the de-



pressing feelings with which he had returned home, and the thought of a brief absence from the town in which stupid people looked on him as a madman was pleasant to him.

“And where precisely do you intend to go?” he asked.

“To Moscow, to Petersburg, to Warsaw. . . . I spent the five happiest years of my life in Warsaw. What a marvellous town! Let us go, my dear fellow!”

### XIII

A week later it was suggested to Andrey Yefimitch that he should have a rest—that is, send in his resignation—a suggestion he received with indifference, and a week later still, Mihail Averyanitch and he were sitting in a posting carriage driving to the nearest railway station. The days were cool and bright, with a blue sky and a transparent distance. They were two days driving the hundred and fifty miles to the railway station, and stayed two nights on the way. When at the posting station the glasses given them for their tea had not been properly washed, or the drivers were slow in harnessing the horses, Mihail Averyanitch would turn crimson, and quivering all over would shout:

“Hold your tongue! Don’t argue!”

And in the carriage he talked without ceasing for a moment, describing his campaigns in the Caucasus and in Poland. What adventures he had had, what meetings! He talked loudly and opened his eyes so wide with wonder that he might well be thought to be lying. Moreover, as he talked he

breathed in Andrey Yefimitch's face and laughed into his ear. This bothered the doctor and prevented him from thinking or concentrating his mind.

In the train they travelled, from motives of economy, third-class in a non-smoking compartment. Half the passengers were decent people. Mihail Averyanitch soon made friends with everyone, and moving from one seat to another, kept saying loudly that they ought not to travel by these appalling lines. It was a regular swindle! A very different thing riding on a good horse: one could do over seventy miles a day and feel fresh and well after it. And our bad harvests were due to the draining of the Pinsk marshes; altogether, the way things were done was dreadful. He got excited, talked loudly, and would not let others speak. This endless chatter to the accompaniment of loud laughter and expressive gestures wearied Andrey Yefimitch.

"Which of us is the madman?" he thought with vexation. "I, who try not to disturb my fellow-passengers in any way, or this egoist who thinks that he is cleverer and more interesting than anyone here, and so will leave no one in peace?"

In Moscow Mihail Averyanitch put on a military coat without epaulettes and trousers with red braid on them. He wore a military cap and overcoat in the street, and soldiers saluted him. It seemed to Andrey Yefimitch, now, that his companion was a man who had flung away all that was good and kept only what was bad of all the characteristics of a country gentleman that he had once possessed. He liked to be waited on even when it was quite unnecessary. The matches would be lying before

him on the table, and he would see them and shout to the waiter to give him the matches; he did not hesitate to appear before a maidservant in nothing but his underclothes; he used the familiar mode of address to all footmen indiscriminately, even old men, and when he was angry called them fools and blockheads. This, Andrey Yefimitch thought, was like a gentleman, but disgusting.

First of all Mihail Averyanitch led his friend to the Iversky Madonna. He prayed fervently, shedding tears and bowing down to the earth, and when he had finished, heaved a deep sigh and said:

“Even though one does not believe it makes one somehow easier when one prays a little. Kiss the ikon, my dear fellow.”

Andrey Yefimitch was embarrassed and he kissed the image, while Mihail Averyanitch pursed up his lips and prayed in a whisper, and again tears came into his eyes. Then they went to the Kremlin and looked there at the Tsar-cannon and the Tsar-bell, and even touched them with their fingers, admired the view over the river, visited St. Saviour's and the Rumyantsev museum.

They dined at Tyestov's. Mihail Averyanitch looked a long time at the menu, stroking his whiskers, and said in the tone of a gourmand accustomed to dine in restaurants:

“We shall see what you give us to eat to-day, angel!”

#### XIV

The doctor walked about, looked at things, ate and drank, but he had all the while one feeling: an-

noyance with Mihail Averyanitch. He longed to have a rest from his friend, to get away from him, to hide himself, while the friend thought it his duty not to let the doctor move a step away from him, and to provide him with as many distractions as possible. When there was nothing to look at he entertained him with conversation. For two days Andrey Yefimitch endured it, but on the third he announced to his friend that he was ill and wanted to stay at home for the whole day; his friend replied that in that case he would stay too—that really he needed rest, for he was run off his legs already. Andrey Yefimitch lay on the sofa, with his face to the back, and clenching his teeth, listened to his friend, who assured him with heat that sooner or later France would certainly thrash Germany, that there were a great many scoundrels in Moscow, and that it was impossible to judge of a horse's quality by its outward appearance. The doctor began to have a buzzing in his ears and palpitations of the heart, but out of delicacy could not bring himself to beg his friend to go away or hold his tongue. Fortunately Mihail Averyanitch grew weary of sitting in the hotel room, and after dinner he went out for a walk.

As soon as he was alone Andrey Yefimitch abandoned himself to a feeling of relief. How pleasant to lie motionless on the sofa and to know that one is alone in the room! Real happiness is impossible without solitude. The fallen angel betrayed God probably because he longed for solitude, of which the angels know nothing. Andrey Yefimitch wanted to think about what he had seen and heard during

the last few days, but he could not get Mihail Averyanitch out of his head.

“Why, he has taken a holiday and come with me out of friendship, out of generosity,” thought the doctor with vexation; “nothing could be worse than this friendly supervision. I suppose he is good-natured and generous and a lively fellow, but he is a bore. An insufferable bore. In the same way there are people who never say anything but what is clever and good, yet one feels that they are dull-witted people.”

For the following days Andrey Yefimitch declared himself ill and would not leave the hotel room; he lay with his face to the back of the sofa, and suffered agonies of weariness when his friend entertained him with conversation, or rested when his friend was absent. He was vexed with himself for having come, and with his friend, who grew every day more talkative and more free-and-easy; he could not succeed in attuning his thoughts to a serious and lofty level.

“This is what I get from the real life Ivan Dmitritch talked about,” he thought, angry at his own pettiness. “It’s of no consequence, though. . . . I shall go home, and everything will go on as before. . . .”

It was the same thing in Petersburg too; for whole days together he did not leave the hotel room, but lay on the sofa and only got up to drink beer.

Mihail Averyanitch was all haste to get to Warsaw.

“My dear man, what should I go there for?”

said Andrey Yefimitch in an imploring voice. "You go alone and let me get home! I entreat you!"

"On no account," protested Mihail Averyanitch. "It's a marvellous town."

Andrey Yefimitch had not the strength of will to insist on his own way, and much against his inclination went to Warsaw. There he did not leave the hotel room, but lay on the sofa, furious with himself, with his friend, and with the waiters, who obstinately refused to understand Russian; while Mihail Averyanitch, healthy, hearty, and full of spirits as usual, went about the town from morning to night, looking for his old acquaintances. Several times he did not return home at night. After one night spent in some unknown haunt he returned home early in the morning, in a violently excited condition, with a red face and tousled hair. For a long time he walked up and down the rooms muttering something to himself, then stopped and said:

"Honour before everything."

After walking up and down a little longer he clutched his head in both hands and pronounced in a tragic voice: "Yes, honour before everything! Accursed be the moment when the idea first entered my head to visit this Babylon! My dear friend," he added, addressing the doctor, "you may despise me, I have played and lost; lend me five hundred roubles!"

Andrey Yefimitch counted out five hundred roubles and gave them to his friend without a word. The latter, still crimson with shame and anger, incoherently articulated some useless vow, put on his cap, and went out. Returning two hours later he



flopped into an easy-chair, heaved a loud sigh, and said:

“My honour is saved. Let us go, my friend; I do not care to remain another hour in this accursed town. Scoundrels! Austrian spies!”

By the time the friends were back in their own town it was November, and deep snow was lying in the streets. Dr. Hobotov had Andrey Yefimitch's post; he was still living in his old lodgings, waiting for Andrey Yefimitch to arrive and clear out of the hospital apartments. The plain woman whom he called his cook was already established in one of the lodges.

Fresh scandals about the hospital were going the round of the town. It was said that the plain woman had quarrelled with the superintendent, and that the latter had crawled on his knees before her begging forgiveness. On the very first day he arrived Andrey Yefimitch had to look out for lodgings.

“My friend,” the postmaster said to him timidly, “excuse an indiscreet question: what means have you at your disposal?”

Andrey Yefimitch, without a word, counted out his money and said: “Eighty-six roubles.”

“I don't mean that,” Mihail Averyanitch brought out in confusion, misunderstanding him; “I mean, what have you to live on?”

“I tell you, eighty-six roubles . . . I have nothing else.”

Mihail Averyanitch looked upon the doctor as an honourable man, yet he suspected that he had accumulated a fortune of at least twenty thousand. Now learning that Andrey Yefimitch was a beggar,



that he had nothing to live on he was for some reason suddenly moved to tears and embraced his friend.

## XV

Andrey Yefimitch now lodged in a little house with three windows. There were only three rooms besides the kitchen in the little house. The doctor lived in two of them which looked into the street, while Daryushka and the landlady with her three children lived in the third room and the kitchen. Sometimes the landlady's lover, a drunken peasant who was rowdy and reduced the children and Daryushka to terror, would come for the night. When he arrived and established himself in the kitchen and demanded vodka, they all felt very uncomfortable, and the doctor would be moved by pity to take the crying children into his room and let them lie on his floor, and this gave him great satisfaction.

He got up as before at eight o'clock, and after his morning tea sat down to read his old books and magazines: he had no money for new ones. Either because the books were old, or perhaps because of the change in his surroundings, reading exhausted him, and did not grip his attention as before. That he might not spend his time in idleness he made a detailed catalogue of his books and gummed little labels on their backs, and this mechanical, tedious work seemed to him more interesting than reading. The monotonous, tedious work lulled his thoughts to sleep in some unaccountable way, and the time

passed quickly while he thought of nothing. Even sitting in the kitchen, peeling potatoes with Daryushka or picking over the buckwheat grain, seemed to him interesting. On Saturdays and Sundays he went to church. Standing near the wall and half closing his eyes, he listened to the singing and thought of his father, of his mother, of the university, of the religions of the world; he felt calm and melancholy, and as he went out of the church afterwards he regretted that the service was so soon over. He went twice to the hospital to talk to Ivan Dmitritch. But on both occasions Ivan Dmitritch was unusually excited and ill-humoured; he bade the doctor leave him in peace, as he had long been sick of empty chatter, and declared, to make up for all his sufferings, he asked from the damned scoundrels only one favour—solitary confinement. Surely they would not refuse him even that? On both occasions when Andrey Yefimitch was taking leave of him and wishing him good-night, he answered rudely and said:

“Go to hell!”

And Andrey Yefimitch did not know now whether to go to him for the third time or not. He longed to go.

In old days Andrey Yefimitch used to walk about his rooms and think in the interval after dinner, but now from dinner-time till evening tea he lay on the sofa with his face to the back and gave himself up to trivial thoughts which he could not struggle against. He was mortified that after more than twenty years of service he had been given neither a pension nor any assistance. It is true that he had

not done his work honestly, but, then, all who are in the Service get a pension without distinction whether they are honest or not. Contemporary justice lies precisely in the bestowal of grades, orders, and pensions, not for moral qualities or capacities, but for service whatever it may have been like. Why was he alone to be an exception? He had no money at all. He was ashamed to pass by the shop and look at the woman who owned it. He owed thirty-two roubles for beer already. There was money owing to the landlady also. Daryushka sold old clothes and books on the sly, and told lies to the landlady, saying that the doctor was just going to receive a large sum of money.

He was angry with himself for having wasted on travelling the thousand roubles he had saved up. How useful that thousand roubles would have been now! He was vexed that people would not leave him in peace. Hobotov thought it his duty to look in on his sick colleague from time to time. Everything about him was revolting to Andrey Yefimitch—his well-fed face and vulgar, condescending tone, and his use of the word “colleague,” and his high top-boots; the most revolting thing was that he thought it was his duty to treat Andrey Yefimitch, and thought that he really was treating him. On every visit he brought a bottle of bromide and rhubarb pills.

Mihail Averyanitch, too, thought it his duty to visit his friend and entertain him. Every time he went in to Andrey Yefimitch with an affectation of ease, laughed constrainedly, and began assuring him that he was looking very well to-day, and that, thank

God, he was on the highroad to recovery, and from this it might be concluded that he looked on his friend's condition as hopeless. He had not yet repaid his Warsaw debt, and was overwhelmed by shame; he was constrained, and so tried to laugh louder and talk more amusingly. His anecdotes and descriptions seemed endless now, and were an agony both to Andrey Yefimitch and himself.

In his presence Andrey Yefimitch usually lay on the sofa with his face to the wall, and listened with his teeth clenched; his soul was oppressed with rankling disgust, and after every visit from his friend he felt as though this disgust had risen higher, and was mounting into his throat.

To stifle petty thoughts he made haste to reflect that he himself, and Hobotov, and Mihail Averyanitch, would all sooner or later perish without leaving any trace on the world. If one imagined some spirit flying by the earthly globe in space in a million years he would see nothing but clay and bare rocks. Everything—culture and the moral law—would pass away and not even a burdock would grow out of them. Of what consequence was shame in the presence of a shopkeeper, of what consequence was the insignificant Hobotov or the wearisome friendship of Mihail Averyanitch? It was all trivial and nonsensical.

But such reflections did not help him now. Scarcely had he imagined the earthly globe in a million years, when Hobotov in his high top-boots or Mihail Averyanitch with his forced laugh would appear from behind a bare rock, and he even heard the shamefaced whisper: "The Warsaw debt. . . ."

I will repay it in a day or two, my dear fellow, without fail. . . .”

## XVI

One day Mihail Averyanitch came after dinner when Andrey Yefimitch was lying on the sofa. It so happened that Hobotov arrived at the same time with his bromide. Andrey Yefimitch got up heavily and sat down, leaning both arms on the sofa.

“You have a much better colour to-day than you had yesterday, my dear man,” began Mihail Averyanitch. “Yes, you look jolly. Upon my soul, you do!”

“It’s high time you were well, colleague,” said Hobotov, yawning. “I’ll be bound, you are sick of this bobbery.”

“And we shall recover,” said Mihail Averyanitch cheerfully. “We shall live another hundred years! To be sure!”

“Not a hundred years, but another twenty,” Hobotov said reassuringly. “It’s all right, all right, colleague; don’t lose heart. . . . Don’t go piling it on!”

“We’ll show what we can do,” laughed Mihail Averyanitch, and he slapped his friend on the knee. “We’ll show them yet! Next summer, please God, we shall be off to the Caucasus, and we will ride all over it on horseback—trot, trot, trot! And when we are back from the Caucasus I shouldn’t wonder if we will all dance at the wedding.” Mihail Averyanitch gave a sly wink. “We’ll marry you, my dear boy, we’ll marry you. . . .”

Andrey Yefimitch felt suddenly that the rising disgust had mounted to his throat, his heart began beating violently.

"That's vulgar," he said, getting up quickly and walking away to the window. "Don't you understand that you are talking vulgar nonsense?"

He meant to go on softly and politely, but against his will he suddenly clenched his fists and raised them above his head.

"Leave me alone," he shouted in a voice unlike his own, flushing crimson and shaking all over. "Go away, both of you!"

Mihail Averyanitch and Hobotov got up and stared at him first with amazement and then with alarm.

"Go away, both!" Andrey Yefimitch went on shouting. "Stupid people! Foolish people! I don't want either your friendship or your medicines, stupid man! Vulgar! Nasty!"

Hobotov and Mihail Averyanitch, looking at each other in bewilderment, staggered to the door and went out. Andrey Yefimitch snatched up the bottle of bromide and flung it after them; the bottle broke with a crash on the door-frame.

"Go to the devil!" he shouted in a tearful voice, running out into the passage. "To the devil!"

When his guests were gone Andrey Yefimitch lay down on the sofa, trembling as though in a fever, and went on for a long while repeating: "Stupid people! Foolish people!"

When he was calmer, what occurred to him first of all was the thought that poor Mihail Averyanitch must be feeling fearfully ashamed and depressed

now, and that it was all dreadful. Nothing like this had ever happened to him before. Where was his intelligence and his tact? Where was his comprehension of things and his philosophical indifference?

The doctor could not sleep all night for shame and vexation with himself, and at ten o'clock next morning he went to the post office and apologized to the postmaster.

"We won't think again of what has happened," Mihail Averyanitch, greatly touched, said with a sigh, warmly pressing his hand. "Let bygones be bygones. Lyubavkin," he suddenly shouted so loud that all the postmen and other persons present started, "hand a chair; and you wait," he shouted to a peasant woman who was stretching out a registered letter to him through the grating. "Don't you see that I am busy? We will not remember the past," he went on, affectionately addressing Andrey Yefmitch; "sit down, I beg you, my dear fellow."

For a minute he stroked his knees in silence, and then said:

"I have never had a thought of taking offence. Illness is no joke, I understand. Your attack frightened the doctor and me yesterday, and we had a long talk about you afterwards. My dear friend, why won't you treat your illness seriously? You can't go on like this. . . . Excuse me speaking openly as a friend," whispered Mihail Averyanitch. "You live in the most unfavourable surroundings, in a crowd, in uncleanness, no one to look after you, no money for proper treatment. . . . My dear



friend, the doctor and I implore you with all our hearts, listen to our advice: go into the hospital! There you will have wholesome food and attendance and treatment. Though, between ourselves, Yevgeny Fyodoritch is *mauvais ton*, yet he does understand his work, you can fully rely upon him. He has promised me he will look after you."

Andrey Yefimitch was touched by the postmaster's genuine sympathy and the tears which suddenly glittered on his cheeks.

"My honoured friend, don't believe it!" he whispered, laying his hand on his heart; "don't believe them. It's all a sham. My illness is only that in twenty years I have only found one intelligent man in the whole town, and he is mad. I am not ill at all, it's simply that I have got into an enchanted circle which there is no getting out of. I don't care; I am ready for anything."

"Go into the hospital, my dear fellow."

"I don't care if it were into the pit."

"Give me your word, my dear man, that you will obey Yevgeny Fyodoritch in everything."

"Certainly I will give you my word. But I repeat, my honoured friend, I have got into an enchanted circle. Now everything, even the genuine sympathy of my friends, leads to the same thing—to my ruin. I am going to my ruin, and I have the manliness to recognize it."

"My dear fellow, you will recover."

"What's the use of saying that?" said Andrey Yefimitch, with irritation. "There are few men who at the end of their lives do not experience what I am experiencing now. When you are told that you

have something such as diseased kidneys or enlarged heart, and you begin being treated for it, or are told you are mad or a criminal—that is, in fact, when people suddenly turn their attention to you—you may be sure you have got into an enchanted circle from which you will not escape. You will try to escape and make things worse. You had better give in, for no human efforts can save you. So it seems to me.”

Meanwhile the public was crowding at the grating. That he might not be in their way, Andrey Yefimitch got up and began to take leave. Mihail Averyanitch made him promise on his honour once more, and escorted him to the outer door.

Towards evening on the same day Hobotov, in his sheepskin and his high top-boots, suddenly made his appearance, and said to Andrey Yefimitch in a tone as though nothing had happened the day before:

“I have come on business, colleague. I have come to ask you whether you would not join me in a consultation. Eh?”

Thinking that Hobotov wanted to distract his mind with an outing, or perhaps really to enable him to earn something, Andrey Yefimitch put on his coat and hat, and went out with him into the street. He was glad of the opportunity to smooth over his fault of the previous day and to be reconciled, and in his heart thanked Hobotov, who did not even allude to yesterday's scene and was evidently sparing him. One would never have expected such delicacy from this uncultured man.

"Where is your invalid?" asked Andrey Yefimitch.

"In the hospital. . . . I have long wanted to show him to you. A very interesting case."

They went into the hospital yard, and going round the main building, turned towards the lodge where the mental cases were kept, and all this, for some reason, in silence. When they went into the lodge Nikita as usual jumped up and stood at attention.

"One of the patients here has a lung complication," Hobotov said in an undertone, going into the ward with Andrey Yefimitch. "You wait here, I'll be back directly. I am going for a stethoscope."

And he went away.

## XVII

It was getting dusk. Ivan Dmitritch was lying on his bed with his face thrust into his pillow; the paralytic was sitting motionless, crying quietly and moving his lips. The fat peasant and the former sorter were asleep. It was quiet.

Andrey Yefimitch sat down on Ivan Dmitritch's bed and waited. But half an hour passed, and instead of Hobotov, Nikita came into the ward with a dressing-gown, some underlinen, and a pair of slippers in a heap on his arm.

"Please change your things, your honour," he said softly. "Here is your bed; come this way," he added, pointing to an empty bedstead which had obviously been recently brought into the ward. "It's all right; please God, you will recover."

Andrey Yefimitch understood it all. Without

saying a word he crossed to the bed to which Nikita pointed and sat down; seeing that Nikita was standing waiting, he undressed entirely and he felt ashamed. Then he put on the hospital clothes; the drawers were very short, the shirt was long, and the dressing-gown smelt of smoked fish.

"Please God, you will recover," repeated Nikita, and he gathered up Andrey Yefimitch's clothes into his arms, went out, and shut the door after him.

"No matter . . ." thought Andrey Yefimitch, wrapping himself in his dressing-gown in a shame-faced way and feeling that he looked like a convict in his new costume. "It's no matter. . . . It does not matter whether it's a dress-coat or a uniform or this dressing-gown. . . ."

But how about his watch? And the notebook that was in the side-pocket? And his cigarettes? Where had Nikita taken his clothes? Now perhaps to the day of his death he would not put on trousers, a waistcoat, and high boots. It was all somehow strange and even incomprehensible at first. Andrey Yefimitch was even now convinced that there was no difference between his landlady's house and Ward No. 6, that everything in this world was nonsense and vanity of vanities. And yet his hands were trembling, his feet were cold, and he was filled with dread at the thought that soon Ivan Dmitritch would get up and see that he was in a dressing-gown. He got up and walked across the room and sat down again.

Here he had been sitting already half an hour, an hour, and he was miserably sick of it: was it really possible to live here a day, a week, and even years

like these people? Why, he had been sitting here, had walked about and sat down again; he could get up and look out of window and walk from corner to corner again, and then what? Sit so all the time, like a post, and think? No, that was scarcely possible.

Andrey Yefimitch lay down, but at once got up, wiped the cold sweat from his brow with his sleeve, and felt that his whole face smelt of smoked fish. He walked about again.

"It's some misunderstanding . . ." he said, turning out the palms of his hands in perplexity. "It must be cleared up. There is a misunderstanding. . . ."

Meanwhile Ivan Dmitritch woke up; he sat up and propped his cheeks on his fists. He spat. Then he glanced lazily at the doctor, and apparently for the first minute did not understand; but soon his sleepy face grew malicious and mocking.

"Aha! so they have put you in here, too, old fellow?" he said in a voice husky from sleepiness, screwing up one eye. "Very glad to see you. You sucked the blood of others, and now they will suck yours. Excellent!"

"It's a misunderstanding . . ." Andrey Yefimitch brought out, frightened by Ivan Dmitritch's words; he shrugged his shoulders and repeated: "It's some misunderstanding. . . ."

Ivan Dmitritch spat again and lay down.

"Cursed life," he grumbled, "and what's bitter and insulting, this life will not end in compensation for our sufferings, it will not end with apotheosis as it would in an opera, but with death; peasants

will come and drag one's dead body by the arms and the legs to the cellar. Ugh! Well, it does not matter. . . . We shall have our good time in the other world. . . . I shall come here as a ghost from the other world and frighten these reptiles. I'll turn their hair grey."

Moiseika returned, and, seeing the doctor, held out his hand.

"Give me one little kopeck," he said.

## XVIII

Andrey Yefimitch walked away to the window and looked out into the open country. It was getting dark, and on the horizon to the right a cold crimson moon was mounting upwards. Not far from the hospital fence, not much more than two hundred yards away, stood a tall white house shut in by a stone wall. This was the prison.

"So this is real life," thought Andrey Yefimitch, and he felt frightened.

The moon and the prison, and the nails on the fence, and the far-away flames at the bone-charring factory were all terrible. Behind him there was the sound of a sigh. Andrey Yefimitch looked round and saw a man with glittering stars and orders on his breast, who was smiling and slyly winking. And this, too, seemed terrible.

Andrey Yefimitch assured himself that there was nothing special about the moon or the prison, that even sane persons wear orders, and that everything in time will decay and turn to earth, but he was suddenly overcome with despair; he clutched at the

grating with both hands and shook it with all his might. The strong grating did not yield.

Then that it might not be so dreadful he went to Ivan Dmitritch's bed and sat down.

"I have lost heart, my dear fellow," he muttered, trembling and wiping away the cold sweat, "I have lost heart."

"You should be philosophical," said Ivan Dmitritch ironically.

"My God, my God. . . . Yes, yes. . . . You were pleased to say once that there was no philosophy in Russia, but that all people, even the paltriest, talk philosophy. But you know the philosophizing of the paltriest does not harm anyone," said Andrey Yefimitch in a tone as if he wanted to cry and complain. "Why, then, that malignant laugh, my friend, and how can these paltry creatures help philosophizing if they are not satisfied? For an intelligent, educated man, made in God's image, proud and loving freedom, to have no alternative but to be a doctor in a filthy, stupid, wretched little town, and to spend his whole life among bottles, leeches, mustard plasters! Quackery, narrowness, vulgarity! Oh, my God!"

"You are talking nonsense. If you don't like being a doctor you should have gone in for being a statesman."

"I could not, I could not do anything. We are weak, my dear friend. . . . I used to be indifferent. I reasoned boldly and soundly, but at the first coarse touch of life upon me I have lost heart. . . . Prostration. . . . We are weak, we are poor creatures . . . and you, too, my dear friend, you are intelli-



gent, generous, you drew in good impulses with your mother's milk, but you had hardly entered upon life when you were exhausted and fell ill. . . . Weak, weak!"

Andrey Yefimitch was all the while at the approach of evening tormented by another persistent sensation besides terror and the feeling of resentment. At last he realized that he was longing for a smoke and for beer.

"I am going out, my friend," he said. "I will tell them to bring a light; I can't put up with this. . . . I am not equal to it. . . ."

Andrey Yefimitch went to the door and opened it, but at once Nikita jumped up and barred his way.

"Where are you going? You can't, you can't!" he said. "It's bedtime."

"But I'm only going out for a minute to walk about the yard," said Andrey Yefimitch.

"You can't, you can't; it's forbidden. You know that yourself."

"But what difference will it make to anyone if I do go out?" asked Andrey Yefimitch, shrugging his shoulders. "I don't understand. Nikita, I must go out!" he said in a trembling voice. "I must."

"Don't be disorderly, it's not right," Nikita said peremptorily.

"This is beyond everything," Ivan Dmitritch cried suddenly, and he jumped up. "What right has he not to let you out? How dare they keep us here? I believe it is clearly laid down in the law that no one can be deprived of freedom without trial! It's an outrage! It's tyranny!"

"Of course it's tyranny," said Andrey Yefimitch,

encouraged by Ivan Dmitritch's outburst. "I must go out, I want to. He has no right! Open, I tell you."

"Do you hear, you dull-witted brute?" cried Ivan Dmitritch, and he banged on the door with his fist. "Open the door, or I will break it open! Torturer!"

"Open the door," cried Andrey Yefimitch, trembling all over; "I insist!"

"Talk away!" Nikita answered through the door, "talk away. . . ."

"Anyhow, go and call Yevgeny Fyodoritch! Say that I beg him to come for a minute!"

"His honour will come of himself to-morrow."

"They will never let us out," Ivan Dmitritch was going on meanwhile. "They will leave us to rot here! Oh, Lord, can there really be no hell in the next world, and will these wretches be forgiven? Where is justice? Open the door, you wretch! I am choking!" he cried in a hoarse voice, and flung himself upon the door. "I'll dash out my brains, murderers!"

Nikita opened the door quickly, and roughly with both his hands and his knee shoved Andrey Yefimitch back, then swung his arm and punched him in the face with his fist. It seemed to Andrey Yefimitch as though a huge salt wave enveloped him from his head downwards and dragged him to the bed; there really was a salt taste in his mouth: most likely the blood was running from his teeth. He waved his arms as though he were trying to swim out and clutched at a bedstead, and at the same moment felt Nikita hit him twice on the back.

Ivan Dmitritch gave a loud scream. He must have been beaten too.

Then all was still, the faint moonlight came through the grating, and a shadow like a net lay on the floor. It was terrible. Andrey Yefimitch lay and held his breath: he was expecting with horror to be struck again. He felt as though someone had taken a sickle, thrust it into him, and turned it round several times in his breast and bowels. He bit the pillow from pain and clenched his teeth, and all at once through the chaos in his brain there flashed the terrible unbearable thought that these people, who seemed now like black shadows in the moonlight, had to endure such pain day by day for years. How could it have happened that for more than twenty years he had not known it and had refused to know it? He knew nothing of pain, had no conception of it, so he was not to blame, but his conscience, as inexorable and as rough as Nikita, made him turn cold from the crown of his head to his heels. He leaped up, tried to cry out with all his might, and to run in haste to kill Nikita, and then Hobotov, the superintendent and the assistant, and then himself; but no sound came from his chest, and his legs would not obey him. Gasping for breath, he tore at the dressing-gown and the shirt on his breast, rent them, and fell senseless on the bed.

## XIX

Next morning his head ached, there was a droning in his ears and a feeling of utter weakness all over.

He was not ashamed at recalling his weakness the day before. He had been cowardly, had even been afraid of the moon, had openly expressed thoughts and feelings such as he had not expected in himself before; for instance, the thought that the paltry people who philosophized were really dissatisfied. But now nothing mattered to him.

He ate nothing, he drank nothing. He lay motionless and silent.

"It is all the same to me," he thought when they asked him questions. "I am not going to answer. . . . It's all the same to me."

After dinner Mihail Averyanitch brought him a quarter of a pound of tea and a pound of fruit pastilles. Daryushka came too and stood for a whole hour by the bed with an expression of dull grief on her face. Dr. Hobotov visited him. He brought a bottle of bromide and told Nikita to fumigate the ward with something.

Towards evening Andrey Yefimitch died of an apoplectic stroke. At first he had a violent shivering fit and a feeling of sickness; something revolting as it seemed, penetrating through his whole body, even to his finger-tips, strained from his stomach to his head and flooded his eyes and ears. There was a greenness before his eyes. Andrey Yefimitch understood that his end had come, and remembered that Ivan Dmitritch, Mihail Averyanitch, and millions of people believed in immortality. And what if it really existed? But he did not want immortality, and he thought of it only for one instant. A herd of deer, extraordinarily beautiful and graceful, of which he had been reading the day before, ran by

him; then a peasant woman stretched out her hand to him with a registered letter. . . . Mihail Averyanitch said something, then it all vanished, and Andrey Yefimitch sank into oblivion for ever.

The hospital porters came, took him by his arms and his legs, and carried him away to the chapel.

There he lay on the table, with open eyes, and the moon shed its light upon him at night. In the morning Sergey Sergeych came, prayed piously before the crucifix, and closed his former chief's eyes.

Next day Andrey Yefimitch was buried. Mihail Averyanitch and Daryushka were the only people at the funeral.



THE PETCHENYEG





## THE PETCHENYEG

IVAN ABRAMITCH ZHMUHIN, a retired Cossack officer, who had once served in the Caucasus, but now lived on his own farm, and who had once been young, strong, and vigorous, but now was old, dried up, and bent, with shaggy eyebrows and a greenish-grey moustache, was returning from the town to his farm one hot summer's day. In the town he had confessed and received absolution, and had made his will at the notary's (a fortnight before he had had a slight stroke), and now all the while he was in the railway carriage he was haunted by melancholy, serious thoughts of approaching death, of the vanity of vanities, of the transitoriness of all things earthly. At the station of Provalye—there is such a one on the Donetz line—a fair-haired, plump, middle-aged gentleman with a shabby portfolio stepped into the carriage and sat down opposite. They got into conversation.

“Yes,” said Ivan Abramitch, looking pensively out of window, “it is never too late to marry. I myself married when I was forty-eight; I was told it was late, but it has turned out that it was not late or early, but simply that it would have been better not to marry at all. Everyone is soon tired of his wife, but not everyone tells the truth, because, you know, people are ashamed of an unhappy home life and conceal it. It's ‘Manya this’ and ‘Manya that’

with many a man by his wife's side, but if he had his way he'd put that Manya in a sack and drop her in the water. It's dull with one's wife, it's mere foolishness. And it's no better with one's children, I make bold to assure you. I have two of them, the rascals. There's nowhere for them to be taught out here in the steppe; I haven't the money to send them to school in Novo Tcherkask, and they live here like young wolves. Next thing they will be murdering someone on the highroad."

The fair-haired gentleman listened attentively, answered questions briefly in a low voice, and was apparently a gentleman of gentle and modest disposition. He mentioned that he was a lawyer, and that he was going to the village Dyuevka on business.

"Why, merciful heavens, that is six miles from me!" said Zhmuhin in a tone of voice as though someone were disputing with him. "But excuse me, you won't find horses at the station now. To my mind, the very best thing you can do, you know, is to come straight to me, stay the night, you know, and in the morning drive over with my horses."

The lawyer thought a moment and accepted the invitation.

When they reached the station the sun was already low over the steppe. They said nothing all the way from the station to the farm: the jolting prevented conversation. The trap bounded up and down, squeaked, and seemed to be sobbing, and the lawyer, who was sitting very uncomfortably, stared before him, miserably hoping to see the farm. After they had driven five or six miles there came into view in the distance a low-pitched house and a yard en-

closed by a fence made of dark, flat stones standing on end; the roof was green, the stucco was peeling off, and the windows were little narrow slits like screwed-up eyes. The farm stood in the full sunshine, and there was no sign either of water or trees anywhere round. Among the neighbouring landowners and the peasants it was known as the Petchenyegs' farm. Many years before, a land surveyor, who was passing through the neighbourhood and put up at the farm, spent the whole night talking to Ivan Abramitch, was not favourably impressed, and as he was driving away in the morning said to him grimly:

"You are a Petchenyeg,\* my good sir!"

From this came the nickname, the Petchenyegs' farm, which stuck to the place even more when Zhmuhin's boys grew up and began to make raids on the orchards and kitchen-gardens. Ivan Abramitch was called "You Know," as he usually talked a very great deal and frequently made use of that expression.

In the yard near a barn Zhmuhin's sons were standing, one a young man of nineteen, the other a younger lad, both barefoot and bareheaded. Just at the moment when the trap drove into the yard the younger one flung high up a hen which, cackling, described an arc in the air; the elder shot at it with a gun and the hen fell dead on the earth.

"Those are my boys learning to shoot birds flying," said Zhmuhin.

\* The Petchenyegs were a tribe of wild Mongolian nomads who made frequent inroads upon the Russians in the tenth and eleventh centuries.—*Translator's Note.*

In the entry the travellers were met by a little thin woman with a pale face, still young and beautiful; from her dress she might have been taken for a servant.

"And this, allow me to introduce her," said Zhmuhin, "is the mother of my young cubs. Come, Lyubov Osipovna," he said, addressing her, "you must be spry, mother, and get something for our guest. Let us have supper. Look sharp!"

The house consisted of two parts: in one was the parlour and beside it old Zhmuhin's bedroom, both stuffy rooms with low ceilings and multitudes of flies and wasps, and in the other was the kitchen in which the cooking and washing was done and the labourers had their meals; here geese and turkey-hens were sitting on their eggs under the benches, and here were the beds of Lyubov Osipovna and her two sons. The furniture in the parlour was unpainted and evidently roughly made by a carpenter; guns, game-bags, and whips were hanging on the walls, and all this old rubbish was covered with the rust of years and looked grey with dust. There was not one picture; in the corner was a dingy board which had at one time been an ikon.

A young Little Russian woman laid the table and handed ham, then beetroot soup. The visitor refused vodka and ate only bread and cucumbers.

"How about ham?" asked Zhmuhin.

"Thank you, I don't eat it," answered the visitor, "I don't eat meat at all."

"Why is that?"

"I am a vegetarian. Killing animals is against my principles."

Zhmuhin thought a minute and then said slowly with a sigh:

"Yes . . . to be sure. . . . I saw a man who did not eat meat in town, too. It's a new religion they've got now. Well, it's good. We can't go on always shooting and slaughtering, you know; we must give it up some day and leave even the beasts in peace. It's a sin to kill, it's a sin, there is no denying it. Sometimes one kills a hare and wounds him in the leg, and he cries like a child. . . . So it must hurt him!"

"Of course it hurts him; animals suffer just like human beings."

"That's true," Zhmuhin assented. "I understand that very well," he went on, musing, "only there is this one thing I don't understand: suppose, you know, everyone gave up eating meat, what would become of the domestic animals—fowls and geese, for instance?"

"Fowls and geese would live in freedom like wild birds."

"Now I understand. To be sure, crows and jackdaws get on all right without us. Yes. . . . Fowls and geese and hares and sheep, all will live in freedom, rejoicing, you know, and praising God; and they will not fear us, peace and concord will come. Only there is one thing, you know, I can't understand," Zhmuhin went on, glancing at the ham. "How will it be with the pigs? What is to be done with them?"

"They will be like all the rest—that is, they will live in freedom."

"Ah! Yes. But allow me to say, if they were

not slaughtered they would multiply, you know, and then good-bye to the kitchen-gardens and the meadows. Why, a pig, if you let it free and don't look after it, will ruin everything in a day. A pig is a pig, and it is not for nothing it is called a pig. . . ."

They finished supper. Zhmuhin got up from the table and for a long while walked up and down the room, talking and talking. . . . He was fond of talking of something important or serious and was fond of meditating, and in his old age he had a longing to reach some haven, to be reassured, that he might not be so frightened of dying. He had a longing for meekness, spiritual calm, and confidence in himself, such as this guest of theirs had, who had satisfied his hunger on cucumbers and bread, and believed that doing so made him more perfect; he was sitting on a chest, plump and healthy, keeping silent and patiently enduring his boredom, and in the dusk when one glanced at him from the entry he looked like a big round stone which one could not move from its place. If a man has something to lay hold of in life he is all right.

Zhmuhin went through the entry to the porch, and then he could be heard sighing and saying reflectively to himself: "Yes. . . . To be sure. . . ." By now it was dark, and here and there stars could be seen in the sky. They had not yet lighted up indoors. Someone came into the parlour as noiselessly as a shadow and stood still near the door. It was Lyubov Osipovna, Zhmuhin's wife.

"Are you from the town?" she asked timidly, not looking at her visitor.



"Yes, I live in the town."

"Perhaps you are something in the learned way, sir; be so kind as to advise us. We ought to send in a petition."

"To whom?" asked the visitor.

"We have two sons, kind gentleman, and they ought to have been sent to school long ago, but we never see anyone and have no one to advise us. And I know nothing. For if they are not taught they will have to serve in the army as common Cossacks. It's not right, sir! They can't read and write, they are worse than peasants, and Ivan Abramitch himself can't stand them and won't let them indoors. But they are not to blame. The younger one, at any rate, ought to be sent to school, it is such a pity!" she said slowly, and there was a quiver in her voice; and it seemed incredible that a woman so small and so youthful could have grown-up children. "Oh, it's such a pity!"

"You don't know anything about it, mother, and it is not your affair," said Zhmuhin, appearing in the doorway. "Don't pester our guest with your wild talk. Go away, mother!"

Lyubov Osipovna went out, and in the entry repeated once more in a thin little voice: "Oh, it's such a pity!"

A bed was made up for the visitor on the sofa in the parlour, and that it might not be dark for him they lighted the lamp before the ikon. Zhmuhin went to bed in his own room. And as he lay there he thought of his soul, of his age, of his recent stroke which had so frightened him and made him think of death. He was fond of philosophizing

when he was in quietness by himself, and then he fancied that he was a very earnest, deep thinker, and that nothing in this world interested him but serious questions. And now he kept thinking and he longed to pitch upon some one significant thought unlike others, which would be a guide to him in life, and he wanted to think out principles of some sort for himself so as to make his life as deep and earnest as he imagined that he felt himself to be. It would be a good thing for an old man like him to abstain altogether from meat, from superfluities of all sorts. The time when men give up killing each other and animals would come sooner or later, it could not but be so, and he imagined that time to himself and clearly pictured himself living in peace with all the animals, and suddenly he thought again of the pigs, and everything was in a tangle in his brain.

“It’s a queer business, Lord have mercy upon us,” he muttered, sighing heavily. “Are you asleep?” he asked.

“No.”

Zhmuhin got out of bed and stopped in the doorway with nothing but his shirt on, displaying to his guest his sinewy legs, that looked as dry as sticks.

“Nowadays, you know,” he began, “all sorts of telegraphs, telephones, and marvels of all kinds, in fact, have come in, but people are no better than they were. They say that in our day, thirty or forty years ago, men were coarse and cruel; but isn’t it just the same now? We certainly did not stand on ceremony in our day. I remember in the

Caucasus when we were stationed by a little river with nothing to do for four whole months—I was an under-officer at that time—something queer happened, quite in the style of a novel. Just on the banks of that river, you know, where our division was encamped, a wretched prince whom we had killed not long before was buried. And at night, you know, the princess used to come to his grave and weep. She would wail and wail, and moan and moan, and make us so depressed we couldn't sleep, and that's the fact. We couldn't sleep one night, we couldn't sleep a second; well, we got sick of it. And from a common-sense point of view you really can't go without your sleep for the devil knows what (excuse the expression). We took that princess and gave her a good thrashing, and she gave up coming. There's an instance for you. Nowadays, of course, there is not the same class of people, and they are not given to thrashing and they live in cleaner style, and there is more learning, but, you know, the soul is just the same: there is no change. Now, look here, there's a landowner living here among us; he has mines, you know; all sorts of tramps without passports who don't know where to go work for him. On Saturdays he has to settle up with the workmen, but he doesn't care to pay them, you know, he grudges the money. So he's got hold of a foreman who is a tramp too, though he does wear a hat. 'Don't you pay them anything,' he says, 'not a kopeck; they'll beat you, and let them beat you,' says he, 'but you put up with it, and I'll pay you ten roubles every Saturday for it.' So on the Saturday evening the workmen come to settle up in the

usual way; the foreman says to them: 'Nothing!' Well, word for word, as the master said, they begin swearing and using their fists. . . . They beat him and they kick him . . . you know, they are a set of men brutalized by hunger—they beat him till he is senseless, and then they go each on his way. The master gives orders for cold water to be poured on the foreman, then flings ten roubles in his face. And he takes it and is pleased too, for indeed he'd be ready to be hanged for three roubles, let alone ten. Yes . . . and on Monday a new gang of workmen arrive; they work, for they have nowhere to go. . . . On Saturday it is the same story over again."

The visitor turned over on the other side with his face to the back of the sofa and muttered something.

"And here's another instance," Zhmuhin went on. "We had the Siberian plague here, you know—the cattle die off like flies, I can tell you—and the veterinary surgeons came here, and strict orders were given that the dead cattle were to be buried at a distance deep in the earth, that lime was to be thrown over them, and so on, you know, on scientific principles. My horse died too. I buried it with every precaution, and threw over three hundred-weight of lime over it. And what do you think? My fine fellows—my precious sons, I mean—dug it up, skinned it, and sold the hide for three roubles; there's an instance for you. So people have grown no better, and however you feed a wolf he will always look towards the forest; there it is. It gives one something to think about, eh? How do you look at it?"

On one side a flash of lightning gleamed through

a chink in the window-blinds. There was the stifling feeling of a storm coming, the gnats were biting, and Zhmuhin, as he lay in his bedroom meditating, sighed and groaned and said to himself: "Yes, to be sure——" and there was no possibility of getting to sleep. Somewhere far, far away there was a growl of thunder.

"Are you asleep?"

"No," answered the visitor.

Zhmuhin got up, and thudding with his heels walked through the parlour and the entry to the kitchen to get a drink of water.

"The worst thing in the world, you know, is stupidity," he said a little later, coming back with a dipper. "My Lyubov Osipovna is on her knees saying her prayers. She prays every night, you know, and bows down to the ground, first that her children may be sent to school; she is afraid her boys will go into the army as simple Cossacks, and that they will be whacked across their backs with sabres. But for teaching one must have money, and where is one to get it? You may break the floor beating your head against it, but if you haven't got it you haven't. And the other reason she prays is because, you know, every woman imagines there is no one in the world as unhappy as she is. I am a plain-spoken man, and I don't want to conceal anything from you. She comes of a poor family, a village priest's daughter. I married her when she was seventeen, and they accepted my offer chiefly because they hadn't enough to eat; it was nothing but poverty and misery, while I have anyway land, you see—a farm—and after all I am an officer; it

was a step up for her to marry me, you know. On the very first day when she was married she cried, and she has been crying ever since, all these twenty years; she has got a watery eye. And she's always sitting and thinking, and what do you suppose she is thinking about? What can a woman think about? Why, nothing. I must own I don't consider a woman a human being."

The visitor got up abruptly and sat on the bed.

"Excuse me, I feel stifled," he said; "I will go outside."

Zhmuhin, still talking about women, drew the bolt in the entry and they both went out. A full moon was floating in the sky just over the yard, and in the moonlight the house and barn looked whiter than by day; and on the grass brilliant streaks of moonlight, white too, stretched between the black shadows. Far away on the right could be seen the steppe, above it the stars were softly glowing—and it was all mysterious, infinitely far away, as though one were gazing into a deep abyss; while on the left heavy storm-clouds, black as soot, were piling up one upon another above the steppe; their edges were lighted up by the moon, and it looked as though there were mountains there with white snow on their peaks, dark forests, the sea. There was a flash of lightning, a faint rumble of thunder, and it seemed as though a battle were being fought in the mountains. . . .

Quite close to the house a little night-owl screeched monotonously:

"Asleep! asleep!"



"What time is it now?" asked the visitor.

"Just after one."

"How long it is still to dawn!"

They went back to the house and lay down again. It was time to sleep, and one can usually sleep so splendidly before rain; but the old man had a hankering after serious, weighty thoughts; he wanted not simply to think but to meditate, and he meditated how good it would be, as death was near at hand, for the sake of his soul to give up the idleness which so imperceptibly swallowed up day after day, year after year, leaving no trace; to think out for himself some great exploit—for instance, to walk on foot far, far away, or to give up meat like this young man. And again he pictured to himself the time when animals would not be killed, pictured it clearly and distinctly as though he were living through that time himself; but suddenly it was all in a tangle again in his head and all was muddled.

The thunderstorm had passed over, but from the edges of the storm-clouds came rain softly pattering on the roof. Zhmuhin got up, stretching and groaning with old age, and looked into the parlour. Noticing that his visitor was not asleep, he said:

"When we were in the Caucasus, you know, there was a colonel there who was a vegetarian, too; he didn't eat meat, never went shooting, and would not let his servants catch fish. Of course, I understand that every animal ought to live in freedom and enjoy its life; only I don't understand how a pig can go about where it likes without being looked after. . . ."

The visitor got up and sat down. His pale, hag-



gard face expressed weariness and vexation; it was evident that he was exhausted, and only his gentleness and the delicacy of his soul prevented him from expressing his vexation in words.

"It's getting light," he said mildly. "Please have the horse brought round for me."

"Why so? Wait a little and the rain will be over."

"No, I entreat you," said the visitor in horror, with a supplicating voice; "it is essential for me to go at once."

And he began hurriedly dressing.

By the time the horse was harnessed the sun was rising. It had just left off raining, the clouds were racing swiftly by, and the patches of blue were growing bigger and bigger in the sky. The first rays of the sun were timidly reflected below in the big puddles. The visitor walked through the entry with his portfolio to get into the trap, and at that moment Zhmuhin's wife, pale, and it seemed paler than the day before, with tear-stained eyes, looked at him intently without blinking, with the naïve expression of a little girl, and it was evident from her dejected face that she was envying him his freedom—oh, with what joy she would have gone away from there!—and she wanted to say something to him, most likely to ask advice about her children. And what a pitiable figure she was! This was not a wife, not the head of a house, not even a servant, but more like a dependent, a poor relation not wanted by anyone, a nonentity. . . . Her husband, fussing about, talking unceasingly, was seeing his visitor off, continually running in front of him, while

she huddled up to the wall with a timid, guilty air, waiting for a convenient minute to speak.

"Please come again another time," the old man kept repeating incessantly; "what we have we are glad to offer, you know."

The visitor hurriedly got into the trap, evidently with relief, as though he were afraid every minute that they would detain him. The trap lurched about as it had the day before, squeaked, and furiously rattled the pail that was tied on at the back. He glanced round at Zhmuhin with a peculiar expression; it looked as though he wanted to call him a Petchenyeg, as the surveyor had once done, or some such name, but his gentleness got the upper hand. He controlled himself and said nothing. But in the gateway he suddenly could not restrain himself; he got up and shouted loudly and angrily: "You have bored me to death."

And he disappeared through the gate.

Near the barn Zhmuhin's sons were standing; the elder held a gun, while the younger had in his hands a grey cockerel with a bright red comb. The younger flung up the cockerel with all his might; the bird flew upwards higher than the house and turned over in the air like a pigeon. The elder boy fired and the cockerel fell like a stone.

The old man, overcome with confusion, not knowing how to explain the visitor's strange, unexpected shout, went slowly back into the house. And sitting down at the table he spent a long while meditating on the intellectual tendencies of the day, on the universal immorality, on the telegraph, on the tele-

phone, on velocipedes, on how unnecessary it all was; little by little he regained his composure, then slowly had a meal, drank five glasses of tea, and lay down for a nap.

'A DEAD BODY



## A DEAD BODY

A STILL August night. A mist is rising slowly from the fields and casting an opaque veil over everything within eyesight. Lighted up by the moon, the mist gives the impression at one moment of a calm, boundless sea, at the next of an immense white wall. The air is damp and chilly. Morning is still far off. A step from the bye-road which runs along the edge of the forest a little fire is gleaming. A dead body, covered from head to foot with new white linen, is lying under a young oak-tree. A wooden ikon is lying on its breast. Beside the corpse almost on the road sits the "watch"—two peasants performing one of the most disagreeable and uninviting of peasants' duties. One, a tall young fellow with a scarcely perceptible moustache and thick black eyebrows, in a tattered sheepskin and bark shoes, is sitting on the wet grass, his feet stuck out straight in front of him, and is trying to while away the time with work. He bends his long neck, and breathing loudly through his nose, makes a spoon out of a big crooked bit of wood; the other—a little scraggy, pock-marked peasant with an aged face, a scanty moustache, and a little goat's beard—sits with his hands dangling loose on his knees, and without moving gazes listlessly at the light. A small camp-fire is lazily burning down between them, throwing a red glow on their faces. There is perfect stillness. The only

sounds are the scrape of the knife on the wood and the crackling of damp sticks in the fire.

"Don't you go to sleep, Syoma . . ." says the young man.

"I . . . I am not asleep . . ." stammers the goat-beard.

"That's all right. . . . It would be dreadful to sit here alone, one would be frightened. You might tell me something, Syoma."

"I . . . I can't. . . ."

"You are a queer fellow, Syomushka! Other people will laugh and tell a story and sing a song, but you—there is no making you out. You sit like a scarecrow in the garden and roll your eyes at the fire. You can't say anything properly . . . when you speak you seem frightened. I dare say you are fifty, but you have less sense than a child. . . . Aren't you sorry that you are a simpleton?"

"I am sorry," the goat-beard answers gloomily.

"And we are sorry to see your foolishness, you may be sure. You are a good-natured, sober peasant, and the only trouble is that you have no sense in your head. You should have picked up some sense for yourself if the Lord has afflicted you and given you no understanding. You must make an effort, Syoma. . . . You should listen hard when anything good's being said, note it well, and keep thinking and thinking. . . . If there is any word you don't understand, you should make an effort and think over in your head in what meaning the word is used. Do you see? Make an effort! If you don't gain some sense for yourself you'll be a simpleton and of no account at all to your dying day."



All at once a long drawn-out, moaning sound is heard in the forest. Something rustles in the leaves as though torn from the very top of the tree and falls to the ground. All this is faintly repeated by the echo. The young man shudders and looks enquiringly at his companion.

"It's an owl at the little birds," says Syoma, gloomily.

"Why, Syoma, it's time for the birds to fly to the warm countries!"

"To be sure, it is time."

"It is chilly at dawn now. It is co-old. The crane is a chilly creature, it is tender. Such cold is death to it. I am not a crane, but I am frozen. . . . Put some more wood on!"

Syoma gets up and disappears in the dark undergrowth. While he is busy among the bushes, breaking dry twigs, his companion puts his hand over his eyes and starts at every sound. Syoma brings an armful of wood and lays it on the fire. The flame irresolutely licks the black twigs with its little tongues, then suddenly, as though at the word of command, catches them and throws a crimson light on the faces, the road, the white linen with its prominences where the hands and feet of the corpse raise it, the ikon. The "watch" is silent. The young man bends his neck still lower and sets to work with still more nervous haste. The goat-beard sits motionless as before and keeps his eyes fixed on the fire. . . .

"Ye that love not Zion . . . shall be put to shame by the Lord." A falsetto voice is suddenly heard singing in the stillness of the night, then slow

footsteps are audible, and the dark figure of a man in a short monkish cassock and a broad-brimmed hat, with a wallet on his shoulders, comes into sight on the road in the crimson firelight.

“Thy will be done, O Lord! Holy Mother!” the figure says in a husky falsetto. “I saw the fire in the outer darkness and my soul leapt for joy. . . . At first I thought it was men grazing a drove of horses, then I thought it can’t be that, since no horses were to be seen. ‘Aren’t they thieves,’ I wondered, ‘aren’t they robbers lying in wait for a rich Lazarus? Aren’t they the gypsy people offering sacrifices to idols? And my soul leapt for joy. ‘Go, Feodosy, servant of God,’ I said to myself, ‘and win a martyr’s crown!’ And I flew to the fire like a light-winged moth. Now I stand before you, and from your outer aspect I judge of your souls: you are not thieves and you are not heathens. Peace be to you!”

“Good-evening.”

“Good orthodox people, do you know how to reach the Makuhinsky Brickyards from here?”

“It’s close here. You go straight along the road; when you have gone a mile and a half there will be Ananova, our village. From the village, father, you turn to the right by the river-bank, and so you will get to the brickyards. It’s two miles from Ananova.”

“God give you health. And why are you sitting here?”

“We are sitting here watching. You see, there is a dead body. . . .”

“What? what body? Holy Mother!”

The pilgrim sees the white linen with the ikon on it, and starts so violently that his legs give a little skip. This unexpected sight has an overpowering effect upon him. He huddles together and stands as though rooted to the spot, with wide-open mouth and staring eyes. For three minutes he is silent as though he could not believe his eyes, then begins muttering:

“O Lord! Holy Mother! I was going along not meddling with anyone, and all at once such an affliction.”

“What may you be?” enquires the young man. “Of the clergy?”

“No . . . no . . . I go from one monastery to another. . . . Do you know Mi . . . Mihail Polikarpitch, the foreman of the brickyard? Well, I am his nephew. . . . Thy will be done, O Lord! Why are you here?”

“We are watching . . . we are told to.”

“Yes, yes . . .” mutters the man in the cassock, passing his hand over his eyes. “And where did the deceased come from?”

“He was a stranger.”

“Such is life! But I’ll . . . er . . . be getting on, brothers. . . . I feel flustered. I am more afraid of the dead than of anything, my dear souls! And only fancy! while this man was alive he wasn’t noticed, while now when he is dead and given over to corruption we tremble before him as before some famous general or a bishop. . . . Such is life; was he murdered, or what?”

“The Lord knows! Maybe he was murdered, or maybe he died of himself.”

"Yes, yes. . . . Who knows, brothers? Maybe his soul is now tasting the joys of Paradise."

"His soul is still hovering here, near his body," says the young man. "It does not depart from the body for three days."

"H'm, yes! . . . How chilly the nights are now! It sets one's teeth chattering. . . . So then I am to go straight on and on? . . ."

"Till you get to the village, and then you turn to the right by the river-bank."

"By the river-bank. . . . To be sure. . . . Why am I standing still? I must go on. Farewell, brothers."

The man in the cassock takes five steps along the road and stops.

"I've forgotten to put a kopeck for the burying," he says. "Good orthodox friends, can I give the money?"

"You ought to know best, you go the round of the monasteries. If he died a natural death it would go for the good of his soul; if it's a suicide it's a sin."

"That's true. . . . And maybe it really was a suicide! So I had better keep my money. Oh, sins, sins! Give me a thousand roubles and I would not consent to sit here. . . . Farewell, brothers."

The cassock slowly moves away and stops again.

"I can't make up my mind what I am to do," he mutters. "To stay here by the fire and wait till daybreak. . . . I am frightened; to go on is dreadful, too. The dead man will haunt me all the way in the darkness. . . . The Lord has chastised me indeed! Over three hundred miles I have come on

foot and nothing happened, and now I am near home and there's trouble. I can't go on. . . ."

"It is dreadful, that is true."

"I am not afraid of wolves, of thieves, or of darkness, but I am afraid of the dead. I am afraid of them, and that is all about it. Good orthodox brothers, I entreat you on my knees, see me to the village."

"We've been told not to go away from the body."

"No one will see, brothers. Upon my soul, no one will see! The Lord will reward you a hundred-fold! Old man, come with me, I beg! Old man! Why are you silent?"

"He is a bit simple," says the young man.

"You come with me, friend; I will give you five kopecks."

"For five kopecks I might," says the young man, scratching his head, "but I was told not to. If Syoma here, our simpleton, will stay alone, I will take you. Syoma, will you stay here alone?"

"I'll stay," the simpleton consents.

"Well, that's all right, then. Come along!"

The young man gets up, and goes with the cassock. A minute later the sound of their steps and their talk dies away. Syoma shuts his eyes and gently dozes. The fire begins to grow dim, and a big black shadow falls on the dead body.



A HAPPY ENDING





## A HAPPY ENDING

LYUBOV GRIGORYEVNA, a substantial, buxom lady of forty who undertook matchmaking and many other matters of which it is usual to speak only in whispers, had come to see Stytchkin, the head guard, on a day when he was off duty. Stytchkin, somewhat embarrassed, but, as always, grave, practical, and severe, was walking up and down the room, smoking a cigar and saying:

“Very pleased to make your acquaintance. Semyon Ivanovitch recommended you on the ground that you may be able to assist me in a delicate and very important matter affecting the happiness of my life. I have, Lyubov Grigoryevna, reached the age of fifty-two; that is a period of life at which very many have already grown-up children. My position is a secure one. Though my fortune is not large, yet I am in a position to support a beloved being and children at my side. I may tell you between ourselves that apart from my salary I have also money in the bank which my manner of living has enabled me to save. I am a practical and sober man, I lead a sensible and consistent life, so that I may hold myself up as an example to many. But one thing I lack—a domestic hearth of my own and a partner in life, and I live like a wandering Magyar, moving from place to place without any satisfaction. I have no one with whom to take counsel, and when

I am ill no one to give me water, and so on. Apart from that, Lyubov Grigoryevna, a married man has always more weight in society than a bachelor. . . . I am a man of the educated class, with money, but if you look at me from a point of view, what am I? A man with no kith and kin, no better than some Polish priest. And therefore I should be very desirous to be united in the bonds of Hymen—that is, to enter into matrimony with some worthy person.”

“An excellent thing,” said the matchmaker, with a sigh.

“I am a solitary man and in this town I know no one. Where can I go, and to whom can I apply, since all the people here are strangers to me? That is why Semyon Ivanovitch advised me to address myself to a person who is a specialist in this line, and makes the arrangement of the happiness of others her profession. And therefore I most earnestly beg you, Lyubov Grigoryevna, to assist me in ordering my future. You know all the marriageable young ladies in the town, and it is easy for you to accommodate me.”

“I can. . . .”

“A glass of wine, I beg you. . . .”

With an habitual gesture the matchmaker raised her glass to her mouth and tossed it off without winking.

“I can,” she repeated. “And what sort of bride would you like, Nikolay Nikolayitch?”

“Should I like? The bride fate sends me.”

“Well, of course it depends on your fate, but everyone has his own taste, you know. One likes dark ladies, the other prefers fair ones.”

“You see, Lyubov Grigoryevna,” said Stytkin, sighing sedately, “I am a practical man and a man of character; for me beauty and external appearance generally take a secondary place, for, as you know yourself, beauty is neither bowl nor platter, and a pretty wife involves a great deal of anxiety. The way I look at it is, what matters most in a woman is not what is external, but what lies within—that is, that she should have soul and all the qualities. A glass of wine, I beg. . . . Of course, it would be very agreeable that one’s wife should be rather plump, but for mutual happiness it is not of great consequence; what matters is the mind. Properly speaking, a woman does not need mind either, for if she has brains she will have too high an opinion of herself, and take all sorts of ideas into her head. One cannot do without education nowadays, of course, but education is of different kinds. It would be pleasing for one’s wife to know French and German, to speak various languages, very pleasing; but what’s the use of that if she can’t sew on one’s buttons, perhaps? I am a man of the educated class; I am just as much at home, I may say, with Prince Kanitelin as I am with you here now. But my habits are simple, and I want a girl who is not too much a fine lady. Above all, she must have respect for me and feel that I have made her happiness.”

“To be sure.”

“Well, now as regards the essential. . . . I do not want a wealthy bride; I would never condescend to anything so low as to marry for money. I desire not to be kept by my wife, but to keep her, and that

she may be sensible of it. But I do not want a poor girl either. Though I am a man of means, and am marrying not from mercenary motives, but from love, yet I cannot take a poor girl, for, as you know yourself, prices have gone up so, and there will be children."

"One might find one with a dowry," said the matchmaker.

"A glass of wine, I beg. . . ."

There was a pause of five minutes.

The matchmaker heaved a sigh, took a sidelong glance at the guard, and asked:

"Well, now, my good sir . . . do you want anything in the bachelor line? I have some fine bargains. One is a French girl and one is a Greek. Well worth the money."

The guard thought a moment and said:

"No, I thank you. In view of your favourable disposition, allow me to enquire now how much you ask for your exertions in regard to a bride?"

"I don't ask much. Give me twenty-five roubles and the stuff for a dress, as is usual, and I will say thank you . . . but for the dowry, that's a different account."

Stytchkin folded his arms over his chest and fell to pondering in silence. After some thought he heaved a sigh and said:

"That's dear. . . ."

"It's not at all dear, Nikolay Nikolayitch! In old days when there were lots of weddings one did do it cheaper, but nowadays what are our earnings? If you make fifty roubles in a month that is not a

fast, you may be thankful. It's not on weddings we make our money, my good sir."

Stytchkin looked at the matchmaker in amazement and shrugged his shoulders.

"H'm! . . . Do you call fifty roubles little?" he asked.

"Of course it is little! In old days we sometimes made more than a hundred."

"H'm! I should never have thought it was possible to earn such a sum by these jobs. Fifty roubles! It is not every man that earns as much! Pray drink your wine. . . ."

The matchmaker drained her glass without winking. Stytchkin looked her over from head to foot in silence, then said:

"Fifty roubles. . . . Why, that is six hundred roubles a year. . . . Please take some more. . . . With such dividends, you know, Lyubov Grigoryevna, you would have no difficulty in making a match for yourself. . . ."

"For myself," laughed the matchmaker, "I am an old woman."

"Not at all. . . . You have such a figure, and your face is plump and fair, and all the rest of it."

The matchmaker was embarrassed. Stytchkin was also embarrassed and sat down beside her.

"You are still very attractive," said he; "if you met with a practical, steady, careful husband, with his salary and your earnings you might even attract him very much, and you'd get on very well together. . . ."

"Goodness knows what you are saying, Nikolay Nikolayitch."

“Well, I meant no harm. . . .”

A silence followed. Stytkin began loudly blowing his nose, while the matchmaker turned crimson, and looking bashfully at him, asked:

“And how much do you get, Nikolay Nikolayitch?”

“I? Seventy-five roubles, besides tips. . . . Apart from that we make something out of candles and hares.”

“You go hunting, then?”

“No. Passengers who travel without tickets are called hares with us.”

Another minute passed in silence. Stytkin got up and walked about the room in excitement.

“I don’t want a young wife,” said he. “I am a middle-aged man, and I want someone who . . . as it might be like you . . . staid and settled . . . and a figure something like yours. . . .”

“Goodness knows what you are saying . . .” giggled the matchmaker, hiding her crimson face in her kerchief.

“There is no need to be long thinking about it. You are after my own heart, and you suit me in your qualities. I am a practical, sober man, and if you like me . . . what could be better? Allow me to make you a proposal!”

The matchmaker dropped a tear, laughed, and, in token of her consent, clinked glasses with Stytkin.

“Well,” said the happy railway guard, “now allow me to explain to you the behaviour and manner of life I desire from you. . . . I am a strict, respectable, practical man. I take a gentlemanly view



of everything. And I desire that my wife should be strict also, and should understand that to her I am a benefactor and the foremost person in the world."

He sat down, and, heaving a deep sigh, began expounding to his bride-elect his views on domestic life and a wife's duties.



THE LOOKING-GLASS



## THE LOOKING-GLASS

NEW YEAR'S EVE. Nellie, the daughter of a land-owner and general, a young and pretty girl, dreaming day and night of being married, was sitting in her room, gazing with exhausted, half-closed eyes into the looking-glass. She was pale, tense, and as motionless as the looking-glass.

The non-existent but apparent vista of a long, narrow corridor with endless rows of candles, the reflection of her face, her hands, of the frame—all this was already clouded in mist and merged into a boundless grey sea. The sea was undulating, gleaming and now and then flaring crimson. . . .

Looking at Nellie's motionless eyes and parted lips, one could hardly say whether she was asleep or awake, but nevertheless she was seeing. At first she saw only the smile and soft, charming expression of someone's eyes, then against the shifting grey background there gradually appeared the outlines of a head, a face, eyebrows, beard. It was he, the destined one, the object of long dreams and hopes. The destined one was for Nellie everything, the significance of life, personal happiness, career, fate. Outside him, as on the grey background of the looking-glass, all was dark, empty, meaningless. And so it was not strange that, seeing before her a handsome, gently smiling face, she was conscious of bliss, of an unutterably sweet dream that could not

be expressed in speech or on paper. Then she heard his voice, saw herself living under the same roof with him, her life merged into his. Months and years flew by against the grey background. And Nellie saw her future distinctly in all its details.

Picture followed picture against the grey background. Now Nellie saw herself one winter night knocking at the door of Stepan Lukitch, the district doctor. The old dog hoarsely and lazily barked behind the gate. The doctor's windows were in darkness. All was silence.

"For God's sake, for God's sake!" whispered Nellie.

But at last the garden gate creaked and Nellie saw the doctor's cook.

"Is the doctor at home?"

"His honour's asleep," whispered the cook into her sleeve, as though afraid of waking her master. "He's only just got home from his fever patients, and gave orders he was not to be waked."

But Nellie scarcely heard the cook. Thrusting her aside, she rushed headlong into the doctor's house. Running through some dark and stuffy rooms, upsetting two or three chairs, she at last reached the doctor's bedroom. Stepan Lukitch was lying on his bed, dressed, but without his coat, and with pouting lips was breathing into his open hand. A little night-light glimmered faintly beside him. Without uttering a word Nellie sat down and began to cry. She wept bitterly, shaking all over.

"My husband is ill!" she sobbed out. Stepan Lukitch was silent. He slowly sat up, propped his head on his hand, and looked at his visitor with fixed,

sleepy eyes. "My husband is ill!" Nellie continued, restraining her sobs. "For mercy's sake come quickly. Make haste. . . . Make haste!"

"Eh?" growled the doctor, blowing into his hand.

"Come! Come this very minute! Or . . . it's terrible to think! For mercy's sake!"

And pale, exhausted Nellie, gasping and swallowing her tears, began describing to the doctor her husband's illness, her unutterable terror. Her sufferings would have touched the heart of a stone, but the doctor looked at her, blew into his open hand, and—not a movement.

"I'll come to-morrow!" he muttered.

"That's impossible!" cried Nellie. "I know my husband has typhus! At once . . . this very minute you are needed!"

"I . . . er . . . have only just come in," muttered the doctor. "For the last three days I've been away, seeing typhus patients, and I'm exhausted and ill myself. . . . I simply can't! Absolutely! I've caught it myself! There!"

And the doctor thrust before her eyes a clinical thermometer.

"My temperature is nearly forty. . . . I absolutely can't. I can scarcely sit up. Excuse me. I'll lie down. . . ."

The doctor lay down.

"But I implore you, doctor," Nellie moaned in despair. "I beseech you! Help me, for mercy's sake! Make a great effort and come! I will repay you, doctor!"



“Oh, dear! . . . Why, I have told you already. Ah!”

Nellie leapt up and walked nervously up and down the bedroom. She longed to explain to the doctor, to bring him to reason. . . . She thought if only he knew how dear her husband was to her and how unhappy she was, he would forget his exhaustion and his illness. But how could she be eloquent enough?

“Go to the Zemstvo doctor,” she heard Stepan Lukitch’s voice.

“That’s impossible! He lives more than twenty miles from here, and time is precious. And the horses can’t stand it. It is thirty miles from us to you, and as much from here to the Zemstvo doctor. No, it’s impossible! Come along, Stepan Lukitch. I ask of you an heroic deed. Come, perform that heroic deed! Have pity on us!”

“It’s beyond everything. . . . I’m in a fever . . . my head’s in a whirl . . . and she won’t understand! Leave me alone!”

“But you are in duty bound to come! You cannot refuse to come! It’s egoism! A man is bound to sacrifice his life for his neighbour, and you . . . you refuse to come! I will summon you before the Court.”

Nellie felt that she was uttering a false and undeserved insult, but for her husband’s sake she was capable of forgetting logic, tact, sympathy for others. . . . In reply to her threats, the doctor greedily gulped a glass of cold water. Nellie fell to entreating and imploring like the very lowest beggar. . . . At last the doctor gave way. He

slowly got up, puffing and panting, looking for his coat.

"Here it is!" cried Nellie, helping him. "Let me put it on to you. Come along! I will repay you. . . . All my life I shall be grateful to you. . . ."

But what agony! After putting on his coat the doctor lay down again. Nellie got him up and dragged him to the hall. Then there was an agonizing to-do over his goloshes, his overcoat. . . . His cap was lost. . . . But at last Nellie was in the carriage with the doctor. Now they had only to drive thirty miles and her husband would have a doctor's help. The earth was wrapped in darkness. One could not see one's hand before one's face. . . . A cold winter wind was blowing. There were frozen lumps under their wheels. The coachman was continually stopping and wondering which road to take.

Nellie and the doctor sat silent all the way. It was fearfully jolting, but they felt neither the cold nor the jolts.

"Get on, get on!" Nellie implored the driver.

At five in the morning the exhausted horses drove into the yard. Nellie saw the familiar gates, the well with the crane, the long row of stables and barns. At last she was at home.

"Wait a moment, I will be back directly," she said to Stepan Lukitch, making him sit down on the sofa in the dining-room. "Sit still and wait a little, and I'll see how he is going on."

On her return from her husband, Nellie found the doctor lying down. He was lying on the sofa and muttering.

"Doctor, please! . . . doctor!"

"Eh? Ask Domna!" muttered Stepan Lukitch.

"What?"

"They said at the meeting . . . Vlassov said . . . Who? . . . what?"

And to her horror Nellie saw that the doctor was as delirious as her husband. What was to be done?

"I must go for the Zemstvo doctor," she decided.

Then again there followed darkness, a cutting cold wind, lumps of frozen earth. She was suffering in body and in soul, and delusive nature has no arts, no deceptions to compensate these sufferings. . . .

Then she saw against the grey background how her husband every spring was in straits for money to pay the interest for the mortgage to the bank. He could not sleep, she could not sleep, and both racked their brains till their heads ached, thinking how to avoid being visited by the clerk of the Court.

She saw her children: the everlasting apprehension of colds, scarlet fever, diphtheria, bad marks at school, separation. Out of a brood of five or six one was sure to die.

The grey background was not untouched by death. That might well be. A husband and wife cannot die simultaneously. Whatever happened one must bury the other. And Nellie saw her husband dying. This terrible event presented itself to her in every detail. She saw the coffin, the candles, the deacon, and even the footmarks in the hall made by the undertaker.

"Why is it, what is it for?" she asked, looking blankly at her husband's face.

And all the previous life with her husband seemed to her a stupid prelude to this.

Something fell from Nellie's hand and knocked on the floor. She started, jumped up, and opened her eyes wide. One looking-glass she saw lying at her feet. The other was standing as before on the table.

She looked into the looking-glass and saw a pale, tear-stained face. There was no grey background now.

"I must have fallen asleep," she thought with a sigh of relief.



OLD AGE





## OLD AGE

UZELKOV, an architect with the rank of civil councillor, arrived in his native town, to which he had been invited to restore the church in the cemetery. He had been born in the town, had been at school, had grown up and married in it. But when he got out of the train he scarcely recognized it. Everything was changed. . . . Eighteen years ago when he had moved to Petersburg the street-boys used to catch marmots, for instance, on the spot where now the station was standing; now when one drove into the chief street, a hotel of four storeys stood facing one; in old days there was an ugly grey fence just there; but nothing—neither fences nor houses—had changed as much as the people. From his enquiries of the hotel waiter Uzelkov learned that more than half of the people he remembered were dead, reduced to poverty, forgotten.

“And do you remember Uzelkov?” he asked the old waiter about himself. “Uzelkov the architect who divorced his wife? He used to have a house in Svirebeyevesky Street . . . you must remember.”

“I don't remember, sir.”

“How is it you don't remember? The case made a lot of noise, even the cabmen all knew about it. Think, now! Shapkin the attorney managed my divorce for me, the rascal . . . the notorious card-sharper, the fellow who got a thrashing at the club. . . .

"Ivan Nikolaitch?"

"Yes, yes. . . . Well, is he alive? Is he dead?"

"Alive, sir, thank God. He is a notary now and has an office. He is very well off. He has two houses in Kirpitchny Street. . . . His daughter was married the other day. . . ."

Uzelkov paced up and down the room, thought a bit, and in his boredom made up his mind to go and see Shapkin at his office. When he walked out of the hotel and sauntered slowly towards Kirpitchny Street it was midday. He found Shapkin at his office and scarcely recognized him. From the once well-made, adroit attorney with a mobile, insolent, and always drunken face Shapkin had changed into a modest, grey-headed, decrepit old man.

"You don't recognize me, you have forgotten me," began Uzelkov. "I am your old client, Uzelkov."

"Uzelkov, what Uzelkov? Ah!" Shapkin remembered, recognized, and was struck all of a heap. There followed a shower of exclamations, questions, recollections.

"This is a surprise! This is unexpected!" cackled Shapkin. "What can I offer you? Do you care for champagne? Perhaps you would like oysters? My dear fellow, I have had so much from you in my time that I can't offer you anything equal to the occasion. . . ."

"Please don't put yourself out. . . ." said Uzelkov. "I have no time to spare. I must go at once to the cemetery and examine the church; I have undertaken the restoration of it."

"That's capital! We'll have a snack and a drink

and drive together. I have capital horses. I'll take you there and introduce you to the church-warden; I will arrange it all. . . . But why is it, my angel, you seem to be afraid of me and hold me at arm's length? Sit a little nearer! There is no need for you to be afraid of me nowadays. He-he! . . . At one time, it is true, I was a cunning blade, a dog of a fellow . . . no one dared approach me; but now I am stiller than water and humbler than the grass. I have grown old, I am a family man, I have children. It's time I was dead."

The friends had lunch, had a drink, and with a pair of horses drove out of the town to the cemetery.

"Yes, those were times!" Shapkin recalled as he sat in the sledge. "When you remember them you simply can't believe in them. Do you remember how you divorced your wife? It's nearly twenty years ago, and I dare say you have forgotten it all; but I remember it as though I'd divorced you yesterday. Good Lord, what a lot of worry I had over it! I was a sharp fellow, tricky and cunning, a desperate character. . . . Sometimes I was burning to tackle some ticklish business, especially if the fee were a good one, as, for instance, in your case. What did you pay me then? Five or six thousand! That was worth taking trouble for, wasn't it? You went off to Petersburg and left the whole thing in my hands to do the best I could, and, though Sofya Mihailovna, your wife, came only of a merchant family, she was proud and dignified. To bribe her to take the guilt on herself was difficult, awfully difficult! I would go to negotiate with her, and as soon as she

saw me she called to her maid: 'Masha, didn't I tell you not to admit that scoundrel?' Well, I tried one thing and another. . . . I wrote her letters and contrived to meet her accidentally—it was no use! I had to act through a third person. I had a lot of trouble with her for a long time, and she only gave in when you agreed to give her ten thousand. . . . She couldn't resist ten thousand, she couldn't hold out. . . . She cried, she spat in my face, but she consented, she took the guilt on herself!"

"I thought it was fifteen thousand she had from me, not ten," said Uzelkov.

"Yes, yes . . . fifteen—I made a mistake," said Shapkin in confusion. "It's all over and done with, though, it's no use concealing it. I gave her ten and the other five I collared for myself. I deceived you both. . . . It's all over and done with, it's no use to be ashamed. And indeed, judge for yourself, Boris Petrovitch, weren't you the very person for me to get money out of? . . . You were a wealthy man and had everything you wanted. . . . Your marriage was an idle whim, and so was your divorce. You were making a lot of money. . . . I remember you made a scoop of twenty thousand over one contract. Whom should I have fleeced if not you? And I must own I envied you. If you grabbed anything they took off their caps to you, while they would thrash me for a rouble and slap me in the face at the club. . . . But there, why recall it? It is high time to forget it."

"Tell me, please, how did Sofya Mihailovna get on afterwards?"

"With her ten thousand? Very badly. God

knows what it was—she lost her head, perhaps, or maybe her pride and her conscience tormented her at having sold her honour, or perhaps she loved you; but, do you know, she took to drink. . . . As soon as she got her money she was off driving about with officers. It was drunkenness, dissipation, debauchery. . . . When she went to a restaurant with officers she was not content with port or anything light, she must have strong brandy, fiery stuff to stupefy her.”

“Yes, she was eccentric. . . . I had a lot to put up with from her . . . sometimes she would take offence at something and begin being hysterical. . . . And what happened afterwards?”

“One week passed and then another. . . . I was sitting at home, writing something. All at once the door opened and she walked in . . . drunk. ‘Take back your cursed money,’ she said, and flung a roll of notes in my face. . . . So she could not keep it up. I picked up the notes and counted them. It was five hundred short of the ten thousand, so she had only managed to get through five hundred.”

“Where did you put the money?”

“It’s all ancient history . . . there’s no reason to conceal it now. . . . In my pocket, of course. Why do you look at me like that? Wait a bit for what will come later. . . . It’s a regular novel, a pathological study. A couple of months later I was going home one night in a nasty drunken condition. . . . I lighted a candle, and lo and behold! Sofya Mihailovna was sitting on my sofa, and she was drunk, too, and in a frantic state—as wild as though she had run out of Bedlam. ‘Give

me back my money,' she said, 'I have changed my mind; if I must go to ruin I won't do it by halves, I'll have my fling! Be quick, you scoundrel, give me my money!' A disgraceful scene!"

"And you . . . gave it her?"

"I gave her, I remember, ten roubles."

"Oh! How could you?" cried Uzelkov, frowning. "If you couldn't or wouldn't have given it her, you might have written to me. . . . And I didn't know! I didn't know!"

"My dear fellow, what use would it have been for me to write, considering that she wrote to you herself when she was lying in the hospital afterwards?"

"Yes, but I was so taken up then with my second marriage. I was in such a whirl that I had no thoughts to spare for letters. . . . But you were an outsider, you had no antipathy for Sofya . . . why didn't you give her a helping hand? . . ."

"You can't judge by the standards of to-day, Boris Petrovitch; that's how we look at it now, but at the time we thought very differently. . . . Now maybe I'd give her a thousand roubles, but then even that ten-rouble note I did not give her for nothing. It was a bad business! . . . We must forget it. . . . But here we are. . . ."

The sledge stopped at the cemetery gates. Uzelkov and Shapkin got out of the sledge, went in at the gate, and walked up a long, broad avenue. The bare cherry-trees and acacias, the grey crosses and tombstones, were silvered with hoar-frost, every little grain of snow reflected the bright, sunny day. There was the smell there always is in cemeteries, the smell of incense and freshly dug earth. . . .



"Our cemetery is a pretty one," said Uzelkov, "quite a garden!"

"Yes, but it is a pity thieves steal the tombstones. . . . And over there, beyond that iron monument on the right, Sofya Mihailovna is buried. Would you like to see?"

The friends turned to the right and walked through the deep snow to the iron monument.

"Here it is," said Shapkin, pointing to a little slab of white marble. "A lieutenant put the stone on her grave."

Uzelkov slowly took off his cap and exposed his bald head to the sun. Shapkin, looking at him, took off his cap too, and another bald patch gleamed in the sunlight. There was the stillness of the tomb all around as though the air, too, were dead. The friends looked at the grave, pondered, and said nothing.

"She sleeps in peace," said Shapkin, breaking the silence. "It's nothing to her now that she took the blame on herself and drank brandy. You must own, Boris Petrovitch . . ."

"Own what?" Uzelkov asked gloomily.

"Why. . . . However hateful the past, it was better than this."

And Shapkin pointed to his grey head.

"I used not to think of the hour of death. . . . I fancied I could have given death points and won the game if we had had an encounter; but now. . . . But what's the good of talking!"

Uzelkov was overcome with melancholy. He suddenly had a passionate longing to weep, as once he had longed for love, and he felt those tears would



have tasted sweet and refreshing. A moisture came into his eyes and there was a lump in his throat, but . . . Shapkin was standing beside him and Uzelkov was ashamed to show weakness before a witness. He turned back abruptly and went into the church.

Only two hours later, after talking to the churchwarden and looking over the church, he seized a moment when Shapkin was in conversation with the priest and hastened away to weep. . . . He stole up to the grave secretly, furtively, looking round him every minute. The little white slab looked at him pensively, mournfully, and innocently as though a little girl lay under it instead of a dissolute, divorced wife.

“To weep, to weep!” thought Uzelkov.

But the moment for tears had been missed; though the old man blinked his eyes, though he worked up his feelings, the tears did not flow nor the lump come in his throat. After standing for ten minutes, with a gesture of despair, Uzelkov went to look for Shapkin.

DARKNESS



## DARKNESS

A YOUNG peasant, with white eyebrows and eyelashes and broad cheekbones, in a torn sheepskin and big black felt overboots, waited till the Zemstvo doctor had finished seeing his patients and came out to go home from the hospital; then he went up to him, diffidently.

"Please, your honour," he said.

"What do you want?"

The young man passed the palm of his hand up and over his nose, looked at the sky, and then answered:

"Please, your honour. . . . You've got my brother Vaska the blacksmith from Varvarino in the convict ward here, your honour. . . ."

"Yes, what then?"

"I am Vaska's brother, you see. . . . Father has the two of us: him, Vaska, and me, Kirila; besides us there are three sisters, and Vaska's a married man with a little one. . . . There are a lot of us and no one to work. . . . In the smithy it's nearly two years now since the forge has been heated. I am at the cotton factory, I can't do smith's work, and how can father work? Let alone work, he can't eat properly, he can't lift the spoon to his mouth."

"What do you want from me?"

"Be merciful! Let Vaska go!"

The doctor looked wonderingly at Kirila, and without saying a word walked on. The young peasant ran on in front and flung himself in a heap at his feet.

"Doctor, kind gentleman!" he besought him, blinking and again passing his open hand over his nose. "Show heavenly mercy; let Vaska go home! We shall remember you in our prayers for ever! Your honour, let him go! They are all starving! Mother's wailing day in, day out, Vaska's wife's wailing . . . it's worse than death! I don't care to look upon the light of day. Be merciful; let him go, kind gentleman!"

"Are you stupid or out of your senses?" asked the doctor angrily. "How can I let him go? Why, he is a convict."

Kirila began crying. "Let him go!"

"Tfoo, queer fellow! What right have I? Am I a gaoler or what? They brought him to the hospital for me to treat him, but I have as much right to let him out as I have to put you in prison, silly fellow!"

"But they have shut him up for nothing! He was in prison a year before the trial, and now there is no saying what he is there for. It would have been a different thing if he had murdered someone, let us say, or stolen horses; but as it is, what is it all about?"

"Very likely, but how do I come in?"

"They shut a man up and they don't know themselves what for. He was drunk, your honour, did not know what he was doing, and even hit father on the ear and scratched his own cheek on a branch,

and two of our fellows—they wanted some Turkish tobacco, you see—began telling him to go with them and break into the Armenian's shop at night for tobacco. Being drunk, he obeyed them, the fool. They broke the lock, you know, got in, and did no end of mischief; they turned everything upside down, broke the windows, and scattered the flour about. They were drunk, that is all one can say! Well, the constable turned up . . . and with one thing and another they took them off to the magistrate. They have been a whole year in prison, and a week ago, on the Wednesday, they were all three tried in the town. A soldier stood behind them with a gun . . . people were sworn in. Vaska was less to blame than any, but the gentry decided that he was the ringleader. The other two lads were sent to prison, but Vaska to a convict battalion for three years. And what for? One should judge like a Christian!"

"I have nothing to do with it, I tell you again. Go to the authorities."

"I have been already! I've been to the court; I have tried to send in a petition—they wouldn't take a petition; I have been to the police captain, and have been to the examining magistrate, and even one says, 'It is not my business!' Whose business is it, then? But there is no one above you here, the hospital; you do what you like, your honor."

"You simpleton," sighed the doctor, "the court jury have found him guilty, not the government, even the minister, could do anything, let alone the police captain. It's no good your trying anything!"

"And who judged him, then?"

"The gentlemen of the jury. . . ."

"They weren't gentlemen, they were our peasants! Andrey Guryev was one; Aloska Huk was one."

"Well, I am cold talking to you. . . ."

The doctor waved his hand and walked quickly to his own door. Kirila was on the point of following him, but, seeing the door slam, he stopped.

For ten minutes he stood motionless in the middle of the hospital yard, and without putting on his cap stared at the doctor's house, then he heaved a deep sigh, slowly scratched himself, and walked towards the gate.

"To whom am I to go?" he muttered as he came out on to the road. "One says it is not his business, another says it is not his business. Whose business is it, then? No, till you grease their hands you will get nothing out of them. The doctor says that, but he keeps looking all the while at my fist to see whether I am going to give him a blue note. Well, brother, I'll go, if it has to be to the governor."

Shifting from one foot to the other and continually looking round him in an objectless way, he edged lazily along the road and was apparently wondering where to go. . . . It was not cold and snow faintly crunched under his feet. Not more than half a mile in front of him the wretched little town in which his brother had just been tried stretched on the hill. On the right was the mansion with its red roof and sentry-boxes at the corners; on the left was the big town copse, now white with hoar-frost. It was still; only an old



man, wearing a woman's short jacket and a huge cap, was walking ahead, coughing and shouting to a cow which he was driving to the town.

"Good-day, grandfather," said Kirila, overtaking him.

"Good-day. . . ."

"Are you driving it to the market?"

"No," the old man answered lazily.

"Are you a townsman?"

They got into conversation; Kirila told him what he had come to the hospital for, and what he had been talking about to the doctor.

"The doctor does not know anything about such matters, that is a sure thing," the old man said to him as they were both entering the town; "though he is a gentleman, he is only taught to cure by every means, but to give you real advice, or, let us say, write out a petition for you—that he cannot do. There are special authorities to do that. You have been to the justice of the peace and to the police captain—they are no good for your business either."

"Where am I to go?"

"The permanent member of the rural board is the chief person for peasants' affairs. Go to him, Mr. Sineokov."

"The one who is at Zolotovo?"

"Why, yes, at Zolotovo. He is your chief man. If it is anything that has to do with you peasants even the police captain has no authority against him."

"It's a long way to go, old man. . . . I dare say it's twelve miles and may be more."

"One who needs something will go seventy."

"That is so. . . . Should I send in a petition to him, or what?"

"You will find out there. If you should have a petition the clerk will write you one quick enough. The permanent member has a clerk."

After parting from the old man Kirila stood still in the middle of the square, thought a little, and walked back out of the town. He made up his mind to go to Zolotovo.

Five days later, as the doctor was on his way home after seeing his patients, he caught sight of Kirila again in his yard. This time the young peasant was not alone, but with a gaunt, very pale old man who nodded his head without ceasing, like a pendulum, and mumbled with his lips.

"Your honour, I have come again to ask your gracious mercy," began Kirila. "Here I have come with my father. Be merciful, let Vaska go! The permanent member would not talk to me. He said: 'Go away!'"

"Your honour," the old man hissed in his throat, raising his twitching eyebrows, "be merciful! We are poor people, we cannot repay your honour, but if you graciously please, Kiryushka or Vaska can repay you in work. Let them work."

"We will pay with work," said Kirila, and he raised his hand above his head as though he would take an oath. "Let him go! They are starving, they are crying day and night, your honour!"

The young peasant bent a rapid glance on his father, pulled him by the sleeve, and both of them, as at the word of command, fell at the doctor's feet. The latter waved his hand in despair, and, without looking round, walked quickly in at his door.

THE BEGGAR



## THE BEGGAR

"KIND sir, be so good as to notice a poor, hungry man. I have not tasted food for three days. . . . I have not a five-kopeck piece for a night's lodging. . . . I swear by God! For five years I was a village schoolmaster and lost my post through the intrigues of the Zemstvo. I was the victim of false witness. I have been out of a place for a year now."

Skvortsov, a Petersburg lawyer, looked at the speaker's tattered dark blue overcoat, at his muddy, drunken eyes, at the red patches on his cheeks, and it seemed to him that he had seen the man before.

"And now I am offered a post in the Kaluga province," the beggar continued, "but I have not the means for the journey there. Graciously help me! I am ashamed to ask, but . . . I am compelled by circumstances."

Skvortsov looked at his goloshes, of which one was shallow like a shoe, while the other came high up the leg like a boot, and suddenly remembered.

"Listen, the day before yesterday I met you in Sadovoy Street," he said, "and then you told me, not that you were a village schoolmaster, but that you were a student who had been expelled. Do you remember?"

"N-o. No, that cannot be so!" the beggar muttered in confusion. "I am a village schoolmaster, and if you wish it I can show you documents to prove it."

"That's enough lies! You called yourself a student, and even told me what you were expelled for. Do you remember?"

Skvortsov flushed, and with a look of disgust on his face turned away from the ragged figure.

"It's contemptible, sir!" he cried angrily. "It's a swindle! I'll hand you over to the police, damn you! You are poor and hungry, but that does not give you the right to lie so shamelessly!"

The ragged figure took hold of the door-handle and, like a bird in a snare, looked round the hall desperately.

"I . . . I am not lying," he muttered. "I can show documents."

"Who can believe you?" Skvortsov went on, still indignant. "To exploit the sympathy of the public for village schoolmasters and students—it's so low, so mean, so dirty! It's revolting!"

Skvortsov flew into a rage and gave the beggar a merciless scolding. The ragged fellow's insolent lying aroused his disgust and aversion, was an offence against what he, Skvortsov, loved and prized in himself: kindness, a feeling heart, sympathy for the unhappy. By his lying, by his treacherous assault upon compassion, the individual had, as it were, defiled the charity which he liked to give to the poor with no misgivings in his heart. The beggar at first defended himself, protested with oaths, then he sank into silence and hung his head, overcome with shame.

"Sir!" he said, laying his hand on his heart, "I really was . . . lying! I am not a student and not

a village schoolmaster. All that's mere invention! I used to be in the Russian choir, and I was turned out of it for drunkenness. But what can I do? Believe me, in God's name, I can't get on without lying—when I tell the truth no one will give me anything. With the truth one may die of hunger and freeze without a night's lodging! What you say is true, I understand that, but . . . what am I to do?"

"What are you to do? You ask what are you to do?" cried Skvortsov, going close up to him. "Work—that's what you must do! You must work!"

"Work. . . . I know that myself, but where can I get work?"

"Nonsense. You are young, strong, and healthy, and could always find work if you wanted to. But you know you are lazy, pampered, drunken! You reek of vodka like a pothouse! You have become false and corrupt to the marrow of your bones and fit for nothing but begging and lying! If you do graciously condescend to take work, you must have a job in an office, in the Russian choir, or as a billiard-marker, where you will have a salary and have nothing to do! But how would you like to undertake manual labour? I'll be bound, you wouldn't be a house porter or a factory hand! You are too genteel for that!"

"What things you say, really . . ." said the beggar, and he gave a bitter smile. "How can I get manual work? It's rather late for me to be a shopman, for in trade one has to begin from a boy; no one would take me as a house porter, because I am



not of that class. . . . And I could not get work in a factory; one must know a trade, and I know nothing."

"Nonsense! You always find some justification! Wouldn't you like to chop wood?"

"I would not refuse to, but the regular wood-choppers are out of work now."

"Oh, all idlers argue like that! As soon as you are offered anything you refuse it. Would you care to chop wood for me?"

"Certainly I will. . . ."

"Very good, we shall see. . . . Excellent. . . . We'll see!" Skvortsov, in nervous haste, and not without malignant pleasure, rubbing his hands, summoned his cook from the kitchen.

"Here, Olga," he said to her, "take this gentleman to the shed and let him chop some wood."

The beggar shrugged his shoulders as though puzzled, and irresolutely followed the cook. It was evident from his demeanour that he had consented to go and chop wood, not because he was hungry and wanted to earn money, but simply from shame and *amour propre*, because he had been taken at his word. It was clear, too, that he was suffering from the effects of vodka, that he was unwell, and felt not the faintest inclination to work.

Skvortsov hurried into the dining-room. There from the window which looked out into the yard he could see the woodshed and everything that happened in the yard. Standing at the window, Skvortsov saw the cook and the beggar come by the back way into the yard and go through the muddy snow to the woodshed. Olga scrutinized her com-

panion angrily, and jerking her elbow unlocked the woodshed and angrily banged the door open.

“Most likely we interrupted the woman drinking her coffee,” thought Skvortsov. “What a cross creature she is!”

Then he saw the pseudo-schoolmaster and pseudo-student seat himself on a block of wood, and, leaning his red cheeks upon his fists, sink into thought. The cook flung an axe at his feet, spat angrily on the ground, and, judging by the expression of her lips, began abusing him. The beggar drew a log of wood towards him irresolutely, set it up between his feet, and diffidently drew the axe across it. The log toppled and fell over. The beggar drew it towards him, breathed on his frozen hands, and again drew the axe along it as cautiously as though he were afraid of its hitting his golosh or chopping off his fingers. The log fell over again.

Skvortsov's wrath had passed off by now, he felt sore and ashamed at the thought that he had forced a pampered, drunken, and perhaps sick man to do hard, rough work in the cold.

“Never mind, let him go on . . .” he thought, going from the dining-room into his study. “I am doing it for his good!”

An hour later Olga appeared and announced that the wood had been chopped up.

“Here, give him half a rouble,” said Skvortsov. “If he likes, let him come and chop wood on the first of every month. . . . There will always be work for him.”

On the first of the month the beggar turned up and again earned half a rouble, though he could

hardly stand. From that time forward he took to turning up frequently, and work was always found for him: sometimes he would sweep the snow into heaps, or clear up the shed, at another he used to beat the rugs and the mattresses. He always received thirty to forty kopecks for his work, and on one occasion an old pair of trousers was sent out to him.

When he moved, Skvortsov engaged him to assist in packing and moving the furniture. On this occasion the beggar was sober, gloomy, and silent; he scarcely touched the furniture, walked with hanging head behind the furniture vans, and did not even try to appear busy; he merely shivered with the cold, and was overcome with confusion when the men with the vans laughed at his idleness, feebleness, and ragged coat that had once been a gentleman's. After the removal Skvortsov sent for him.

"Well, I see my words have had an effect upon you," he said, giving him a rouble. "This is for your work. I see that you are sober and not disinclined to work. What is your name?"

"Lushkov."

"I can offer you better work, not so rough, Lushkov. Can you write?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then go with this note to-morrow to my colleague and he will give you some copying to do. Work, don't drink, and don't forget what I said to you. Good-bye."

Skvortsov, pleased that he had put a man in the path of rectitude, patted Lushkov genially on the shoulder, and even shook hands with him at parting.

Lushkov took the letter, departed, and from that time forward did not come to the back-yard for work.

Two years passed. One day as Skvortsov was standing at the ticket-office of a theatre, paying for his ticket, he saw beside him a little man with a lambskin collar and a shabby cat's-skin cap. The man timidly asked the clerk for a gallery ticket and paid for it with kopecks.

"Lushkov, is it you?" asked Skvortsov, recognizing in the little man his former woodchopper. "Well, what are you doing? Are you getting on all right?"

"Pretty well. . . . I am in a notary's office now. I earn thirty-five roubles."

"Well, thank God, that's capital. I rejoice for you. I am very, very glad, Lushkov. You know, in a way, you are my godson. It was I who shoved you into the right way. Do you remember what a scolding I gave you, eh? You almost sank through the floor that time. Well, thank you, my dear fellow, for remembering my words."

"Thank you too," said Lushkov. "If I had not come to you that day, maybe I should be calling myself a schoolmaster or a student still. Yes, in your house I was saved, and climbed out of the pit."

"I am very, very glad."

"Thank you for your kind words and deeds. What you said that day was excellent. I am grateful to you and to your cook, God bless that kind, noble-hearted woman. What you said that day was excellent; I am indebted to you as long as I live, of

course, but it was your cook, Olga, who really saved me."

"How was that?"

"Why, it was like this. I used to come to you to chop wood and she would begin: 'Ah, you drunkard! You God-forsaken man! And yet death does not take you!' and then she would sit opposite me, lamenting, looking into my face and wailing: 'You unlucky fellow! You have no gladness in this world, and in the next you will burn in hell, poor drunkard! You poor sorrowful creature!' and she always went on in that style, you know. How often she upset herself, and how many tears she shed over me I can't tell you. But what affected me most—she chopped the wood for me! Do you know, sir, I never chopped a single log for you—she did it all! How it was she saved me, how it was I changed, looking at her, and gave up drinking, I can't explain. I only know that what she said and the noble way she behaved brought about a change in my soul, and I shall never forget it. It's time to go up, though, they are just going to ring the bell."

Lushkov bowed and went off to the gallery.

A STORY WITHOUT A TITLE



## A STORY WITHOUT A TITLE

IN the fifth century, just as now, the sun rose every morning and every evening retired to rest. In the morning, when the first rays kissed the dew, the earth revived, the air was filled with the sounds of rapture and hope; while in the evening the same earth subsided into silence and plunged into gloomy darkness. One day was like another, one night like another. From time to time a storm-cloud raced up and there was the angry rumble of thunder, or a negligent star fell out of the sky, or a pale monk ran to tell the brotherhood that not far from the monastery he had seen a tiger—and that was all, and then each day was like the next.

The monks worked and prayed, and their Father Superior played on the organ, made Latin verses, and wrote music. The wonderful old man possessed an extraordinary gift. He played on the organ with such art that even the oldest monks, whose hearing had grown somewhat dull towards the end of their lives, could not restrain their tears when the sounds of the organ floated from his cell. When he spoke of anything, even of the most ordinary things—for instance of the trees, of the wild beasts, or of the sea—they could not listen to him without a smile or tears, and it seemed that the same chords vibrated in his soul as in the organ. If he were moved to anger or abandoned himself to



intense joy, or began speaking of something terrible or grand, then a passionate inspiration took possession of him, tears came into his flashing eyes, his face flushed, and his voice thundered, and as the monks listened to him they felt that their souls were spell-bound by his inspiration; at such marvellous, splendid moments his power over them was boundless, and if he had bidden his elders fling themselves into the sea, they would all, every one of them, have hastened to carry out his wishes.

His music, his voice, his poetry in which he glorified God, the heavens and the earth, were a continual source of joy to the monks. It sometimes happened that through the monotony of their lives they grew weary of the trees, the flowers, the spring, the autumn, their ears were tired of the sound of the sea, and the song of the birds seemed tedious to them, but the talents of their Father Superior were as necessary to them as their daily bread.

Dozens of years passed by, and every day was like every other day, every night was like every other night. Except the birds and the wild beasts, not one soul appeared near the monastery. The nearest human habitation was far away, and to reach it from the monastery, or to reach the monastery from it, meant a journey of over seventy miles across the desert. Only men who despised life, who had renounced it, and who came to the monastery as to the grave, ventured to cross the desert.

What was the amazement of the monks, therefore, when one night there knocked at their gate a man who turned out to be from the town, and the most ordinary sinner who loved life. Before saying

his prayers and asking for the Father Superior's blessing, this man asked for wine and food. To the question how he had come from the town into the desert, he answered by a long story of hunting; he had gone out hunting, had drunk too much, and lost his way. To the suggestion that he should enter the monastery and save his soul, he replied with a smile: "I am not a fit companion for you!"

When he had eaten and drunk he looked at the monks who were serving him, shook his head reproachfully, and said:

"You don't do anything, you monks. You are good for nothing but eating and drinking. Is that the way to save one's soul? Only think, while you sit here in peace, eat and drink and dream of beatitude, your neighbours are perishing and going to hell. You should see what is going on in the town! Some are dying of hunger, others, not knowing what to do with their gold, sink into profligacy and perish like flies stuck in honey. There is no faith, no truth in men. Whose task is it to save them? Whose work is it to preach to them? It is not for me, drunk from morning till night as I am. Can a meek spirit, a loving heart, and faith in God have been given you for you to sit here within four walls doing nothing?"

The townsman's drunken words were insolent and unseemly, but they had a strange effect upon the Father Superior. The old man exchanged glances with his monks, turned pale, and said:

"My brothers, he speaks the truth, you know. Indeed, poor people in their weakness and lack of understanding are perishing in vice and infidelity,

while we do not move, as though it did not concern us. Why should I not go and remind them of the Christ whom they have forgotten? ”

The townsman's words had carried the old man away. The next day he took his staff, said farewell to the brotherhood, and set off for the town. And the monks were left without music, and without his speeches and verses. They spent a month drearily, then a second, but the old man did not come back. At last after three months had passed the familiar tap of his staff was heard. The monks flew to meet him and showered questions upon him, but instead of being delighted to see them he wept bitterly and did not utter a word. The monks noticed that he looked greatly aged and had grown thinner; his face looked exhausted and wore an expression of profound sadness, and when he wept he had the air of a man who has been outraged.

The monks fell to weeping too, and began with sympathy asking him why he was weeping, why his face was so gloomy, but he locked himself in his cell without uttering a word. For seven days he sat in his cell, eating and drinking nothing, weeping and not playing on his organ. To knocking at his door and to the entreaties of the monks to come out and share his grief with them he replied with unbroken silence.

At last he came out. Gathering all the monks around him, with a tear-stained face and with an expression of grief and indignation, he began telling them of what had befallen him during those three months. His voice was calm and his eyes were smiling while he described his journey from the mon-

astery to the town. On the road, he told them, the birds sang to him, the brooks gurgled, and sweet youthful hopes agitated his soul; he marched on and felt like a soldier going to battle and confident of victory; he walked on dreaming, and composed poems and hymns, and reached the end of his journey without noticing it.

But his voice quivered, his eyes flashed, and he was full of wrath when he came to speak of the town and of the men in it. Never in his life had he seen or even dared to imagine what he met with when he went into the town. Only then for the first time in his life, in his old age, he saw and understood how powerful was the devil, how fair was evil and how weak and faint-hearted and worthless were men. By an unhappy chance the first dwelling he entered was the abode of vice. Some fifty men in possession of much money were eating and drinking wine beyond measure. Intoxicated by the wine, they sang songs and boldly uttered terrible, revolting words such as a God-fearing man could not bring himself to pronounce; boundlessly free, self-confident, and happy, they feared neither God nor the devil, nor death, but said and did what they liked, and went whither their lust led them. And the wine, clear as amber, flecked with sparks of gold, must have been irresistibly sweet and fragrant, for each man who drank it smiled blissfully and wanted to drink more. To the smile of man it responded with a smile and sparkled joyfully when they drank it, as though it knew the devilish charm it kept hidden in its sweetness.

The old man, growing more and more incensed

and weeping with wrath, went on to describe what he had seen. On a table in the midst of the revellers, he said, stood a sinful, half-naked woman. It was hard to imagine or to find in nature anything more lovely and fascinating. This reptile, young, long-haired, dark-skinned, with black eyes and full lips, shameless and insolent, showed her snow-white teeth and smiled as though to say: "Look how shameless, how beautiful I am." Silk and brocade fell in lovely folds from her shoulders, but her beauty would not hide itself under her clothes, but eagerly thrust itself through the folds, like the young grass through the ground in spring. The shameless woman drank wine, sang songs, and abandoned herself to anyone who wanted her.

Then the old man, wrathfully brandishing his arms, described the horse-races, the bull-fights, the theatres, the artists' studios where they painted naked women or moulded them of clay. He spoke with inspiration, with sonorous beauty, as though he were playing on unseen chords, while the monks, petrified, greedily drank in his words and gasped with rapture. . . .

After describing all the charms of the devil, the beauty of evil, and the fascinating grace of the dreadful female form, the old man cursed the devil, turned and shut himself up in his cell. . . .

When he came out of his cell in the morning there was not a monk left in the monastery; they had all fled to the town.

IN TROUBLE



## IN TROUBLE

PYOTR SEMYONITCH, the bank manager, together with the book-keeper, his assistant, and two members of the board, were taken in the night to prison. The day after the upheaval the merchant Avdeyev, who was one of the committee of auditors, was sitting with his friends in the shop saying:

“So it is God’s will, it seems. There is no escaping your fate. Here to-day we are eating caviare and to-morrow, for aught we know, it will be prison, beggary, or maybe death. Anything may happen. Take Pyotr Semyonitch, for instance. . . .”

He spoke, screwing up his drunken eyes, while his friends went on drinking, eating caviare, and listening. Having described the disgrace and helplessness of Pyotr Semyonitch, who only the day before had been powerful and respected by all, Avdeyev went on with a sigh:

“The tears of the mouse come back to the cat. Serve them right, the scoundrels! They could steal the rooks, so let them answer for it!”

“You’d better look out, Ivan Danilitch, that you don’t catch it too!” one of his friends observed.

“What has it to do with me?”

“Why, they were stealing, and what were you auditors thinking about? I’ll be bound, you signed the audit.”

“It’s all very well to talk!” laughed Avdeyev:



“Signed it, indeed! They used to bring the accounts to my shop and I signed them. As though I understood! Give me anything you like, I’ll scrawl my name to it. If you were to write that I murdered someone I’d sign my name to it. I haven’t time to go into it; besides, I can’t see without my spectacles.”

After discussing the failure of the bank and the fate of Pyotr Semyonitch, Avdeyev and his friends went to eat pie at the house of a friend whose wife was celebrating her name-day. At the name-day party everyone was discussing the bank failure. Avdeyev was more excited than anyone, and declared that he had long foreseen the crash and knew two years before that things were not quite right at the bank. While they were eating pie he described a dozen illegal operations which had come to his knowledge.

“If you knew, why did you not give information?” asked an officer who was present.

“I wasn’t the only one: the whole town knew of it,” laughed Avdeyev. “Besides, I haven’t the time to hang about the law courts, damn them!”

He had a nap after the pie and then had dinner, then had another nap, then went to the evening service at the church of which he was a warden; after the service he went back to the name-day party and played preference till midnight. Everything seemed satisfactory.

But when Avdeyev hurried home after midnight the cook, who opened the door to him, looked pale, and was trembling so violently that she could not utter a word. His wife, Elizaveta Trofimovna, a

flabby, overfed woman, with her grey hair hanging loose, was sitting on the sofa in the drawing-room quivering all over, and vacantly rolling her eyes as though she were drunk. Her elder son, Vassily, a high-school boy, pale too, and extremely agitated, was fussing round her with a glass of water.

"What's the matter?" asked Avdeyev, and looked angrily sideways at the stove (his family was constantly being upset by the fumes from it).

"The examining magistrate has just been with the police," answered Vassily; "they've made a search."

Avdeyev looked round him. The cupboards, the chests, the tables—everything bore traces of the recent search. For a minute Avdeyev stood motionless as though petrified, unable to understand; then his whole inside quivered and seemed to grow heavy, his left leg went numb, and, unable to endure his trembling, he lay down flat on the sofa. He felt his inside heaving and his rebellious left leg tapping against the back of the sofa.

In the course of two or three minutes he recalled the whole of his past, but could not remember any crime deserving of the attention of the police.

"It's all nonsense," he said, getting up. "They must have slandered me. To-morrow I must lodge a complaint of their having dared to do such a thing."

Next morning after a sleepless night Avdeyev, as usual, went to his shop. His customers brought him the news that during the night the public prosecutor had sent the deputy manager and the head-

clerk to prison as well. This news did not disturb Avdeyev. He was convinced that he had been slandered, and that if he were to lodge a complaint to-day the examining magistrate would get into trouble for the search of the night before.

Between nine and ten o'clock he hurried to the town hall to see the secretary, who was the only educated man in the town council.

"Vladimir Stepanitch, what's this new fashion?" he said, bending down to the secretary's ear. "People have been stealing, but how do I come in? What has it to do with me? My dear fellow," he whispered, "there has been a search at my house last night! Upon my word! Have they gone crazy? Why touch me?"

"Because one shouldn't be a sheep," the secretary answered calmly. "Before you sign you ought to look."

"Look at what? But if I were to look at those accounts for a thousand years I could not make head or tail of them! It's all Greek to me! I am no book-keeper. They used to bring them to me and I signed them."

"Excuse me. Apart from that you and your committee are seriously compromised. You borrowed nineteen thousand from the bank, giving no security."

"Lord have mercy upon us!" cried Avdeyev in amazement. "I am not the only one in debt to the bank! The whole town owes it money. I pay the interest and I shall repay the debt. What next! And besides, to tell the honest truth, it wasn't I myself borrowed the money. Pyotr Semyonitch

forced it upon me. 'Take it,' he said, 'take it. If you don't take it,' he said, 'it means that you don't trust us and fight shy of us. You take it,' he said, 'and build your father a mill.' So I took it."

"Well, you see, none but children or sheep can reason like that. In any case, *signor*, you need not be anxious. You can't escape trial, of course, but you are sure to be acquitted."

The secretary's indifference and calm tone restored Avdeyev's composure. Going back to his shop and finding friends there, he again began drinking, eating caviare, and airing his views. He almost forgot the police search, and he was only troubled by one circumstance which he could not help noticing: his left leg was strangely numb, and his stomach for some reason refused to do its work.

That evening destiny dealt another overwhelming blow at Avdeyev: at an extraordinary meeting of the town council all members who were on the staff of the bank, Avdeyev among them, were asked to resign, on the ground that they were charged with a criminal offence. In the morning he received a request to give up immediately his duties as churchwarden.

After that Avdeyev lost count of the blows dealt him by fate, and strange, unprecedented days flitted rapidly by, one after another, and every day brought some new, unexpected surprise. Among other things, the examining magistrate sent him a summons, and he returned home after the interview, insulted and red in the face.

"He gave me no peace, pestering me to tell him why I had signed. I signed, that's all about it. I

didn't do it on purpose. They brought the papers to the shop and I signed them. I am no great hand at reading writing."

Young men with unconcerned faces arrived, sealed up the shop, and made an inventory of all the furniture of the house. Suspecting some intrigue behind this, and, as before, unconscious of any wrongdoing, Avdeyev in his mortification ran from one Government office to another lodging complaints. He spent hours together in waiting-rooms, composed long petitions, shed tears, swore. To his complaints the public prosecutor and the examining magistrate made the indifferent and rational reply: "Come to us when you are summoned: we have not time to attend to you now." While others answered: "It is not our business."

The secretary, an educated man, who, Avdeyev thought, might have helped him, merely shrugged his shoulders and said:

"It's your own fault. You shouldn't have been a sheep."

The old man exerted himself to the utmost, but his left leg was still numb, and his digestion was getting worse and worse. When he was weary of doing nothing and was getting poorer and poorer, he made up his mind to go to his father's mill, or to his brother, and begin dealing in corn. His family went to his father's and he was left alone. The days flitted by, one after another. Without a family, without a shop, and without money, the former churchwarden, an honoured and respected man, spent whole days going the round of his friends' shops, drinking, eating, and listening to

advice. In the mornings and in the evenings, to while away the time, he went to church. Looking for hours together at the ikons, he did not pray, but pondered. His conscience was clear, and he ascribed his position to mistake and misunderstanding; to his mind, it was all due to the fact that the officials and the examining magistrates were young men and inexperienced. It seemed to him that if he were to talk it over in detail and open his heart to some elderly judge, everything would go right again. He did not understand his judges, and he fancied they did not understand him.

The days raced by, and at last, after protracted, harassing delays, the day of the trial came. Avdeyev borrowed fifty roubles, and providing himself with spirit to rub on his leg and a decoction of herbs for his digestion, set off for the town where the circuit court was being held.

The trial lasted for ten days. Throughout the trial Avdeyev sat among his companions in misfortune with the stolid composure and dignity befitting a respectable and innocent man who is suffering for no fault of his own: he listened and did not understand a word. He was in an antagonistic mood. He was angry at being detained so long in the court, at being unable to get Lenten food anywhere, at his defending counsel's not understanding him, and, as he thought, saying the wrong thing. He thought that the judges did not understand their business. They took scarcely any notice of Avdeyev, they only addressed him once in three days, and the questions they put to him were of such a character that Avdeyev raised a laugh in the audience each time he



answered them. When he tried to speak of the expenses he had incurred, of his losses, and of his meaning to claim his costs from the court, his counsel turned round and made an incomprehensible grimace, the public laughed, and the judge announced sternly that that had nothing to do with the case. The last words that he was allowed to say were not what his counsel had instructed him to say, but something quite different, which raised a laugh again.

During the terrible hour when the jury were consulting in their room he sat angrily in the refreshment bar, not thinking about the jury at all. He did not understand why they were so long deliberating when everything was so clear, and what they wanted of him.

Getting hungry, he asked the waiter to give him some cheap Lenten dish. For forty kopecks they gave him some cold fish and carrots. He ate it and felt at once as though the fish were heaving in a chilly lump in his stomach; it was followed by flatulence, heartburn, and pain.

Afterwards, as he listened to the foreman of the jury reading out the questions point by point, there was a regular revolution taking place in his inside, his whole body was bathed in a cold sweat, his left leg was numb; he did not follow, understood nothing, and suffered unbearably at not being able to sit or lie down while the foreman was reading. At last, when he and his companions were allowed to sit down, the public prosecutor got up and said something unintelligible, and all at once, as though they had sprung out of the earth, some police officers

appeared on the scene with drawn swords and surrounded all the prisoners. Avdeyev was told to get up and go.

Now he understood that he was found guilty and in charge of the police, but he was not frightened nor amazed; such a turmoil was going on in his stomach that he could not think about his guards.

“So they won’t let us go back to the hotel?” he asked one of his companions. “But I have three roubles and an untouched quarter of a pound of tea in my room there.”

He spent the night at the police station; all night he was aware of a loathing for fish, and was thinking about the three roubles and the quarter of a pound of tea. Early in the morning, when the sky was beginning to turn blue, he was told to dress and set off. Two soldiers with bayonets took him to prison. Never before had the streets of the town seemed to him so long and endless. He walked not on the pavement but in the middle of the road in the muddy, thawing snow. His inside was still at war with the fish, his left leg was numb; he had forgotten his goloshes either in the court or in the police station, and his feet felt frozen.

Five days later all the prisoners were brought before the court again to hear their sentence. Avdeyev learnt that he was sentenced to exile in the province of Tobolsk. And that did not frighten nor amaze him either. He fancied for some reason that the trial was not yet over, that there were more adjournments to come, and that the final decision had not been reached yet. . . . He went on in the prison expecting this final decision every day.



Only six months later, when his wife and his son Vassily came to say good-bye to him, and when in the wasted, wretchedly dressed old woman he scarcely recognized his once fat and dignified Elizaveta Trofimovna, and when he saw his son wearing a short, shabby reefer-jacket and cotton trousers instead of the high-school uniform, he realized that his fate was decided, and that whatever new "decision" there might be, his past would never come back to him. And for the first time since the trial and his imprisonment the angry expression left his face, and he wept bitterly.

FROST



## FROST

A "POPULAR" fête with a philanthropic object had been arranged on the Feast of Epiphany in the provincial town of N——. They had selected a broad part of the river between the market and the bishop's palace, fenced it round with a rope, with fir-trees and with flags, and provided everything necessary for skating, sledging, and tobogganing. The festivity was organized on the grandest scale possible. The notices that were distributed were of huge size and promised a number of delights: skating, a military band, a lottery with no blank tickets, an electric sun, and so on. But the whole scheme almost came to nothing owing to the hard frost. From the eve of Epiphany there were twenty-eight degrees of frost with a strong wind; it was proposed to put off the fête, and this was not done only because the public, which for a long while had been looking forward to the fête impatiently, would not consent to any postponement.

"Only think, what do you expect in winter but a frost!" said the ladies persuading the governor, who tried to insist that the fête should be postponed. "If anyone is cold he can go and warm himself."

The trees, the horses, the men's beards were white with frost; it even seemed that the air itself crackled, as though unable to endure the cold; but

in spite of that the frozen public were skating. Immediately after the blessing of the waters and precisely at one o'clock the military band began playing.

Between three and four o'clock in the afternoon, when the festivity was at its height, the select society of the place gathered together to warm themselves in the governor's pavilion, which had been put up on the river-bank. The old governor and his wife, the bishop, the president of the local court, the head master of the high school, and many others, were there. The ladies were sitting in armchairs, while the men crowded round the wide glass door, looking at the skating.

"Holy Saints!" said the bishop in surprise; "what flourishes they execute with their legs! Upon my soul, many a singer couldn't do a twirl with his voice as those cut-throats do with their legs. Aie! he'll kill himself!"

"That's Smirnov. . . . That's Gruzdev . . ." said the head master, mentioning the names of the schoolboys who flew by the pavilion.

"Bah! he's all alive-oh!" laughed the governor. "Look, gentlemen, our mayor is coming. . . . He is coming this way. . . . That's a nuisance, he will talk our heads off now."

A little thin old man, wearing a big cap and a fur-lined coat hanging open, came from the opposite bank towards the pavilion, avoiding the skaters. This was the mayor of the town, a merchant, Eremeyev by name, a millionaire and an old inhabitant of N—. Flinging wide his arms and shrugging at the cold, he skipped along, knocking one golosh against the other, evidently in haste to get out of

the wind. Half-way he suddenly bent down, stole up to some lady, and plucked at her sleeve from behind. When she looked round he skipped away, and probably delighted at having succeeded in frightening her, went off into a loud, aged laugh.

"Lively old fellow," said the governor. "It's a wonder he's not skating."

As he got near the pavilion the mayor fell into a little tripping trot, waved his hands, and, taking a run, slid along the ice in his huge golosh boots up to the very door.

"Yegor Ivanitch, you ought to get yourself some skates!" the governor greeted him.

"That's just what I am thinking," he answered in a squeaky, somewhat nasal tenor, taking off his cap. "I wish you good health, your Excellency! Your Holiness! Long life to all the other gentlemen and ladies! Here's a frost! Yes, it is a frost, bother it! It's deadly!"

Winking with his red, frozen eyes, Yegor Ivanitch stamped on the floor with his golosh boots and swung his arms together like a frozen cabman.

"Such a damnable frost, worse than any dog!" he went on talking, smiling all over his face. "It's a real affliction!"

"It's healthy," said the governor; "frost strengthens a man and makes him vigorous. . . ."

"Though it may be healthy, it would be better without it at all," said the mayor, wiping his wedge-shaped beard with a red handkerchief. "It would be a good riddance! To my thinking, your Excellency, the Lord sends it us as a punishment—

the frost, I mean. We sin in the summer and are punished in the winter. . . . Ye's!"

Yegor Ivanitch looked round him quickly and flung up his hands.

"Why, where's the needful . . . to warm us up?" he asked, looking in alarm first at the governor and then at the bishop. "Your Excellency! Your Holiness! I'll be bound, the ladies are frozen too! We must have something, this won't do!"

Everyone began gesticulating and declaring that they had not come to the skating to warm themselves, but the mayor, heeding no one, opened the door and beckoned to someone with his crooked finger. A workman and a fireman ran up to him.

"Here, run off to Savatin," he muttered, "and tell him to make haste and send here . . . what do you call it? . . . What's it to be? Tell him to send a dozen glasses . . . a dozen glasses of mulled wine, the very hottest, or punch, perhaps. . . ."

There was laughter in the pavilion.

"A nice thing to treat us to!"

"Never mind, we will drink it," muttered the mayor; "a dozen glasses, then . . . and some Benedictine, perhaps . . . and tell them to warm two bottles of red wine. . . . Oh, and what for the ladies? Well, you tell them to bring cakes, nuts . . . sweets of some sort, perhaps. . . . There, run along, look sharp!"

The mayor was silent for a minute and then began again abusing the frost, banging his arms across his chest and thumping with his golosh boots.

"No, Yegor Ivanitch," said the governor persuasively, "don't be unfair, the Russian frost has

its charms. I was reading lately that many of the good qualities of the Russian people are due to the vast expanse of their land and to the climate, the cruel struggle for existence . . . that's perfectly true!"

"It may be true, your Excellency, but it would be better without it. The frost did drive out the French, of course, and one can freeze all sorts of dishes, and the children can go skating—that's all true! For the man who is well fed and well clothed the frost is only a pleasure, but for the working man, the beggar, the pilgrim, the crazy wanderer, it's the greatest evil and misfortune. It's misery, your Holiness! In a frost like this poverty is twice as hard, and the thief is more cunning and evildoers more violent. There's no gainsaying it! I am turned seventy, I've a fur coat now, and at home I have a stove and rums and punches of all sorts. The frost means nothing to me now; I take no notice of it, I don't care to know of it, but how it used to be in old days, Holy Mother! It's dreadful to recall it! My memory is failing me with years and I have forgotten everything; my enemies, and my sins and troubles of all sorts—I forget them all, but the frost—ough! How I remember it! When my mother died I was left a little devil—this high—a homeless orphan . . . no kith nor kin, wretched, ragged, little clothes, hungry, nowhere to sleep—in fact, 'we have here no abiding city, but seek the one to come.' In those days I used to lead an old blind woman about the town for five kopecks a day . . . the frosts were cruel, wicked. One would go out with the old woman and begin suffering torments. My



Creator! First of all you would be shivering as in a fever, shrugging and dancing about. Then your ears, your fingers, your feet, would begin aching. They would ache as though someone were squeezing them with pincers. But all that would have been nothing, a trivial matter, of no great consequence. The trouble was when your whole body was chilled. One would walk for three blessed hours in the frost, your Holiness, and lose all human semblance. Your legs are drawn up, there is a weight on your chest, your stomach is pinched; above all, there is a pain in your heart that is worse than anything. Your heart aches beyond all endurance, and there is a wretchedness all over your body as though you were leading Death by the hand instead of an old woman. You are numb all over, turned to stone like a statue; you go on and feel as though it were not you walking, but someone else moving your legs instead of you. When your soul is frozen you don't know what you are doing: you are ready to leave the old woman with no one to guide her, or to pull a hot roll from off a hawker's tray, or to fight with someone. And when you come to your night's lodging into the warmth after the frost, there is not much joy in that either! You lie awake till midnight, crying, and don't know yourself what you are crying for. . . ."

"We must walk about the skating-ground before it gets dark," said the governor's wife, who was bored with listening. "Who's coming with me?"

The governor's wife went out and the whole company trooped out of the pavilion after her. Only the governor, the bishop, and the mayor remained.

"Queen of Heaven! and what I went through

when I was a shopboy in a fish-shop!" Yegor Ivanitch went on, flinging up his arms so that his fox-lined coat fell open. "One would go out to the shop almost before it was light . . . by eight o'clock I was completely frozen, my face was blue, my fingers were stiff so that I could not fasten my buttons nor count the money. One would stand in the cold, turn numb, and think, 'Lord, I shall have to stand like this right on till evening!' By dinner-time my stomach was pinched and my heart was aching. . . . Yes! And I was not much better afterwards when I had a shop of my own. The frost was intense and the shop was like a mouse-trap with draughts blowing in all directions; the coat I had on was, pardon me, mangy, as thin as paper, threadbare. . . . One would be chilled through and through, half dazed, and turn as cruel as the frost oneself: I would pull one by the ear so that I nearly pulled the ear off; I would smack another on the back of the head; I'd glare at a customer like a ruffian, a wild beast, and be ready to fleece him; and when I got home in the evening and ought to have gone to bed, I'd be ill-humoured and set upon my family, throwing it in their teeth that they were living upon me; I would make a row and carry on so that half a dozen policemen couldn't have managed me. The frost makes one spiteful and drives one to drink."

Yegor Ivanitch clasped his hands and went on:

"And when we were taking fish to Moscow in the winter, Holy Mother!" And spluttering as he talked, he began describing the horrors he endured with his shopmen when he was taking fish to Moscow. . . .

"Yes," sighed the governor, "it is wonderful what a man can endure! You used to take wagon-loads of fish to Moscow, Yegor Ivanitch, while I in my time was at the war. I remember one extraordinary instance. . . ."

And the governor described how, during the last Russo-Turkish War, one frosty night the division in which he was had stood in the snow without moving for thirteen hours in a piercing wind; from fear of being observed the division did not light a fire, nor make a sound or a movement; they were forbidden to smoke. . . .

Reminiscences followed. The governor and the mayor grew lively and good-humoured, and, interrupting each other, began recalling their experiences. And the bishop told them how, when he was serving in Siberia, he had travelled in a sledge drawn by dogs; how one day, being drowsy, in a time of sharp frost he had fallen out of the sledge and been nearly frozen; when the Tunguses turned back and found him he was barely alive. Then, as by common agreement, the old men suddenly sank into silence, sat side by side, and mused.

"Ech!" whispered the mayor; "you'd think it would be time to forget, but when you look at the water-carriers, at the schoolboys, at the convicts in their wretched gowns, it brings it all back! Why, only take those musicians who are playing now. I'll be bound, there is a pain in their hearts; a pinch at their stomachs, and their trumpets are freezing to their lips. . . . They play and think: 'Holy Mother! we have another three hours to sit here in the cold.'"

The old men sank into thought. They thought of that in man which is higher than good birth, higher than rank and wealth and learning, of that which brings the lowest beggar near to God: of the helplessness of man, of his sufferings and his patience. . . .

Meanwhile the air was turning blue . . . the door opened and two waiters from Savatin's walked in, carrying trays and a big muffled teapot. When the glasses had been filled and there was a strong smell of cinnamon and clove in the air, the door opened again, and there came into the pavilion a beardless young policeman whose nose was crimson, and who was covered all over with frost; he went up to the governor, and, saluting, said: "Her Excellency told me to inform you that she has gone home."

Looking at the way the policeman put his stiff, frozen fingers to his cap, looking at his nose, his lustreless eyes, and his hood covered with white frost near the mouth, they all for some reason felt that this policeman's heart must be aching, that his stomach must feel pinched, and his soul numb. . . .

"I say," said the governor hesitatingly, "have a drink of mulled wine!"

"It's all right . . . it's all right! Drink it up!" the mayor urged him, gesticulating; "don't be shy!"

The policeman took the glass in both hands, moved aside, and, trying to drink without making any sound, began discreetly sipping from the glass. He drank and was overwhelmed with embarrassment while the old men looked at him in silence, and

they all fancied that the pain was leaving the young policeman's heart, and that his soul was thawing. The governor heaved a sigh.

"It's time we were at home," he said, getting up. "Good-bye! I say," he added, addressing the policeman, "tell the musicians there to . . . leave off playing, and ask Pavel Semyonovitch from me to see they are given . . . beer or vodka."

The governor and the bishop said good-bye to the mayor and went out of the pavilion.

Yegor Ivanitch attacked the mulled wine, and before the policeman had finished his glass succeeded in telling him a great many interesting things. He could not be silent.

A SLANDER



## A SLANDER

SERGEY KAPITONITCH AHINEEV, the writing-master, was marrying his daughter Natalya to the teacher of history and geography. The wedding festivities were going off most successfully. In the drawing-room there was singing, playing, and dancing. Waiters hired from the club were flitting distractedly about the rooms, dressed in black swallow-tails and dirty white ties. There was a continual hubbub and din of conversation. Sitting side by side on the sofa, the teacher of mathematics, Tarantulov, the French teacher, Pasdequoi, and the junior assessor of taxes, Mzda, were talking hurriedly and interrupting one another as they described to the guests cases of persons being buried alive, and gave their opinions on spiritualism. None of them believed in spiritualism, but all admitted that there were many things in this world which would always be beyond the mind of man. In the next room the literature master, Dodonsky, was explaining to the visitors the cases in which a sentry has the right to fire on passers-by. The subjects, as you perceive, were alarming, but very agreeable. Persons whose social position precluded them from entering were looking in at the windows from the yard.

Just at midnight the master of the house went into the kitchen to see whether everything was ready for supper. The kitchen from floor to ceiling



was filled with fumes composed of goose, duck, and many other odours. On two tables the accessories, the drinks and light refreshments, were set out in artistic disorder. The cook, Marfa, a red-faced woman, whose figure was like a barrel with a belt round it, was bustling about the tables.

"Show me the sturgeon, Marfa," said Ahineev, rubbing his hands and licking his lips. "What a perfume, what a miasma! I could eat up the whole kitchen. Come, show me the sturgeon."

Marfa went up to one of the benches and cautiously lifted a piece of greasy newspaper. Under the paper on an immense dish there reposed a huge sturgeon, masked in jelly and decorated with capers, olives, and carrots. Ahineev gazed at the sturgeon and gasped. His face beamed, he turned his eyes up. He bent down and with his lips emitted the sound of an ungreased wheel. After standing a moment he snapped his fingers with delight, and once more smacked his lips.

"Ah-ah! the sound of a passionate kiss. . . . Who is it you're kissing out there, little Marfa?" came a voice from the next room, and in the doorway there appeared the cropped head of the assistant usher Vankin. "Who is it? A-a-h! . . . Delighted to meet you! Sergey Kapitonitch! You're a fine grandfather, I must say! *Tête-à-tête* with the fair sex—tette!"

"I'm not kissing," said Ahineev in confusion. "Who told you so, you fool? I was only . . . I smacked my lips . . . in reference to . . . as an indication of . . . pleasure . . . at the sight of the fish."

"Tell that to the marines!" The intrusive face vanished, wearing a broad grin.

Ahineev flushed.

"Hang it!" he thought, "the beast will go now and talk scandal. He'll disgrace me to all the town, the brute."

Ahineev went timidly into the drawing-room and looked stealthily round for Vankin. Vankin was standing by the piano, and, bending down with a jaunty air, was whispering something to the inspector's sister-in-law, who was laughing.

"Talking about me!" thought Ahineev. "About me, blast him! And she believes it . . . believes it! She laughs! Mercy on us! No, I can't let it pass . . . I can't. I must do something to prevent his being believed. . . . I'll speak to them all, and he'll be shown up for a fool and a gossip."

Ahineev scratched his head, and still overcome with embarrassment, went up to Pasdequoi.

"I've just been in the kitchen to see after the supper," he said to the Frenchman. "I know you are fond of fish, and I've a sturgeon, my dear fellow, beyond everything! A yard and a half long! Ha, ha, ha! And, by the way . . . I was just forgetting. . . . In the kitchen just now, with that sturgeon . . . quite a little story! I went into the kitchen just now and wanted to look at the supper dishes. I looked at the sturgeon and I smacked my lips with relish . . . at the piquancy of it. And at the very moment that fool Vankin came in and said: . . . 'Ha, ha, ha! . . . So you're kissing here!' Kissing Marfa, the cook! What a thing to imagine, silly fool! The woman is a perfect

fright, like all the beasts put together, and he talks about kissing! Queer fish!”

“Who’s a queer fish?” asked Tarantulov, coming up.

“Why he, over there—Vankin! I went into the kitchen . . .”

And he told the story of Vankin. “. . . He amused me, queer fish! I’d rather kiss a dog than Marfa, if you ask me,” added Ahineev. He looked round and saw behind him Mzda.

“We are talking of Vankin,” he said. “Queer fish, he is! He went into the kitchen, saw me beside Marfa, and began inventing all sorts of silly stories. ‘Why are you kissing?’ says he. He must have had a drop too much. ‘And I’d rather kiss a turkeycock than Marfa,’ I said. ‘And I’ve a wife of my own, you fool,’ said I. He did amuse me!”

“Who amused you?” asked the priest who taught Scripture in the school, going up to Ahineev.

“Vankin. I was standing in the kitchen, you know, looking at the sturgeon. . . .”

And so on. Within half an hour or so all the guests knew the incident of the sturgeon and Vankin.

“Let him tell away now!” thought Ahineev, rubbing his hands, “let him! He’ll begin telling his story and they’ll say to him at once, ‘Enough of your nonsense, you fool, we know all about it!’”

And Ahineev was so relieved that in his joy he drank four glasses too many. After escorting the young people to their room he went to bed and slept like an innocent babe, and next day he thought no more of the incident with the sturgeon. But, alas! man proposes, but God disposes. An evil

tongue did its evil work, and Ahineev's strategy was of no avail. Just a week later—to be precise, on Wednesday after the third lesson—when Ahineev was standing in the middle of the teachers' room, holding forth on the vicious propensities of a boy called Visekin, the head master went up to him and drew him aside:

“Look here, Sergey Kapitonitch,” said the head master, “you must excuse me. . . . It's not my business; but all the same I must make you realize. . . . It's my duty. You see, there are rumours that you are living with that . . . cook. . . . It's nothing to do with me, but . . . Live with her, kiss her . . . as you please, but don't let it be so public, please. I entreat you! Don't forget that you're a schoolmaster.”

Ahineev turned cold and faint. He went home like a man stung by a whole swarm of bees, like a man scalded with boiling water. As he walked home, it seemed to him that the whole town was looking at him as though he were smeared with pitch. At home fresh trouble awaited him.

“Why aren't you gobbling up your food as usual?” his wife asked him at dinner. “What are you so pensive about? Brooding over your amours? Pining for your slut of a Marfa? I know all about it, Mahommedan! Kind friends have opened my eyes! O-o-o! . . . you savage!”

And she slapped him in the face. He got up from the table, not feeling the earth under his feet, and without his hat or his coat, made his way to Vankin. He found him at home.

“You scoundrel!” was how he addressed him.

“Why have you covered me with mud before all the town? Why did you set this slander going about me?”

“What slander? What are you talking about?”

“Who was it gossiped of my kissing Marfa? Wasn't it you? Tell me that. Wasn't it you, you brigand?”

Vankin blinked and twitched in every fibre of his battered countenance, raised his eyes to the ikon and articulated, “God blast me! Strike me blind and lay me out, if I said a single word about you! May I be left without house or home, may I be stricken with worse than cholera!”

Vankin's sincerity did not admit of doubt. It was evidently not he who was the author of the slander.

“But who, then, who?” Ahineev wondered, going over all his acquaintances in his mind and beating himself on the breast. “Who, then?”

Who, then? We, too, ask the reader.

MINDS IN FERMENT



## MINDS IN FERMENT

(FROM THE ANNALS OF A TOWN)

THE earth was like an oven. The afternoon sun blazed with such energy that even the thermometer hanging in the excise officer's room lost its head: it ran up to 112.5 and stopped there, irresolute. The inhabitants streamed with perspiration like overdriven horses, and were too lazy to mop their faces.

Two of the inhabitants were walking along the market-place in front of the closely shuttered houses. One was Potcheshihin, the local treasury clerk, and the other was Optimov, the agent, for many years a correspondent of the *Son of the Fatherland* newspaper. They walked in silence, speechless from the heat. Optimov felt tempted to find fault with the local authorities for the dust and disorder of the market-place, but, aware of the peace-loving disposition and moderate views of his companion, he said nothing.

In the middle of the market-place Potcheshihin suddenly halted and began gazing into the sky.

"What are you looking at?"

"Those starlings that flew up. I wonder where they have settled. Clouds and clouds of them. . . . If one were to go and take a shot at them, and if one were to pick them up . . . and if . . .



They have settled in the Father Prebendary's garden!"

"Oh no! They are not in the Father Prebendary's, they are in the Father Deacon's. If you did have a shot at them from here you wouldn't kill anything. Fine shot won't carry so far; it loses its force. And why should you kill them, anyway? They're birds destructive of the fruit, that's true; still, they're fowls of the air, works of the Lord. The starling sings, you know. . . . And what does it sing, pray? A song of praise. . . . 'All ye fowls of the air, praise ye the Lord.' No. I do believe they have settled in the Father Prebendary's garden."

Three old pilgrim women, wearing bark shoes and carrying wallets, passed noiselessly by the speakers. Looking enquiringly at the gentlemen who were for some unknown reason staring at the Father Prebendary's house, they slackened their pace, and when they were a few yards off stopped, glanced at the friends once more, and then fell to gazing at the house themselves.

"Yes, you were right; they have settled in the Father Prebendary's," said Optimov. "His cherries are ripe now, so they have gone there to peck them."

From the garden gate emerged the Father Prebendary himself, accompanied by the sexton. Seeing the attention directed upon his abode and wondering what people were staring at, he stopped, and he, too, as well as the sexton, began looking upwards to find out.

"The father is going to a service somewhere, I suppose," said Potcheshihin. "The Lord be his succour!"

Some workmen from Purov's factory, who had been bathing in the river, passed between the friends and the priest. Seeing the latter absorbed in contemplation of the heavens and the pilgrim women, too, standing motionless with their eyes turned upwards, they stood still and stared in the same direction.

A small boy leading a blind beggar and a peasant, carrying a tub of stinking fish to throw into the market-place, did the same.

"There must be something the matter, I should think," said Potcheshihin, "a fire or something. But there's no sign of smoke anywhere. Hey! Kuzma!" he shouted to the peasant, "what's the matter?"

The peasant made some reply, but Potcheshihin and Optimov did not catch it. Sleepy-looking shopmen made their appearance at the doors of all the shops. Some plasterers at work on a warehouse near left their ladders and joined the workmen.

The fireman, who was describing circles with his bare feet, on the watch-tower, halted, and, after looking steadily at them for a few minutes, came down. The watch-tower was left deserted. This seemed suspicious.

"There must be a fire somewhere. Don't shove me! You damned swine!"

"Where do you see the fire? What fire? Pass on, gentlemen! I ask you civilly!"

"It must be a fire indoors!"

"Asks us civilly and keeps poking with his elbows. Keep your hands to yourself! Though you are a head constable, you have no sort of right to make free with your fists!"

"He's trodden on my corn! Ah! I'll crush you!"

"Crushed? Who's crushed? Lads! a man's been crushed!"

"What's the meaning of this crowd? What do you want?"

"A man's been crushed, please your honour!"

"Where? Pass on! I ask you civilly! I ask you civilly, you blockheads!"

"You may shove a peasant, but you daren't touch a gentleman! Hands off!"

"Did you ever know such people? There's no doing anything with them by fair words, the devils! Sidorov, run for Akim Danilitch! Look sharp! It'll be the worse for you, gentlemen! Akim Danilitch is coming, and he'll give it to you! You here, Parfen? A blind man, and at his age too! Can't see, but he must be like other people and won't do what he's told. Smirnov, put his name down!"

"Yes, sir! And shall I write down the men from Purov's? That man there with the swollen cheek, he's from Purov's works."

"Don't put down the men from Purov's. It's Purov's birthday to-morrow."

The starlings rose in a black cloud from the Father Prebendary's garden, but Potcheshihin and Optimov did not notice them. They stood staring into the air, wondering what could have attracted such a crowd, and what it was looking at.

Akim Danilitch appeared. Still munching and wiping his lips, he cut his way into the crowd, bellowing:

“Firemen, be ready! Disperse! Mr. Optimov, disperse, or it’ll be the worse for you! Instead of writing all kinds of things about decent people in the papers, you had better try to behave yourself more conformably! No good ever comes of reading the papers!”

“Kindly refrain from reflections upon literature!” cried Optimov hotly. “I am a literary man, and I will allow no one to make reflections upon literature! though, as is the duty of a citizen, I respect you as a father and benefactor!”

“Firemen, turn the hose on them!”

“There’s no water, please your honour!”

“Don’t answer me! Go and get some! Look sharp!”

“We’ve nothing to get it in, your honour. The major has taken the fire-brigade horses to drive his aunt to the station.”

“Disperse! Stand back, damnation take you! . . . Is that to your taste? Put him down, the devil!”

“I’ve lost my pencil, please your honour!”

The crowd grew larger and larger. There is no telling what proportions it might have reached if the new organ just arrived from Moscow had not fortunately begun playing in the tavern close by. Hearing their favourite tune, the crowd gasped and rushed off to the tavern. So nobody ever knew why the crowd had assembled, and Potcheshihin and Optimov had by now forgotten the existence of the

starlings who were innocently responsible for the proceedings.

An hour later the town was still and silent again, and only a solitary figure was to be seen—the fireman pacing round and round on the watch-tower.

The same evening Akim Danilitch sat in the grocer's shop drinking *limonade gaseuse* and brandy, and writing:

“In addition to the official report, I venture, your Excellency, to append a few supplementary observations of my own. Father and benefactor! In very truth, but for the prayers of your virtuous spouse in her salubrious villa near our town, there's no knowing what might not have come to pass. What I have been through to-day I can find no words to express. The efficiency of Krushensky and of the major of the fire brigade are beyond all praise! I am proud of such devoted servants of our country! As for me, I did all that a weak man could do, whose only desire is the welfare of his neighbour; and sitting now in the bosom of my family, with tears in my eyes I thank Him Who spared us bloodshed! In absence of evidence, the guilty parties remain in custody, but I propose to release them in a week or so. It was their ignorance that led them astray!”

GONE ASTRAY



## GONE ASTRAY

A COUNTRY village wrapped in the darkness of night. One o'clock strikes from the belfry. Two lawyers, called Kozyavkin and Laev, both in the best of spirits and a little unsteady on their legs, come out of the wood and turn towards the cottages.

"Well, thank God, we've arrived," says Kozyavkin, drawing a deep breath. "Tramping four miles from the station in our condition is a feat. I am fearfully done up! And, as ill-luck would have it, not a fly to be seen."

"Petya, my dear fellow. . . . I can't. . . . I feel like dying if I'm not in bed in five minutes."

"In bed! Don't you think it, my boy! First we'll have supper and a glass of red wine, and then you can go to bed. Verotchka and I will wake you up. . . . Ah, my dear fellow, it's a fine thing to be married! You don't understand it, you cold-hearted wretch! I shall be home in a minute, worn out and exhausted. . . . A loving wife will welcome me, give me some tea and something to eat, and repay me for my hard work and my love with such a fond and loving look out of her darling black eyes that I shall forget how tired I am, and forget the burglary and the law courts and the appeal division. . . . It's glorious!"

"Yes—I say, I feel as though my legs were



dropping off, I can scarcely get along. . . . I am frightfully thirsty. . . .”

“Well, here we are at home.”

The friends go up to one of the cottages, and stand still under the nearest window.

“It’s a jolly cottage,” said Kozyavkin. “You will see to-morrow what views we have! There’s no light in the windows. Verotchka must have gone to bed, then; she must have got tired of sitting up. She’s in bed, and must be worrying at my not having turned up.” (He pushes the window with his stick, and it opens.) “Plucky girl! She goes to bed without bolting the window.” (He takes off his cape and flings it with his portfolio in at the window.) “I am hot! Let us strike up a serenade and make her laugh!” (He sings.) “The moon floats in the midnight sky. . . . Faintly stir the tender breezes. . . . Faintly rustle in the tree-tops. . . . Sing, sing, Alyosha! Verotchka, shall we sing you Schubert’s Serenade?” (He sings.)

His performance is cut short by a sudden fit of coughing. “Tphoo! Verotchka, tell Aksinya to unlock the gate for us!” (A pause.) “Verotchka! don’t be lazy, get up, darling!” (He stands on a stone and looks in at the window.) “Verotchka, my dumpling; Verotchka, my poppet . . . my little angel, my wife beyond compare, get up and tell Aksinya to unlock the gate for us! You are not asleep, you know. Little wife, we are really so done up and exhausted that we’re not in the mood for jokes. We’ve trudged all the way from the station! Don’t you hear? Ah, hang it all!” (He makes an effort to climb up to the window and falls

down.) "You know this isn't a nice trick to play on a visitor! I see you are just as great a school-girl as ever, Vera, you are always up to mischief!"

"Perhaps Vera Stepanovna is asleep," says Laev.

"She isn't asleep! I bet she wants me to make an outcry and wake up the whole neighbourhood. I'm beginning to get cross, Vera! Ach, damn it all! Give me a leg up, Alyosha; I'll get in. You are a naughty girl, nothing but a regular schoolgirl. . . . Give me a hoist."

Puffing and panting, Laev gives him a leg up, and Kozyavkin climbs in at the window and vanishes into the darkness within.

"Vera!" Laev hears a minute later, "where are you? . . . D—damnation! Tphoo! I've put my hand into something! Tphoo!"

There is a rustling sound, a flapping of wings, and the desperate cackling of a fowl.

"A nice state of things," Laev hears. "Vera, where on earth did these chickens come from? Why, the devil, there's no end of them! There's a basket with a turkey in it. . . . It pecks, the nasty creature."

Two hens fly out of the window, and cackling at the top of their voices, flutter down the village street.

"Alyosha, we've made a mistake!" says Kozyavkin in a lachrymose voice. "There are a lot of hens here. . . . I must have mistaken the house. Confound you, you are all over the place, you cursed brutes!"

"Well, then, make haste and come down. Do you hear? I am dying of thirst!"

"In a minute. . . . I am looking for my cape and portfolio."

"Light a match."

"The matches are in the cape. . . . I was a crazy idiot to get into this place. The cottages are exactly alike; the devil himself couldn't tell them apart in the dark. Aie, the turkey's pecked my cheek, nasty creature!"

"Make haste and get out or they'll think we are stealing the chickens."

"In a minute. . . . I can't find my cape anywhere. . . . There are lots of old rags here, and I can't tell where the cape is. Throw me a match."

"I haven't any."

"We are in a hole, I must say! What am I to do? I can't go without my cape and my portfolio. I must find them."

"I can't understand a man's not knowing his own cottage," says Laev indignantly. "Drunken beast. . . . If I'd known I was in for this sort of thing I would never have come with you. I should have been at home and fast asleep by now, and a nice fix I'm in here. . . . I'm fearfully done up and thirsty, and my head is going round."

"In a minute, in a minute. . . . You won't expire."

A big cock flies crowing over Laev's head. Laev heaves a deep sigh, and with a hopeless gesture sits down on a stone. He is beset with a burning thirst, his eyes are closing, his head drops forward. . . . Five minutes pass, ten, twenty, and Kozyavkin is still busy among the hens.

"Petya, will you be long?"

"A minute. I found the portfolio, but I have lost it again."

Laev lays his head on his fists, and closes his eyes. The cackling of the fowls grows louder and louder. The inhabitants of the empty cottage fly out of the window and flutter round in circles, he fancies, like owls over his head. His ears ring with their cackle, he is overwhelmed with terror.

"The beast!" he thinks. "He invited me to stay, promising me wine and junket, and then he makes me walk from the station and listen to these hens. . . ."

In the midst of his indignation his chin sinks into his collar, he lays his head on his portfolio, and gradually subsides. Weariness gets the upper hand and he begins to doze.

"I've found the portfolio!" he hears Kozyavkin cry triumphantly. "I shall find the cape in a minute and then off we go!"

Then through his sleep he hears the barking of dogs. First one dog barks, then a second, and a third. . . . And the barking of the dogs blends with the cackling of the fowls into a sort of savage music. Someone comes up to Laev and asks him something. Then he hears someone climb over his head into the window, then a knocking and a shouting. . . . A woman in a red apron stands beside him with a lantern in her hand and asks him something.

"You've no right to say so," he hears Kozyavkin's voice. "I am a lawyer, a bachelor of laws—Kozyavkin—here's my visiting card."

"What do I want with your card?" says some-

one in a husky bass. "You've disturbed all my fowls, you've smashed the eggs! Look what you've done. The turkey poults were to have come out to-day or to-morrow, and you've smashed them. What's the use of your giving me your card, sir?"

"How dare you interfere with me! No! I won't have it!"

"I am thirsty," thinks Laev, trying to open his eyes, and he feels somebody climb down from the window over his head.

"My name is Kozyavkin! I have a cottage here. Everyone knows me."

"We don't know anyone called Kozyavkin."

"What are you saying? Call the elder. He knows me."

"Don't get excited, the constable will be here directly. . . . We know all the summer visitors here, but I've never seen you in my life."

"I've had a cottage in Rottendale for five years."

"Whew! Do you take this for the Dale? This is Sicklystead, but Rottendale is farther to the right, beyond the match factory. It's three miles from here."

"Bless my soul! Then I've taken the wrong turning!"

The cries of men and fowls mingle with the barking of dogs, and the voice of Kozyavkin rises above the chaos of confused sounds:

"You shut up! I'll pay. I'll show you whom you have to deal with!"

Little by little the voices die down. Laev feels himself being shaken by the shoulder. . . .

AN AVENGER



## AN AVENGER

SHORTLY after finding his wife *in flagrante delicto* Fyodor Fyodorovitch Sigaev was standing in Schmuck and Co.'s, the gunsmiths, selecting a suitable revolver. His countenance expressed wrath, grief, and unalterable determination.

"I know what I must do," he was thinking. "The sanctities of the home are outraged, honour is trampled in the mud, vice is triumphant, and therefore as a citizen and a man of honour I must be their avenger. First I will kill her and her lover and then myself."

He had not yet chosen a revolver or killed anyone, but already in imagination he saw three blood-stained corpses, broken skulls, brains oozing from them, the commotion, the crowd of gaping spectators, the post-mortem. . . . With the malignant joy of an insulted man he pictured the horror of the relations and the public, the agony of the traitress, and was mentally reading leading articles on the destruction of the traditions of the home.

The shopman, a sprightly little Frenchified figure with rounded belly and white waistcoat, displayed the revolvers, and smiling respectfully and scraping with his little feet observed:

". . . I would advise you, M'sieur, to take this superb revolver, the Smith and Wesson pattern, the last word in the science of firearms: triple-action, with ejector, kills at six hundred paces, central sight.



Let me draw your attention, M'sieu, to the beauty of the finish. The most fashionable system, M'sieu. We sell a dozen every day for burglars, wolves, and lovers. Very correct and powerful action, hits at a great distance, and kills wife and lover with one bullet. As for suicide, M'sieu, I don't know a better pattern."

The shopman pulled and cocked the trigger, breathed on the barrel, took aim, and affected to be breathless with delight. Looking at his ecstatic countenance, one might have supposed that he would readily have put a bullet through his brains if he had only possessed a revolver of such a superb pattern as a Smith-Wesson.

"And what price?" asked Sigaev.

"Forty-five roubles, M'sieu."

"Mm! . . . that's too dear for me."

"In that case, M'sieu, let me offer you another make, somewhat cheaper. Here, if you'll kindly look, we have an immense choice, at all prices. . . . Here, for instance, this revolver of the Lefaucher pattern costs only eighteen roubles, but . . ." (the shopman pursed up his face contemptuously) ". . . but, M'sieu, it's an old-fashioned make. They are only bought by hysterical ladies or the mentally deficient. To commit suicide or shoot one's wife with a Lefaucher revolver is considered bad form nowadays. Smith-Wesson is the only pattern that's correct style."

"I don't want to shoot myself or to kill anyone," said Sigaev, lying sullenly. "I am buying it simply for a country cottage . . . to frighten away burglars. . . ."

“That’s not our business, what object you have in buying it.” The shopman smiled, dropping his eyes discreetly. “If we were to investigate the object in each case, M’sieu, we should have to close our shop. To frighten burglars Lefaucher is not a suitable pattern, M’sieu, for it goes off with a faint, muffled sound. I would suggest Mortimer’s, the so-called duelling pistol. . . .”

“Shouldn’t I challenge him to a duel?” flashed through Sigaev’s mind. “It’s doing him too much honour, though. . . . Beasts like that are killed like dogs. . . .”

The shopman, swaying gracefully and tripping to and fro on his little feet, still smiling and chattering, displayed before him a heap of revolvers. The most inviting and impressive of all was the Smith and Wesson’s. Sigaev picked up a pistol of that pattern, gazed blankly at it, and sank into brooding. His imagination pictured how he would blow out their brains, how blood would flow in streams over the rug and the parquet, how the traitress’s legs would twitch in her last agony. . . . But that was not enough for his indignant soul. The picture of blood, wailing, and horror did not satisfy him. He must think of something more terrible.

“I know! I’ll kill myself and him,” he thought, “but I’ll leave her alive. Let her pine away from the stings of conscience and the contempt of all surrounding her. For a sensitive nature like hers that will be far more agonizing than death.”

And he imagined his own funeral: he, the injured husband, lies in his coffin with a gentle smile on his lips, and she, pale, tortured by remorse, follows the

coffin like a Niobe, not knowing where to hide herself to escape from the withering, contemptuous looks cast upon her by the indignant crowd.

"I see, M'sieu, that you like the Smith and Wesson make," the shopman broke in upon his broodings. "If you think it too dear, very well, I'll knock off five roubles. . . . But we have other makes, cheaper."

The little Frenchified figure turned gracefully and took down another dozen cases of revolvers from the shelf.

"Here, M'sieu, price thirty roubles. That's not expensive, especially as the rate of exchange has dropped terribly and the Customs duties are rising every hour. M'sieu, I vow I am a Conservative, but even I am beginning to murmur. Why, with the rate of exchange and the Customs tariff, only the rich can purchase firearms. There's nothing left for the poor but Tula weapons and phosphorus matches, and Tula weapons are a misery! You may aim at your wife with a Tula revolver and shoot yourself through the shoulder-blade."

Sigaev suddenly felt mortified and sorry that he would be dead, and would miss seeing the agonies of the traitress. Revenge is only sweet when one can see and taste its fruits, and what sense would there be in it if he were lying in his coffin, knowing nothing about it?

"Hadn't I better do this?" he pondered. "I'll kill him, then I'll go to his funeral and look on, and after the funeral I'll kill myself. They'd arrest me, though, before the funeral, and take away my pistol. . . . And so I'll kill him, she shall remain

alive, and I . . . for the time, I'll not kill myself, but go and be arrested. I shall always have time to kill myself. There will be this advantage about being arrested, that at the preliminary investigation I shall have an opportunity of exposing to the authorities and to the public all the infamy of her conduct. If I kill myself she may, with her characteristic duplicity and impudence, throw all the blame on me, and society will justify her behaviour and will very likely laugh at me. . . . If I remain alive, then . . .”

A minute later he was thinking:

“Yes, if I kill myself I may be blamed and suspected of petty feeling. . . . Besides, why should I kill myself? That's one thing. And for another, to shoot oneself is cowardly. And so I'll kill him and let her live, and I'll face my trial. I shall be tried, and she will be brought into court as a witness. . . . I can imagine her confusion, her disgrace when she is examined by my counsel! The sympathies of the court, of the Press, and of the public will certainly be with me.”

While he deliberated the shopman displayed his wares, and felt it incumbent upon him to entertain his customer.

“Here are English ones, a new pattern, only just received,” he prattled on. “But I warn you, M'sieu, all these systems pale beside the Smith and Wesson. The other day—as I dare say you have read—an officer bought from us a Smith and Wesson. He shot his wife's lover, and—would you believe it?—the bullet passed through him, pierced the bronze lamp, then the piano, and ricocheted

back from the piano, killing the lap-dog and bruising the wife. A magnificent record redounding to the honour of our firm! The officer is now under arrest. He will no doubt be convicted and sent to penal servitude. In the first place, our penal code is quite out of date; and, secondly, M'sieu, the sympathies of the court are always with the lover. Why is it? Very simple, M'sieu. The judges and the jury and the prosecutor and the counsel for the defence are all living with other men's wives, and it'll add to their comfort that there will be one husband the less in Russia. Society would be pleased if the Government were to send all the husbands to Sahalin. Oh, M'sieu, you don't know how it excites my indignation to see the corruption of morals nowadays. To love other men's wives is as much the regular thing to-day as to smoke other men's cigarettes and to read other men's books. Every year our trade gets worse and worse—it doesn't mean that wives are more faithful, but that husbands resign themselves to their position and are afraid of the law and penal servitude."

The shopman looked round and whispered: "And whose fault is it, M'sieu? The Government's."

"To go to Sahalin for the sake of a pig like that—there's no sense in that either," Sigaev pondered. "If I go to penal servitude it will only give my wife an opportunity of marrying again and deceiving a second husband. She would triumph. . . . And so I will leave *her* alive, I won't kill myself, *him* . . . I won't kill either. I must think of something more sensible and more effective. I will punish

them with my contempt, and will take divorce proceedings that will make a scandal."

"Here, M'sieu, is another make," said the shopman, taking down another dozen from the shelf. "Let me call your attention to the original mechanism of the lock."

In view of his determination a revolver was now of no use to Sigaev, but the shopman, meanwhile, getting more and more enthusiastic, persisted in displaying his wares before him. The outraged husband began to feel ashamed that the shopman should be taking so much trouble on his account for nothing, that he should be smiling, wasting time, displaying enthusiasm for nothing.

"Very well, in that case," he muttered, "I'll look in again later on . . . or I'll send someone."

He didn't see the expression of the shopman's face, but to smooth over the awkwardness of the position a little he felt called upon to make some purchase. But what should he buy? He looked round the walls of the shop to pick out something inexpensive, and his eyes rested on a green net hanging near the door.

"That's . . . what's that?" he asked.

"That's a net for catching quails."

"And what price is it?"

"Eight roubles, M'sieu."

"Wrap it up for me. . . ."

The outraged husband paid his eight roubles, took the net, and, feeling even more outraged, walked out of the shop.



THE JEUNE PREMIER





## THE JEUNE PREMIER

YEVGENY ALEXEYITCH PODZHAROV, the *jeune premier*, a graceful, elegant young man with an oval face and little bags under his eyes, had come for the season to one of the southern towns of Russia, and tried at once to make the acquaintance of a few of the leading families of the place. "Yes, signor," he would often say, gracefully swinging his foot and displaying his red socks, "an artist ought to act upon the masses, both directly and indirectly; the first aim is attained by his work on the stage, the second by an acquaintance with the local inhabitants. On my honour, *parole d'honneur*, I don't understand why it is we actors avoid making acquaintance with local families. Why is it? To say nothing of dinners, name-day parties, feasts, *soirées fixes*, to say nothing of these entertainments, think of the moral influence we may have on society! Is it not agreeable to feel one has dropped a spark in some thick skull? The types one meets! The women! *Mon Dieu*, what women! they turn one's head! One penetrates into some huge merchant's house, into the sacred retreats, and picks out some fresh and rosy little peach—it's heaven, *parole d'honneur!*"

In the southern town, among other estimable families he made the acquaintance of that of a manufacturer called Zybaev. Whenever he remem-

bers that acquaintance now he frowns contemptuously, screws up his eyes, and nervously plays with his watch-chain.

One day—it was at a name-day party at Zybaev's—the actor was sitting in his new friends' drawing-room and holding forth as usual. Around him “types” were sitting in armchairs and on the sofa, listening affably; from the next room came feminine laughter and the sounds of evening tea. . . . Crossing his legs, after each phrase sipping tea with rum in it, and trying to assume an expression of careless boredom, he talked of his stage triumphs.

“I am a provincial actor principally,” he said, smiling condescendingly, “but I have played in Petersburg and Moscow too. . . . By the way, I will describe an incident which illustrates pretty well the state of mind of to-day. At my benefit in Moscow the young people brought me such a mass of laurel wreaths that I swear by all I hold sacred I did not know where to put them! *Parole d'honneur!* Later on, at a moment when funds were short, I took the laurel wreaths to the shop, and . . . guess what they weighed. Eighty pounds altogether. Ha, ha! you can't think how useful the money was. Artists, indeed, are often hard up. To-day I have hundreds, thousands, to-morrow nothing. . . . To-day I haven't a crust of bread, to-morrow I have oysters and anchovies, hang it all!”

The local inhabitants sipped their glasses decorously and listened. The well-pleased host, not knowing how to make enough of his cultured and interesting visitor, presented to him a distant rela-

tive who had just arrived, one Pavel Ignatyevitch Klimov, a bulky gentleman about forty, wearing a long frock-coat and very full trousers.

"You ought to know each other," said Zybaev as he presented Klimov; "he loves theatres, and at one time used to act himself. He has an estate in the Tula province."

Podzharov and Klimov got into conversation. It appeared, to the great satisfaction of both, that the Tula landowner lived in the very town in which the *jeune premier* had acted for two seasons in succession. Enquiries followed about the town, about common acquaintances, and about the theatre. . . .

"Do you know, I like that town awfully," said the *jeune premier*, displaying his red socks. "What streets, what a charming park, and what society! Delightful society!"

"Yes, delightful society," the landowner assented.

"A commercial town, but extremely cultured. . . . For instance, er-er-er . . . the head master of the high school, the public prosecutor . . . the officers. . . . The police captain, too, was not bad, a man, as the French say, *enchanté*, and the women, Allah, what women!"

"Yes, the women . . . certainly. . . ."

"Perhaps I am partial; the fact is that in your town, I don't know why, I was devilishly lucky with the fair sex! I could write a dozen novels. To take this episode, for instance. . . . I was staying in Yegoryevsky Street, in the very house where the Treasury is. . . ."

"The red house without stucco?"

"Yes, yes . . . without stucco. . . . Close by, as I remember now, lived a local beauty, Varenka. . . ."

"Not Varvara Nikolayevna?" asked Klimov, and he beamed with satisfaction. "She really is a beauty . . . the most beautiful girl in the town."

"The most beautiful girl in the town! A classic profile, great black eyes . . . and hair to her waist! She saw me in 'Hamlet,' she wrote me a letter *à la* Pushkin's 'Tatyana.' . . . I answered, as you may guess. . . ."

Podzharov looked round, and having satisfied himself that there were no ladies in the room, rolled his eyes, smiled mournfully, and heaved a sigh.

"I came home one evening after a performance," he whispered, "and there she was, sitting on my sofa. There followed tears, protestations of love, kisses. . . . Oh, that was a marvellous, that was a divine night! Our romance lasted two months, but that night was never repeated. It was a night, *parole d'honneur!*"

"Excuse me, what's that?" muttered Klimov, turning crimson and gazing open-eyed at the actor. "I know Varvara Nikolayevna well: she's my niece."

Podzharov was embarrassed, and he, too, opened his eyes wide.

"How's this?" Klimov went on, throwing up his hands. "I know the girl, and . . . and . . . I am surprised. . . ."

"I am very sorry this has come up," muttered the actor, getting up and rubbing something out of

his left eye with his little finger. "Though, of course . . . of course, you as her uncle . . ."

The other guests, who had hitherto been listening to the actor with pleasure and rewarding him with smiles, were embarrassed and dropped their eyes.

"Please, do be so good . . . take your words back . . ." said Klimov in extreme embarrassment.

"I beg you to do so!"

"If . . . er-er-er . . . it offends you, certainly," answered the actor, with an undefined movement of his hand.

"And confess you have told a falsehood."

"I, no . . . er-er-er. . . . It was not a lie, but . . . I greatly regret having spoken too freely. . . . And, in fact . . . I don't understand your tone!"

Klimov walked up and down the room in silence, as though in uncertainty and hesitation. His fleshy face grew more and more crimson, and the veins in his neck swelled up. After walking up and down for about two minutes he went up to the actor and said in a tearful voice:

"No, do be so good as to confess that you told a lie about Varenka! Have the goodness to do so!"

"It's queer," said the actor, with a strained smile, shrugging his shoulders and swinging his leg.

"This is positively insulting!"

"So you will not confess it?"

"I do-on't understand!"

"You will not? In that case, excuse me . . . I shall have to resort to unpleasant measures. Either, sir, I shall insult you at once on the spot,

or . . . if you are an honourable man, you will kindly accept my challenge to a duel. . . . We will fight!"

"Certainly!" rapped out the *jeune premier*, with a contemptuous gesture. "Certainly."

Extremely perturbed, the guests and the host, not knowing what to do, drew Klimov aside and began begging him not to get up a scandal. Astonished feminine countenances appeared in the doorway. . . . The *jeune premier* turned round, said a few words, and with an air of being unable to remain in a house where he was insulted, took his cap and made off without saying good-bye.

On his way home the *jeune premier* smiled contemptuously and shrugged his shoulders, but when he reached his hotel room and stretched himself on his sofa he felt exceedingly uneasy.

"The devil take him!" he thought. "A duel does not matter, he won't kill me, but the trouble is the other fellows will hear of it, and they know perfectly well it was a yarn. It's abominable! I shall be disgraced all over Russia. . . ."

Podzharov thought a little, smoked, and to calm himself went out into the street.

"I ought to talk to this bully, ram into his stupid noddle that he is a blockhead and a fool, and that I am not in the least afraid of him. . . ."

The *jeune premier* stopped before Zybaev's house and looked at the windows. Lights were still burning behind the muslin curtains and figures were moving about.

"I'll wait for him!" the actor decided.

It was dark and cold. A hateful autumn rain was

drizzling as though through a sieve. Podzharov leaned his elbow on a lamp-post and abandoned himself to a feeling of uneasiness.

He was wet through and exhausted.

At two o'clock in the night the guests began coming out of Zybaev's house. The landowner from Tula was the last to make his appearance. He heaved a sigh that could be heard by the whole street and scraped the pavement with his heavy overboots.

"Excuse me!" said the *jeune premier*, overtaking him. "One minute."

Klimov stopped. The actor gave a smile, hesitated, and began, stammering: "I . . . I confess . . . I told a lie."

"No, sir, you will please confess that publicly," said Klimov, and he turned crimson again. "I can't leave it like that. . . ."

"But you see I am apologizing! I beg you . . . don't you understand? I beg you because you will admit a duel will make talk, and I am in a position. . . . My fellow-actors . . . goodness knows what they may think. . . ."

The *jeune premier* tried to appear unconcerned, to smile, to stand erect, but his body would not obey him, his voice trembled, his eyes blinked guiltily, and his head drooped. For a good while he went on muttering something. Klimov listened to him, thought a little, and heaved a sigh.

"Well, so be it," he said. "May God forgive you. Only don't lie in future, young man. Nothing degrades a man like lying . . . yes, indeed!



You are a young man, you have had a good education. . . .”

The landowner from Tula, in a benignant, fatherly way, gave him a lecture, while the *jeune premier* listened and smiled meekly. . . . When it was over he smirked, bowed, and with a guilty step and a crestfallen air set off for his hotel.

As he went to bed half an hour later he felt that he was out of danger and was already in excellent spirits. Serene and satisfied that the misunderstanding had ended so satisfactorily, he wrapped himself in the bedclothes, soon fell asleep, and slept soundly till ten o'clock next morning.

A DEFENCELESS CREATURE



## A DEFENCELESS CREATURE

IN spite of a violent attack of gout in the night and the nervous exhaustion left by it, Kistunov went in the morning to his office and began punctually seeing the clients of the bank and persons who had come with petitions. He looked languid and exhausted, and spoke in a faint voice hardly above a whisper, as though he were dying.

“What can I do for you?” he asked a lady in an antediluvian mantle, whose back view was extremely suggestive of a huge dung-beetle.

“You see, your Excellency,” the petitioner in question began, speaking rapidly, “my husband Shtchukin, a collegiate assessor, was ill for five months, and while he, if you will excuse my saying so, was laid up at home, he was for no sort of reason dismissed, your Excellency; and when I went for his salary they deducted, if you please, your Excellency, twenty-four roubles thirty-six kopecks from his salary. ‘What for?’ I asked. ‘He borrowed from the club fund,’ they told me, ‘and the other clerks had stood security for him.’ How was that? How could he have borrowed it without my consent? It’s impossible, your Excellency. What’s the reason of it? I am a poor woman, I earn my bread by taking in lodgers. I am a weak, defenceless woman . . . I have to put up with ill-usage from everyone and never hear a kind word. . . .”

The petitioner was blinking, and dived into her mantle for her handkerchief. Kistunov took her petition from her and began reading it.

"Excuse me, what's this?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders. "I can make nothing of it. Evidently you have come to the wrong place, madam. Your petition has nothing to do with us at all. You will have to apply to the department in which your husband was employed."

"Why, my dear sir, I have been to five places already, and they would not even take the petition anywhere," said Madame Shtchukin. "I'd quite lost my head, but, thank goodness—God bless him for it—my son-in-law, Boris Matveyitch, advised me to come to you. 'You go to Mr. Kistunov, mamma: he is an influential man, he can do anything for you. . . .' Help me, your Excellency!"

"We can do nothing for you, Madame Shtchukin. You must understand: your husband served in the Army Medical Department, and our establishment is a purely private commercial undertaking, a bank. Surely you must understand that!"

Kistunov shrugged his shoulders again and turned to a gentleman in a military uniform, with a swollen face.

"Your Excellency," piped Madame Shtchukin in a pitiful voice, "I have the doctor's certificate that my husband was ill! Here it is, if you will kindly look at it."

"Very good, I believe you," Kistunov said irritably, "but I repeat it has nothing to do with us. It's queer and positively absurd! Surely your husband must know where you are to apply?"

“He knows nothing, your Excellency. He keeps on: ‘It’s not your business! Get away!’—that’s all I can get out of him. . . . Whose business is it, then? It’s I have to keep them all!”

Kistunov again turned to Madame Shtchukin and began explaining to her the difference between the Army Medical Department and a private bank. She listened attentively, nodded in token of assent, and said:

“Yes . . . yes . . . yes . . . I understand, sir. In that case, your Excellency, tell them to pay me fifteen roubles at least! I agree to take part on account!”

“Ough!” sighed Kistunov, letting his head drop back. “There’s no making you see reason. Do understand that to apply to us with such a petition is as strange as to send in a petition concerning divorce, for instance, to a chemist’s or to the Assaying Board. You have not been paid your due, but what have we to do with it?”

“Your Excellency, make me remember you in my prayers for the rest of my days, have pity on a lone, lorn woman,” wailed Madame Shtchukin; “I am a weak, defenceless woman. . . . I am worried to death, I’ve to settle with the lodgers and see to my husband’s affairs and fly round looking after the house, and I am going to church every day this week, and my son-in-law is out of a job. . . . I might as well not eat or drink. . . . I can scarcely keep on my feet. . . . I haven’t slept all night. . . .”

Kistunov was conscious of the palpitation of his heart. With a face of anguish, pressing his hand

on his heart, he began explaining to Madame Shtchukin again, but his voice failed him. . . .

"No, excuse me, I cannot talk to you," he said with a wave of his hand. "My head's going round. You are hindering us and wasting your time. Ough! Alexey Nikolaitch," he said, addressing one of his clerks, "please will you explain to Madame Shtchukin?"

Kistunov, passing by all the petitioners, went to his private room and signed about a dozen papers while Alexey Nikolaitch was still engaged with Madame Shtchukin. As he sat in his room Kistunov heard two voices: the monotonous, restrained bass of Alexey Nikolaitch and the shrill, wailing voice of Madame Shtchukin.

"I am a weak, defenceless woman, I am a woman in delicate health," said Madame Shtchukin. "I look strong, but if you were to overhaul me there is not one healthy fibre in me. I can scarcely keep on my feet, and my appetite is gone. . . . I drank my cup of coffee this morning without the slightest relish. . . ."

Alexey Nikolaitch explained to her the difference between the departments and the complicated system of sending in papers. He was soon exhausted, and his place was taken by the accountant.

"A wonderfully disagreeable woman!" said Kistunov, revolted, nervously cracking his fingers and continually going to the decanter of water. "She's a perfect idiot! She's worn me out and she'll exhaust them, the nasty creature! Ough! . . . my heart is throbbing."

Half an hour later he rang his bell. Alexey Nikolaitch made his appearance.

"How are things going?" Kistunov asked languidly.

"We can't make her see anything, Pyotr Alexandritch! We are simply done. We talk of one thing and she talks of something else."

"I . . . I can't stand the sound of her voice. . . . I am ill. . . . I can't bear it."

"Send for the porter, Pyotr Alexandritch, let him put her out."

"No, no," cried Kistunov in alarm. "She will set up a squeal, and there are lots of flats in this building, and goodness knows what they would think of us. . . . Do try and explain to her, my dear fellow. . . ."

A minute later the deep drone of Alexey Nikolaitch's voice was audible again. A quarter of an hour passed, and instead of his bass there was the murmur of the accountant's powerful tenor."

"Re-mark-ably nasty woman," Kistunov thought indignantly, nervously shrugging his shoulders. "No more brains than a sheep. I believe that's a twinge of the gout again. . . . My migraine is coming back. . . ."

In the next room Alexey Nikolaitch, at the end of his resources, at last tapped his finger on the table and then on his own forehead.

"The fact of the matter is you haven't a head on your shoulders," he said, "but this."

"Come, come," said the old lady, offended.



"Talk to your own wife like that. . . . You screw! . . . Don't be too free with your hands."

And looking at her with fury, with exasperation, as though he would devour her, Alexey Nikolaitch said in a quiet, stifled voice:

"Clear out."

"Wha-at?" squealed Madame Shtchukin. "How dare you? I am a weak, defenceless woman; I won't endure it. My husband is a collegiate assessor. You screw! . . . I will go to Dmitri Karlitch, the lawyer, and there will be nothing left of you! I've had the law of three lodgers, and I will make you flop down at my feet for your saucy words! I'll go to your general. Your Excellency, your Excellency!"

"Be off, you pest," hissed Alexey Nikolaitch.

Kistunov opened his door and looked into the office.

"What is it?" he asked in a tearful voice.

Madame Shtchukin, as red as a crab, was standing in the middle of the room, rolling her eyes and prodding the air with her fingers. The bank clerks were standing round red in the face too, and, evidently harassed, were looking at each other distractedly.

"Your Excellency," cried Madame Shtchukin, pouncing upon Kistunov. "Here, this man, he here . . . this man . . ." (she pointed to Alexey Nikolaitch) "tapped himself on the forehead and then tapped the table. . . . You told him to go into my case, and he's jeering at me! I am a weak, defenceless woman. . . . My husband is a collegiate assessor, and I am a major's daughter myself!"

"Very good, madam," moaned Kistunov. "I will go into it . . . I will take steps. . . . Go away . . . later!"

"And when shall I get the money, your Excellency? I need it to-day!"

Kistunov passed his trembling hand over his forehead, heaved a sigh, and began explaining again.

"Madam, I have told you already this is a bank, a private commercial establishment. . . . What do you want of us? And do understand that you are hindering us."

Madame Shtchukin listened to him and sighed.

"To be sure, to be sure," she assented. "Only, your Excellency, do me the kindness, make me pray for you for the rest of my life, be a father, protect me! If a medical certificate is not enough I can produce an affidavit from the police. . . . Tell them to give me the money."

Everything began swimming before Kistunov's eyes. He breathed out all the air in his lungs in a prolonged sigh and sank helpless on a chair.

"How much do you want?" he asked in a weak voice.

"Twenty-four roubles and thirty-six kopecks."

Kistunov took his pocket-book out of his pocket, extracted a twenty-five rouble note and gave it to Madame Shtchukin.

"Take it and . . . and go away!"

Madame Shtchukin wrapped the money up in her handkerchief, put it away, and pursing up her face into a sweet, mincing, even coquettish smile, asked:

"Your Excellency, and would it be possible for my husband to get a post again?"

“I am going . . . I am ill . . .” said Kistunov in a weary voice. “I have dreadful palpitations.”

When he had driven home Alexey Nikolaitch sent Nikita for some laurel drops, and, after taking twenty drops each, all the clerks set to work, while Madame Shtchukin stayed another two hours in the vestibule, talking to the porter and waiting for Kistunov to return. . . .

She came again next day.

AN ENIGMATIC NATURE



## AN ENIGMATIC NATURE

ON the red velvet seat of a first-class railway carriage a pretty lady sits half reclining. An expensive fluffy fan trembles in her tightly closed fingers, a pince-nez keeps dropping off her pretty little nose, the brooch heaves and falls on her bosom, like a boat on the ocean. She is greatly agitated.

On the seat opposite sits the Provincial Secretary of Special Commissions, a budding young author, who from time to time publishes long stories of high life, or "Novelli" as he calls them, in the leading paper of the province. He is gazing into her face, gazing intently, with the eyes of a connoisseur. He is watching, studying, catching every shade of this exceptional, enigmatic nature. He understands it, he fathoms it. Her soul, her whole psychology lies open before him.

"Oh, I understand, I understand you to your inmost depths!" says the Secretary of Special Commissions, kissing her hand near the bracelet. "Your sensitive, responsive soul is seeking to escape from the maze of—— Yes, the struggle is terrific, titanic. But do not lose heart, you will be triumphant! Yes!"

"Write about me, Voldemar!" says the pretty lady, with a mournful smile. "My life has been so full, so varied, so chequered. Above all, I am unhappy. I am a suffering soul in some page of

Dostoevsky. Reveal my soul to the world, Volde-  
mar. Reveal that hapless soul. You are a psychol-  
ogist. We have not been in the train an hour to-  
gether, and you have already fathomed my heart."

"Tell me! I beseech you, tell me!"

"Listen. My father was a poor clerk in the  
Service. He had a good heart and was not without  
intelligence; but the spirit of the age—of his environ-  
ment—*vous comprenez?*—I do not blame my  
poor father. He drank, gambled, took bribes. My  
mother—but why say more? Poverty, the struggle  
for daily bread, the consciousness of insignificance  
—ah, do not force me to recall it! I had to make  
my own way. You know the monstrous education  
at a boarding-school, foolish novel-reading, the er-  
rors of early youth, the first timid flutter of love.  
It was awful! The vacillation! And the agonies  
of losing faith in life, in oneself! Ah, you are an  
author. You know us women. You will under-  
stand. Unhappily I have an intense nature. I  
looked for happiness—and what happiness! I  
longed to set my soul free. Yes. In that I saw  
my happiness!"

"Exquisite creature!" murmured the author,  
kissing her hand close to the bracelet. "It's not  
you I am kissing, but the suffering of humanity.  
Do you remember Raskolnikov and his kiss?"

"Oh, Voldemar, I longed for glory, renown, suc-  
cess, like every—why affect modesty?—every nature  
above the commonplace. I yearned for something  
extraordinary, above the common lot of woman!  
And then—and then—there crossed my path—an  
old general—very well off. Understand me, Volde-

mar! It was self-sacrifice, renunciation! You must see that! I could do nothing else. I restored the family fortunes, was able to travel, to do good. Yet how I suffered, how revolting, how loathsome to me were his embraces—though I will be fair to him—he had fought nobly in his day. There were moments—terrible moments—but I was kept up by the thought that from day to day the old man might die, that then I would begin to live as I liked, to give myself to the man I adore—be happy. There is such a man, Voldemar, indeed there is!”

The pretty lady flutters her fan more violently. Her face takes a lachrymose expression. She goes on:

“But at last the old man died. He left me something. I was free as a bird of the air. Now is the moment for me to be happy, isn't it, Voldemar? Happiness comes tapping at my window, I had only to let it in—but—Voldemar, listen, I implore you! Now is the time for me to give myself to the man I love, to become the partner of his life, to help, to uphold his ideals, to be happy—to find rest—but—how ignoble, repulsive, and senseless all our life is! How mean it all is, Voldemar. I am wretched, wretched, wretched! Again there is an obstacle in my path! Again I feel that my happiness is far, far away! Ah, what anguish!—if only you knew what anguish!”

“But what—what stands in your way? I implore you tell me! What is it?”

“Another old general, very well off——”

The broken fan conceals the pretty little face.



The author props on his fist his thought-heavy brow and ponders with the air of a master in psychology. The engine is whistling and hissing while the window curtains flush red with the glow of the setting sun.

A HAPPY MAN



## A HAPPY MAN

THE passenger train is just starting from Bologoe, the junction on the Petersburg-Moscow line. In a second-class smoking compartment five passengers sit dozing, shrouded in the twilight of the carriage. They had just had a meal, and now, snugly ensconced in their seats, they are trying to go to sleep. Stillness.

The door opens and in there walks a tall, lanky figure straight as a poker, with a ginger-coloured hat and a smart overcoat, wonderfully suggestive of a journalist in Jules Verne or on the comic stage.

The figure stands still in the middle of the compartment for a long while, breathing heavily, screwing up his eyes and peering at the seats.

"No, wrong again!" he mutters. "What the deuce! It's positively revolting! No, the wrong one again!"

One of the passengers stares at the figure and utters a shout of joy:

"Ivan Alexyevitch! what brings you here? Is it you?"

The poker-like gentleman starts, stares blankly at the passenger, and recognizing him claps his hands with delight.

"Ha! Pyotr Petrovitch," he says. "How many summers, how many winters! I didn't know you were in this train."

"How are you getting on?"

"I am all right; the only thing is, my dear fellow, I've lost my compartment and I simply can't find it. What an idiot I am! I ought to be thrashed!"

The poker-like gentleman sways a little unsteadily and sniggers.

"Queer things do happen!" he continues. "I stepped out just after the second bell to get a glass of brandy. I got it, of course. Well, I thought, since it's a long way to the next station, it would be as well to have a second glass. While I was thinking about it and drinking it the third bell rang. . . . I ran like mad and jumped into the first carriage. I am an idiot! I am the son of a hen!"

"But you seem in very good spirits," observes Pyotr Petrovitch. "Come and sit down! There's room and a welcome."

"No, no. . . . I'm off to look for my carriage. Good-bye!"

"You'll fall between the carriages in the dark if you don't look out! Sit down, and when we get to a station you'll find your own compartment. Sit down!"

Ivan Alexyevitch heaves a sigh and irresolutely sits down facing Pyotr Petrovitch. He is visibly excited, and fidgets as though he were sitting on thorns.

"Where are you travelling to?" Pyotr Petrovitch enquires.

"I? Into space. There is such a turmoil in my head that I couldn't tell where I am going myself. I go where fate takes me. Ha-ha! My dear fellow, have you ever seen a happy fool? No?"

Well, then, take a look at one. You behold the happiest of mortals! Yes! Don't you see something from my face?"

"Well, one can see you're a bit . . . a tiny bit so-so."

"I dare say I look awfully stupid just now. Ach! it's a pity I haven't a looking-glass, I should like to look at my counting-house. My dear fellow, I feel I am turning into an idiot, honour bright. Haha! Would you believe it, I'm on my honeymoon. Am I not the son of a hen?"

"You? Do you mean to say you are married?"

"To-day, my dear boy. We came away straight after the wedding."

Congratulations and the usual questions follow.

"Well, you are a fellow!" laughs Pyotr Petrovitch. "That's why you are rigged out such a dandy."

"Yes, indeed. . . . To complete the illusion. I've even sprinkled myself with scent. I am over my ears in vanity! No care, no thought, nothing but a sensation of something or other . . . deuce knows what to call it . . . beatitude or something? I've never felt so grand in my life!"

Ivan Alexyevitch shuts his eyes and waggles his head.

"I'm revoltingly happy," he says. "Just think; in a minute I shall go to my compartment. There on the seat near the window is sitting a being who is, so to say, devoted to you with her whole being. A little blonde with a little nose . . . little fingers. . . . My little darling! My angel! My little poppet! Phylloxera of my soul! And her little

foot! Good God! A little foot not like our beetle-crushers, but something miniature, fairylike, allegorical. I could pick it up and eat it, that little foot! Oh, but you don't understand! You're a materialist, of course, you begin analyzing at once, and one thing and another. You are cold-hearted bachelors, that's what you are! When you get married you'll think of me. 'Where's Ivan Alexyevitch now?' you'll say. Yes; so in a minute I'm going to my compartment. There she is waiting for me with impatience . . . in joyful anticipation of my appearance. She'll have a smile to greet me. I sit down beside her and take her chin with my two fingers. . . ."

Ivan Alexyevitch waggles his head and goes off into a chuckle of delight.

"Then I lay my noddle on her shoulder and put my arm round her waist. Around all is silence, you know . . . poetic twilight. I could embrace the whole world at such a moment. Pyotr Petrovitch, allow me to embrace you!"

"Delighted, I'm sure." The two friends embrace while the passengers laugh in chorus. And the happy bridegroom continues:

"And to complete the idiocy, or, as the novelists say, to complete the illusion, one goes to the refreshment-room and tosses off two or three glasses. And then something happens in your head and your heart, finer than you can read of in a fairy tale. I am a man of no importance, but I feel as though I were limitless: I embrace the whole world!"

The passengers, looking at the tipsy and blissful bridegroom, are infected by his cheerfulness and

no longer feel sleepy. Instead of one listener, Ivan Alexyevitch has now an audience of five. He wriggles and splutters, gesticulates, and prattles on without ceasing. He laughs and they all laugh.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, don't think so much! Damn all this analysis! If you want a drink, drink, no need to philosophize as to whether it's bad for you or not. . . . Damn all this philosophy and psychology!"

The guard walks through the compartment.

"My dear fellow," the bridegroom addresses him, "when you pass through the carriage No. 209 look out for a lady in a grey hat with a white bird and tell her I'm here!"

"Yes, sir. Only there isn't a No. 209 in this train; there's 219!"

"Well, 219, then! It's all the same. Tell that lady, then, that her husband is all right!"

Ivan Alexyevitch suddenly clutches his head and groans:

"Husband. . . . Lady. . . . All in a minute! Husband. . . . Ha-ha! I am a puppy that needs thrashing, and here I am a husband! Ach, idiot! But think of her! . . . Yesterday she was a little girl, a midget . . . it's simply incredible!"

"Nowadays it really seems strange to see a happy man," observes one of the passengers; "one as soon expects to see a white elephant."

"Yes, and whose fault is it?" says Ivan Alexyevitch, stretching his long legs and thrusting out his feet with their very pointed toes. "If you are not happy it's your own fault! Yes, what else do you suppose it is? Man is the creator of his own



happiness. If you want to be happy you will be, but you don't want to be! You obstinately turn away from happiness."

"Why, what next! How do you make that out?"

"Very simply. Nature has ordained that at a certain stage in his life man should love. When that time comes you should love like a house on fire, but you won't heed the dictates of nature, you keep waiting for something. What's more, it's laid down by law that the normal man should enter upon matrimony. There's no happiness without marriage. When the propitious moment has come, get married. There's no use in shilly-shallying. . . . But you don't get married, you keep waiting for something! Then the Scriptures tell us that 'wine maketh glad the heart of man.' . . . If you feel happy and you want to feel better still, then go to the refreshment bar and have a drink. The great thing is not to be too clever, but to follow the beaten track! The beaten track is a grand thing!"

"You say that man is the creator of his own happiness. How the devil is he the creator of it when a toothache or an ill-natured mother-in-law is enough to scatter his happiness to the winds? Everything depends on chance. If we had an accident at this moment you'd sing a different tune."

"Stuff and nonsense!" retorts the bridegroom. "Railway accidents only happen once a year. I'm not afraid of an accident, for there is no reason for one. Accidents are exceptional! Confound them! I don't want to talk of them! Oh, I believe we're stopping at a station."

"Where are you going now?" asks Pyotr Petrovitch. "To Moscow or somewhere further south?"

"Why, bless you! How could I go somewhere further south, when I'm on my way to the north?"

"But Moscow isn't in the north."

"I know that, but we're on our way to Petersburg," says Ivan Alexyevitch.

"We are going to Moscow, mercy on us!"

"To Moscow? What do you mean?" says the bridegroom in amazement.

"It's queer. . . . For what station did you take your ticket?"

"For Petersburg."

"In that case I congratulate you. You've got into the wrong train."

There follows a minute of silence. The bridegroom gets up and looks blankly round the company.

"Yes, yes," Pyotr Petrovitch explains. "You must have jumped into the wrong train at Bologoe. . . . After your glass of brandy you succeeded in getting into the down-train."

Ivan Alexyevitch turns pale, clutches his head, and begins pacing rapidly about the carriage.

"Ach, idiot that I am!" he says in indignation. "Scoundrel! The devil devour me! Whatever am I to do now? Why, my wife is in that train! She's there all alone, expecting me, consumed by anxiety. Ach, I'm a motley fool!"

The bridegroom falls on the seat and writhes as though someone had trodden on his corns.

"I am un-unhappy man!" he moans. "What am I to do, what am I to do?"

“There, there!” the passengers try to console him. “It’s all right. . . . You must telegraph to your wife and try to change into the Petersburg express. In that way you’ll overtake her.”

“The Petersburg express!” weeps the bridegroom, the creator of his own happiness. “And how am I to get a ticket for the Petersburg express? All my money is with my wife.”

The passengers, laughing and whispering together, make a collection and furnish the happy man with funds.

A TROUBLESOME VISITOR



## A TROUBLESOME VISITOR

IN the low-pitched, crooked little hut of Artyom, the forester, two men were sitting under the big dark ikon—Artyom himself, a short and lean peasant with a wrinkled, aged-looking face and a little beard that grew out of his neck, and a well-grown young man in a new crimson shirt and big wading boots, who had been out hunting and come in for the night. They were sitting on a bench at a little three-legged table on which a tallow candle stuck into a bottle was lazily burning.

Outside the window the darkness of the night was full of the noisy uproar into which nature usually breaks out before a thunderstorm. The wind howled angrily and the bowed trees moaned miserably. One pane of the window had been pasted up with paper, and leaves torn off by the wind could be heard pattering against the paper.

“I tell you what, good Christian,” said Artyom in a hoarse little tenor half-whisper, staring with unblinking, scared-looking eyes at the hunter. “I am not afraid of wolves or bears, or wild beasts of any sort, but I am afraid of man. You can save yourself from beasts with a gun or some other weapon, but you have no means of saving yourself from a wicked man.”

“To be sure, you can fire at a beast, but if you

shoot at a robber you will have to answer for it: you will go to Siberia."

"I've been forester, my lad, for thirty years, and I couldn't tell you what I have had to put up with from wicked men. There have been lots and lots of them here. The hut's on a track, it's a cart-road, and that brings them, the devils. Every sort of ruffian turns up, and without taking off his cap or making the sign of the cross, bursts straight in upon one with: 'Give us some bread, you old so-and-so.' And where am I to get bread for him? What claim has he? Am I a millionaire to feed every drunkard that passes? They are half-blind with spite. . . . They have no cross on them, the devils. . . . They'll give you a clout on the ear and not think twice about it: 'Give us bread!' Well, one gives it. . . . One is not going to fight with them, the idols! Some of them are two yards across the shoulders, and a great fist as big as your boot, and you see the sort of figure I am. One of them could smash me with his little finger. . . . Well, one gives him bread and he gobbles it up, and stretches out full length across the hut with not a word of thanks. And there are some that ask for money. 'Tell me, where is your money?' As though I had money! How should I come by it?"

"A forester and no money!" laughed the hunter. "You get wages every month, and I'll be bound you sell timber on the sly."

Artyom took a timid sideway glance at his visitor and twitched his beard as a magpie twitches her tail.

"You are still young to say a thing like that to

me," he said. "You will have to answer to God for those words. Whom may your people be? Where do you come from?"

"I am from Vyazovka. I am the son of Nefed the village elder."

"You have gone out for sport with your gun. . . . I used to like sport, too, when I was young. H'm! Ah, our sins are grievous," said Artyom, with a yawn. "It's a sad thing! There are few good folks, but villains and murderers no end—God have mercy upon us."

"You seem to be frightened of me, too. . . ."

"Come, what next! What should I be afraid of you for? I see. . . . I understand. . . . You came in, and not just anyhow, but you made the sign of the cross, you bowed, all decent and proper. . . . I understand. . . . One can give you bread. . . . I am a widower, I don't heat the stove, I sold the samovar. . . . I am too poor to keep meat or anything else, but bread you are welcome to."

At that moment something began growling under the bench: the growl was followed by a hiss. Artyom started, drew up his legs, and looked enquiringly at the hunter.

"It's my dog worrying your cat," said the hunter. "You devils!" he shouted under the bench. "Lie down. You'll be beaten. I say, your cat's thin, mate! She is nothing but skin and bone."

"She is old, it is time she was dead. . . . So you say you are from Vyazovka?"

"I see you don't feed her. Though she's a cat she's a creature . . . every breathing thing. You should have pity on her!"



"You are a queer lot in Vyazovka," Artyom went on, as though not listening. "The church has been robbed twice in one year. . . . To think that there are such wicked men! So they fear neither man nor God! To steal what is the Lord's! Hanging's too good for them! In old days the governors used to have such rogues flogged."

"However you punish, whether it is with flogging or anything else, it will be no good, you will not knock the wickedness out of a wicked man."

"Save and preserve us, Queen of Heaven!" The forester sighed abruptly. "Save us from all enemies and evildoers. Last week at Volovy Zaimishtchy, a mower struck another on the chest with his scythe . . . he killed him outright! And what was it all about, God bless me! One mower came out of the tavern . . . drunk. The other met him, drunk too."

The young man, who had been listening attentively, suddenly started, and his face grew tense as he listened.

"Stay," he said, interrupting the forester. "I fancy someone is shouting."

The hunter and the forester fell to listening with their eyes fixed on the window. Through the noise of the forest they could hear sounds such as the strained ear can always distinguish in every storm, so that it was difficult to make out whether people were calling for help or whether the wind was wailing in the chimney. But the wind tore at the roof, tapped at the paper on the window, and brought a distinct shout of "Help!"

"Talk of your murderers," said the hunter, turn-

ing pale and getting up. "Someone is being robbed!"

"Lord have mercy on us," whispered the forester, and he, too, turned pale and got up.

The hunter looked aimlessly out of window and walked up and down the hut.

"What a night, what a night!" he muttered. "You can't see your hand before your face! The very time for a robbery. Do you hear? There is a shout again."

The forester looked at the ikon and from the ikon turned his eyes upon the hunter, and sank on to the bench, collapsing like a man terrified by sudden bad news.

"Good Christian," he said in a tearful voice, "you might go into the passage and bolt the door. And we must put out the light."

"What for?"

"By ill-luck they may find their way here. . . . Oh, our sins!"

"We ought to be going, and you talk of bolting the door! You are a clever one! Are you coming?"

The hunter threw his gun over his shoulder and picked up his cap.

"Get ready, take your gun. Hey, Flerka, here," he called to his dog. "Flerka!"

A dog with long frayed ears, a mongrel between a setter and a house-dog, came out from under the bench. He stretched himself by his master's feet and wagged his tail.

"Why are you sitting there?" cried the hunter

to the forester. "You mean to say you are not going?"

"Where?"

"To help!"

"How can I?" said the forester with a wave of his hand, shuddering all over. "I can't bother about it!"

"Why won't you come?"

"After talking of such dreadful things I won't stir a step into the darkness. Bless them! And what should I go for?"

"What are you afraid of? Haven't you got a gun? Let us go, please do. It's scaring to go alone; it will be more cheerful, the two of us. Do you hear? There was a shout again. Get up!"

"Whatever do you think of me, lad?" wailed the forester. "Do you think I am such a fool to go straight to my undoing?"

"So you are not coming?"

The forester did not answer. The dog, probably hearing a human cry, gave a plaintive whine.

"Are you coming, I ask you?" cried the hunter, rolling his eyes angrily.

"You do keep on, upon my word," said the forester with annoyance. "Go yourself."

"Ugh! . . . low cur," growled the hunter, turning towards the door. "Flerka, here!"

He went out and left the door open. The wind flew into the hut. The flame of the candle flickered uneasily, flared up, and went out.

As he bolted the door after the hunter, the forester saw the puddles in the track, the nearest pine-trees, and the retreating figure of his guest lighted

up by a flash of lightning. Far away he heard the rumble of thunder.

"Holy, holy, holy," whispered the forester, making haste to thrust the thick bolt into the great iron rings. "What weather the Lord has sent us!"

Going back into the room, he felt his way to the stove, lay down, and covered himself from head to foot. Lying under the sheepskin and listening intently, he could no longer hear the human cry, but the peals of thunder kept growing louder and more prolonged. He could hear the big wind-lashed rain-drops pattering angrily on the panes and on the paper of the window.

"He's gone on a fool's errand," he thought, picturing the hunter soaked with rain and stumbling over the tree-stumps. "I bet his teeth are chattering with terror!"

Not more than ten minutes later there was a sound of footsteps, followed by a loud knock at the door.

"Who's there?" cried the forester.

"It's I," he heard the young man's voice. "Unfasten the door."

The forester clambered down from the stove, felt for the candle, and, lighting it, went to the door. The hunter and his dog were drenched to the skin. They had come in for the heaviest of the downpour, and now the water ran from them as from washed clothes before they have been wrung out.

"What was it?" asked the forester.

"A peasant woman driving in a cart; she had got off the road . . ." answered the young man,

struggling with his breathlessness. "She was caught in a thicket."

"Ah, the silly thing! She was frightened, then. . . . Well, did you put her on the road?"

"I don't care to talk to a scoundrel like you."

The young man flung his wet cap on the bench and went on:

"I know now that you are a scoundrel and the lowest of men. And you a keeper, too, getting a salary! You blackguard!"

The forester slunk with a guilty step to the stove, cleared his throat, and lay down. The young man sat on the bench, thought a little, and lay down on it full length. Not long afterwards he got up, put out the candle, and lay down again. During a particularly loud clap of thunder he turned over, spat on the floor, and growled out:

"He's afraid. . . . And what if the woman were being murdered? Whose business is it to defend her? And he an old man, too, and a Christian. . . . He's a pig and nothing else."

The forester cleared his throat and heaved a deep sigh. Somewhere in the darkness Flerka shook his wet coat vigorously, which sent drops of water flying about all over the room.

"So you wouldn't care if the woman were murdered?" the hunter went on. "Well—strike me, God—I had no notion you were that sort of man. . . ."

A silence followed. The thunderstorm was by now over and the thunder came from far away, but it was still raining.

"And suppose it hadn't been a woman but you

shouting 'Help!'?" said the hunter, breaking the silence. "How would you feel, you beast, if no one ran to your aid? You have upset me with your meanness, plague take you!"

After another long interval the hunter said:

"You must have money to be afraid of people! A man who is poor is not likely to be afraid. . . ."

"For those words you will answer before God," Artyom said hoarsely from the stove. "I have no money."

"I dare say! Scoundrels always have money. . . . Why are you afraid of people, then? So you must have! I'd like to take and rob you for spite, to teach you a lesson! . . ."

Artyom slipped noiselessly from the stove, lighted a candle, and sat down under the holy image. He was pale and did not take his eyes off the hunter.

"Here, I'll rob you," said the hunter, getting up. "What do you think about it? Fellows like you want a lesson. Tell me, where is your money hidden?"

Artyom drew his legs up under him and blinked.

"What are you wriggling for? Where is your money hidden? Have you lost your tongue, you fool? Why don't you answer?"

The young man jumped up and went up to the forester.

"He is blinking like an owl! Well? Give me your money, or I will shoot you with my gun."

"Why do you keep on at me?" squealed the forester, and big tears rolled from his eyes. "What's the reason of it? God sees all! You will have to answer, for every word you say, to

God. You have no right whatever to ask for my money."

The young man looked at Artyom's tearful face, frowned, and walked up and down the hut, then angrily clapped his cap on his head and picked up his gun.

"Ugh! . . . ugh! . . . it makes me sick to look at you," he filtered through his teeth. "I can't bear the sight of you. I won't sleep in your house, anyway. Good-bye! Hey, Flerka!"

The door slammed and the troublesome visitor went out with his dog. . . . Artyom bolted the door after him, crossed himself, and lay down.

AN ACTOR'S END





## AN ACTOR'S END

SHTCHIPTSOV, the "heavy father" and "good-hearted simpleton," a tall and thick-set old man, not so much distinguished by his talents as an actor as by his exceptional physical strength, had a desperate quarrel with the manager during the performance, and just when the storm of words was at its height felt as though something had snapped in his chest. Zhukov, the manager, as a rule began at the end of every heated discussion to laugh hysterically and to fall into a swoon; on this occasion, however, Shtchiptsov did not remain for this climax, but hurried home. The high words and the sensation of something ruptured in his chest so agitated him as he left the theatre that he forgot to wash off his paint, and did nothing but take off his beard.

When he reached his hotel room, Shtchiptsov spent a long time pacing up and down, then sat down on the bed, propped his head on his fists, and sank into thought. He sat like that without stirring or uttering a sound till two o'clock the next afternoon, when Sigaev, the comic man, walked into his room.

"Why is it you did not come to the rehearsal, Booby Ivanitch?" the comic man began, panting and filling the room with fumes of vodka. "Where have you been?"

Shtchiptsov made no answer, but simply stared at

the comic man with lustreless eyes, under which there were smudges of paint.

"You might at least have washed your phiz!" Sigaev went on. "You are a disgraceful sight! Have you been boozing, or . . . are you ill, or what? But why don't you speak? I am asking you: are you ill?"

Shtchiptsov did not speak. In spite of the paint on his face, the comic man could not help noticing his striking pallor, the drops of sweat on his forehead, and the twitching of his lips. His hands and feet were trembling too, and the whole huge figure of the "good-natured simpleton" looked somehow crushed and flattened. The comic man took a rapid glance round the room, but saw neither bottle nor flask nor any other suspicious vessel.

"I say, Mishutka, you know you are ill!" he said in a flutter. "Strike me dead, you are ill! You don't look yourself!"

Shtchiptsov remained silent and stared disconsolately at the floor.

"You must have caught cold," said Sigaev, taking him by the hand. "Oh, dear, how hot your hands are! What's the trouble?"

"I wa-ant to go home," muttered Shtchiptsov.

"But you are at home now, aren't you?"

"No. . . . To Vyazma. . . ."

"Oh, my, anywhere else! It would take you three years to get to your Vyazma. . . . What? do you want to go and see your daddy and mummy? I'll be bound, they've kicked the bucket years ago, and you won't find their graves. . . ."

"My ho-ome's there."

"Come, it's no good giving way to the dismal dumps. These neurotic feelings are the limit, old man. You must get well, for you have to play Mitka in 'The Terrible Tsar' to-morrow. There is nobody else to do it. Drink something hot and take some castor-oil? Have you got the money for some castor-oil? Or, stay, I'll run and buy some."

The comic man fumbled in his pockets, found a fifteen-kopeck piece, and ran to the chemist's. A quarter of an hour later he came back.

"Come, drink it," he said, holding the bottle to the "heavy father's" mouth. "Drink it straight out of the bottle. . . . All at a go! That's the way. . . . Now nibble at a clove that your very soul mayn't stink of the filthy stuff."

The comic man sat a little longer with his sick friend, then kissed him tenderly, and went away. Towards evening the *jeune premier*, Brama-Glinsky, ran in to see Shtchiptsov. The gifted actor was wearing a pair of prunella boots, had a glove on his left hand, was smoking a cigar, and even smelt of heliotrope, yet nevertheless he strongly suggested a traveller cast away in some land in which there were neither baths nor laundresses nor tailors. . . .

"I hear you are ill?" he said to Shtchiptsov, twirling round on his heel. "What's wrong with you? What's wrong with you, really? . . ."

Shtchiptsov did not speak nor stir.

"Why don't you speak? Do you feel giddy? Oh well, don't talk, I won't pester you . . . don't talk. . . ."

Brama-Glinsky (that was his stage name, in his passport he was called Guskov) walked away to the

window, put his hands in his pockets, and fell to gazing into the street. Before his eyes stretched an immense waste, bounded by a grey fence beside which ran a perfect forest of last year's burdocks. Beyond the waste ground was a dark, deserted factory, with windows boarded up. A belated jackdaw was flying round the chimney. This dreary, lifeless scene was beginning to be veiled in the dusk of evening.

"I must go home!" the *jeune premier* heard.

"Where is home?"

"To Vyazma . . . to my home. . . ."

"It is a thousand miles to Vyazma . . . my boy," sighed Brama-Glinsky, drumming on the window-pane. "And what do you want to go to Vyazma for?"

"I want to die there."

"What next! Now he's dying! He has fallen ill for the first time in his life, and already he fancies that his last hour is come. . . . No, my boy, no cholera will carry off a buffalo like you. You'll live to be a hundred. . . . Where's the pain?"

"There's no pain, but I . . . feel . . ."

"You don't feel anything, it all comes from being too healthy. Your surplus energy upsets you. You ought to get jolly tight—drink, you know, till your whole inside is topsy-turvy. Getting drunk is wonderfully restoring. . . . Do you remember how screwed you were at Rostov on the Don? Good Lord, the very thought of it is alarming! Sashka and I together could only just carry in the barrel, and you emptied it alone, and even sent for rum

afterwards. . . . You got so drunk you were catching devils in a sack and pulled a lamp-post up by the roots. Do you remember? Then you went off to beat the Greeks. . . .”

Under the influence of these agreeable reminiscences Shtchiptsov's face brightened a little and his eyes began to shine.

“And do you remember how I beat Savoikin the manager?” he muttered, raising his head. “But there! I've beaten thirty-three managers in my time, and I can't remember how many smaller fry. And what managers they were! Men who would not permit the very winds to touch them! I've beaten two celebrated authors and one painter!”

“What are you crying for?”

“At Kherson I killed a horse with my fists. And at Taganrog some roughs fell upon me at night, fifteen of them. I took off their caps and they followed me, begging: ‘Uncle, give us back our caps.’ That's how I used to go on.”

“What are you crying for, then, you silly?”

“But now it's all over : . . . I feel it. If only I could go to Vyazma!”

A pause followed. After a silence Shtchiptsov suddenly jumped up and seized his cap. He looked distraught.

“Good-bye! I am going to Vyazma!” he articulated, staggering.

“And the money for the journey?”

“H'm! . . . I shall go on foot!”

“You are crazy. . . .”

The two men looked at each other, probably because the same thought—of the boundless plains,

the unending forests and swamps—struck both of them at once.

“Well, I see you have gone off your head,” the *jeune premier* commented. “I’ll tell you what, old man. . . . First thing, go to bed, then drink some brandy and tea to put you into a sweat. And some castor-oil, of course. Stay, where am I to get some brandy?”

Brama-Glinsky thought a minute, then made up his mind to go to a shopkeeper called Madame Tsitrinnikov to try and get it from her on tick: who knows? perhaps the woman would feel for them and let them have it. The *jeune premier* went off, and half an hour later returned with a bottle of brandy and some castor-oil. Shtchiptsov was sitting motionless, as before, on the bed, gazing dumbly at the floor. He drank the castor-oil offered him by his friend like an automaton, with no consciousness of what he was doing. Like an automaton he sat afterwards at the table, and drank tea and brandy; mechanically he emptied the whole bottle and let the *jeune premier* put him to bed. The latter covered him up with a quilt and an overcoat, advised him to get into a perspiration, and went away.

The night came on; Shtchiptsov had drunk a great deal of brandy, but he did not sleep. He lay motionless under the quilt and stared at the dark ceiling; then, seeing the moon looking in at the window, he turned his eyes from the ceiling towards the companion of the earth, and lay so with open eyes till the morning. At nine o’clock in the morning Zhukov, the manager, ran in.

“What has put it into your head to be ill, my

angel?" he cackled, wrinkling up his nose. "Aie, aie! A man with your physique has no business to be ill! For shame, for shame! Do you know, I was quite frightened. 'Can our conversation have had such an effect on him?' I wondered. My dear soul, I hope it's not through me you've fallen ill! You know you gave me as good . . . er . . . And, besides, comrades can never get on without words. You called me all sorts of names . . . and have gone at me with your fists too, and yet I am fond of you! Upon my soul, I am. I respect you and am fond of you! Explain, my angel, why I am so fond of you. You are neither kith nor kin nor wife, but as soon as I heard you had fallen ill it cut me to the heart."

Zhukov spent a long time declaring his affection, then fell to kissing the invalid, and finally was so overcome by his feelings that he began laughing hysterically, and was even meaning to fall into a swoon, but, probably remembering that he was not at home nor at the theatre, put off the swoon to a more convenient opportunity and went away.

Soon after him Adabashev, the tragic actor, a dingy, short-sighted individual who talked through his nose, made his appearance. . . . For a long while he looked at Shtchiptsov, for a long while he pondered, and at last he made a discovery.

"Do you know what, Mifa?" he said, pronouncing through his nose "f" instead of "sh," and assuming a mysterious expression. "Do you know what? You ought to have a dose of castor-oil!"

Shtchiptsov was silent. He remained silent, too,



a little later as the tragic actor poured the loathsome oil into his mouth. Two hours later Yevlampy, or, as the actors for some reason called him, Rigoletto, the hairdresser of the company, came into the room. He too, like the tragic man, stared at Shtchiptsov for a long time, then sighed like a steam-engine, and slowly and deliberately began untying a parcel he had brought with him. In it there were twenty cups and several little flasks.

"You should have sent for me and I would have cupped you long ago," he said, tenderly baring Shtchiptsov's chest. "It is easy to neglect illness."

Thereupon Rigoletto stroked the broad chest of the "heavy father" and covered it all over with suction cups.

"Yes . . ." he said, as after this operation he packed up his paraphernalia, crimson with Shtchiptsov's blood. "You should have sent for me, and I would have come. . . . You needn't trouble about payment. . . . I do it from sympathy. Where are you to get the money if that idol won't pay you? Now, please take these drops. They are nice drops! And now you must have a dose of this castor-oil. It's the real thing. That's right! I hope it will do you good. Well, now, good-bye. . . ."

Rigoletto took his parcel and withdrew, pleased that he had been of assistance to a fellow-creature.

The next morning Sigaev, the comic man, going in to see Shtchiptsov, found him in a terrible condition. He was lying under his coat, breathing in gasps, while his eyes strayed over the ceiling. In his hands he was crushing convulsively the crumpled quilt.

"To Vyazma!" he whispered, when he saw the comic man. "To Vyazma."

"Come, I don't like that, old man!" said the comic man, flinging up his hands. "You see . . . you see . . . you see, old man, that's not the thing! Excuse me, but . . . it's positively stupid. . . ."

"To go to Vyazma! My God, to Vyazma!"

"I . . . I did not expect it of you," the comic man muttered, utterly distracted. "What the deuce do you want to collapse like this for? Aie . . . aie . . . aie! . . . that's not the thing. A giant as tall as a watch-tower, and crying. Is it the thing for actors to cry?"

"No wife nor children," muttered Shtchiptsov. "I ought not to have gone for an actor, but have stayed at Vyazma. My life has been wasted, Semyon! Oh, to be in Vyazma!"

"Aie . . . aie . . . aie! . . . that's not the thing! You see, it's stupid . . . contemptible indeed!"

Recovering his composure and setting his feelings in order, Sigaev began comforting Shtchiptsov, telling him untruly that his comrades had decided to send him to the Crimea at their expense, and so on, but the sick man did not listen and kept muttering about Vyazma. . . . At last, with a wave of his hand, the comic man began talking about Vyazma himself to comfort the invalid.

"It's a fine town," he said soothingly, "a capital town, old man! It's famous for its cakes. The cakes are classical, but—between ourselves—h'm!—they are a bit groggy. For a whole week after

eating them I was . . . h'm! . . . But what is fine there is the merchants! They are something like merchants. When they treat you they do treat you!"

The comic man talked while Shtchiptsov listened in silence and nodded his head approvingly.

Towards evening he died.

THE TALES OF CHEKHOV

THE WIFE  
AND OTHER STORIES



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AND OTHER STORIES

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THE WIFE



# THE TALES OF CHEKHOV

## THE WIFE

### I

I RECEIVED the following letter:

“DEAR SIR, PAVEL ANDREITCH!

“Not far from you — that is to say, in the village of Pestrovo — very distressing incidents are taking place, concerning which I feel it my duty to write to you. All the peasants of that village sold their cottages and all their belongings, and set off for the province of Tomsk, but did not succeed in getting there, and have come back. Here, of course, they have nothing now; everything belongs to other people. They have settled three or four families in a hut, so that there are no less than fifteen persons of both sexes in each hut, not counting the young children; and the long and the short of it is, there is nothing to eat. There is famine and there is a terrible pestilence of hunger, or spotted, typhus; literally every one is stricken. The doctor's assistant says one goes into a cottage and what does one see? Every one is sick, every one delirious, some laughing, others frantic; the huts are filthy; there is no one to fetch them water, no one to give

them a drink, and nothing to eat but frozen potatoes. What can Sobol (our Zemstvo doctor) and his lady assistant do when more than medicine the peasants need bread which they have not? The District Zemstvo refuses to assist them, on the ground that their names have been taken off the register of this district, and that they are now reckoned as inhabitants of Tomsk; and, besides, the Zemstvo has no money.

“Laying these facts before you, and knowing your humanity, I beg you not to refuse immediate help.

“Your well-wisher.”

Obviously the letter was written by the doctor with the animal name<sup>1</sup> or his lady assistant. Zemstvo doctors and their assistants go on for years growing more and more convinced every day that they can do *nothing*, and yet continue to receive their salaries from people who are living upon frozen potatoes, and consider they have a right to judge whether I am humane or not.

Worried by the anonymous letter and by the fact that peasants came every morning to the servants' kitchen and went down on their knees there, and that twenty sacks of rye had been stolen at night out of the barn, the wall having first been broken in, and by the general depression which was fostered by conversations, newspapers, and horrible weather — worried by all this, I worked listlessly and ineffectively. I was writing “A History of Railways”;

<sup>1</sup> *Sobol* in Russian means “sable-marten.”—TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

I had to read a great number of Russian and foreign books, pamphlets, and articles in the magazines, to make calculations, to refer to logarithms, to think and to write; then again to read, calculate, and think; but as soon as I took up a book or began to think, my thoughts were in a muddle, my eyes began blinking, I would get up from the table with a sigh and begin walking about the big rooms of my deserted country-house. When I was tired of walking about I would stand still at my study window, and, looking across the wide courtyard, over the pond and the bare young birch-trees and the great fields covered with recently fallen, thawing snow, I saw on a low hill on the horizon a group of mud-coloured huts from which a black muddy road ran down in an irregular streak through the white field. That was Pestrovo, concerning which my anonymous correspondent had written to me. If it had not been for the crows who, foreseeing rain or snowy weather, floated cawing over the pond and the fields, and the tapping in the carpenter's shed, this bit of the world about which such a fuss was being made would have seemed like the Dead Sea; it was all so still, motionless, lifeless, and dreary!

My uneasiness hindered me from working and concentrating myself; I did not know what it was, and chose to believe it was disappointment. I had actually given up my post in the Department of Ways and Communications, and had come here into the country expressly to live in peace and to devote myself to writing on social questions. It had long been my cherished dream. And now I had to say

good-bye both to peace and to literature, to give up everything and think only of the peasants. And that was inevitable, because I was convinced that there was absolutely nobody in the district except me to help the starving. The people surrounding me were uneducated, unintellectual, callous, for the most part dishonest, or if they were honest, they were unreasonable and unpractical like my wife, for instance. It was impossible to rely on such people, it was impossible to leave the peasants to their fate, so that the only thing left to do was to submit to necessity and see to setting the peasants to rights myself.

I began by making up my mind to give five thousand roubles to the assistance of the starving peasants. And that did not decrease, but only aggravated my uneasiness. As I stood by the window or walked about the rooms I was tormented by the question which had not occurred to me before: how this money was to be spent. To have bread bought and to go from hut to hut distributing it was more than one man could do, to say nothing of the risk that in your haste you might give twice as much to one who was well-fed or to one who was making money out of his fellows as to the hungry. I had no faith in the local officials. All these district captains and tax inspectors were young men, and I distrusted them as I do all young people of today, who are materialistic and without ideals. The District Zemstvo, the Peasant Courts, and all the local institutions, inspired in me not the slightest desire to appeal to them for assistance. I knew that all

these institutions who were busily engaged in picking out plums from the Zemstvo and the Government pie had their mouths always wide open for a bite at any other pie that might turn up.

The idea occurred to me to invite the neighbouring landowners and suggest to them to organize in my house something like a committee or a centre to which all subscriptions could be forwarded, and from which assistance and instructions could be distributed throughout the district; such an organization, which would render possible frequent consultations and free control on a big scale, would completely meet my views. But I imagined the lunches, the dinners, the suppers and the noise, the waste of time, the verbosity and the bad taste which that mixed provincial company would inevitably bring into my house, and I made haste to reject my idea.

As for the members of my own household, the last thing I could look for was help or support from them. Of my father's household, of the household of my childhood, once a big and noisy family, no one remained but the governess Mademoiselle Marie, or, as she was now called, Marya Gerasimovna, an absolutely insignificant person. She was a precise little old lady of seventy, who wore a light grey dress and a cap with white ribbons, and looked like a china doll. She always sat in the drawing-room reading.

Whenever I passed by her, she would say, knowing the reason for my brooding:

"What can you expect, Pasha? I told you how



it would be before. You can judge from our servants."

My wife, Natalya Gavrilovna, lived on the lower storey, all the rooms of which she occupied. She slept, had her meals, and received her visitors downstairs in her own rooms, and took not the slightest interest in how I dined, or slept, or whom I saw. Our relations with one another were simple and not strained, but cold, empty, and dreary as relations are between people who have been so long estranged, that even living under the same roof gives no semblance of nearness. There was no trace now of the passionate and tormenting love — at one time sweet, at another bitter as wormwood — which I had once felt for Natalya Gavrilovna. There was nothing left, either, of the outbursts of the past — the loud altercations, upbraidings, complaints, and gusts of hatred which had usually ended in my wife's going abroad or to her own people, and in my sending money in small but frequent instalments that I might sting her pride oftener. (My proud and sensitive wife and her family live at my expense, and much as she would have liked to do so, my wife could not refuse my money: that afforded me satisfaction and was one comfort in my sorrow.) Now when we chanced to meet in the corridor downstairs or in the yard, I bowed, she smiled graciously. We spoke of the weather, said that it seemed time to put in the double windows, and that some one with bells on their harness had driven over the dam. And at such times I read in her face: "I am faithful to you and am not dis-

gracing your good name which you think so much about; you are sensible and do not worry me; we are quits."

I assured myself that my love had died long ago, that I was too much absorbed in my work to think seriously of my relations with my wife. But, alas! that was only what I imagined. When my wife talked aloud downstairs I listened intently to her voice, though I could not distinguish one word. When she played the piano downstairs I stood up and listened. When her carriage or her saddle-horse was brought to the door, I went to the window and waited to see her out of the house; then I watched her get into her carriage or mount her horse and ride out of the yard. I felt that there was something wrong with me, and was afraid the expression of my eyes or my face might betray me. I looked after my wife and then watched for her to come back that I might see again from the window her face, her shoulders, her fur coat, her hat. I felt dreary, sad, infinitely regretful, and felt inclined in her absence to walk through her rooms, and longed that the problem that my wife and I had not been able to solve because our characters were incompatible, should solve itself in the natural way as soon as possible — that is, that this beautiful woman of twenty-seven might make haste and grow old, and that my head might be grey and bald.

One day at lunch my bailiff informed me that the Pestrovo peasants had begun to pull the thatch off the roofs to feed their cattle. Marya Gerasimovna looked at me in alarm and perplexity.

"What can I do?" I said to her. "One cannot fight single-handed, and I have never experienced such loneliness as I do now. I would give a great deal to find one man in the whole province on whom I could rely."

"Invite Ivan Ivanitch," said Marya Gerasimovna.

"To be sure!" I thought, delighted. "That is an idea! *C'est raison*," I hummed, going to my study to write to Ivan Ivanitch. "*C'est raison, c'est raison.*"

## II

Of all the mass of acquaintances who, in this house twenty-five to thirty-five years ago, had eaten, drunk, masqueraded, fallen in love, married bored us with accounts of their splendid packs of hounds and horses, the only one still living was Ivan Ivanitch Bragin. At one time he had been very active, talkative, noisy, and given to falling in love, and had been famous for his extreme views and for the peculiar charm of his face, which fascinated men as well as women; now he was an old man, had grown corpulent, and was living out his days with neither views nor charm. He came the day after getting my letter, in the evening just as the samovar was brought into the dining-room and little Marya Gerasimovna had begun slicing the lemon.

"I am very glad to see you, my dear fellow," I said gaily, meeting him. "Why, you are stouter than ever."

"It isn't getting stout; it's swelling," he answered. "The bees must have stung me."

With the familiarity of a man laughing at his own fatness, he put his arms round my waist and laid on my breast his big soft head, with the hair combed down on the forehead like a Little Russian's, and went off into a thin, aged laugh.

"And you go on getting younger," he said through his laugh. "I wonder what dye you use for your hair and beard; you might let me have some of it." Sniffing and gasping, he embraced me and kissed me on the cheek. "You might give me some of it," he repeated. "Why, you are not forty, are you?"

"Alas, I am forty-six!" I said, laughing.

Ivan Ivanitch smelt of tallow candles and cooking, and that suited him. His big, puffy, slow-moving body was swathed in a long frock-coat like a coachman's full coat, with a high waist, and with hooks and eyes instead of buttons, and it would have been strange if he had smelt of eau-de-Cologne, for instance. In his long, unshaven, bluish double chin, which looked like a thistle, his goggle eyes, his shortness of breath, and in the whole of his clumsy, slovenly figure, in his voice, his laugh, and his words, it was difficult to recognize the graceful, interesting talker who used in old days to make the husbands of the district jealous on account of their wives.

"I am in great need of your assistance, my friend," I said, when we were sitting in the dining-room, drinking tea. "I want to organize relief

for the starving peasants, and I don't know how to set about it. So perhaps you will be so kind as to advise me."

"Yes, yes, yes," said Ivan Ivanitch, sighing. "To be sure, to be sure, to be sure. . . ."

"I would not have worried you, my dear fellow, but really there is no one here but you I can appeal to. You know what people are like about here."

"To be sure, to be sure, to be sure. . . . Yes."

I thought that as we were going to have a serious, business consultation in which any one might take part, regardless of their position or personal relations, why should I not invite Natalya Gavrilovna.

"*Tres faciunt collegium,*" I said gaily. "What if we were to ask Natalya Gavrilovna? What do you think? Fenya," I said, turning to the maid, "ask Natalya Gavrilovna to come upstairs to us, if possible at once. Tell her it's a very important matter."

A little later Natalya Gavrilovna came in. I got up to meet her and said:

"Excuse us for troubling you, Natalie. We are discussing a very important matter, and we had the happy thought that we might take advantage of your good advice, which you will not refuse to give us. Please sit down."

Ivan Ivanitch kissed her hand while she kissed his forehead; then, when we all sat down to the table, he, looking at her tearfully and blissfully, craned forward to her and kissed her hand again. She was dressed in black, her hair was carefully arranged, and she smelt of fresh scent. She had

evidently dressed to go out or was expecting somebody. Coming into the dining-room, she held out her hand to me with simple friendliness, and smiled to me as graciously as she did to Ivan Ivanitch — that pleased me; but as she talked she moved her fingers, often and abruptly leaned back in her chair and talked rapidly, and this jerkiness in her words and movements irritated me and reminded me of her native town — Odessa, where the society, men and women alike, had wearied me by its bad taste.

“I want to do something for the famine-stricken peasants,” I began, and after a brief pause I went on: “Money, of course, is a great thing, but to confine oneself to subscribing money, and with that to be satisfied, would be evading the worst of the trouble. Help must take the form of money, but the most important thing is a proper and sound organization. Let us think it over, my friends, and do something.”

Natalya Gavrilovna looked at me inquiringly and shrugged her shoulders as though to say, “What do I know about it?”

“Yes, yes, famine . . .” muttered Ivan Ivanitch. “Certainly . . . yes.”

“It’s a serious position,” I said, “and assistance is needed as soon as possible. I imagine the first point among the principles which we must work out ought to be promptitude. We must act on the military principles of judgment, promptitude, and energy.”

“Yes, promptitude . . .” repeated Ivan Ivanitch in a drowsy and listless voice, as though he



were dropping asleep. "Only one can't do anything. The crops have failed, and so what's the use of all your judgment and energy? . . . It's the elements. . . . You can't go against God and fate. . . ."

"Yes, but that's what man has a head for, to contend against the elements."

"Eh? Yes . . . that's so, to be sure. . . . Yes."

Ivan Ivanitch sneezed into his handkerchief, brightened up, and as though he had just woken up, looked round at my wife and me.

"My crops have failed, too." He laughed a thin little laugh and gave a sly wink as though this were really funny. "No money, no corn, and a yard full of labourers like Count Sheremetyev's. I want to kick them out, but I haven't the heart to."

Natalya Gavrilovna laughed, and began questioning him about his private affairs. Her presence gave me a pleasure such as I had not felt for a long time, and I was afraid to look at her for fear my eyes would betray my secret feeling. Our relations were such that that feeling might seem surprising and ridiculous.

She laughed and talked with Ivan Ivanitch without being in the least disturbed that she was in my room and that I was not laughing.

"And so, my friends, what are we to do?" I asked after waiting for a pause. "I suppose before we do anything else we had better immediately open a subscription-list. We will write to our friends in the capitals and in Odessa, Natalie, and

ask them to subscribe. When we have got together a little sum we will begin buying corn and fodder for the cattle; and you, Ivan Ivanitch, will you be so kind as to undertake distributing the relief? Entirely relying on your characteristic tact and efficiency, we will only venture to express a desire that before you give any relief you make acquaintance with the details of the case on the spot, and also, which is very important, you should be careful that corn should be distributed only to those who are in genuine need, and not to the drunken, the idle, or the dishonest."

"Yes, yes, yes . . ." muttered Ivan Ivanitch. "To be sure, to be sure."

"Well, one won't get much done with that slobbering wreck," I thought, and I felt irritated.

"I am sick of these famine-stricken peasants, bother them! It's nothing but grievances with them!" Ivan Ivanitch went on, sucking the rind of the lemon. "The hungry have a grievance against those who have enough, and those who have enough have a grievance against the hungry. Yes . . . hunger stupefies and maddens a man and makes him savage; hunger is not a potato. When a man is starving he uses bad language, and steals, and may do worse. . . . One must realize that."

Ivan Ivanitch choked over his tea, coughed, and shook all over with a squeaky, smothered laughter.

"'There was a battle at Pol . . . Poltava,'" he brought out, gesticulating with both hands in protest against the laughter and coughing which prevented him from speaking. "'There was a battle at



Poltava!’ When three years after the Emancipation we had famine in two districts here, Fyodor Fyodoritch came and invited me to go to him. ‘Come along, come along,’ he persisted, and nothing else would satisfy him. ‘Very well, let us go,’ I said. And, so we set off. It was in the evening; there was snow falling. Towards night we were getting near his place, and suddenly from the wood came ‘bang!’ and another time ‘bang!’ ‘Oh, damn it all!’ . . . I jumped out of the sledge, and I saw in the darkness a man running up to me, knee-deep in the snow. I put my arm round his shoulder, like this, and knocked the gun out of his hand. Then another one turned up; I fetched him a knock on the back of his head so that he grunted and flopped with his nose in the snow. I was a sturdy chap then, my fist was heavy; I disposed of two of them, and when I turned round Fyodor was sitting astride of a third. We did not let our three fine fellows go; we tied their hands behind their backs so that they might not do us or themselves any harm, and took the fools into the kitchen. We were angry with them and at the same time ashamed to look at them; they were peasants we knew, and were good fellows; we were sorry for them. They were quite stupid with terror. One was crying and begging our pardon, the second looked like a wild beast and kept swearing, the third knelt down and began to pray. I said to Fedya: ‘Don’t bear them a grudge; let them go, the rascals!’ He fed them, gave them a bushel of flour each, and let them go: ‘Get along with you,’ he said. So that’s

what he did. . . . The Kingdom of Heaven be his and everlasting peace! He understood and did not bear them a grudge; but there were some who did, and how many people they ruined! Yes. . . . Why, over the affair at the Klotchkovs' tavern eleven men were sent to the disciplinary battalion. Yes. . . . And now, look, it's the same thing. Anisyin, the investigating magistrate, stayed the night with me last Thursday, and he told me about some landowner. . . . Yes. . . . They took the wall of his barn to pieces at night and carried off twenty sacks of rye. When the gentleman heard that such a crime had been committed, he sent a telegram to the Governor and another to the police captain, another to the investigating magistrate! . . . Of course, every one is afraid of a man who is fond of litigation. The authorities were in a flutter and there was a general hubbub. Two villages were searched."

"Excuse me, Ivan Ivanitch," I said. "Twenty sacks of rye were stolen from me, and it was I who telegraphed to the Governor. I telegraphed to Petersburg, too. But it was by no means out of love for litigation, as you are pleased to express it, and not because I bore them a grudge. I look at every subject from the point of view of principle. From the point of view of the law, theft is the same whether a man is hungry or not."

"Yes, yes . . ." muttered Ivan Ivanitch in confusion. "Of course. . . To be sure, yes."

Natalya Gavrilovna blushed.

"There are people . . ." she said and stopped;

she made an effort to seem indifferent, but she could not keep it up, and looked into my eyes with the hatred that I know so well. "There are people," she said, "for whom famine and human suffering exist simply that they may vent their hateful and despicable temperaments upon them."

I was confused and shrugged my shoulders.

"I meant to say generally," she went on, "that there are people who are quite indifferent and completely devoid of all feeling of sympathy, yet who do not pass human suffering by, but insist on meddling for fear people should be able to do without them. Nothing is sacred for their vanity."

"There are people," I said softly, "who have an angelic character, but who express their glorious ideas in such a form that it is difficult to distinguish the angel from an Odessa market-woman."

I must confess it was not happily expressed.

My wife looked at me as though it cost her a great effort to hold her tongue. Her sudden outburst, and then her inappropriate eloquence on the subject of my desire to help the famine-stricken peasants, were, to say the least, out of place; when I had invited her to come upstairs I had expected quite a different attitude to me and my intentions.. I cannot say definitely what I had expected, but I had been agreeably agitated by the expectation. Now I saw that to go on speaking about the famine would be difficult and perhaps stupid.

"Yes . . ." Ivan Ivanitch muttered inappropriately. "Burov, the merchant, must have four hundred thousand at least. I said to him: 'Hand

over one or two thousand to the famine. You can't take it with you when you die, anyway.' He was offended. But we all have to die, you know. Death is not a potato."

A silence followed again.

"So there's nothing left for me but to reconcile myself to loneliness," I sighed. "One cannot fight single-handed. Well, I will try single-handed. Let us hope that my campaign against the famine will be more successful than my campaign against indifference."

"I am expected downstairs," said Natalya Gavrilovna.

She got up from the table and turned to Ivan Ivanitch.

"So you will look in upon me downstairs for a minute? I won't say good-bye to you."

And she went away.

Ivan Ivanitch was now drinking his seventh glass of tea, choking, smacking his lips, and sucking sometimes his moustache, sometimes the lemon. He was muttering something drowsily and listlessly, and I did not listen but waited for him to go. At last, with an expression that suggested that he had only come to me to take a cup of tea, he got up and began to take leave. As I saw him out I said:

"And so you have given me no advice."

"Eh? I am a feeble, stupid old man," he answered. "What use would my advice be? You shouldn't worry yourself. . . . I really don't know why you worry yourself. Don't disturb yourself, my dear fellow! Upon my word, there's no need,"

he whispered genuinely and affectionately, soothing me as though I were a child. "Upon my word, there's no need."

"No need? Why, the peasants are pulling the thatch off their huts, and they say there is typhus somewhere already."

"Well, what of it? If there are good crops next year, they'll thatch them again, and if we die of typhus others will live after us. Anyway, we have to die — if not now, later. Don't worry yourself, my dear."

"I can't help worrying myself," I said irritably.

We were standing in the dimly lighted vestibule. Ivan Ivanitch suddenly took me by the elbow, and, preparing to say something evidently very important, looked at me in silence for a couple of minutes.

"Pavel Andreitch!" he said softly, and suddenly in his puffy, set face and dark eyes there was a gleam of the expression for which he had once been famous and which was truly charming. "Pavel Andreitch, I speak to you as a friend: try to be different! One is ill at ease with you, my dear fellow, one really is!"

He looked intently into my face; the charming expression faded away, his eyes grew dim again, and he sniffed and muttered feebly:

"Yes, yes. . . . Excuse an old man. . . . It's all nonsense . . . yes."

As he slowly descended the staircase, spreading out his hands to balance himself and showing me his huge, bulky back and red neck, he gave me the unpleasant impression of a sort of crab.

“You ought to go away, your Excellency,” he muttered. “To Petersburg or abroad. . . . Why should you live here and waste your golden days? You are young, wealthy, and healthy. . . . Yes. . . . Ah, if I were younger I would whisk away like a hare, and snap my fingers at everything.”

## III

My wife's outburst reminded me of our married life together. In old days after every such outburst we felt irresistibly drawn to each other; we would meet and let off all the dynamite that had accumulated in our souls. And now after Ivan Ivanitch had gone away I had a strong impulse to go to my wife. I wanted to go downstairs and tell her that her behaviour at tea had been an insult to me, that she was cruel, petty, and that her plebeian mind had never risen to a comprehension of what *I* was saying and of what *I* was doing. I walked about the rooms a long time thinking of what I would say to her and trying to guess what she would say to me.

That evening, after Ivan Ivanitch went away, I felt in a peculiarly irritating form the uneasiness which had worried me of late. I could not sit down or sit still, but kept walking about in the rooms that were lighted up and keeping near to the one in which Marya Gerasimovna was sitting. I had a feeling very much like that which I had on the North Sea during a storm when every one thought that our ship, which had no freight nor

ballast, would overturn. And that evening I understood that my uneasiness was not disappointment, as I had supposed, but a different feeling, though what exactly I could not say, and that irritated me more than ever.

"I will go to her," I decided. "I can think of a pretext. I shall say that I want to see Ivan Ivanitch; that will be all."

I went downstairs and walked without haste over the carpeted floor through the vestibule and the hall. Ivan Ivanitch was sitting on the sofa in the drawing-room; he was drinking tea again and muttering something. My wife was standing opposite to him and holding on to the back of a chair. There was a gentle, sweet, and docile expression on her face, such as one sees on the faces of people listening to crazy saints or holy men when a peculiar hidden significance is imagined in their vague words and mutterings. There was something morbid, something of a nun's exaltation, in my wife's expression and attitude; and her low-pitched, half-dark rooms with their old-fashioned furniture, with her birds asleep in their cages, and with a smell of geranium, reminded me of the rooms of some abbess or pious old lady.

I went into the drawing-room. My wife showed neither surprise nor confusion, and looked at me calmly and serenely, as though she had known I should come.

"I beg your pardon," I said softly. "I am so glad you have not gone yet, Ivan Ivanitch. I for-



got to ask you, do you know the Christian name of the president of our Zemstvo?"

"Andrey Stanislavovitch. Yes. . . ."

"*Merci*," I said, took out my notebook, and wrote it down.

There followed a silence during which my wife and Ivan Ivanitch were probably waiting for me to go; my wife did not believe that I wanted to know the president's name — I saw that from her eyes.

"Well, I must be going, my beauty," muttered Ivan Ivanitch, after I had walked once or twice across the drawing-room and sat down by the fireplace.

"No," said Natalya Gavrilovna quickly, touching his hand. "Stay another quarter of an hour. . . . Please do!"

Evidently she did not wish to be left alone with me without a witness.

"Oh, well, I'll wait a quarter of an hour, too," I thought.

"Why, it's snowing!" I said, getting up and looking out of window. "A good fall of snow! Ivan Ivanitch" — I went on walking about the room — "I do regret not being a sportsman. I can imagine what a pleasure it must be coursing hares or hunting wolves in snow like this!"

My wife, standing still, watched my movements, looking out of the corner of her eyes without turning her head. She looked as though she thought I had a sharp knife or a revolver in my pocket.



“Ivan Ivanitch, do take me out hunting some day,” I went on softly. “I shall be very, very grateful to you.”

At that moment a visitor came into the room. He was a tall, thick-set gentleman whom I did not know, with a bald head, a big fair beard, and little eyes. From his baggy, crumpled clothes and his manners I took him to be a parish clerk or a teacher, but my wife introduced him to me as Dr. Sobol.

“Very, very glad to make your acquaintance,” said the doctor in a loud tenor voice, shaking hands with me warmly, with a naïve smile. “Very glad!”

He sat down at the table, took a glass of tea, and said in a loud voice:

“Do you happen to have a drop of rum or brandy? Have pity on me, Olya, and look in the cupboard; I am frozen,” he said, addressing the maid.

I sat down by the fire again, looked on, listened, and from time to time put in a word in the general conversation. My wife smiled graciously to the visitors and kept a sharp lookout on me, as though I were a wild beast. She was oppressed by my presence, and this aroused in me jealousy, annoyance, and an obstinate desire to wound her. “Wife, these snug rooms, the place by the fire,” I thought, “are mine, have been mine for years, but some crazy Ivan Ivanitch or Sobol has for some reason more right to them than I. Now I see my wife, not out of window, but close at hand, in ordinary home surroundings that I feel the want of

now I am growing older, and, in spite of her hatred for me, I miss her as years ago in my childhood I used to miss my mother and my nurse. And I feel that now, on the verge of old age, my love for her is purer and loftier than it was in the past; and that is why I want to go up to her, to stamp hard on her toe with my heel, to hurt her and smile as I do it."

"Monsieur Marten," I said, addressing the doctor, "how many hospitals have we in the district?"

"Sobol," my wife corrected.

"Two," answered Sobol.

"And how many deaths are there every year in each hospital?"

"Pavel Andreitch, I want to speak to you," said my wife.

She apologized to the visitors and went to the next room. I got up and followed her.

"You will go upstairs to your own rooms this minute," she said.

"You are ill-bred," I said to her.

"You will go upstairs to your own rooms this very minute," she repeated sharply, and she looked into my face with hatred.

She was standing so near that if I had stooped a little my beard would have touched her face.

"What is the matter?" I asked. "What harm have I done all at once?"

Her chin quivered, she hastily wiped her eyes, and, with a cursory glance at the looking-glass, whispered:

“The old story is beginning all over again. Of course you won’t go away. Well, do as you like. I’ll go away myself, and you stay.”

We returned to the drawing-room, she with a resolute face, while I shrugged my shoulders and tried to smile. There were some more visitors — an elderly lady and a young man in spectacles. Without greeting the new arrivals or taking leave of the others, I went off to my own rooms.

After what had happened at tea and then again downstairs, it became clear to me that our “family happiness,” which we had begun to forget about in the course of the last two years, was through some absurd and trivial reason beginning all over again, and that neither I nor my wife could now stop ourselves; and that next day or the day after, the outburst of hatred would, as I knew by experience of past years, be followed by something revolting which would upset the whole order of our lives. “So it seems that during these two years we have grown no wiser, colder, or calmer,” I thought as I began walking about the rooms. “So there will again be tears, outcries, curses, packing up, going abroad, then the continual sickly fear that she will disgrace me with some coxcomb out there, Italian or Russian, refusing a passport, letters, utter loneliness, missing her, and in five years old age, grey hairs.” I walked about, imagining what was really impossible — her, grown handsomer, stouter, embracing a man I did not know. By now convinced that that would certainly happen, “Why,” I asked myself, “Why, in one of our long past quar-

rels, had not I given her a divorce, or why had she not at that time left me altogether? I should not have had this yearning for her now, this hatred, this anxiety; and I should have lived out my life quietly, working and not worrying about anything."

A carriage with two lamps drove into the yard, then a big sledge with three horses. My wife was evidently having a party.

Till midnight everything was quiet downstairs and I heard nothing, but at midnight there was a sound of moving chairs and a clatter of crockery. So there was supper. Then the chairs moved again, and through the floor I heard a noise; they seemed to be shouting hurrah. Marya Gerasimovna was already asleep and I was quite alone in the whole upper storey; the portraits of my forefathers, cruel, insignificant people, looked at me from the walls of the drawing-room, and the reflection of my lamp in the window winked unpleasantly. And with a feeling of jealousy and envy for what was going on downstairs, I listened and thought: "I am master here; if I like, I can in a moment turn out all that fine crew." But I knew that all that was nonsense, that I could not turn out any one, and the word "master" had no meaning. One may think oneself master, married, rich, a kammer-junker, as much as one likes, and at the same time not know what it means.

After supper some one downstairs began singing in a tenor voice.

"Why, nothing special has happened," I tried to persuade myself. "Why am I so upset? I won't

go downstairs tomorrow, that's all; and that will be the end of our quarrel."

At a quarter past one I went to bed.

"Have the visitors downstairs gone?" I asked Alexey as he was undressing me.

"Yes, sir, they've gone."

"And why were they shouting hurrah?"

"Alexey Dmitritch Mahonov subscribed for the famine fund a thousand bushels of flour and a thousand roubles. And the old lady — I don't know her name — promised to set up a soup kitchen on her estate to feed a hundred and fifty people. Thank God . . . Natalya Gavrilovna has been pleased to arrange that all the gentry should assemble every Friday."

"To assemble here, downstairs?"

"Yes, sir. Before supper they read a list: since August up to today Natalya Gavrilovna has collected eight thousand roubles, besides corn. Thank God. . . . What I think is that if our mistress does take trouble for the salvation of her soul, she will soon collect a lot. There are plenty of rich people here."

Dismissing Alexey, I put out the light and drew the bedclothes over my head.

"After all, why am I so troubled?" I thought. "What force draws me to the starving peasants like a butterfly to a flame? I don't know them, I don't understand them; I have never seen them and I don't like them. Why this uneasiness?"

I suddenly crossed myself under the quilt.

"But what a woman she is!" I said to myself,

thinking of my wife. "There's a regular committee held in the house without my knowing. Why this secrecy? Why this conspiracy? What have I done to them? Ivan Ivanitch is right — I must go away."

Next morning I woke up firmly resolved to go away. The events of the previous day — the conversation at tea, my wife, Sobol, the supper, my apprehensions — worried me, and I felt glad to think of getting away from the surroundings which reminded me of all that. While I was drinking my coffee the bailiff gave me a long report on various matters. The most agreeable item he saved for the last.

"The thieves who stole our rye have been found," he announced with a smile. "The magistrate arrested three peasants at Pestrovo yesterday."

"Go away!" I shouted at him; and à propos of nothing, I picked up the cake-basket and flung it on the floor.

#### IV

After lunch I rubbed my hands, and thought I must go to my wife and tell her that I was going away. Why? Who cared? Nobody cares, I answered, but why shouldn't I tell her, especially as it would give her nothing but pleasure? Besides, to go away after our yesterday's quarrel without saying a word would not be quite tactful: she might think that I was frightened of her, and perhaps the thought that she has driven me out of my house

may weigh upon her. It would be just as well, too, to tell her that I subscribe five thousand, and to give her some advice about the organization, and to warn her that her inexperience in such a complicated and responsible matter might lead to most lamentable results. In short, I wanted to see my wife, and while I thought of various pretexts for going to her, I had a firm conviction in my heart that I should do so.

It was still light when I went in to her, and the lamps had not yet been lighted. She was sitting in her study, which led from the drawing-room to her bedroom, and, bending low over the table, was writing something quickly. Seeing me, she started, got up from the table, and remained standing in an attitude such as to screen her papers from me.

"I beg your pardon, I have only come for a minute," I said, and, I don't know why, I was overcome with embarrassment. "I have learnt by chance that you are organizing relief for the famine, Natalie."

"Yes, I am. But that's my business," she answered.

"Yes, it is your business," I said softly. "I am glad of it, for it just fits in with my intentions. I beg your permission to take part in it."

"Forgive me, I cannot let you do it," she said in response, and looked away.

"Why not, Natalie?" I said quietly. "Why not? I, too, am well fed and I, too, want to help the hungry."

"I don't know what it has to do with you," she



said with a contemptuous smile, shrugging her shoulders. "Nobody asks you."

"Nobody asks you, either, and yet you have got up a regular committee in *my* house," I said.

"I am asked, but you can have my word for it no one will ever ask you. Go and help where you are not known."

"For God's sake, don't talk to me in that tone." I tried to be mild, and besought myself most earnestly not to lose my temper. For the first few minutes I felt glad to be with my wife. I felt an atmosphere of youth, of home, of feminine softness, of the most refined elegance — exactly what was lacking on my floor and in my life altogether. My wife was wearing a pink flannel dressing-gown; it made her look much younger, and gave a softness to her rapid and sometimes abrupt movements. Her beautiful dark hair, the mere sight of which at one time stirred me to passion, had from sitting so long with her head bent come loose from the comb and was untidy, but, to my eyes, that only made it look more rich and luxuriant. All this, though is banal to the point of vulgarity. Before me stood an ordinary woman, perhaps neither beautiful nor elegant, but this was my wife with whom I had once lived, and with whom I should have been living to this day if it had not been for her unfortunate character; she was the one human being on the terrestrial globe whom I loved. At this moment, just before going away, when I knew that I should no longer see her even through the window, she seemed to me fascinating even as she was, cold



and forbidding, answering me with a proud and contemptuous mockery. I was proud of her, and confessed to myself that to go away from her was terrible and impossible.

“Pavel Andreitch,” she said after a brief silence, “for two years we have not interfered with each other but have lived quietly. Why do you suddenly feel it necessary to go back to the past? Yesterday you came to insult and humiliate me,” she went on, raising her voice, and her face flushed and her eyes flamed with hatred; “but restrain yourself; do not do it, Pavel Andreitch! Tomorrow I will send in a petition and they will give me a passport, and I will go away; I will go, I will go! I’ll go into a convent, into a widows’ home, into an almshouse. . . .”

“Into a lunatic asylum!” I cried, not able to restrain myself.

“Well, even into a lunatic asylum! That would be better, that would be better,” she cried, with flashing eyes. “When I was in Pestrovo today I envied the sick and starving peasant women because they are not living with a man like you. They are free and honest, while, thanks to you, I am a parasite, I am perishing in idleness, I eat your bread, I spend your money, and I repay you with my liberty and a fidelity which is of no use to any one. Because you won’t give me a passport, I must respect your good name, though it doesn’t exist.”

I had to keep silent. Clenching my teeth, I walked quickly into the drawing-room, but turned back at once and said:

“ I beg you earnestly that there should be no more assemblies, plots, and meetings of conspirators in my house! I only admit to my house those with whom I am acquainted, and let all your crew find another place to do it if they want to take up philanthropy. I can't allow people at midnight in my house to be shouting hurrah at successfully exploiting an hysterical woman like you! ”

My wife, pale and wringing her hands, took a rapid stride across the room, uttering a prolonged moan as though she had toothache. With a wave of my hand, I went into the drawing-room. I was choking with rage, and at the same time I was trembling with terror that I might not restrain myself, and that I might say or do something which I might regret all my life. And I clenched my hands tight, hoping to hold myself in.

After drinking some water and recovering my calm a little, I went back to my wife. She was standing in the same attitude as before, as though barring my approach to the table with the papers. Tears were slowly trickling down her pale, cold face. I paused then and said to her bitterly but without anger:

“ How you misunderstand me! How unjust you are to me! I swear upon my honour I came to you with the best of motives, with nothing but the desire to do good! ”

“ Pavel Andreitch! ” she said, clasping her hands on her bosom, and her face took on the agonized, imploring expression with which frightened, weeping children beg not to be punished, “ I know per-

fectly well that you will refuse me, but still I beg you. Force yourself to do one kind action in your life. I entreat you, go away from here! That's the only thing you can do for the starving peasants. Go away, and I will forgive you everything, everything!"

"There is no need for you to insult me, Natalie," I sighed, feeling a sudden rush of humility. "I had already made up my mind to go away, but I won't go until I have done something for the peasants. It's my duty!"

"Ach!" she said softly with an impatient frown. "You can make an excellent bridge or railway, but you can do nothing for the starving peasants. Do understand!"

"Indeed? Yesterday you reproached me with indifference and with being devoid of the feeling of compassion. How well you know me!" I laughed. "You believe in God — well, God is my witness that I am worried day and night. . . ."

"I see that you are worried, but the famine and compassion have nothing to do with it. You are worried because the starving peasants can get on without you, and because the Zemstvo, and in fact every one who is helping them, does not need your guidance."

I was silent, trying to suppress my irritation. Then I said:

"I came to speak to you on business. Sit down. Please sit down."

She did not sit down.

“I beg you to sit down,” I repeated, and I motioned her to a chair.

She sat down. I sat down, too, thought a little, and said:

“I beg you to consider earnestly what I am saying. Listen. . . . Moved by love for your fellow-creatures, you have undertaken the organization of famine relief. I have nothing against that, of course; I am completely in sympathy with you, and am prepared to co-operate with you in every way, whatever our relations may be. But, with all my respect for your mind and your heart . . . and your heart,” I repeated, “I cannot allow such a difficult, complex, and responsible matter as the organization of relief to be left in your hands entirely. You are a woman, you are inexperienced, you know nothing of life, you are too confiding and expansive. You have surrounded yourself with assistants whom you know nothing about. I am not exaggerating if I say that under these conditions your work will inevitably lead to two deplorable consequences. To begin with, our district will be left unrelieved; and, secondly, you will have to pay for your mistakes and those of your assistants, not only with your purse, but with your reputation. The money deficit and other losses I could, no doubt, make good, but who could restore you your good name? When through lack of proper supervision and oversight there is a rumour that you, and consequently I, have made two hundred thousand over the famine fund, will your assistants come to your aid?”

She said nothing.

“Not from vanity, as you say,” I went on, “but simply that the starving peasants may not be left unrelieved and your reputation may not be injured, I feel it my moral duty to take part in your work.”

“Speak more briefly,” said my wife.

“You will be so kind,” I went on, “as to show me what has been subscribed so far and what you have spent. Then inform me daily of every fresh subscription in money or kind, and of every fresh outlay. You will also give me, Natalie, the list of your helpers. Perhaps they are quite decent people; I don’t doubt it; but, still, it is absolutely necessary to make inquiries.”

She was silent. I got up, and walked up and down the room.

“Let us set to work, then,” I said, and I sat down to her table.

“Are you in earnest?” she asked, looking at me in alarm and bewilderment.

“Natalie, do be reasonable!” I said appealingly, seeing from her face that she meant to protest. “I beg you, trust my experience and my sense of honour.”

“I don’t understand what you want.”

“Show me how much you have collected and how much you have spent.”

“I have no secrets. Any one may see. Look.”

On the table lay five or six school exercise books, several sheets of notepaper covered with writing, a map of the district, and a number of pieces of paper

of different sizes. It was getting dusk. I lighted a candle.

"Excuse me, I don't see anything yet," I said, turning over the leaves of the exercise books. "Where is the account of the receipt of money subscriptions?"

"That can be seen from the subscription lists."

"Yes, but you must have an account," I said, smiling at her naïveté. "Where are the letters accompanying the subscriptions in money or in kind? *Pardon*, a little practical advice, Natalie: it's absolutely necessary to keep those letters. You ought to number each letter and make a special note of it in a special record. You ought to do the same with your own letters. But I will do all that myself."

"Do so, do so . . ." she said.

I was very much pleased with myself. Attracted by this living interesting work, by the little table, the naïve exercise books and the charm of doing this work in my wife's society, I was afraid that my wife would suddenly hinder me and upset everything by some sudden whim, and so I was in haste and made an effort to attach no consequence to the fact that her lips were quivering, and that she was looking about her with a helpless and frightened air like a wild creature in a trap.

"I tell you what, Natalie," I said without looking at her; "let me take all these papers and exercise books upstairs to my study. There I will look through them and tell you what I think about it tomorrow. Have you any more papers?" I asked,

arranging the exercise books and sheets of papers in piles.

"Take them, take them all!" said my wife, helping me to arrange them, and big tears ran down her cheeks. "Take it all! That's all that was left me in life. . . . Take the last."

"Ach! Natalie, Natalie!" I sighed reproachfully.

She opened the drawer in the table and began flinging the papers out of it on the table at random, poking me in the chest with her elbow and brushing my face with her hair; as she did so, copper coins kept dropping upon my knees and on the floor.

"Take everything!" she said in a husky voice.

When she had thrown out the papers she walked away from me, and putting both hands to her head, she flung herself on the couch. I picked up the money, put it back in the drawer, and locked it up that the servants might not be led into dishonesty; then I gathered up all the papers and went off with them. As I passed my wife I stopped, and, looking at her back and shaking shoulders, I said:

"What a baby you are, Natalie! Fie, fie! Listen, Natalie: when you realize how serious and responsible a business it is you will be the first to thank me. I assure you you will."

In my own room I set to work without haste. The exercise books were not bound, the pages were not numbered. The entries were put in all sorts of handwritings; evidently any one who liked had a hand in managing the books. In the record of the subscriptions in kind there was no note of their money value. But, excuse me, I thought, the rye



which is now worth one rouble fifteen kopecks may be worth two roubles fifteen kopecks in two months' time! Was that the way to do things? Then, "Given to A. M. Sobol 32 roubles." When was it given? For what purpose was it given? Where was the receipt? There was nothing to show, and no making anything of it. In case of legal proceedings, these papers would only obscure the case.

"How naïve she is!" I thought with surprise. "What a child!"

I felt both vexed and amused.

## V

My wife had already collected eight thousand; with my five it would be thirteen thousand. For a start that was very good. The business which had so worried and interested me was at last in my hands; I was doing what the others would not and could not do; I was doing my duty, organizing the relief fund in a practical and businesslike way.

Everything seemed to be going in accordance with my desires and intentions; but why did my feeling of uneasiness persist? I spent four hours over my wife's papers, making out their meaning and correcting her mistakes, but instead of feeling soothed, I felt as though some one were standing behind me and rubbing my back with a rough hand. What was it I wanted? The organization of the relief fund had come into trustworthy hands, the hungry would be fed — what more was wanted?

The four hours of this light work for some reason



exhausted me, so that I could not sit bending over the table nor write. From below I heard from time to time a smothered moan; it was my wife sobbing. Alexey, invariably meek, sleepy, and sanctimonious, kept coming up to the table to see to the candles, and looked at me somewhat strangely.

"Yes, I must go away," I decided at last, feeling utterly exhausted. "As far as possible from these agreeable impressions! I will set off tomorrow."

I gathered together the papers and exercise books, and went down to my wife. As, feeling quite worn out and shattered, I held the papers and the exercise books to my breast with both hands, and passing through my bedroom saw my trunks, the sound of weeping reached me through the floor.

"Are you a kammer-junker?" a voice whispered in my ear. "That's a very pleasant thing. But yet you are a reptile."

"It's all nonsense, nonsense, nonsense," I muttered as I went downstairs. "Nonsense . . . and it's nonsense, too, that I am actuated by vanity or a love of display. . . . What rubbish! Am I going to get a decoration for working for the peasants or be made the director of a department? Nonsense, nonsense! And who is there to show off to here in the country?"

I was tired, frightfully tired, and something kept whispering in my ear: "Very pleasant. But, still, you are a reptile." For some reason I remembered a line out of an old poem I knew as a child: "How pleasant it is to be good!"

My wife was lying on the couch in the same atti-

tude, on her face and with her hands clutching her head. She was crying. A maid was standing beside her with a perplexed and frightened face. I sent the maid away, laid the papers on the table, thought a moment and said:

“Here are all your papers, Natalie. It’s all in order, it’s all capital, and I am very much pleased. I am going away tomorrow.”

She went on crying. I went into the drawing-room and sat there in the dark. My wife’s sobs, her sighs, accused me of something, and to justify myself I remembered the whole of our quarrel, starting from my unhappy idea of inviting my wife to our consultation and ending with the exercise books and these tears. It was an ordinary attack of our conjugal hatred, senseless and unseemly, such as had been frequent during our married life, but what had the starving peasants to do with it? How could it have happened that they had become a bone of contention between us? It was just as though pursuing one another we had accidentally run up to the altar and had carried on a quarrel there.

“Natalie,” I said softly from the drawing-room, “hush, hush!”

To cut short her weeping and make an end of this agonizing state of affairs, I ought to have gone up to my wife and comforted her, caressed her, or apologized; but how could I do it so that she would believe me? How could I persuade the wild duck, living in captivity and hating me, that it was dear to me, and that I felt for its sufferings? I had never known my wife, so I had never known how to talk

to her or what to talk about. Her appearance I knew very well and appreciated it as it deserved, but her spiritual, moral world, her mind, her outlook on life, her frequent changes of mood, her eyes full of hatred, her disdain, the scope and variety of her reading which sometimes struck me, or, for instance, the nun-like expression I had seen on her face the day before — all that was unknown and incomprehensible to me. When in my collisions with her I tried to define what sort of a person she was, my psychology went no farther than deciding that she was giddy, impractical, ill-tempered, guided by feminine logic; and it seemed to me that that was quite sufficient. But now that she was crying I had a passionate desire to know more.

The weeping ceased. I went up to my wife. She sat up on the couch, and, with her head propped in both hands, looked fixedly and dreamily at the fire.

“I am going away tomorrow morning,” I said.

She said nothing. I walked across the room, sighed, and said:

“Natalie, when you begged me to go away, you said: ‘I will forgive you everything, everything. . . . So you think I have wronged you. I beg you calmly and in brief terms to formulate the wrong I’ve done you.’”

“I am worn out. Afterwards, some time . . .” said my wife.

“How am I to blame?” I went on. “What have I done? Tell me: you are young and beautiful, you want to live, and I am nearly twice your age and hated by you, but is that my fault? I didn’t

marry you by force. But if you want to live in freedom, go; I'll give you your liberty. You can go and love whom you please. . . . I will give you a divorce."

"That's not what I want," she said. "You know I used to love you and always thought of myself as older than you. That's all nonsense. . . . You are not to blame for being older or for my being younger, or that I might be able to love some one else if I were free; but because you are a difficult person, an egoist, and hate every one."

"Perhaps so. I don't know," I said.

"Please go away. You want to go on at me till the morning, but I warn you I am quite worn out and cannot answer you. You promised me to go to town. I am very grateful; I ask nothing more."

My wife wanted me to go away, but it was not easy for me to do that. I was dispirited and I dreaded the big, cheerless, chill rooms that I was so weary of. Sometimes when I had an ache or a pain as a child, I used to huddle up to my mother or my nurse, and when I hid my face in the warm folds of their dress, it seemed to me as though I were hiding from the pain. And in the same way it seemed to me now that I could only hide from my uneasiness in this little room beside my wife. I sat down and screened away the light from my eyes with my hand. . . . There was a stillness.

"How are you to blame?" my wife said after a long silence, looking at me with red eyes that gleamed with tears. "You are very well educated and very well bred, very honest, just, and high-

principled, but in you the effect of all that is that wherever you go you bring suffocation, oppression, something insulting and humiliating to the utmost degree. You have a straightforward way of looking at things, and so you hate the whole world. You hate those who have faith, because faith is an expression of ignorance and lack of culture, and at the same time you hate those who have no faith for having no faith and no ideals; you hate old people for being conservative and behind the times, and young people for free-thinking. The interests of the peasantry and of Russia are dear to you, and so you hate the peasants because you suspect every one of them of being a thief and a robber. You hate every one. You are just, and always take your stand on your legal rights, and so you are always at law with the peasants and your neighbours. You have had twenty bushels of rye stolen, and your love of order has made you complain of the peasants to the Governor and all the local authorities, and to send a complaint of the local authorities to Petersburg. Legal justice!" said my wife, and she laughed. "On the ground of your legal rights and in the interests of morality, you refuse to give me a passport. Law and morality is such that a self-respecting healthy young woman has to spend her life in idleness, in depression, and in continual apprehension, and to receive in return board and lodging from a man she does not love. You have a thorough knowledge of the law, you are very honest and just, you respect marriage and family life, and the effect of all that is that all your life you have not done one kind

action, that every one hates you, that you are on bad terms with every one, and the seven years that you have been married you've only lived seven months with your wife. You've had no wife and I've had no husband. To live with a man like you is impossible; there is no way of doing it. In the early years I was frightened with you, and now I am ashamed. . . . That's how my best years have been wasted. When I fought with you I ruined my temper, grew shrewish, coarse, timid, mistrustful. . . . Oh, but what's the use of talking! As though you wanted to understand! Go upstairs, and God be with you!"

My wife lay down on the couch and sank into thought.

"And how splendid, how enviable life might have been!" she said softly, looking reflectively into the fire. "What a life it might have been! There's no bringing it back now."

Any one who has lived in the country in winter and knows those long dreary, still evenings when even the dogs are too bored to bark and even the clocks seem weary of ticking, and any one who on such evenings has been troubled by awakening conscience and has moved restlessly about, trying now to smother his conscience, now to interpret it, will understand the distraction and the pleasure my wife's voice gave me as it sounded in the snug little room, telling me I was a bad man. I did not understand what was wanted of me by my conscience, and my wife, translating it in her feminine way, made clear to me in the meaning of my agitation. As often before in the moments of intense uneasiness, I guessed



that the whole secret lay, not in the starving peasants, but in my not being the sort of a man I ought to be.

My wife got up with an effort and came up to me.

"Pavel Andreitch," she said, smiling mournfully, "forgive me, I don't believe you: you are not going away, but I will ask you one more favour. Call this"—she pointed to her papers—"self-deception, feminine logic, a mistake, as you like; but do not hinder me. It's all that is left me in life." She turned away and paused. "Before this I had nothing. I have wasted my youth in fighting with you. Now I have caught at this and am living; I am happy. . . . It seems to me that I have found in this a means of justifying my existence."

"Natalie, you are a good woman, a woman of ideas," I said, looking at my wife enthusiastically, "and everything you say and do is intelligent and fine."

I walked about the room to conceal my emotion.

"Natalie," I went on a minute later, "before I go away, I beg of you as a special favour, help me to do something for the starving peasants!"

"What can I do?" said my wife, shrugging her shoulders. "Here's the subscription list."

She rummaged among the papers and found the subscription list.

"Subscribe some money," she said, and from her tone I could see that she did not attach great importance to her subscription list; "that is the only way in which you can take part in the work."

I took the list and wrote: "Anonymous, 5,000."

In this "anonymous" there was something wrong, false, conceited, but I only realized that when I noticed that my wife flushed very red and hurriedly thrust the list into the heap of papers. We both felt ashamed; I felt that I must at all costs efface this clumsiness at once, or else I should feel ashamed afterwards, in the train and at Petersburg. But how efface it? What was I to say?

"I fully approve of what you are doing, Natalie," I said genuinely, "and I wish you every success. But allow me at parting to give you one piece of advice, Natalie; be on your guard with Sobol, and with your assistants generally, and don't trust them blindly. I don't say they are not honest, but they are not gentlefolks; they are people with no ideas, no ideals, no faith, with no aim in life, no definite principles, and the whole object of their life is comprised in the rouble. Rouble, rouble, rouble!" I sighed. "They are fond of getting money easily, for nothing, and in that respect the better educated they are the more they are to be dreaded."

My wife went to the couch and lay down.

"Ideas," she brought out, listlessly and reluctantly, "ideas, ideals, objects of life, principles . . . you always used to use those words when you wanted to insult or humiliate some one, or say something unpleasant. Yes, that's your way: if with your views and such an attitude to people you are allowed to take part in anything, you would destroy it from the first day. It's time you understand that."

She sighed and paused.

"It's coarseness of character, Pavel Andreitch,"



she said. "You are well-bred and educated, but what a . . . Scythian you are in reality! That's because you lead a cramped life full of hatred, see no one, and read nothing but your engineering books. And, you know, there are good people, good books! Yes . . . but I am exhausted and it wearies me to talk. I ought to be in bed."

"So I am going away, Natalie," I said.

"Yes . . . yes. . . . *Merci* . . ."

I stood still for a little while, then went upstairs. An hour later — it was half-past one — I went downstairs again with a candle in my hand to speak to my wife. I didn't know what I was going to say to her, but I felt that I must say something very important and necessary. She was not in her study, the door leading to her bedroom was closed.

"Natalie, are you asleep?" I asked softly.

There was no answer.

I stood near the door, sighed, and went into the drawing-room. There I sat down on the sofa, put out the candle, and remained sitting in the dark till the dawn.

## VI

I went to the station at ten o'clock in the morning. There was no frost, but snow was falling in big wet flakes and an unpleasant damp wind was blowing.

We passed a pond and then a birch copse, and then began going uphill along the road which I could see from my window. I turned round to take a last look at my house, but I could see nothing for the

snow. Soon afterwards dark huts came into sight ahead of us as in a fog. It was Pestrovo.

“If I ever go out of my mind, Pestrovo will be the cause of it,” I thought. “It persecutes me.”

We came out into the village street. All the roofs were intact, not one of them had been pulled to pieces; so my bailiff had told a lie. A boy was pulling along a little girl and a baby in a sledge. Another boy of three, with his head wrapped up like a peasant woman's and with huge mufflers on his hands, was trying to catch the flying snowflakes on his tongue, and laughing. Then a wagon loaded with fagots came toward us and a peasant walking beside it, and there was no telling whether his beard was white or whether it was covered with snow. He recognized my coachman, smiled at him and said something, and mechanically took off his hat to me. The dogs ran out of the yards and looked inquisitively at my horses. Everything was quiet, ordinary, as usual. The emigrants had returned, there was no bread; in the huts “some were laughing, some were delirious”; but it all looked so ordinary that one could not believe it really was so. There were no distracted faces, no voices whining for help, no weeping, nor abuse, but all around was stillness, order, life, children, sledges, dogs with dishevelled tails. Neither the children nor the peasant we met were troubled; why was I so troubled?

Looking at the smiling peasant, at the boy with the huge mufflers, at the huts, remembering my wife, I realized there was no calamity that could daunt this people; I felt as though there were already a

breath of victory in the air. I felt proud and felt ready to cry out that I was with them too; but the horses were carrying us away from the village into the open country, the snow was whirling, the wind was howling, and I was left alone with my thoughts. Of the million people working for the peasantry, life itself had cast me out as a useless, incompetent, bad man. I was a hindrance, a part of the people's calamity; I was vanquished, cast out, and I was hurrying to the station to go away and hide myself in Petersburg in a hotel in Bolshaya Morskaya.

An hour later we reached the station. The coachman and a porter with a disc on his breast carried my trunks into the ladies' room. My coachman Nikanor, wearing high felt boots and the skirt of his coat tucked up through his belt, all wet with the snow and glad I was going away, gave me a friendly smile and said:

"A fortunate journey, your Excellency. God give you luck."

Every one, by the way, calls me "your Excellency," though I am only a collegiate councillor and a kammer-junker. The porter told me the train had not yet left the next station; I had to wait. I went outside, and with my head heavy from my sleepless night, and so exhausted I could hardly move my legs, I walked aimlessly towards the pump. There was not a soul anywhere near.

"Why am I going?" I kept asking myself. "What is there awaiting me there? The acquaintances from whom I have come away, loneliness, restaurant dinners, noise, the electric light, which makes

my eyes ache. Where am I going, and what am I going for? What am I going for?"

And it seemed somehow strange to go away without speaking to my wife. I felt that I was leaving her in uncertainty. Going away, I ought to have told that she was right, that I really was a bad man.

When I turned away from the pump, I saw in the doorway the station-master, of whom I had twice made complaints to his superiors, turning up the collar of his coat, shrinking from the wind and the snow. He came up to me, and putting two fingers to the peak of his cap, told me with an expression of helpless confusion, strained respectfulness, and hatred on his face, that the train was twenty minutes late, and asked me would I not like to wait in the warm?

"Thank you," I answered, "but I am probably not going. Send word to my coachman to wait; I have not made up my mind."

I walked to and fro on the platform and thought, should I go away or not? When the train came in I decided not to go. At home I had to expect my wife's amazement and perhaps her mockery, the dismal upper storey and my uneasiness; but, still, at my age that was easier and as it were more homelike than travelling for two days and nights with strangers to Petersburg, where I should be conscious every minute that my life was of no use to any one or to anything, and that it was approaching its end. No, better at home whatever awaited me there. . . . I went out of the station. It was awkward by daylight to return home, where every one was so glad at

my going. I might spend the rest of the day till evening at some neighbour's, but with whom? With some of them I was on strained relations, others I did not know at all. I considered and thought of Ivan Ivanitch.

"We are going to Bragino!" I said to the coachman, getting into the sledge.

"It's a long way," sighed Nikanor; "it will be twenty miles, or maybe twenty-five."

"Oh, please, my dear fellow," I said in a tone as though Nikanor had the right to refuse. "Please let us go!"

Nikanor shook his head doubtfully and said slowly that we really ought to have put in the shafts, not Circassian, but Peasant or Siskin; and uncertainly, as though expecting I should change my mind, took the reins in his gloves, stood up, thought a moment, and then raised his whip.

"A whole series of inconsistent actions . . ." I thought, screening my face from the snow. "I must have gone out of my mind. Well, I don't care. . . ."

In one place, on a very high and steep slope, Nikanor carefully held the horses in to the middle of the descent, but in the middle the horses suddenly bolted and dashed downhill at a fearful rate; he raised his elbows and shouted in a wild, frantic voice such as I had never heard from him before:

"Hey! Let's give the general a drive! If you come to grief he'll buy new ones, my darlings! Hey! look out! We'll run you down!"

Only now, when the extraordinary pace we were

going at took my breath away, I noticed that he was very drunk. He must have been drinking at the station. At the bottom of the descent there was the crash of ice; a piece of dirty frozen snow thrown up from the road hit me a painful blow in the face.

The runaway horses ran up the hill as rapidly as they had downhill, and before I had time to shout to Nikanor my sledge was flying along on the level in an old pine forest, and the tall pines were stretching out their shaggy white paws to me from all directions.

"I have gone out of my mind, and the coachman's drunk," I thought. "Good!"

I found Ivan Ivanitch at home. He laughed till he coughed, laid his head on my breast, and said what he always did say on meeting me:

"You grow younger and younger. I don't know what dye you use for your hair and your beard; you might give me some of it."

"I've come to return your call, Ivan Ivanitch," I said untruthfully. "Don't be hard on me; I'm a townsman, conventional; I do keep count of calls."

"I am delighted, my dear fellow. I am an old man; I like respect. . . . Yes."

From his voice and his blissfully smiling face, I could see that he was greatly flattered by my visit. Two peasant women helped me off with my coat in the entry, and a peasant in a red shirt hung it on a hook, and when Ivan Ivanitch and I went into his little study, two barefooted little girls were sitting on the floor looking at a picture-book; when they saw us they jumped up and ran away, and a tall, thin old



woman in spectacles came in at once, bowed gravely to me, and picking up a pillow from the sofa and a picture-book from the floor, went away. From the adjoining rooms we heard incessant whispering and the patter of bare feet.

"I am expecting the doctor to dinner," said Ivan Ivanitch. "He promised to come from the relief centre. Yes. He dines with me every Wednesday, God bless him." He craned towards me and kissed me on the neck. "You have come, my dear fellow, so you are not vexed," he whispered, sniffing. "Don't be vexed, my dear creature. Yes. Perhaps it is annoying, but don't be cross. My only prayer to God before I die is to live in peace and harmony with all in the true way. Yes."

"Forgive me, Ivan Ivanitch, I will put my feet on a chair," I said, feeling that I was so exhausted I could not be myself; I sat further back on the sofa and put up my feet on an arm-chair. My face was burning from the snow and the wind, and I felt as though my whole body were basking in the warmth and growing weaker from it.

"It's very nice here," I went on — "warm, soft, snug . . . and goose-feather pens," I laughed, looking at the writing-table; "sand instead of blotting-paper."

"Eh? Yes . . . yes. . . . The writing-table and the mahogany cupboard here were made for my father by a self-taught cabinet-maker — Glyeb Butyga, a serf of General Zhukov's. Yes . . . a great artist in his own way."

Listlessly and in the tone of a man dropping

asleep, he began telling me about cabinet-maker Butyga. I listened. Then Ivan Ivanitch went into the next room to show me a polisander wood chest of drawers remarkable for its beauty and cheapness. He tapped the chest with his fingers, then called my attention to a stove of patterned tiles, such as one never sees now. He tapped the stove, too, with his fingers. There was an atmosphere of good-natured simplicity and well-fed abundance about the chest of drawers, the tiled stove, the low chairs, the pictures embroidered in wool and silk on canvas in solid, ugly frames. When one remembers that all those objects were standing in the same places and precisely in the same order when I was a little child, and used to come here to name-day parties with my mother, it is simply unbelievable that they could ever cease to exist.

I thought what a fearful difference between Butyga and me! Butyga who made things, above all, solidly and substantially, and seeing in that his chief object, gave to length of life peculiar significance, had no thought of death, and probably hardly believed in its possibility; I, when I built my bridges of iron and stone which would last a thousand years, could not keep from me the thought, "It's not for long . . . it's no use." If in time Butyga's cupboard and my bridge should come under the notice of some sensible historian of art, he would say: "These were two men remarkable in their own way: Butyga loved his fellow-creatures and would not admit the thought that they might die and be annihilated, and so when he made his furniture he had the immortal



man in his mind. The engineer Asorin did not love life or his fellow-creatures; even in the happy moments of creation, thoughts of death, of finiteness and dissolution, were not alien to him, and we see how insignificant and finite, how timid and poor, are these lines of his. . . .”

“I only heat these rooms,” muttered Ivan Ivanitch, showing me his rooms. “Ever since my wife died and my son was killed in the war, I have kept the best rooms shut up. Yes . . . see . . .”

He opened a door, and I saw a big room with four columns, an old piano, and a heap of peas on the floor; it smelt cold and damp.

“The garden seats are in the next room . . .” muttered Ivan Ivanitch. “There’s no one to dance the mazarca now. . . . I’ve shut them up.”

We heard a noise. It was Dr. Sobol arriving. While he was rubbing his cold hands and stroking his wet beard, I had time to notice in the first place that he had a very dull life, and so was pleased to see Ivan Ivanitch and me; and, secondly, that he was a naïve and simple-hearted man. He looked at me as though I were very glad to see him and very much interested in him.

“I have not slept for two nights,” he said, looking at me naïvely and stroking his beard. “One night with a confinement, and the next I stayed at a peasant’s with the bugs biting me all night. I am as sleepy as Satan, do you know.”

With an expression on his face as though it could not afford me anything but pleasure, he took me by the arm and led me to the dining-room. His naïve

eyes, his crumpled coat, his cheap tie and the smell of iodoform made an unpleasant impression upon me; I felt as though I were in vulgar company. When we sat down to table he filled my glass with vodka, and, smiling helplessly, I drank it; he put a piece of ham on my plate and I ate it submissively.

"*Repetitia est mater studiorum,*" said Sobol, hastening to drink off another wineglassful. "Would you believe it, the joy of seeing good people has driven away my sleepiness? I have turned into a peasant, a savage in the wilds; I've grown coarse, but I am still an educated man, and I tell you in good earnest, it's tedious without company."

They served first for a cold course white sucking-pig with horse-radish cream, then a rich and very hot cabbage soup with pork on it, with boiled buckwheat, from which rose a column of steam. The doctor went on talking, and I was soon convinced that he was a weak, unfortunate man, disorderly in external life. Three glasses of vodka made him drunk; he grew unnaturally lively, ate a great deal, kept clearing his throat and smacking his lips, and already addressed me in Italian, "*Eccellenza.*" Looking naïvely at me as though he were convinced that I was very glad to see and hear him, he informed me that he had long been separated from his wife and gave her three-quarters of his salary; that she lived in the town with his children, a boy and a girl, whom he adored; that he loved another woman, a widow, well educated, with an estate in the country, but was rarely able to see her, as he was busy with his work from morning till night and had not a free moment.

“The whole day long, first at the hospital, then on my rounds,” he told us; “and I assure you, Eccellenza, I have not time to read a book, let alone going to see the woman I love. I’ve read nothing for ten years! For ten years, Eccellenza. As for the financial side of the question, ask Ivan Ivanitch: I have often no money to buy tobacco.”

“On the other hand, you have the moral satisfaction of your work,” I said.

“What?” he asked, and he winked. “No,” he said, “better let us drink.”

I listened to the doctor, and, after my invariable habit, tried to take his measure by my usual classification — materialist, idealist, filthy lucre, gregarious instincts, and so on; but no classification fitted him even approximately; and strange to say, while I simply listened and looked at him, he seemed perfectly clear to me as a person, but as soon as I began trying to classify him he became an exceptionally complex, intricate, and incomprehensible character in spite of all his candour and simplicity. “Is that man,” I asked myself, “capable of wasting other people’s money, abusing their confidence, being disposed to sponge on them?” And now this question, which had once seemed to me grave and important, struck me as crude, petty, and coarse.

Pie was served; then, I remember, with long intervals between, during which we drank home-made liquors, they gave us a stew of pigeons, some dish of giblets, roast sucking-pig, partridges, cauliflower, curd dumplings, curd cheese and milk, jelly, and finally pancakes and jam. At first I ate with great

relish, especially the cabbage soup and the buckwheat, but afterwards I munched and swallowed mechanically, smiling helplessly and unconscious of the taste of anything. My face was burning from the hot cabbage soup and the heat of the room. Ivan Ivanitch and Sobol, too, were crimson.

"To the health of your wife," said Sobol. "She likes me. Tell her her doctor sends her his respects."

"She's fortunate, upon my word," sighed Ivan Ivanitch. "Though she takes no trouble, does not fuss or worry herself, she has become the most important person in the whole district. Almost the whole business is in her hands, and they all gather round her, the doctor, the District Captains, and the ladies. With people of the right sort that happens of itself. Yes. . . . The apple-tree need take no thought for the apple to grow on it; it will grow of itself."

"It's only people who don't care who take no thought," said I.

"Eh? Yes . . ." muttered Ivan Ivanitch, not catching what I said, "that's true. . . . One must not worry oneself. Just so, just so. . . . Only do your duty towards God and your neighbour, and then never mind what happens."

"Eccellenza," said Sobol solemnly, "just look at nature about us: if you poke your nose or your ear out of your fur collar it will be frost-bitten; stay in the fields for one hour, you'll be buried in the snow; while the village is just the same as in the days of Rurik, the same Petchenyegs and Polovtsi. It's

nothing but being burnt down, starving, and struggling against nature in every way. What was I saying? Yes! If one thinks about it, you know, looks into it and analyses all this hotchpotch, if you will allow me to call it so, it's not life but more like a fire in a theatre! Any one who falls down or screams with terror, or rushes about, is the worst enemy of good order; one must stand up and look sharp, and not stir a hair! There's no time for whimpering and busying oneself with trifles. When you have to deal with elemental forces you must put out force against them, be firm and as unyielding as a stone. Isn't that right, grandfather?" He turned to Ivan Ivanitch and laughed. "I am no better than a woman myself; I am a limp rag, a flabby creature, so I hate flabbiness. I can't endure petty feelings! One mopes, another is frightened, a third will come straight in here and say: 'Fie on you! Here you've guzzled a dozen courses and you talk about the starving!' That's petty and stupid! A fourth will reproach you, Eccellenza, for being rich. Excuse me, Eccellenza," he went on in a loud voice, laying his hand on his heart, "but your having set our magistrate the task of hunting day and night for your thieves — excuse me, that's also petty on your part. I am a little drunk, so that's why I say this now, but you know, it is petty!"

"Who's asking him to worry himself? I don't understand!" I said, getting up.

I suddenly felt unbearably ashamed and mortified, and I walked round the table.

“Who asks him to worry himself? I didn't ask him to. . . . Damn him!”

“They have arrested three men and let them go again. They turned out not to be the right ones, and now they are looking for a fresh lot,” said Sobol, laughing. “It's too bad!”

“I did not ask him to worry himself,” said I, almost crying with excitement. “What's it all for? What's it all for? Well, supposing I was wrong, supposing I have done wrong, why do they try to put me more in the wrong?”

“Come, come, come, come!” said Sobol, trying to soothe me. “Come! I have had a drop, that is why I said it. My tongue is my enemy. Come,” he sighed, “we have eaten and drunk wine, and now for a nap.”

He got up from the table, kissed Ivan Ivanitch on the head, and staggering from repletion, went out of the dining-room. Ivan Ivanitch and I smoked in silence.

“I don't sleep after dinner, my dear,” said Ivan Ivanitch, “but you have a rest in the lounge-room.”

I agreed. In the half-dark and warmly heated room they called the lounge-room, there stood against the walls long, wide sofas, solid and heavy, the work of Butyga the cabinet maker; on them lay high, soft, white beds, probably made by the old woman in spectacles. On one of them Sobol, without his coat and boots, already lay asleep with his face to the back of the sofa; another bed was awaiting me. I took off my coat and boots, and, overcome by



fatigue, by the spirit of Butyga which hovered over the quiet lounge-room, and by the light, caressing snore of Sobol, I lay down submissively.

And at once I began dreaming of my wife, of her room, of the station-master with his face full of hatred, the heaps of snow, a fire in the theatre. . . . I dreamed of the peasants who had stolen twenty sacks of rye out of my barn. . . .

"Anyway, it's a good thing the magistrate let them go," I said.

I woke up at the sound of my own voice, looked for a moment in perplexity at Sobol's broad back, at the buckles of his waistcoat, at his thick heels, then lay down again and fell asleep.

When I woke up the second time it was quite dark. Sobol was asleep. There was peace in my heart, and I longed to make haste home. I dressed and went out of the lounge-room. Ivan Ivanitch was sitting in a big arm-chair in his study, absolutely motionless, staring at a fixed point, and it was evident that he had been in the same state of petrification all the while I had been asleep.

"Good!" I said, yawning. "I feel as though I had woken up after breaking the fast at Easter. I shall often come and see you now. Tell me, did my wife ever dine here?"

"So-ome-ti-mes . . . sometimes," muttered Ivan Ivanitch, making an effort to stir. "She dined here last Saturday. Yes. . . . She likes me."

After a silence I said:

"Do you remember, Ivan Ivanitch, you told me I had a disagreeable character and that it was difficult

to get on with me? But what am I to do to make my character different?"

"I don't know, my dear boy. . . . I'm a feeble old man, I can't advise you. . . . Yes. . . . But I said that to you at the time because I am fond of you and fond of your wife, and I was fond of your father. . . . Yes. I shall soon die, and what need have I to conceal things from you or to tell you lies? So I tell you: I am very fond of you, but I don't respect you. No, I don't respect you."

He turned towards me and said in a breathless whisper:

"It's impossible to respect you, my dear fellow. You look like a real man. You have the figure and deportment of the French President Carnot — I saw a portrait of him the other day in an illustrated paper . . . yes. . . . You use lofty language, and you are clever, and you are high up in the service beyond all reach, but haven't real soul, my dear boy . . . there's no strength in it."

"A Scythian, in fact," I laughed. "But what about my wife? Tell me something about my wife; you know her better."

I wanted to talk about my wife, but Sobol came in and prevented me.

"I've had a sleep and a wash," he said, looking at me naïvely. "I'll have a cup of tea with some rum in it and go home."



## VII

It was by now past seven. Besides Ivan Ivanitch, women servants, the old dame in spectacles, the little girls and the peasant, all accompanied us from the hall out on to the steps, wishing us good-bye and all sorts of blessings, while near the horses in the darkness there were standing and moving about men with lanterns, telling our coachmen how and which way to drive, and wishing us a lucky journey. The horses, the men, and the sledges were white.

“Where do all these people come from?” I asked as my three horses and the doctor’s two moved at a walking pace out of the yard.

“They are all his serfs,” said Sobol. “The new order has not reached him yet. Some of the old servants are living out their lives with him, and then there are orphans of all sorts who have nowhere to go; there are some, too, who insist on living there, there’s no turning them out. A queer old man!”

Again the flying horses, the strange voice of drunken Nikanor, the wind and the persistent snow, which got into one’s eyes, one’s mouth, and every fold of one’s fur coat. . . .

“Well, I am running a rig,” I thought, while my bells chimed in with the doctor’s, the wind whistled, the coachmen shouted; and while this frantic uproar was going on, I recalled all the details of that strange wild day, unique in my life, and it seemed to me that I really had gone out of my mind or become a differ-

ent man. It was as though the man I had been till that day were already a stranger to me.

The doctor drove behind and kept talking loudly with his coachman. From time to time he overtook me, drove side by side, and always, with the same naïve confidence that it was very pleasant to me, offered me a cigarette or asked for the matches. Or, overtaking me, he would lean right out of his sledge, and waving about the sleeves of his fur coat, which were at least twice as long as his arms, shout:

“Go it, Vaska! Beat the thousand roubles! Hey, my kittens!”

And to the accompaniment of loud, malicious laughter from Sobol and his Vaska the doctor's kittens raced ahead. My Nikanor took it as an affront, and held in his three horses, but when the doctor's bells had passed out of hearing, he raised his elbows, shouted, and our horses flew like mad in pursuit. We drove into a village, there were glimpses of lights, the silhouettes of huts. Some one shouted: “Ah, the devils!” We seemed to have galloped a mile and a half, and still it was the village street and there seemed no end to it. When we caught up the doctor and drove more quietly, he asked for matches and said:

“Now try and feed that street! And, you know, there are five streets like that, sir. Stay, stay,” he shouted. “Turn in at the tavern! We must get warm and let the horses rest.”

They stopped at the tavern.

“I have more than one village like that in my

district," said the doctor, opening a heavy door with a squeaky block, and ushering me in front of him. "If you look in broad daylight you can't see to the end of the street, and there are side-streets, too, and one can do nothing but scratch one's head. It's hard to do anything."

We went into the best room where there was a strong smell of table-cloths, and at our entrance a sleepy peasant in a waistcoat and a shirt worn outside his trousers jumped up from a bench. Sobol asked for some beer and I asked for tea.

"It's hard to do anything," said Sobol. "Your wife has faith; I respect her and have the greatest reverence for her, but I have no great faith myself. As long as our relations to the people continue to have the character of ordinary philanthropy, as shown in orphan asylums and almshouses, so long we shall only be shuffling, shamming, and deceiving ourselves, and nothing more. Our relations ought to be businesslike, founded on calculation, knowledge, and justice. My Vaska has been working for me all his life; his crops have failed, he is sick and starving. If I give him fifteen kopecks a day, by so so doing I try to restore him to his former condition as a workman; that is, I am first and foremost looking after my own interests, and yet for some reason I call that fifteen kopecks relief, charity, good works. Now let us put it like this. On the most modest computation, reckoning seven kopecks a soul and five souls a family, one needs three hundred and fifty roubles a day to feed a thousand families. That sum is fixed by our practical duty to a thousand

families. Meanwhile we give not three hundred and fifty a day, but only ten, and say that that is relief, charity, that that makes your wife and all of us exceptionally good people and hurrah for our humaneness. That is it, my dear soul! Ah! if we would talk less of being humane and calculated more, reasoned, and took a conscientious attitude to our duties! How many such humane, sensitive people there are among us who tear about in all good faith with subscription lists, but don't pay their tailors or their cooks. There is no logic in our life; that's what it is! No logic!"

We were silent for a while. I was making a mental calculation and said:

"I will feed a thousand families for two hundred days. Come and see me tomorrow to talk it over."

I was pleased that this was said quite simply, and was glad that Sobol answered me still more simply:

"Right."

We paid for what we had and went out of the tavern.

"I like going on like this," said Sobol, getting into the sledge. "Eccellenza, oblige me with a match. I've forgotten mine in the tavern."

A quarter of an hour later his horses fell behind, and the sound of his bells was lost in the roar of the snow-storm. Reaching home, I walked about my rooms, trying to think things over and to define my position clearly to myself; I had not one word, one phrase, ready for my wife. My brain was not working.

But without thinking of anything, I went down-

stairs to my wife. She was in her room, in the same pink dressing-gown, and standing in the same attitude as though screening her papers from me. On her face was an expression of perplexity and irony, and it was evident that having heard of my arrival, she had prepared herself not to cry, not to entreat me, not to defend herself, as she had done the day before, but to laugh at me, to answer me contemptuously, and to act with decision. Her face was saying: "If that's how it is, good-bye."

"Natalie, I've not gone away," I said, "but it's not deception. I have gone out of my mind; I've grown old, I'm ill, I've become a different man — think as you like. . . . I've shaken off my old self with horror, with horror; I despise him and am ashamed of him, and the new man who has been in me since yesterday will not let me go away. Do not drive me away, Natalie!"

She looked intently into my face and believed me, and there was a gleam of uneasiness in her eyes. Enchanted by her presence, warmed by the warmth of her room, I muttered as in delirium, holding out my hands to her:

"I tell you, I have no one near to me but you. I have never for one minute ceased to miss you, and only obstinate vanity prevented me from owning it. The past, when we lived as husband and wife, cannot be brought back, and there's no need; but make me your servant, take all my property, and give it away to any one you like. I am at peace, Natalie, I am content. . . . I am at peace."

My wife, looking intently and with curiosity into

my face, suddenly uttered a faint cry, burst into tears, and ran into the next room. I went upstairs to my own storey.

An hour later I was sitting at my table, writing my "History of Railways," and the starving peasants did not now hinder me from doing so. Now I feel no uneasiness. Neither the scenes of disorder which I saw when I went the round of the huts at Pestrovo with my wife and Sobol the other day, nor malignant rumours, nor the mistakes of the people around me, nor old age close upon me — nothing disturbs me. Just as the flying bullets do not hinder soldiers from talking of their own affairs, eating and cleaning their boots, so the starving peasants do not hinder me from sleeping quietly and looking after my personal affairs. In my house and far around it there is in full swing the work which Dr. Sobol calls "an orgy of philanthropy." My wife often comes up to me and looks about my rooms uneasily, as though looking for what more she can give to the starving peasants "to justify her existence," and I see that, thanks to her, there will soon be nothing of our property left and we shall be poor; but that does not trouble me, and I smile at her gaily. What will happen in the future I don't know.



DIFFICULT PEOPLE





## DIFFICULT PEOPLE

YEVGRAF IVANOVITCH SHIRYAEV, a small farmer, whose father, a parish priest, now deceased, had received a gift of three hundred acres of land from Madame Kuvshinnikov, a general's widow, was standing in a corner before a copper washing-stand, washing his hands. As usual, his face looked anxious and ill-humoured, and his beard was uncombed.

“What weather!” he said. “It's not weather, but a curse laid upon us. It's raining again!”

He grumbled on, while his family sat waiting at table for him to have finished washing his hands before beginning dinner. Fedosya Semyonovna, his wife, his son Pyotr, a student, his eldest daughter Varvara, and three small boys, had been sitting waiting a long time. The boys — Kolka, Vanka, and Arhipka — grubby, snub-nosed little fellows with chubby faces and tousled hair that wanted cutting, moved their chairs impatiently, while their elders sat without stirring, and apparently did not care whether they ate their dinner or waited. . . .

As though trying their patience, Shiryayev deliberately dried his hands, deliberately said his prayer, and sat down to the table without hurrying himself. Cabbage-soup was served immediately. The sound of carpenters' axes (Shiryayev was having a new barn

built) and the laughter of Fomka, their labourer, teasing the turkey, floated in from the courtyard.

Big, sparse drops of rain pattered on the window.

Pyotr, a round-shouldered student in spectacles, kept exchanging glances with his mother as he ate his dinner. Several times he laid down his spoon and cleared his throat, meaning to begin to speak, but after an intent look at his father he fell to eating again. At last, when the porridge had been served, he cleared his throat resolutely and said:

"I ought to go tonight by the evening train. I out to have gone before; I have missed a fortnight as it is. The lectures begin on the first of September."

"Well, go," Shiryaev assented; "why are you lingering on here? Pack up and go, and good luck to you."

A minute passed in silence.

"He must have money for the journey, Yevgraf Ivanovitch," the mother observed in a low voice.

"Money? To be sure, you can't go without money. Take it at once, since you need it. You could have had it long ago!"

The student heaved a faint sigh and looked with relief at his mother. Deliberately Shiryaev took a pocket-book out of his coat-pocket and put on his spectacles.

"How much do you want?" he asked.

"The fare to Moscow is eleven roubles forty-two kopecks. . . ."

"Ah, money, money!" sighed the father. (He always sighed when he saw money, even when he

was receiving it.) "Here are twelve roubles for you. You will have change out of that which will be of use to you on the journey."

"Thank you."

After waiting a little, the student said:

"I did not get lessons quite at first last year. I don't know how it will be this year; most likely it will take me a little time to find work. I ought to ask you for fifteen roubles for my lodging and dinner."

Shiryaev thought a little and heaved a sigh.

"You will have to make ten do," he said.

"Here, take it."

The student thanked him. He ought to have asked him for something more, for clothes, for lecture fees, for books, but after an intent look at his father he decided not to pester him further.

The mother, lacking in diplomacy and prudence, like all mothers, could not restrain herself, and said:

"You ought to give him another six roubles, Yevgraf Ivanovitch, for a pair of boots. Why, just see, how can he go to Moscow in such wrecks?"

"Let him take my old ones; they are still quite good."

"He must have trousers, anyway; he is a disgrace to look at."

And immediately after that a storm-signal showed itself, at the sight of which all the family trembled.

Shiryaev's short, fat neck turned suddenly red as a beetroot. The colour mounted slowly to his ears, from his ears to his temples, and by degrees suffused his whole face. Yevgraf Ivanovitch shifted in his

chair and unbuttoned his shirt-collar to save himself from choking. He was evidently struggling with the feeling that was mastering him. A deathlike silence followed. The children held their breath. Fedosya Semyonovna, as though she did not grasp what was happening to her husband, went on:

“He is not a little boy now, you know; he is ashamed to go about without clothes.”

Shiryaev suddenly jumped up, and with all his might flung down his fat pocket-book in the middle of the table, so that a hunk of bread flew off a plate. A revolting expression of anger, resentment, avarice — all mixed together — flamed on his face.

“Take everything!” he shouted in an unnatural voice; “plunder me! Take it all! Strangle me!”

He jumped up from the table, clutched at his head, and ran staggering about the room.

“Strip me to the last thread!” he shouted in a shrill voice. “Squeeze out the last drop! Rob me! Wring my neck!”

The student flushed and dropped his eyes. He could not go on eating. Fedosya Semyonovna, who had not after twenty-five years grown used to her husband’s difficult character, shrank into herself and muttered something in self-defence. An expression of amazement and dull terror came into her wasted and birdlike face, which at all times looked dull and scared. The little boys and the elder daughter Varvara, a girl in her teens, with a pale ugly face, laid down their spoons and sat mute.

Shiryaev, growing more and more ferocious, uttering words each more terrible than the one before,

dashed up to the table and began shaking the notes out of his pocket-book.

“Take them!” he muttered, shaking all over. “You’ve eaten and drunk your fill, so here’s money for you too! I need nothing! Order yourself new boots and uniforms!”

The student turned pale and got up.

“Listen, papa,” he began, gasping for breath. “I . . . I beg you to end this, for . . .”

“Hold your tongue!” the father shouted at him, and so loudly that the spectacles fell off his nose; “hold your tongue!”

“I used . . . I used to be able to put up with such scenes, but . . . but now I have got out of the way of it. Do you understand? I have got out of the way of it!”

“Hold your tongue!” cried the father, and he stamped with his feet. “You must listen to what I say! I shall say what I like, and you hold your tongue. At your age I was earning my living, while you . . . Do you know what you cost me, you scoundrel? I’ll turn you out! Wastrel!”

“Yevgraf Ivanovitch,” muttered Fedosya Semyonovna, moving her fingers nervously; “you know he . . . you know Petya . . . !”

“Hold your tongue!” Shiryaev shouted out to her, and tears actually came into his eyes from anger. “It is you who have spoilt them — you! It’s all your fault! He has no respect for us, does not say his prayers, and earns nothing! I am only one against the ten of you! I’ll turn you out of the house!”

The daughter Varvara gazed fixedly at her mother with her mouth open, moved her vacant-looking eyes to the window, turned pale, and, uttering a loud shriek, fell back in her chair. The father, with a curse and a wave of the hand, ran out into the yard.

This was how domestic scenes usually ended at the Shiryaevs'. But on this occasion, unfortunately, Pyotr the student was carried away by overmastering anger. He was just as hasty and ill-tempered as his father and his grandfather the priest, who used to beat his parishioners about the head with a stick. Pale and clenching his fists, he went up to his mother and shouted in the very highest tenor note his voice could reach:

"These reproaches are loathsome! sickening to me! I want nothing from you! Nothing! I would rather die of hunger than eat another mouthful at your expense! Take your nasty money back! take it!"

The mother huddled against the wall and waved her hands, as though it were not her son, but some phantom before her.

"What have I done?" she wailed. "What?"

Like his father, the boy waved his hands and ran into the yard. Shiryayev's house stood alone on a ravine which ran like a furrow for four miles along the steppe. Its sides were overgrown with oak saplings and alders, and a stream ran at the bottom. On one side the house looked towards the ravine, on the other towards the open country, there were no fences nor hurdles. Instead there were farm-build-



ings of all sorts close to one another, shutting in a small space in front of the house which was regarded as the yard, and in which hens, ducks, and pigs ran about.

Going out of the house, the student walked along the muddy road towards the open country. The air was full of a penetrating autumn dampness. The road was muddy, puddles gleamed here and there, and in the yellow fields autumn itself seemed looking out from the grass, dismal, decaying, dark. On the right-hand side of the road was a vegetable-garden cleared of its crops and gloomy-looking, with here and there sunflowers standing up in it with hanging heads already black.

Pyotr thought it would not be a bad thing to walk to Moscow on foot; to walk just as he was, with holes in his boots, without a cap, and without a farthing of money. When he had gone eighty miles his father, frightened and aghast, would overtake him, would begin begging him to turn back or take the money, but he would not even look at him, but would go on and on. . . . Bare forests would be followed by desolate fields, fields by forests again; soon the earth would be white with the first snow, and the streams would be coated with ice. . . . Somewhere near Kursk or near Serpuhovo, exhausted and dying of hunger, he would sink down and die. His corpse would be found, and there would be a paragraph in all the papers saying that a student called Shiryayev had died of hunger. . . .

A white dog with a muddy tail who was wandering about the vegetable-garden looking for some-



thing gazed at him and sauntered after him. . . .

He walked along the road and thought of death, of the grief of his family, of the moral sufferings of his father, and then pictured all sorts of adventures on the road, each more marvellous than the one before — picturesque places, terrible nights, chance encounters. He imagined a string of pilgrims, a hut in the forest with one little window shining in the darkness; he stands before the window, begs for a night's lodging. . . . They let him in, and suddenly he sees that they are robbers. Or, better still, he is taken into a big manor-house, where, learning who he is, they give him food and drink, play to him on the piano, listen to his complaints, and the daughter of the house, a beauty, falls in love with him.

Absorbed in his bitterness and such thoughts, young Shiryaev walked on and on. Far, far ahead he saw the inn, a dark patch against the grey background of cloud. Beyond the inn, on the very horizon, he could see a little hillock; this was the railway-station. That hillock reminded him of the connection existing between the place where he was now standing and Moscow, where street-lamps were burning and carriages were rattling in the streets, where lectures were being given. And he almost wept with depression and impatience. The solemn landscape, with its order and beauty, the deathlike stillness all around, revolted him and moved him to despair and hatred!

"Look out!" He heard behind him a loud voice.

An old lady of his acquaintance, a landowner of

the neighbourhood, drove past him in a light, elegant landau. He bowed to her, and smiled all over his face. And at once he caught himself in that smile, which was so out of keeping with his gloomy mood. Where did it come from if his whole heart was full of vexation and misery? And he thought nature itself had given man this capacity for lying, that even in difficult moments of spiritual strain he might be able to hide the secrets of his nest as the fox and the wild duck do. Every family has its joys and its horrors, but however great they may be, it's hard for an outsider's eye to see them; they are a secret. The father of the old lady who had just driven by, for instance, had for some offence lain for half his lifetime under the ban of the wrath of Tsar Nicolas I.; her husband had been a gambler; of her four sons, not one had turned out well. One could imagine how many terrible scenes there must have been in her life, how many tears must have been shed. And yet the old lady seemed happy and satisfied, and she had answered his smile by smiling too. The student thought of his comrades, who did not like talking about their families; he thought of his mother, who almost always lied when she had to speak of her husband and children. . . .

Pyotr walked about the roads far from home till dusk, abandoning himself to dreary thoughts. When it began to drizzle with rain he turned homewards. As he walked back he made up his mind at all costs to talk to his father, to explain to him, once and for all, that it was dreadful and oppressive to live with him.

He found perfect stillness in the house. His sister Varvara was lying behind a screen with a headache, moaning faintly. His mother, with a look of amazement and guilt upon her face, was sitting beside her on a box, mending Arhipka's trousers. Yevgraf Ivanovitch was pacing from one window to another, scowling at the weather. From his walk, from the way he cleared his throat, and even from the back of his head, it was evident he felt himself to blame.

"I suppose you have changed your mind about going today?" he asked.

The student felt sorry for him, but immediately suppressing that feeling, he said:

"Listen . . . I must speak to you seriously . . . yes, seriously. I have always respected you, and . . . and have never brought myself to speak to you in such a tone, but your behaviour . . . your last action . . ."

The father looked out of the window and did not speak. The student, as though considering his words, rubbed his forehead and went on in great excitement:

"Not a dinner or tea passes without your making an uproar. Your bread sticks in our throat . . . nothing is more bitter, more humiliating, than bread that sticks in one's throat. . . . Though you are my father, no one, neither God nor nature, has given you the right to insult and humiliate us so horribly, to vent your ill-humour on the weak. You have worn my mother out and made a slave of her, my sister is hopelessly crushed, while I . . ."

"It's not your business to teach me," said his father.

"Yes, it is my business! You can quarrel with me as much as you like, but leave my mother in peace! I will not allow you to torment my mother!" the student went on, with flashing eyes. "You are spoilt because no one has yet dared to oppose you. They tremble and are mute towards you, but now that is over! Coarse, ill-bred man! You are coarse . . . do you understand? You are coarse, ill-humoured, unfeeling. And the peasants can't endure you!"

The student had by now lost his thread, and was not so much speaking as firing off detached words. Yevgraf Ivanovitch listened in silence, as though stunned; but suddenly his neck turned crimson, the colour crept up his face, and he made a movement.

"Hold your tongue!" he shouted.

"That's right!" the son persisted; "you don't like to hear the truth! Excellent! Very good! begin shouting! Excellent!"

"Hold your tongue, I tell you!" roared Yevgraf Ivanovitch.

Fedosya Semyonovna appeared in the doorway, very pale, with an astonished face; she tried to say something, but she could not, and could only move her fingers.

"It's all your fault!" Shiryaev shouted at her. "You have brought him up like this!"

"I don't want to go on living in this house!" shouted the student, crying, and looking angrily at his mother. "I don't want to live with you!"

Varvara uttered a shriek behind the screen and broke into loud sobs. With a wave of his hand, Shiryaev ran out of the house.

The student went to his own room and quietly lay down. He lay till midnight without moving or opening his eyes. He felt neither anger nor shame, but a vague ache in his soul. He neither blamed his father nor pitied his mother, nor was he tormented by stings of conscience; he realized that every one in the house was feeling the same ache, and God only knew which was most to blame, which was suffering most. . . .

At midnight he woke the labourer, and told him to have the horse ready at five o'clock in the morning for him to drive to the station; he undressed and got into bed, but could not get to sleep. He heard how his father, still awake, paced slowly from window to window, sighing, till early morning. No one was asleep; they spoke rarely, and only in whispers. Twice his mother came to him behind the screen. Always with the same look of vacant wonder, she slowly made the cross over him, shaking nervously.

At five o'clock in the morning he said good-bye to them all affectionately, and even shed tears. As he passed his father's room, he glanced in at the door. Yevgraf Ivanovitch, who had not taken off his clothes or gone to bed, was standing by the window, drumming on the panes.

"Good-bye; I am going," said his son.

"Good-bye . . . the money is on the round table . . ." his father answered, without turning round.

A cold, hateful rain was falling as the labourer drove him to the station. The sunflowers were drooping their heads still lower, and the grass seemed darker than ever.



THE GRASSHOPPER





## THE GRASSHOPPER

### I

ALL Olga Ivanovna's friends and acquaintances were at her wedding.

"Look at him; isn't it true that there is something in him?" she said to her friends, with a nod towards her husband, as though she wanted to explain why she was marrying a simple, very ordinary, and in no way remarkable man.

Her husband, Osip Stepanitch Dymov, was a doctor, and only of the rank of a titular councillor. He was on the staff of two hospitals: in one a ward-surgeon and in the other a dissecting demonstrator. Every day from nine to twelve he saw patients and was busy in his ward, and after twelve o'clock he went by tram to the other hospital, where he dissected. His private practice was a small one, not worth more than five hundred roubles a year. That was all. What more could one say about him? Meanwhile, Olga Ivanovna and her friends and acquaintances were not quite ordinary people. Every one of them was remarkable in some way, and more or less famous; already had made a reputation and was looked upon as a celebrity; or if not yet a celebrity, gave brilliant promise of becoming one. There was an actor from the Dramatic Theatre, who was a

great talent of established reputation, as well as an elegant, intelligent, and modest man, and a capital elocutionist, and who taught Olga Ivanovna to recite; there was a singer from the opera, a good-natured, fat man who assured Olga Ivanovna, with a sigh, that she was ruining herself, that if she would take herself in hand and not be lazy she might make a remarkable singer; then there were several artists, and chief among them Ryabovsky, a very handsome, fair young man of five-and-twenty who painted genre pieces, animal studies, and landscapes, was successful at exhibitions, and had sold his last picture for five hundred roubles. He touched up Olga Ivanovna's sketches, and used to say she might do something. Then a violoncellist, whose instrument used to sob, and who openly declared that of all the ladies of his acquaintance the only one who could accompany him was Olga Ivanovna; then there was a literary man, young but already well known, who had written stories, novels, and plays. Who else? Why, Vassily Vassilyitch, a landowner and amateur illustrator and vignettist, with a great feeling for the old Russian style, the old ballad and epic. On paper, on china, and on smoked plates, he produced literally marvels. In the midst of this free artistic company, spoiled by fortune, though refined and modest, who recalled the existence of doctors only in times of illness, and to whom the name of Dymov sounded in no way different from Sidorov or Tarasov — in the midst of this company Dymov seemed strange, not wanted, and small, though he was tall and broad-shouldered. He looked as though he

had on somebody else's coat, and his beard was like a shopman's. Though if he had been a writer or an artist, they would have said that his beard reminded them of Zola.

An artist said to Olga Ivanovna that with her flaxen hair and in her wedding-dress she was very much like a graceful cherry-tree when it is covered all over with delicate white blossoms in spring.

"Oh, let me tell you," said Olga Ivanovna, taking his arm, "how it was it all came to pass so suddenly. Listen, listen! . . . I must tell you that my father was on the same staff at the hospital as Dymov. When my poor father was taken ill, Dymov watched for days and nights together at his bedside. Such self-sacrifice! Listen, Ryabovsky! You, my writer, listen; it is very interesting! Come nearer. Such self-sacrifice, such genuine sympathy! I sat up with my father, and did not sleep for nights, either. And all at once — the princess had won the hero's heart — my Dymov fell head over ears in love. Really, fate is so strange at times! Well, after my father's death he came to see me sometimes, met me in the street, and one fine evening, all at once he made me an offer . . . like snow upon my head. . . . I lay awake all night, crying, and fell hellishly in love myself. And here, as you see, I am his wife. There really is something strong, powerful, bearlike about him, isn't there? Now his face is turned three-quarters towards us in a bad light, but when he turns round look at his forehead. Ryabovsky, what do you say to that forehead? Dymov, we are talking about you!" she called to her husband. "Come

here; hold out your honest hand to Ryabovsky. . . . That's right, be friends."

Dymov, with a naïve and good-natured smile, held out his hand to Ryabovsky, and said:

"Very glad to meet you. There was a Ryabovsky in my year at the medical school. Was he a relation of yours?"

## II

Olga Ivanovna was twenty-two, Dymov was thirty-one. They got on splendidly together when they were married. Olga Ivanovna hung all her drawing-room walls with her own and other people's sketches, in frames and without frames, and near the piano and furniture arranged picturesque corners with Japanese parasols, easels, daggers, busts, photographs, and rags of many colours. . . . In the dining-room she papered the walls with peasant woodcuts, hung up bark shoes and sickles, stood in a corner a scythe and a rake, and so achieved a dining-room in the Russian style. In her bedroom she draped the ceiling and the walls with dark cloths to make it like a cavern, hung a Venetian lantern over the beds, and at the door set a figure with a halberd. And every one thought that the young people had a very charming little home.

When she got up at eleven o'clock every morning, Olga Ivanovna played the piano or, if it were sunny, painted something in oils. Then between twelve and one she drove to her dressmaker's. As Dymov and she had very little money, only just enough, she and

her dressmaker were often put to clever shifts to enable her to appear constantly in new dresses and make a sensation with them. Very often out of an old dyed dress, out of bits of tulle, lace, plush, and silk, costing nothing, perfect marvels were created, something bewitching — not a dress, but a dream. From the dressmaker's Olga Ivanovna usually drove to some actress of her acquaintance to hear the latest theatrical gossip, and incidentally to try and get hold of tickets for the first night of some new play or for a benefit performance. From the actress's she had to go to some artist's studio or to some exhibition or to see some celebrity — either to pay a visit or to give an invitation or simply to have a chat. And everywhere she met with a gay and friendly welcome, and was assured that she was good, that she was sweet, that she was rare. . . . Those whom she called great and famous received her as one of themselves, as an equal, and predicted with one voice that, with her talents, her taste, and her intelligence, she would do great things if she concentrated herself. She sang, she played the piano, she painted in oils, she carved, she took part in amateur performances; and all this not just anyhow, but all with talent, whether she made lanterns for an illumination or dressed up or tied somebody's cravat — everything she did was exceptionally graceful, artistic, and charming. But her talents showed themselves in nothing so clearly as in her faculty for quickly becoming acquainted and on intimate terms with celebrated people. No sooner did any one become ever so little celebrated, and set people talking about him,

than she made his acquaintance, got on friendly terms the same day, and invited him to her house. Every new acquaintance she made was a veritable fête for her. She adored celebrated people, was proud of them, dreamed of them every night. She craved for them, and never could satisfy her craving. The old ones departed and were forgotten, new ones came to replace them, but to these, too, she soon grew accustomed or was disappointed in them, and began eagerly seeking for fresh great men, finding them and seeking for them again. What for?

Between four and five she dined at home with her husband. His simplicity, good sense, and kind-heartedness touched her and moved her up to enthusiasm. She was constantly jumping up, impulsively hugging his head and showering kisses on it.

"You are a clever, generous man, Dymov," she used to say, "but you have one very serious defect. You take absolutely no interest in art. You don't believe in music or painting."

"I don't understand them," he would say mildly. "I have spent all my life in working at natural science and medicine, and I have never had time to take an interest in the arts."

"But, you know, that's awful, Dymov!"

"Why so? Your friends don't know anything of science or medicine, but you don't reproach them with it. Every one has his own line. I don't understand landscapes and operas, but the way I look at it is that if one set of sensible people devote their whole lives to them, and other sensible people pay



immense sums for them, they must be of use. I don't understand them, but not understanding does not imply disbelieving in them."

"Let me shake your honest hand!"

After dinner Olga Ivanovna would drive off to see her friends, then to a theatre or to a concert, and she returned home after midnight. So it was every day.

On Wednesdays she had "At Homes." At these "At Homes" the hostess and her guests did not play cards and did not dance, but entertained themselves with various arts. An actor from the Dramatic Theatre recited, a singer sang, artists sketched in the albums of which Olga Ivanovna had a great number, the violoncellist played, and the hostess herself sketched, carved, sang, and played accompaniments. In the intervals between the recitations, music, and singing, they talked and argued about literature, the theatre, and painting. There were no ladies, for Olga Ivanovna considered all ladies wearisome and vulgar except actresses and her dressmaker. Not one of these entertainments passed without the hostess starting at every ring at the bell, and saying, with a triumphant expression, "It is he," meaning by "he," of course, some new celebrity. Dymov was not in the drawing-room, and no one remembered his existence. But exactly at half-past eleven the door leading into the dining-room opened, and Dymov would appear with his good-natured, gentle smile and say, rubbing his hands:

"Come to supper, gentlemen."

They all went into the dining-room, and every



time found on the table exactly the same things: a dish of oysters, a piece of ham or veal, sardines, cheese, caviare, mushrooms, vodka, and two decanters of wine.

“My dear *mâitre d' hôtel!*” Olga Ivanovna would say, clasping her hands with enthusiasm, “you are simply fascinating! My friends, look at his forehead! Dymov, turn your profile. Look! he has the face of a Bengal tiger and an expression as kind and sweet as a gazelle. Ah, the darling!”

The visitors ate, and, looking at Dymov, thought, “He really is a nice fellow”; but they soon forgot about him, and went on talking about the theatre, music, and painting.

The young people were happy, and their life flowed on without a hitch.

The third week of their honeymoon was spent, however, not quite happily — sadly, indeed. Dymov caught erysipelas in the hospital, was in bed for six days, and had to have his beautiful black hair cropped. Olga Ivanovna sat beside him and wept bitterly, but when he was better she put a white handkerchief on his shaven head and began to paint him as a Bedouin. And they were both in good spirits. Three days after he had begun to go back to the hospital he had another mischance.

“I have no luck, little mother,” he said one day at dinner. “I had four dissections to do today, and I cut two of my fingers at one. And I did not notice it till I got home.”

Olga Ivanovna was alarmed. He smiled, and

told her that it did not matter, and that he often cut his hands when he was dissecting.

“I get absorbed, little mother, and grow careless.”

Olga Ivanovna dreaded symptoms of blood-poisoning, and prayed about it every night, but all went well. And again life flowed on peaceful and happy, free from grief and anxiety. The present was happy, and to follow it spring was at hand, already smiling in the distance, and promising a thousand delights. There would be no end to their happiness. In April, May and June a summer villa a good distance out of town; walks, sketching, fishing, nightingales; and then from July right on to autumn an artist's tour on the Volga, and in this tour Olga Ivanovna would take part as an indispensable member of the society. She had already had made for her two travelling dresses of linen, had bought paints, brushes, canvases, and a new palette for the journey. Almost every day Ryabovsky visited her to see what progress she was making in her painting; when she showed him her painting, he used to thrust his hands deep into his pockets, compress his lips, sniff, and say:

“Ye—es . . . ! That cloud of yours is screaming: it's not in the evening light. The foreground is somehow chewed up, and there is something, you know, not the thing. . . . And your cottage is weighed down and whines pitifully. That corner ought to have been taken more in shadow, but on the whole it is not bad; I like it.”

And the more incomprehensible he talked, the more readily Olga Ivanovna understood him.

## III

After dinner on the second day of Trinity week, Dymov bought some sweets and some savouries<sup>9</sup> and went down to the villa to see his wife. He had not seen her for a fortnight, and missed her terribly. As he sat in the train and afterwards as he looked for his villa in a big wood, he felt all the while hungry and weary, and dreamed of how he would have supper in freedom with his wife, then tumble into bed and to sleep. And he was delighted as he looked at his parcel, in which there was caviare, cheese, and white salmon.

The sun was setting by the time he found his villa and recognized it. The old servant told him that her mistress was not at home, but that most likely she would soon be in. The villa, very uninviting in appearance, with low ceilings papered with writing-paper and with uneven floors full of crevices, consisted only of three rooms. In one there was a bed, in the second there were canvases, brushes, greasy papers, and men's overcoats and hats lying about on the chairs and in the windows, while in the third Dymov found three unknown men; two were dark-haired and had beards, the other was clean-shaven and fat, apparently an actor. There was a samovar boiling on the table.

"What do you want?" asked the actor in a bass voice, looking at Dymov ungraciously. "Do you

want Olga Ivanovna? Wait a minute; she will be here directly."

Dymov sat down and waited. One of the dark-haired men, looking sleepily and listlessly at him, poured himself out a glass of tea, and asked:

"Perhaps you would like some tea?"

Dymov was both hungry and thirsty, but he refused tea for fear of spoiling his supper. Soon he heard footsteps and a familiar laugh; a door slammed, and Olga Ivanovna ran into the room, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and carrying a box in her hand; she was followed by Ryabovsky, rosy and good-humoured, carrying a big umbrella and a campstool.

"Dymov!" cried Olga Ivanovna, and she flushed crimson with pleasure. "Dymov!" she repeated, laying her head and both arms on his bosom. "Is that you? Why haven't you come for so long? Why? Why?"

"When could I, little mother? I am always busy, and whenever I am free it always happens somehow that the train does not fit."

"But how glad I am to see you! I have been dreaming about you the whole night, the whole night, and I was afraid you must be ill. Ah! if you only knew how sweet you are! You have come in the nick of time! You will be my salvation! You are the only person who can save me! There is to be a most original wedding here tomorrow," she went on, laughing, and tying her husband's cravat. "A young telegraph clerk at the station, called Tchikeldyev, is going to be married. He is a handsome

young man and — well, not stupid, and you know there is something strong, bearlike in his face . . . you might paint him as a young Norman. We summer visitors take a great interest in him, and have promised to be at his wedding. . . . He is a lonely, timid man, not well off, and of course it would be a shame not to be sympathetic to him. Fancy! the wedding will be after the service; then we shall all walk from the church to the bride's lodgings . . . you see the wood, the birds singing, patches of sunlight on the grass, and all of us spots of different colours against the bright green background — very original, in the style of the French impressionists. But, Dymov, what am I to go to the church in?" said Olga Ivanovna, and she looked as though she were going to cry. "I have nothing here, literally nothing! no dress, no flowers, no gloves . . . you must save me. Since you have come, fate itself bids you save me. Take the keys, my precious, go home and get my pink dress from the wardrobe. You remember it; it hangs in front. . . . Then, in the storeroom, on the floor, on the right side, you will see two cardboard boxes. When you open the top one you will see tulle, heaps of tulle and rags of all sorts, and under them flowers. Take out all the flowers carefully, try not to crush them, darling; I will choose among them later. . . . And buy me some gloves."

"Very well," said Dymov; "I will go tomorrow and send them to you."

"Tomorrow?" asked Olga Ivanovna, and she looked at him surprised. "You won't have time to-

morrow. The first train goes tomorrow at nine, and the wedding's at eleven. No, darling, it must be today; it absolutely must be today. If you won't be able to come tomorrow, send them by a messenger. Come, you must run along. . . . The passenger train will be in directly; don't miss it, darling."

"Very well."

"Oh, how sorry I am to let you go!" said Olga Ivanovna, and tears came into her eyes. "And why did I promise that telegraph clerk, like a silly?"

Dymov hurriedly drank a glass of tea, took a cracknel, and, smiling gently, went to the station. And the caviare, the cheese, and the white salmon were eaten by the two dark gentlemen and the fat actor.

#### IV

On a still moonlight night in July Olga Ivanovna was standing on the deck of a Volga steamer and looking alternately at the water and at the picturesque banks. Beside her was standing Ryabovsky, telling her the black shadows on the water were not shadows, but a dream, that it would be sweet to sink into forgetfulness, to die, to become a memory in the sight of that enchanted water with the fantastic glimmer, in sight of the fathomless sky and the mournful, dreamy shores that told of the vanity of our life and of the existence of something higher, blessed, and eternal. The past was vulgar and uninteresting, the future was trivial, and that marvelous night, unique in a lifetime, would soon be over, would blend with eternity; then, why live?



And Olga Ivanovna listened alternately to Ryabovsky's voice and the silence of the night, and thought of her being immortal and never dying. The turquoise colour of the water, such as she had never seen before, the sky, the river-banks, the black shadows, and the unaccountable joy that flooded her soul, all told her that she would make a great artist, and that somewhere in the distance, in the infinite space beyond the moonlight, success, glory, the love of the people, lay awaiting her. . . . When she gazed steadily without blinking into the distance, she seemed to see crowds of people, lights, triumphant strains of music, cries of enthusiasm, she herself in a white dress, and flowers showered upon her from all sides. She thought, too, that beside her, leaning with his elbows on the rail of the steamer, there was standing a real great man, a genius, one of God's elect. . . . All that he had created up to the present was fine, new, and extraordinary, but what he would create in time, when with maturity his rare talent reached its full development, would be astounding, immeasurably sublime; and that could be seen by his face, by his manner of expressing himself and his attitude to nature. He talked of shadows, of the tones of evening, of the moonlight, in a special way, in a language of his own, so that one could not help feeling the fascination of his power over nature. He was very handsome, original, and his life, free, independent, aloof from all common cares, was like the life of a bird.

"It's growing cooler," said Olga Ivanovna, and she gave a shudder.

Ryabovsky wrapped her in his cloak, and said mournfully:

"I feel that I am in your power; I am a slave. Why are you so enchanting today?"

He kept staring intently at her, and his eyes were terrible. And she was afraid to look at him.

"I love you madly," he whispered, breathing on her cheek. "Say one word to me and I will not go on living; I will give up art . . ." he muttered in violent emotion. "Love me, love . . ."

"Don't talk like that," said Olga Ivanovna, covering her eyes. "It's dreadful! How about Dymov?"

"What of Dymov? Why Dymov? What have I to do with Dymov? The Volga, the moon, beauty, my love, ecstasy, and there is no such thing as Dymov. . . . Ah! I don't know . . . I don't care about the past; give me one moment, one instant!"

Olga Ivanovna's heart began to throb. She tried to think about her husband, but all her past, with her wedding, with Dymov, and with her "At Homes," seemed to her petty, trivial, dingy, unnecessary, and far, far away. . . . Yes, really, what of Dymov? Why Dymov? What had she to do with Dymov? Had he any existence in nature, or was he only a dream?

"For him, a simple and ordinary man the happiness he has had already is enough," she thought, covering her face with her hands. "Let them condemn me, let them curse me, but in spite of them all I will go to my ruin; I will go to my ruin! . . . One



must experience everything in life. My God! how terrible and how glorious!"

"Well? Well?" muttered the artist, embracing her, and greedily kissing the hands with which she feebly tried to thrust him from her. "You love me? Yes? Yes? Oh, what a night! marvellous night!"

"Yes, what a night!" she whispered, looking into his eyes, which were bright with tears.

Then she looked round quickly, put her arms round him, and kissed him on the lips.

"We are nearing Kineshmo!" said some one on the other side of the deck.

They heard heavy footsteps; it was a waiter from the refreshment-bar.

"Waiter," said Olga Ivanovna, laughing and crying with happiness, "bring us some wine."

The artist, pale with emotion, sat on the seat, looking at Olga Ivanovna with adoring, grateful eyes; then he closed his eyes, and said, smiling languidly:

"I am tired."

And he leaned his head against the rail.

## V

On the second of September the day was warm and still, but overcast. In the early morning a light mist had hung over the Volga, and after nine o'clock it had begun to spout with rain. And there seemed no hope of the sky clearing. Over their morning tea Ryabovsky told Olga Ivanovna that painting was the

most ungrateful and boring art, that he was not an artist, that none but fools thought that he had any talent, and all at once, for no rhyme or reason, he snatched up a knife and with it scraped over his very best sketch. After his tea he sat plunged in gloom at the window and gazed at the Volga. And now the Volga was dingy, all of one even colour without a gleam of light, cold-looking. Everything, everything recalled the approach of dreary, gloomy autumn. And it seemed as though nature had removed now from the Volga the sumptuous green covers from the banks, the brilliant reflections of the sunbeams, the transparent blue distance, and all its smart gala array, and had packed it away in boxes till the coming spring, and the crows were flying above the Volga and crying tauntingly, "Bare, bare!"

Ryabovsky heard their cawing, and thought he had already gone off and lost his talent, that everything in this world was relative, conditional, and stupid, and that he ought not to have taken up with this woman. . . . In short, he was out of humour and depressed.

Olga Ivanovna sat behind the screen on the bed, and, passing her fingers through her lovely flaxen hair, pictured herself first in the drawing-room, then in the bedroom, then in her husband's study; her imagination carried her to the theatre, to the dress-maker, to her distinguished friends. Were they getting something up now? Did they think of her? The season had begun by now, and it would be time to think about her "At Homes." And Dymov?

Dear Dymov! with what gentleness and childlike pathos he kept begging her in his letters to make haste and come home! Every month he sent her seventy-five roubles, and when she wrote him that she had lent the artists a hundred roubles, he sent that hundred too. What a kind, generous-hearted man! The travelling wearied Olga Ivanovna; she was bored; and she longed to get away from the peasants, from the damp smell of the river, and to cast off the feeling of physical uncleanness of which she was conscious all the time, living in the peasants' huts and wandering from village to village. If Ryabovsky had not given his word to the artists that he would stay with them till the twentieth of September, they might have gone away that very day. And how nice that would have been!

"My God!" moaned Ryabovsky. "Will the sun ever come out? I can't go on with a sunny landscape without the sun. . . ."

"But you have a sketch with a cloudy sky," said Olga Ivanovna, coming from behind the screen. "Do you remember, in the right foreground forest trees, on the left a herd of cows and geese? You might finish it now."

"Aie!" the artist scowled. "Finish it! Can you imagine I am such a fool that I don't know what I want to do?"

"How you have changed to me!" sighed Olga Ivanovna.

"Well, a good thing too!"

Olga Ivanovna's face quivered; she moved away to the stove and began to cry.

“Well, that’s the last straw — crying! Give over! I have a thousand reasons for tears, but I am not crying.”

“A thousand reasons!” cried Olga Ivanovna. “The chief one is that you are weary of me. Yes!” she said, and broke into sobs. “If one is to tell the truth, you are ashamed of our love. You keep trying to prevent the artists from noticing it, though it is impossible to conceal it, and they have known all about it for ever so long.”

“Olga, one thing I beg you,” said the artist in an imploring voice, laying his hand on his heart — “one thing; don’t worry me! I want nothing else from you!”

“But swear that you love me still!”

“This is agony!” the artist hissed through his teeth, and he jumped up. “It will end by my throwing myself in the Volga or going out of my mind! Let me alone!”

“Come, kill me, kill me!” cried Olga Ivanovna. “Kill me!”

She sobbed again, and went behind the screen. There was a swish of rain on the straw thatch of the hut. Ryabovsky clutched his head and strode up and down the hut; then with a resolute face, as though bent on proving something to somebody, put on his cap, slung his gun over his shoulder, and went out of the hut.

After he had gone, Olga Ivanovna lay a long time on the bed, crying. At first she thought it would be a good thing to poison herself, so that when Ryabovsky came back he would find her dead; then her

imagination carried her to her drawing-room, to her husband's study, and she imagined herself sitting motionless beside Dymov and enjoying the physical peace and cleanliness, and in the evening sitting in the theatre, listening to Mazini. And a yearning for civilization, for the noise and bustle of the town, for celebrated people sent a pang to her heart. A peasant woman came into the hut and began in a leisurely way lighting the stove to get the dinner. There was a smell of charcoal fumes, and the air was filled with bluish smoke. The artists came in, in muddy high boots and with faces wet with rain, examined their sketches, and comforted themselves by saying that the Volga had its charms even in bad weather. On the wall the cheap clock went "tic-tic-tic." . . . The flies, feeling chilled, crowded round the ikon in the corner, buzzing, and one could hear the cockroaches scurrying about among the thick portfolios under the seats. . . .

Ryabovsky came home as the sun was setting. He flung his cap on the table, and, without removing his muddy boots, sank pale and exhausted on the bench and closed his eyes.

"I am tired . . ." he said, and twitched his eyebrows, trying to raise his eyelids.

To be nice to him and to show she was not cross, Olga Ivanovna went up to him, gave him a silent kiss, and passed the comb through his fair hair. She meant to comb it for him.

"What's that?" he said, starting as though something cold had touched him, and he opened his eyes. "What is it? Please let me alone."

He thrust her off, and moved away. And it seemed to her that there was a look of aversion and annoyance on his face.

At that time the peasant woman cautiously carried him, in both hands, a plate of cabbage-soup. And Olga Ivanovna saw how she wetted her fat fingers in it. And the dirty peasant woman, standing with her body thrust forward, and the cabbage-soup which Ryabovsky began eating greedily, and the hut, and their whole way of life, which she at first had so loved for its simplicity and artistic disorder, seemed horrible to her now. She suddenly felt insulted, and said coldly:

“We must part for a time, or else from boredom we shall quarrel in earnest. I am sick of this; I am going today.”

“Going how? Astride on a broomstick?”

“Today is Thursday, so the steamer will be here at half-past nine.”

“Eh? Yes, yes. . . . Well, go, then . . .” Ryabovsky said softly, wiping his mouth with a towel instead of a dinner napkin. “You are dull and have nothing to do here, and one would have to be a great egoist to try and keep you. Go home, and we shall meet again after the twentieth.”

Olga Ivanovna packed in good spirits. Her cheeks positively glowed with pleasure. Could it really be true, she asked herself, that she would soon be writing in her drawing-room and sleeping in her bedroom, and dining with a cloth on the table? A weight was lifted from her heart, and she no longer felt angry with the artist.



“ My paints and brushes I will leave with you, Ryabovsky,” she said. “ You can bring what’s left. . . . Mind, now, don’t be lazy here when I am gone; don’t mope, but work. You are such a splendid fellow, Ryabovsky! ”

At ten o’clock Ryabovsky gave her a farewell kiss, in order, as she thought, to avoid kissing her on the steamer before the artists, and went with her to the landing-stage. The steamer soon came up and carried her away.

She arrived home two and a half days later. Breathless with excitement, she went, without taking off her hat or waterproof, into the drawing-room and thence into the dining-room. Dymov, with his waistcoat unbuttoned and no coat, was sitting at the table sharpening a knife on a fork; before him lay a grouse on a plate. As Olga Ivanovna went into the flat she was convinced that it was essential to hide everything from her husband, and that she would have the strength and skill to do so; but now, when she saw his broad, mild, happy smile, and shining, joyful eyes, she felt that to deceive this man was as vile, as revolting, and as impossible and out of her power as to bear false witness, to steal, or to kill, and in a flash she resolved to tell him all that had happened. Letting him kiss and embrace her, she sank down on her knees before him and hid her face.

“ What is it, what is it, little mother? ” he asked tenderly. “ Were you homesick? ”

She raised her face, red with shame, and gazed at him with a guilty and imploring look, but fear

and shame prevented her from telling him the truth.

"Nothing," she said; "it's just nothing. . . ."

"Let us sit down," he said, raising her and seating her at the table. "That's right, eat the grouse. You are starving, poor darling."

She eagerly breathed in the atmosphere of home and ate the grouse, while he watched her with tenderness and laughed with delight.

## VI

Apparently, by the middle of the winter Dymov began to suspect that he was being deceived. As though his conscience was not clear, he could not look his wife straight in the face, did not smile with delight when he met her, and to avoid being left alone with her, he often brought in to dinner his colleague, Korostelev, a little close-cropped man with a wrinkled face, who kept buttoning and unbuttoning his reefer jacket with embarrassment when he talked with Olga Ivanovna, and then with his right hand nipped his left moustache. At dinner the two doctors talked about the fact that a displacement of the diaphragm was sometimes accompanied by irregularities of the heart, or that a great number of neurotic complaints were met with of late, or that Dymov had the day before found a cancer of the lower abdomen while dissecting a corpse with the diagnosis of pernicious anaemia. And it seemed as though they were talking of medicine to give Olga Ivanovna a chance of being silent — that is, of not lying. After dinner Korostelev sat down to



the piano, while Dymov sighed and said to him:  
“Ech, brother — well, well! Play something melancholy.”

Hunching up his shoulders and stretching his fingers wide apart, Korostelev played some chords and began singing in a tenor voice, “Show me the abode where the Russian peasant would not groan,” while Dymov sighed once more, propped his head on his fist, and sank into thought.

Olga Ivanovna had been extremely imprudent in her conduct of late. Every morning she woke up in a very bad humour and with the thought that she no longer cared for Ryabovsky, and that, thank God, it was all over now. But as she drank her coffee she reflected that Ryabovsky had robbed her of her husband, and that now she was left with neither her husband nor Ryabovsky; then she remembered talks she had heard among her acquaintances of a picture Ryabovsky was preparing for the exhibition, something striking, a mixture of genre and landscape, in the style of Polyenov, about which every one who had been into his studio went into raptures; and this, of course, she mused, he had created under her influence, and altogether, thanks to her influence, he had greatly changed for the better. Her influence was so beneficent and essential that if she were to leave him he might perhaps go to ruin. And she remembered, too, that the last time he had come to see her in a great-coat with flecks on it and a new tie, he had asked her languidly:

“Am I beautiful?”

And with his elegance, his long curls, and his blue

eyes, he really was very beautiful (or perhaps it only seemed so), and he had been affectionate to her.

Considering and remembering many things Olga Ivanovna dressed and in great agitation drove to Ryabovsky's studio. She found him in high spirits, and enchanted with his really magnificent picture. He was dancing about and playing the fool and answering serious questions with jokes. Olga Ivanovna was jealous of the picture and hated it, but from politeness she stood before the picture for five minutes in silence, and, heaving a sigh, as though before a holy shrine, said softly:

"Yes, you have never painted anything like it before. Do you know, it is positively awe-inspiring?"

And then she began beseeching him to love her and not to cast her off, to have pity on her in her misery and her wretchedness. She shed tears, kissed his hands, insisted on his swearing that he loved her, told him that without her good influence he would go astray and be ruined. And, when she had spoilt his good-humour, feeling herself humiliated, she would drive off to her dressmaker or to an actress of her acquaintance to try and get theatre tickets.

If she did not find him at his studio she left a letter in which she swore that if he did not come to see her that day she would poison herself. He was scared, came to see her, and stayed to dinner. Regardless of her husband's presence, he would say rude things to her, and she would answer him in

the same way. Both felt they were a burden to each other, that they were tyrants and enemies, and were wrathful, and in their wrath did not notice that their behaviour was unseemly, and that even Korostelev, with his close-cropped head, saw it all. After dinner Ryabovsky made haste to say good-bye and get away.

"Where are you off to?" Olga Ivanovna would ask him in the hall, looking at him with hatred.

Scowling and screwing up his eyes, he mentioned some lady of their acquaintance, and it was evident that he was laughing at her jealousy and wanted to annoy her. She went to her bedroom and lay down on her bed; from jealousy, anger, a sense of humiliation and shame, she bit the pillow and began sobbing aloud. Dymov left Korostelev in the drawing-room, went into the bedroom, and with a desperate and embarrassed face said softly:

"Don't cry so loud, little mother; there's no need. You must be quiet about it. You must not let people see. . . . You know what is done is done, and can't be mended."

Not knowing how to ease the burden of her jealousy, which actually set her temples throbbing with pain, and thinking still that things might be set right, she would wash, powder her tear-stained face, and fly off to the lady mentioned.

Not finding Ryabovsky with her, she would drive off to a second, then to a third. At first she was ashamed to go about like this, but afterwards she got used to it, and it would happen that in one evening she would make the round of all her female

acquaintances in search of Ryabovsky, and they all understood it.

One day she said to Ryabovsky of her husband:

“That man crushes me with his magnanimity.”

This phrase pleased her so much that when she met the artists who knew of her affair with Ryabovsky she said every time of her husband, with a vigorous movement of her arm:

“That man crushes me with his magnanimity.”

Their manner of life was the same as it had been the year before. On Wednesdays they were “At Home”; an actor recited, the artists sketched. The violoncellist played, a singer sang, and invariably at half-past eleven the door leading to the dining-room opened and Dymov, smiling, said:

“Come to supper, gentlemen.”

As before, Olga Ivanovna hunted celebrities, found them, was not satisfied, and went in pursuit of fresh ones. As before, she came back late every night; but now Dymov was not, as last year, asleep, but sitting in his study at work of some sort. He went to bed at three o'clock and got up at eight.

One evening when she was getting ready to go to the theatre and standing before the pier glass, Dymov came into her bedroom, wearing his dress-coat and a white tie. He was smiling gently and looked into his wife's face joyfully, as in old days; his face was radiant.

“I have just been defending my thesis,” he said, sitting down and smoothing his knees.

“Defending?” asked Olga Ivanovna.

“Oh, oh!” he laughed, and he craned his neck to

see his wife's face in the mirror, for she was still standing with her back to him, doing up her hair. "Oh, oh," he repeated, "do you know it's very possible they may offer me the Readership in General Pathology? It seems like it."

It was evident from his beaming, blissful face that if Olga Ivanovna had shared with him his joy and triumph he would have forgiven her everything, both the present and the future, and would have forgotten everything, but she did not understand what was meant by a "readership" or by "general pathology"; besides, she was afraid of being late for the theatre, and she said nothing.

He sat there another two minutes, and with a guilty smile went away.

## VII

It had been a very troubled day.

Dymov had a very bad headache; he had no breakfast, and did not go to the hospital, but spent the whole time lying on his sofa in the study. Olga Ivanovna went as usual at midday to see Ryabovsky, to show him her still-life sketch, and to ask him why he had not been to see her the evening before. The sketch seemed to her worthless, and she had painted it only in order to have an additional reason for going to the artist.

She went in to him without ringing, and as she was taking off her goloshes in the entry she heard a sound as of something running softly in the studio, with a feminine rustle of skirts; and as she hastened

to peep in she caught a momentary glimpse of a bit of brown petticoat, which vanished behind a big picture draped, together with the easel, with black calico, to the floor. There could be no doubt that a woman was hiding there. How often Olga Ivanovna herself had taken refuge behind that picture!

Ryabovsky, evidently much embarrassed, held out both hands to her, as though surprised at her arrival, and said with a forced smile:

"Aha! Very glad to see you! Anything nice to tell me?"

Olga Ivanovna's eyes filled with tears. She felt ashamed and bitter, and would not for a million roubles have consented to speak in the presence of the outsider, the rival, the deceitful woman who was standing now behind the picture, and probably giggling malignantly.

"I have brought you a sketch," she said timidly in a thin voice, and her lips quivered. "*Nature morte.*"

"Ah — ah! . . . A sketch?"

The artist took the sketch in his hands, and as he examined it walked, as it were mechanically, into the other room.

Olga Ivanovna followed him humbly.

"*Nature morte* . . . first-rate sort," he muttered, falling into rhyme. "Kurort . . . sport . . . port . . ."

From the studio came the sound of hurried footsteps and the rustle of a skirt.

So she had gone. Olga Ivanovna wanted to

scream aloud, to hit the artist on the head with something heavy, but she could see nothing through her tears, was crushed by her shame, and felt herself, not Olga Ivanovna, not an artist, but a little insect.

"I am tired . . ." said the artist languidly, looking at the sketch and tossing his head as though struggling with drowsiness. "It's very nice, of course, but here a sketch today, a sketch last year, another sketch in a month . . . I wonder you are not bored with them. If I were you I should give up painting and work seriously at music or something. You're not an artist, you know, but a musician. But you can't think how tired I am! I'll tell them to bring us some tea, shall I?"

He went out of the room, and Olga Ivanovna heard him give some order to his footman. To avoid farewells and explanations, and above all to avoid bursting into sobs, she ran as fast as she could, before Ryabovsky came back, to the entry, put on her goloshes, and went out into the street; then she breathed easily, and felt she was free for ever from Ryabovsky and from painting and from the burden of shame which had so crushed her in the studio. It was all over!

She drove to her dressmaker's; then to see Barnay, who had only arrived the day before; from Barnay to a music-shop, and all the time she was thinking how she would write Ryabovsky a cold, cruel letter full of personal dignity, and how in the spring or the summer she would go with Dymov to



the Crimea, free herself finally from the past there, and begin a new life.

On getting home late in the evening she sat down in the drawing-room, without taking off her things, to begin the letter. Ryabovsky had told her she was not an artist, and to pay him out she wrote to him now that he painted the same thing every year, and said exactly the same thing every day; that he was at a standstill, and that nothing more would come of him than had come already. She wanted to write, too, that he owed a great deal to her good influence, and that if he was going wrong it was only because her influence was paralysed by various dubious persons like the one who had been hiding behind the picture that day.

"Little mother!" Dymov called from the study, without opening the door.

"What is it?"

"Don't come in to me, but only come to the door—that's right. . . . The day before yesterday I must have caught diphtheria at the hospital, and now . . . I am ill. Make haste and send for Korostelev."

Olga Ivanovna always called her husband by his surname, as she did all the men of her acquaintance; she disliked his Christian name, Osip, because it reminded her of the Osip in Gogol and the silly pun on his name. But now she cried:

"Osip, it cannot be!"

"Send for him; I feel ill," Dymov said behind the door, and she could hear him go back to the



sofa and lie down. "Send!" she heard his voice faintly.

"Good Heavens!" thought Olga Ivanovna, turning chill with horror. "Why, it's dangerous!"

For no reason she took the candle and went into the bedroom, and there, reflecting what she must do, glanced casually at herself in the pier glass. With her pale, frightened face, in a jacket with sleeves high on the shoulders, with yellow ruches on her bosom, and with stripes running in unusual directions on her skirt, she seemed to herself horrible and disgusting. She suddenly felt poignantly sorry for Dymov, for his boundless love for her, for his young life, and even for the desolate little bed in which he had not slept for so long; and she remembered his habitual, gentle, submissive smile. She wept bitterly, and wrote an imploring letter to Korostelev. It was two o'clock in the night.

## VIII

When towards eight o'clock in the morning Olga Ivanovna, her head heavy from want of sleep and her hair unbrushed, came out of her bedroom, looking unattractive and with a guilty expression on her face, a gentleman with a black beard, apparently the doctor, passed by her into the entry. There was a smell of drugs. Korostelev was standing near the study door, twisting his left moustache with his right hand.

"Excuse me, I can't let you go in," he said surlily

to Olga Ivanovna; "it's catching. Besides, it's no use, really; he is delirious, anyway."

"Has he really got diphtheria?" Olga Ivanovna asked in a whisper.

"People who wantonly risk infection ought to be hauled up and punished for it," muttered Korostelev, not answering Olga Ivanovna's question. Do you know why he caught it? On Tuesday he was sucking up the mucus through a pipette from a boy with diphtheria. And what for? It was stupid. . . . Just from folly. . . ."

"Is it dangerous, very?" asked Olga Ivanovna.

"Yes; they say it is the malignant form. We ought to send for Shrek really."

A little red-haired man with a long nose and a Jewish accent arrived; then a tall, stooping, shaggy individual, who looked like a head deacon; then a stout young man with a red face and spectacles. These were doctors who came to watch by turns beside their colleague. Korostelev did not go home when his turn was over, but remained and wandered about the rooms like an uneasy spirit. The maid kept getting tea for the various doctors, and was constantly running to the chemist, and there was no one to do the rooms. There was a dismal stillness in the flat.

Olga Ivanovna sat in her bedroom and thought that God was punishing her for having deceived her husband. That silent, unrepining, uncomprehended creature, robbed by his mildness of all personality and will, weak from excessive kindness, had been

suffering in obscurity somewhere on his sofa, and had not complained. And if he were to complain even in delirium, the doctors watching by his bedside would learn that diphtheria was not the only cause of his sufferings. They would ask Korostelev. He knew all about it, and it was not for nothing that he looked at his friend's wife with eyes that seemed to say that she was the real chief criminal and diphtheria was only her accomplice. She did not think now of the moonlight evening on the Volga, nor the words of love, nor their poetical life in the peasant's hut. She thought only that from an idle whim, from self-indulgence, she had sullied herself all over from head to foot in something filthy, sticky, which one could never wash off. . . .

"Oh, how fearfully false I've been!" she thought, recalling the troubled passion she had known with Ryabovsky. "Curse it all! . . ."

At four o'clock she dined with Korostelev. He did nothing but scowl and drink red wine, and did not eat a morsel. She ate nothing, either. At one minute she was praying inwardly and vowing to God that if Dymov recovered she would love him again and be a faithful wife to him. Then, forgetting herself for a minute, she would look at Korostelev, and think: "Surely it must be dull to be a humble, obscure person, not remarkable in any way, especially with such a wrinkled face and bad manners!" Then it seemed to her that God would strike her dead that minute for not having once been in her husband's study, for fear of infection. And altogether she had a dull, despondent feeling and a con-

viction that her life was spoilt, and that there was no setting it right anyhow. . . .

After dinner darkness came on. When Olga Ivanovna went into the drawing-room Korostelev was asleep on the sofa, with a gold-embroidered silk cushion under his head.

“Khee-poo-ah,” he snored — “khee-poo-ah.”

And the doctors as they came to sit up and went away again did not notice this disorder. The fact that a strange man was asleep and snoring in the drawing-room, and the sketches on the walls and the exquisite decoration of the room, and the fact that the lady of the house was dishevelled and untidy — all that aroused not the slightest interest now. One of the doctors chanced to laugh at something, and the laugh had a strange and timid sound that made one's heart ache.

When Olga Ivanovna went into the drawing-room next time, Korostelev was not asleep, but sitting up and smoking.

“He has diphtheria of the nasal cavity,” he said in a low voice, “and the heart is not working properly now. Things are in a bad way, really.”

“But you will send for Shrek?” said Olga Ivanovna.

“He has been already. It was he noticed that the diphtheria had passed into the nose. What's the use of Shrek! Shrek's no use at all, really. He is Shrek, I am Korostelev, and nothing more.”

The time dragged on fearfully slowly. Olga Ivanovna lay down in her clothes on her bed, that

had not been made all day, and sank into a doze. She dreamed that the whole flat was filled up from floor to ceiling with a huge piece of iron, and that if they could only get the iron out they would all be light-hearted and happy. Waking, she realized that it was not the iron but Dymov's illness that was weighing on her.

"Nature morte, port . . ." she thought, sinking into forgetfulness again. "Sport . . . Kurort . . . and what of Shrek? Shrek . . . trek . . . wreck. . . . And where are my friends now? Do they know that we are in trouble? Lord, save . . . spare! Shrek . . . trek . . ."

And again the iron was there. . . . The time dragged on slowly, though the clock on the lower storey struck frequently. And bells were continually ringing as the doctors arrived. . . . The housemaid came in with an empty glass on a tray, and asked, "Shall I make the bed, madam?" and getting no answer, went away.

The clock below struck the hour. She dreamed of the rain on the Volga; and again some one came into her bedroom, she thought a stranger. Olga Ivanovna jumped up, and recognized Korostelev.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"About three."

"Well, what is it?"

"What, indeed! . . . I've come to tell you he is passing. . . ."

He gave a sob, sat down on the bed beside her, and wiped away the tears with his sleeve. She

could not grasp it at once, but turned cold all over and began slowly crossing herself.

“He is passing,” he repeated in a shrill voice, and again he gave a sob. “He is dying because he sacrificed himself. What a loss for science!” he said bitterly. “Compare him with all of us. He was a great man, an extraordinary man! What gifts! What hopes we all had of him!” Korostelev went on, wringing his hands: “Merciful God, he was a man of science; we shall never look on his like again. Osip Dymov, what have you done — aie, aie, my God!”

Korostelev covered his face with both hands in despair, and shook his head.

“And his moral force,” he went on, seeming to grow more and more exasperated against some one. “Not a man, but a pure, good, loving soul, and clean as crystal. He served science and died for science. And he worked like an ox night and day — no one spared him — and with his youth and his learning he had to take a private practice and work at translations at night to pay for these . . . vile rags!”

Korostelev looked with hatred at Olga Ivanovna, snatched at the sheet with both hands and angrily tore it, as though it were to blame.

“He did not spare himself, and others did not spare him. Oh, what’s the use of talking!”

“Yes, he was a rare man,” said a bass voice in the drawing-room.

Olga Ivanovna remembered her whole life with

him from the beginning to the end, with all its details, and suddenly she understood that he really was an extraordinary, rare, and, compared with every one else she knew, a great man. And remembering how her father, now dead, and all the other doctors had behaved to him, she realized that they really had seen in him a future celebrity. The walls, the ceiling, the lamp, and the carpet on the floor, seemed to be winking at her sarcastically, as though they would say, "You were blind! you were blind!" With a wail she flung herself out of the bedroom, dashed by some unknown man in the drawing-room, and ran into her husband's study. He was lying motionless on the sofa, covered to the waist with a quilt. His face was fearfully thin and sunken, and was of a greyish-yellow colour such as is never seen in the living; only from the forehead, from the black eyebrows and from the familiar smile, could he be recognized as Dymov. Olga Ivanovna hurriedly felt his chest, his forehead, and his hands. The chest was still warm, but the forehead and hands were unpleasantly cold, and the half-open eyes looked, not at Olga Ivanovna, but at the quilt.

"Dymov!" she called aloud, "Dymov!" She wanted to explain to him that it had been a mistake, that all was not lost, that life might still be beautiful and happy, that he was an extraordinary, rare, great man, and that she would all her life worship him and bow down in homage and holy awe before him . . .

"Dymov!" she called him, patting him on the



shoulder, unable to believe that he would never wake again. "Dymov! Dymov!"

In the drawing-room Korostelev was saying to the housemaid:

"Why keep asking? Go to the church beadle and enquire where they live. They'll wash the body and lay it out, and do everything that is necessary."





A DREARY STORY



## A DREARY STORY

FROM THE NOTEBOOK OF AN OLD MAN

### I

THERE is in Russia an emeritus Professor Nikolay Stepanovitch, a chevalier and privy councillor; he has so many Russian and foreign decorations that when he has occasion to put them on the students nickname him "The Ikonstand." His acquaintances are of the most aristocratic; for the last twenty-five or thirty years, at any rate, there has not been one single distinguished man of learning in Russia with whom he has not been intimately acquainted. There is no one for him to make friends with nowadays; but if we turn to the past, the long list of his famous friends winds up with such names as Pirogov, Kavelin, and the poet Nekrasov, all of whom bestowed upon him a warm and sincere affection. He is a member of all the Russian and of three foreign universities. And so on, and so on. All that and a great deal more that might be said makes up what is called my "name."

That is my name as known to the public. In Russia it is known to every educated man, and abroad it is mentioned in the lecture-room with the addition "honoured and distinguished." It is one of those fortunate names to abuse which or to take

which in vain, in public or in print, is considered a sign of bad taste. And that is as it should be. You see, my name is closely associated with the conception of a highly distinguished man of great gifts and unquestionable usefulness. I have the industry and power of endurance of a camel, and that is important, and I have talent, which is even more important. Moreover, while I am on this subject, I am a well-educated, modest, and honest fellow. I have never poked my nose into literature or politics; I have never sought popularity in polemics with the ignorant; I have never made speeches either at public dinners or at the funerals of my friends. . . . In fact, there is no slur on my learned name, and there is no complaint one can make against it. It is fortunate.

The bearer of that name, that is I, see myself as a man of sixty-two, with a bald head, with false teeth, and with an incurable tic douloureux. I am myself as dingy and unsightly as my name is brilliant and splendid. My head and my hands tremble with weakness; my neck, as Turgenev says of one of his heroines, is like the handle of a double bass; my chest is hollow; my shoulders narrow; when I talk or lecture, my mouth turns down at one corner; when I smile, my whole face is covered with aged-looking, deathly wrinkles. There is nothing impressive about my pitiful figure; only, perhaps, when I have an attack of tic douloureux my face wears a peculiar expression, the sight of which must have roused in every one the grim and impressive thought, "Evidently that man will soon die."

I still, as in the past, lecture fairly well; I can still, as in the past, hold the attention of my listeners for a couple of hours. My fervour, the literary skill of my exposition, and my humour, almost efface the defects of my voice, though it is harsh, dry, and monotonous as a praying beggar's. I write poorly. That bit of my brain which presides over the faculty of authorship refuses to work. My memory has grown weak; there is a lack of sequence in my ideas, and when I put them on paper it always seems to me that I have lost the instinct for their organic connection; my construction is monotonous; my language is poor and timid. Often I write what I do not mean; I have forgotten the beginning when I am writing the end. Often I forget ordinary words, and I always have to waste a great deal of energy in avoiding superfluous phrases and unnecessary parentheses in my letters, both unmistakable proofs of a decline in mental activity. And it is noteworthy that the simpler the letter the more painful the effort to write it. At a scientific article I feel far more intelligent and at ease than at a letter of congratulation or a minute of proceedings. Another point: I find it easier to write German or English than to write Russian.

As regards my present manner of life, I must give a foremost place to the insomnia from which I have suffered of late. If I were asked what constituted the chief and fundamental feature of my existence now, I should answer, Insomnia. As in the past, from habit I undress and go to bed exactly at midnight. I fall asleep quickly, but before two

o'clock I wake up and feel as though I had not slept at all. Sometimes I get out of bed and light a lamp. For an hour or two I walk up and down the room looking at the familiar photographs and pictures. When I am weary of walking about, I sit down to my table. I sit motionless, thinking of nothing, conscious of no inclination; if a book is lying before me, I mechanically move it closer and read it without any interest — in that way not long ago I mechanically read through in one night a whole novel, with the strange title "The Song the Lark was Singing"; or to occupy my attention I force myself to count to a thousand; or I imagine the face of one of my colleagues and begin trying to remember in what year and under what circumstances he entered the service. I like listening to sounds. Two rooms away from me my daughter Liza says something rapidly in her sleep, or my wife crosses the drawing-room with a candle and invariably drops the match-box; or a warped cupboard creaks; or the burner of the lamp suddenly begins to hum — and all these sounds, for some reason, excite me.

To lie awake at night means to be at every moment conscious of being abnormal, and so I look forward with impatience to the morning and the day when I have a right to be awake. Many wearisome hours pass before the cock crows in the yard. He is my first bringer of good tidings. As soon as he crows I know that within an hour the porter will wake up below, and, coughing angrily, will go upstairs to fetch something. And then a pale light

will begin gradually glimmering at the windows, voices will sound in the street. . . .

The day begins for me with the entrance of my wife. She comes in to me in her petticoat, before she has done her hair, but after she has washed, smelling of flower-scented eau-de-Cologne, looking as though she had come in by chance. Every time she says exactly the same thing: "Excuse me, I have just come in for a minute. . . . Have you had a bad night again?"

Then she puts out the lamp, sits down near the table, and begins talking. I am no prophet, but I know what she will talk about. Every morning it is exactly the same thing. Usually, after anxious inquiries concerning my health, she suddenly mentions our son who is an officer serving at Warsaw. After the twentieth of each month we send him fifty roubles, and that serves as the chief topic of our conversation.

"Of course it is difficult for us," my wife would sigh, "but until he is completely on his own feet it is our duty to help him. The boy is among strangers, his pay is small. . . . However, if you like, next month we won't send him fifty, but forty. What do you think?"

Daily experience might have taught my wife that constantly talking of our expenses does not reduce them, but my wife refuses to learn by experience, and regularly every morning discusses our officer son, and tells me that bread, thank God, is cheaper, while sugar is a halfpenny dearer — with a tone and



an air as though she were communicating interesting news.

I listen, mechanically assent, and probably because I have had a bad night, strange and inappropriate thoughts intrude themselves upon me. I gaze at my wife and wonder like a child. I ask myself in perplexity, is it possible that this old, very stout, ungainly woman, with her dull expression of petty anxiety and alarm about daily bread, with eyes dimmed by continual brooding over debts and money difficulties, who can talk of nothing but expenses and who smiles at nothing but things getting cheaper — is it possible that this woman is no other than the slender Varya whom I fell in love with so passionately for her fine, clear intelligence, for her pure soul, her beauty, and, as Othello his Desdemona, for her “sympathy” for my studies? Could that woman be no other than the Varya who had once borne me a son?

I look with strained attention into the face of this flabby, spiritless, clumsy old woman, seeking in her my Varya, but of her past self nothing is left but her anxiety over my health and her manner of calling my salary “our salary,” and my cap “our cap.” It is painful for me to look at her, and, to give her what little comfort I can, I let her say what she likes, and say nothing even when she passes unjust criticisms on other people or pitches into me for not having a private practice or not publishing text-books.

Our conversation always ends in the same way. My wife suddenly remembers with dismay that I have not had my tea.

“What am I thinking about, sitting here?” she says, getting up. “The samovar has been on the table ever so long, and here I stay gossiping. My goodness! how forgetful I am growing!”

She goes out quickly, and stops in the doorway to say:

“We owe Yegor five months’ wages. Did you know it? You mustn’t let the servants’ wages run on; how many times I have said it! It’s much easier to pay ten roubles a month than fifty roubles every five months!”

As she goes out, she stops to say:

“The person I am sorriest for is our Liza. The girl studies at the Conservatoire, always mixes with people of good position, and goodness knows how she is dressed. Her fur coat is in such a state she is ashamed to show herself in the street. If she were somebody else’s daughter it wouldn’t matter, but of course every one knows that her father is a distinguished professor, a privy councillor.”

And having reproached me with my rank and reputation, she goes away at last. That is how my day begins. It does not improve as it goes on.

As I am drinking my tea, my Liza comes in wearing her fur coat and her cap, with her music in her hand, already quite ready to go to the Conservatoire. She is two-and-twenty. She looks younger, is pretty, and rather like my wife in her young days. She kisses me tenderly on my forehead and on my hand, and says:

“Good-morning, papa; are you quite well?”

As a child she was very fond of ice-cream, and I used often to take her to a confectioner's. Ice-cream was for her the type of everything delightful. If she wanted to praise me she would say: "You are as nice as cream, papa." We used to call one of her little fingers "pistachio ice," the next, "cream ice," the third "raspberry," and so on. Usually when she came in to say good-morning to me I used to sit her on my knee, kiss her little fingers, and say:

"Creamy ice . . . pistachio . . . lemon . . ."

And now, from old habit, I kiss Liza's fingers and mutter: "Pistachio . . . cream . . . lemon . . ." but the effect is utterly different. I am cold as ice and I am ashamed. When my daughter comes in to me and touches my forehead with her lips I start as though a bee had stung me on the head, give a forced smile, and turn my face away. Ever since I have been suffering from sleeplessness, a question sticks in my brain like a nail. My daughter often sees me, an old man and a distinguished man, blush painfully at being in debt to my footman; she sees how often anxiety over petty debts forces me to lay aside my work and to walk up and down the room for hours together, thinking; but why is it she never comes to me in secret to whisper in my ear: "Father, here is my watch, here are my bracelets, my earrings, my dresses. . . . Pawn them all; you want money . . ."? How is it that, seeing how her mother and I are placed in a false position and do our utmost to hide our poverty from people, she does not give up her expensive pleasure of music

lessons? I would not accept her watch nor her bracelets, nor the sacrifice of her lessons — God forbid! That isn't what I want.

I think at the same time of my son, the officer at Warsaw. He is a clever, honest, and sober fellow. But that is not enough for me. I think if I had an old father, and if I knew there were moments when he was put to shame by his poverty, I should give up my officer's commission to somebody else, and should go out to earn my living as a workman. Such thoughts about my children poison me. What is the use of them? It is only a narrow-minded or embittered man who can harbour evil thoughts about ordinary people because they are not heroes. But enough of that!

At a quarter to ten I have to go and give a lecture to my dear boys. I dress and walk along the road which I have known for thirty years, and which has its history for me. Here is the big grey house with the chemist's shop; at this point there used to stand a little house, and in it was a beershop; in that beershop I thought out my thesis and wrote my first love-letter to Varya. I wrote it in pencil, on a page headed "Historia morbi." Here there is a grocer's shop; at one time it was kept by a little Jew, who sold me cigarettes on credit; then by a fat peasant woman, who liked the students because "every one of them has a mother"; now there is a red-haired shopkeeper sitting in it, a very stolid man who drinks tea from a copper teapot. And here are the gloomy gates of the University, which have long needed doing up; I see the bored porter in his sheep-skin, the

broom, the drifts of snow. . . . On a boy coming fresh from the provinces and imagining that the temple of science must really be a temple, such gates cannot make a healthy impression. Altogether the dilapidated condition of the University buildings, the gloominess of the corridors, the griminess of the walls, the lack of light, the dejected aspect of the steps, the hat-stands and the benches, take a prominent position among predisposing causes in the history of Russian pessimism. . . . Here is our garden . . . I fancy it has grown neither better nor worse since I was a student. I don't like it. It would be far more sensible if there were tall pines and fine oaks growing here instead of sickly-looking lime-trees, yellow acacias, and skimpy pollard lilacs. The student whose state of mind is in the majority of cases created by his surroundings, ought in the place where he is studying to see facing him at every turn nothing but what is lofty, strong and elegant. . . . God preserve him from gaunt trees, broken windows, grey walls, and doors covered with torn American leather!

When I go to my own entrance the door is flung wide open, and I am met by my colleague, contemporary, and namesake, the porter Nikolay. As he lets me in he clears his throat and says:

“A frost, your Excellency!”

Or, if my great-coat is wet:

“Rain, your Excellency!”

Then he runs on ahead of me and opens all the doors on my way. In my study he carefully takes off my fur coat, and while doing so manages to tell

me some bit of University news. Thanks to the close intimacy existing between all the University porters and beadles, he knows everything that goes on in the four faculties, in the office, in the rector's private room, in the library. What does he not know? When in an evil day a rector or dean, for instance, retires, I hear him in conversation with the young porters mention the candidates for the post, explain that such a one would not be confirmed by the minister, that another would himself refuse to accept it, then drop into fantastic details concerning mysterious papers received in the office, secret conversations alleged to have taken place between the minister and the trustee, and so on. With the exception of these details, he almost always turns out to be right. His estimates of the candidates, though original, are very correct, too. If one wants to know in what year some one read his thesis, entered the service, retired, or died, then summon to your assistance the vast memory of that soldier, and he will not only tell you the year, the month and the day, but will furnish you also with the details that accompanied this or that event. Only one who loves can remember like that.

He is the guardian of the University traditions. From the porters who were his predecessors he has inherited many legends of University life, has added to that wealth much of his own gained during his time of service, and if you care to hear he will tell you many long and intimate stories. He can tell one about extraordinary sages who knew *everything*, about remarkable students who did not sleep for



weeks, about numerous martyrs and victims of science; with him good triumphs over evil, the weak always vanquishes the strong, the wise man the fool, the humble the proud, the young the old. There is no need to take all these fables and legends for sterling coin; but filter them, and you will have left what is wanted: our fine traditions and the names of real heroes, recognized as such by all.

In our society the knowledge of the learned world consists of anecdotes of the extraordinary absent-mindedness of certain old professors, and two or three witticisms variously ascribed to Gruber, to me, and to Babukin. For the educated public that is not much. If it loved science, learned men, and students, as Nikolay does, its literature would long ago have contained whole epics, records of sayings and doings such as, unfortunately, it cannot boast of now.

After telling me a piece of news, Nikolay assumes a severe expression, and conversation about business begins. If any outsider could at such times overhear Nikolay's free use of our terminology, he might perhaps imagine that he was a learned man disguised as a soldier. And, by the way, the rumours of the erudition of the University porters are greatly exaggerated. It is true that Nikolay knows more than a hundred Latin words, knows how to put the skeleton together, sometimes prepares the apparatus and amuses the students by some long, learned quotation, but the by no means complicated theory of the circulation of the blood, for instance, is as much a mystery to him now as it was twenty years ago.

At the table in my study, bending low over some book or preparation, sits Pyotr Ignatyevitch, my demonstrator, a modest and industrious but by no means clever man of five-and-thirty, already bald and corpulent; he works from morning to night, reads a lot, remembers well everything he has read — and in that way he is not a man, but pure gold; in all else he is a carthorse or, in other words, a learned dullard. The carthorse characteristics that show his lack of talent are these: his outlook is narrow and sharply limited by his specialty; outside his special branch he is simple as a child.

“Fancy! what a misfortune! They say Skobelev is dead.”

Nikolay crosses himself, but Pyotr Ignatyevitch turns to me and asks:

“What Skobelev is that?”

Another time — somewhat earlier — I told him that Professor Perov was dead. Good Pyotr Ignatyevitch asked:

“What did he lecture on?”

I believe if Patti had sung in his very ear, if a horde of Chinese had invaded Russia, if there had been an earthquake, he would not have stirred a limb, but screwing up his eye, would have gone on calmly looking through his microscope. What is he to Hecuba or Hecuba to him, in fact? I would give a good deal to see how this dry stick sleeps with his wife at night.

Another characteristic is his fanatical faith in the infallibility of science, and, above all, of everything written by the Germans. He believes in himself, in



his preparations; knows the object of life, and knows nothing of the doubts and disappointments that turn the hair of talent grey. He has a slavish reverence for authorities and a complete lack of any desire for independent thought. To change his convictions is difficult, to argue with him impossible. How is one to argue with a man who is firmly persuaded that medicine is the finest of sciences, that doctors are the best of men, and that the traditions of the medical profession are superior to those of any other? Of the evil past of medicine only one tradition has been preserved — the white tie still worn by doctors; for a learned — in fact, for any educated man the only traditions that can exist are those of the University as a whole, with no distinction between medicine, law, etc. But it would be hard for Pyotr Ignatyevitch to accept these facts, and he is ready to argue with you till the day of judgment.

I have a clear picture in my mind of his future. In the course of his life he will prepare many hundreds of chemicals of exceptional purity; he will write a number of dry and very accurate memoranda, will make some dozen conscientious translations, but he won't do anything striking. To do that one must have imagination, inventiveness, the gift of insight, and Pyotr Ignatyevitch has nothing of the kind. In short, he is not a master in science, but a journeyman.

Pyotr Ignatyevitch, Nikolay, and I, talk in subdued tones. We are not quite ourselves. There is always a peculiar feeling when one hears through the doors a murmur as of the sea from the lecture-

theatre. In the course of thirty years I have not grown accustomed to this feeling, and I experience it every morning. I nervously button up my coat, ask Nikolay unnecessary questions, lose my temper. . . . It is just as though I were frightened; it is not timidity, though, but something different which I can neither describe nor find a name for.

Quite unnecessarily, I look at my watch and say: "Well, it's time to go in."

And we march into the room in the following order: foremost goes Nikolay, with the chemicals and apparatus or with a chart; after him I come; and then the carthorse follows humbly, with hanging head; or, when necessary, a dead body is carried in first on a stretcher, followed by Nikolay, and so on. On my entrance the students all stand up, then they sit down, and the sound as of the sea is suddenly hushed. Stillness reigns.

I know what I am going to lecture about, but I don't know how I am going to lecture, where I am going to begin or with what I am going to end. I haven't a single sentence ready in my head. But I have only to look round the lecture-hall (it is built in the form of an amphitheatre) and utter the stereotyped phrase, "Last lecture we stopped at . . ." when sentences spring up from my soul in a long string, and I am carried away by my own eloquence. I speak with irresistible rapidity and passion, and it seems as though there were no force which could check the flow of my words. To lecture well — that is, with profit to the listeners and without boring them — one must have, besides tal-

ent, experience and a special knack; one must possess a clear conception of one's own powers, of the audience to which one is lecturing, and of the subject of one's lecture. Moreover, one must be a man who knows what he is doing; one must keep a sharp lookout, and not for one second lose sight of what lies before one.

A good conductor, interpreting the thought of the composer, does twenty things at once: reads the score, waves his baton, watches the singer, makes a motion sideways, first to the drum then to the wind-instruments, and so on. I do just the same when I lecture. Before me a hundred and fifty faces, all unlike one another; three hundred eyes all looking straight into my face. My object is to dominate this many-headed monster. If every moment as I lecture I have a clear vision of the degree of its attention and its power of comprehension, it is in my power. The other foe I have to overcome is in myself. It is the infinite variety of forms, phenomena, laws, and the multitude of ideas of my own and other people's conditioned by them. Every moment I must have the skill to snatch out of that vast mass of material what is most important and necessary, and, as rapidly as my words flow, clothe my thought in a form in which it can be grasped by the monster's intelligence, and may arouse its attention, and at the same time one must keep a sharp lookout that one's thoughts are conveyed, not just as they come, but in a certain order, essential for the correct composition of the picture I wish to sketch. Further, I endeavour to make my diction literary,

my definitions brief and precise, my wording, as far as possible, simple and eloquent. Every minute I have to pull myself up and remember that I have only an hour and forty minutes at my disposal. In short, one has one's work cut out. At one and the same minute one has to play the part of savant and teacher and orator, and it's a bad thing if the orator gets the upper hand of the savant or of the teacher in one, or *vice versa*.

You lecture for a quarter of an hour, for half an hour, when you notice that the students are beginning to look at the ceiling, at Pyotr Ignatyevitch; one is feeling for his handkerchief, another shifts in his seat, another smiles at his thoughts. . . . That means that their attention is flagging. Something must be done. Taking advantage of the first opportunity, I make some pun. A broad grin comes on to a hundred and fifty faces, the eyes shine brightly, the sound of the sea is audible for a brief moment. . . . I laugh too. Their attention is refreshed, and I can go on.

No kind of sport, no kind of game or diversion, has ever given me such enjoyment as lecturing. Only at lectures have I been able to abandon myself entirely to passion, and have understood that inspiration is not an invention of the poets, but exists in real life, and I imagine Hercules after the most piquant of his exploits felt just such voluptuous exhaustion as I experience after every lecture.

That was in old times. Now at lectures I feel nothing but torture. Before half an hour is over I am conscious of an overwhelming weakness in my

legs and my shoulders. I sit down in my chair, but I am not accustomed to lecture sitting down; a minute later I get up and go on standing, then sit down again. There is a dryness in my mouth, my voice grows husky, my head begins to go round. . . . To conceal my condition from my audience I continually drink water, cough, often blow my nose as though I were hindered by a cold, make puns inappropriately, and in the end break off earlier than I ought to. But above all I am ashamed.

My conscience and my intelligence tell me that the very best thing I could do now would be to deliver a farewell lecture to the boys, to say my last word to them, to bless them, and give up my post to a man younger and stronger than me. But, God, be my judge, I have not manly courage enough to act according to my conscience.

Unfortunately, I am not a philosopher and not a theologian. I know perfectly well that I cannot live more than another six months; it might be supposed that I ought now to be chiefly concerned with the question of the shadowy life beyond the grave, and the visions that will visit my slumbers in the tomb. But for some reason my soul refuses to recognize these questions, though my mind is fully alive to their importance. Just as twenty, thirty years ago, so now, on the threshold of death, I am interested in nothing but science. As I yield up my last breath I shall still believe that science is the most important, the most splendid, the most essential thing in the life of man; that it always has been and

will be the highest manifestation of love, and that only by means of it will man conquer himself and nature. This faith is perhaps naïve and may rest on false assumptions, but it is not my fault that I believe that and nothing else; I cannot overcome in myself this belief.

But that is not the point. I only ask people to be indulgent to my weakness, and to realize that to tear from the lecture-theatre and his pupils a man who is more interested in the history of the development of the bone medulla than in the final object of creation would be equivalent to taking him and nailing him up in his coffin without waiting for him to be dead.

Sleeplessness and the consequent strain of combating increasing weakness leads to something strange in me. In the middle of my lecture tears suddenly rise in my throat, my eyes begin to smart, and I feel a passionate, hysterical desire to stretch out my hands before me and break into loud lamentation. I want to cry out in a loud voice that I, a famous man, have been sentenced by fate to the death penalty, that within some six months another man will be in control here in the lecture-theatre. I want to shriek that I am poisoned; new ideas such as I have not known before have poisoned the last days of my life, and are still stinging my brain like mosquitoes. And at that moment my position seems to me so awful that I want all my listeners to be horrified, to leap up from their seats and to rush in panic terror, with desperate screams, to the exit.

It is not easy to get through such moments.



## II

After my lecture I sit at home and work. I read journals and monographs, or prepare my next lecture; sometimes I write something. I work with interruptions, as I have from time to time to see visitors.

There is a ring at the bell. It is a colleague come to discuss some business matter with me. He comes in to me with his hat and his stick, and, holding out both these objects to me, says:

“Only for a minute! Only for a minute! Sit down, *collega!* Only a couple of words.”

To begin with, we both try to show each other that we are extraordinarily polite and highly delighted to see each other. I make him sit down in an easy-chair, and he makes me sit down; as we do so, we cautiously pat each other on the back, touch each other's buttons, and it looks as though we were feeling each other and afraid of scorching our fingers. Both of us laugh, though we say nothing amusing. When we are seated we bow our heads towards each other and begin talking in subdued voices. However affectionately disposed we may be to one another, we cannot help adorning our conversation with all sorts of Chinese mannerisms, such as “As you so justly observed,” or “I have already had the honour to inform you”; we cannot help laughing if one of us makes a joke, however unsuccessfully. When we have finished with business my colleague gets up impulsively and, waving his hat in the direc-

tion of my work, begins to say good-bye. Again we paw one another and laugh. I see him into the hall; when I assist my colleague to put on his coat, while he does all he can to decline this high honour. Then when Yegor opens the door my colleague declares that I shall catch cold, while I make a show of being ready to go even into the street with him. And when at last I go back into my study my face still goes on smiling, I suppose from inertia.

A little later another ring at the bell. Somebody comes into the hall, and is a long time coughing and taking off his things. Yegor announces a student. I tell him to ask him in. A minute later a young man of agreeable appearance comes in. For the last year he and I have been on strained relations; he answers me disgracefully at the examinations, and I mark him one. Every year I have some seven such hopefuls whom, to express it in the students' slang, I "chivy" or "floor." Those of them who fail in their examination through incapacity or illness usually bear their cross patiently and do not haggle with me; those who come to the house and haggle with me are always youths of sanguine temperament, broad natures, whose failure at examinations spoils their appetites and hinders them from visiting the opera with their usual regularity. I let the first class off easily, but the second I chivy through a whole year.

"Sit down," I say to my visitor; "what have you to tell me?"

"Excuse me, professor, for troubling you," he begins, hesitating, and not looking me in the face. "I



would not have ventured to trouble you if it had not been . . . I have been up for your examination five times, and have been ploughed. . . . I beg you, be so good as to mark me for a pass, because . . .”

The argument which all the sluggards bring forward on their own behalf is always the same; they have passed well in all their subjects and have only come to grief in mine, and that is the more surprising because they have always been particularly interested in my subject and knew it so well; their failure has always been entirely owing to some incomprehensible misunderstanding.

“Excuse me, my friend,” I say to the visitor; “I cannot mark you for a pass. Go and read up the lectures and come to me again. Then we shall see.”

A pause. I feel an impulse to torment the student a little for liking beer and the opera better than science, and I say, with a sigh:

“To my mind, the best thing you can do now is to give up medicine altogether. If, with your abilities, you cannot succeed in passing the examination, it’s evident that you have neither the desire nor the vocation for a doctor’s calling.”

The sanguine youth’s face lengthens.

“Excuse me, professor,” he laughs, “but that would be odd of me, to say the least of it. After studying for five years, all at once to give it up.”

“Oh, well! Better to have lost your five years than have to spend the rest of your life in doing work you do not care for.”

But at once I feel sorry for him, and I hasten to add:

"However, as you think best. And so read a little more and come again."

"When?" the idle youth asks in a hollow voice.

"When you like. Tomorrow if you like."

And in his good-natured eyes I read:

"I can come all right, but of course you will plough me again, you beast!"

"Of course," I say, "you won't know more science for going in for my examination another fifteen times, but it is training your character, and you must be thankful for that."

Silence follows. I get up and wait for my visitor to go, but he stands and looks towards the window, fingers his beard, and thinks. It grows boring.

The sanguine youth's voice is pleasant and mellow, his eyes are clever and ironical, his face is genial, though a little bloated from frequent indulgence in beer and overlong lying on the sofa; he looks as though he could tell me a lot of interesting things about the opera, about his affairs of the heart, and about comrades whom he likes. Unluckily, it is not the thing to discuss these subjects, or else I should have been glad to listen to him.

"Professor, I give you my word of honour that if you mark me for a pass I . . . I'll . . ."

As soon as we reach the "word of honour" I wave my hands and sit down to the table. The student ponders a minute longer, and says dejectedly:

"In that case, good-bye. . . . I beg your pardon."

"Good-bye, my friend. Good luck to you."

He goes irresolutely into the hall, slowly puts on

his outdoor things, and, going out into the street, probably ponders for some time longer; unable to think of anything, except "old devil," inwardly addressed to me, he goes into a wretched restaurant to dine and drink beer, and then home to bed. "Peace be to thy ashes, honest toiler."

A third ring at the bell. A young doctor, in a pair of new black trousers, gold spectacles, and of course a white tie, walks in. He introduces himself. I beg him to be seated, and ask what I can do for him. Not without emotion, the young devotee of science begins telling me that he has passed his examination as a doctor of medicine, and that he has now only to write his dissertation. He would like to work with me under my guidance, and he would be greatly obliged to me if I would give him a subject for his dissertation.

"Very glad to be of use to you, colleague," I say, "but just let us come to an understanding as to the meaning of a dissertation. That word is taken to mean a composition which is a product of independent creative effort. Is that not so? A work written on another man's subject and under another man's guidance is called something different. . . ."

The doctor says nothing. I fly into a rage and jump up from my seat.

"Why is it you all come to me?" I cry angrily. "Do I keep a shop? I don't deal in subjects. For the thousand and oneth time I ask you all to leave me in peace! Excuse my brutality, but I am quite sick of it!"

The doctor remains silent, but a faint flush is ap-

parent on his cheek-bones. His face expresses a profound reverence for my fame and my learning, but from his eyes I can see he feels a contempt for my voice, my pitiful figure, and my nervous gesticulation. I impress him in my anger as a queer fish.

“I don’t keep a shop,” I go on angrily. “And it is a strange thing! Why don’t you want to be independent? Why have you such a distaste for independence?”

I say a great deal, but he still remains silent. By degrees I calm down, and of course give in. The doctor gets a subject from me for his theme not worth a halfpenny, writes under my supervision a dissertation of no use to any one, with dignity defends it in a dreary discussion, and receives a degree of no use to him.

The rings at the bell may follow one another endlessly, but I will confine my description here to four of them. The bell rings for the fourth time, and I hear familiar footsteps, the rustle of a dress, a dear voice. . . .

Eighteen years ago a colleague of mine, an oculist, died leaving a little daughter Katya, a child of seven, and sixty thousand roubles. In his will he made me the child’s guardian. Till she was ten years old Katya lived with us as one of the family, then she was sent to a boarding-school, and only spent the summer holidays with us. I never had time to look after her education. I only superintended it at leisure moments, and so I can say very little about her childhood.

The first thing I remember, and like so much in

remembrance, is the extraordinary trustfulness with which she came into our house and let herself be treated by the doctors, a trustfulness which was always shining in her little face. She would sit somewhere out of the way, with her face tied up, invariably watching something with attention; whether she watched me writing or turning over the pages of a book, or watched my wife bustling about, or the cook scrubbing a potato in the kitchen, or the dog playing, her eyes invariably expressed the same thought — that is, “Everything that is done in this world is nice and sensible.” She was curious, and very fond of talking to me. Sometimes she would sit at the table opposite me, watching my movements and asking questions. It interested her to know what I was reading, what I did at the University, whether I was not afraid of the dead bodies, what I did with my salary.

“Do the students fight at the University?” she would ask.

“They do, dear.”

“And do you make them go down on their knees?”

“Yes, I do.”

And she thought it funny that the students fought and I made them go down on their knees, and she laughed. She was a gentle, patient, good child. It happened not infrequently that I saw something taken away from her, saw her punished without reason, or her curiosity repressed; at such times a look of sadness was mixed with the invariable expression of trustfulness on her face — that was all. I did

not know how to take her part; only when I saw her sad I had an inclination to draw her to me and to commiserate her like some old nurse: "My poor little orphan one!"

I remember, too, that she was fond of fine clothes and of sprinkling herself with scent. In that respect she was like me. I, too, am fond of pretty clothes and nice scent.

I regret that I had not time nor inclination to watch over the rise and development of the passion which took complete possession of Katya when she was fourteen or fifteen. I mean her passionate love for the theatre. When she used to come from boarding-school and stay with us for the summer holidays, she talked of nothing with such pleasure and such warmth as of plays and actors. She bored us with her continual talk of the theatre. My wife and children would not listen to her. I was the only one who had not the courage to refuse to attend to her. When she had a longing to share her transports, she used to come into my study and say in an imploring tone:

"Nikolay Stepanovitch, do let me talk to you about the theatre!"

I pointed to the clock, and said:

"I'll give you half an hour — begin."

Later on she used to bring with her dozens of portraits of actors and actresses which she worshipped; then she attempted several times to take part in private theatricals, and the upshot of it all was that when she left school she came to me and announced that she was born to be an actress.



I had never shared Katya's inclinations for the theatre. To my mind, if a play is good there is no need to trouble the actors in order that it may make the right impression; it is enough to read it. If the play is poor, no acting will make it good.

In my youth I often visited the theatre, and now my family takes a box twice a year and carries me off for a little distraction. Of course, that is not enough to give me the right to judge of the theatre. In my opinion the theatre has become no better than it was thirty or forty years ago. Just as in the past, I can never find a glass of clean water in the corridors or foyers of the theatre. Just as in the past, the attendants fine me twenty kopecks for my fur coat, though there is nothing reprehensible in wearing a warm coat in winter. As in the past, for no sort of reason, music is played in the intervals, which adds something new and uncalled-for to the impression made by the play. As in the past, men go in the intervals and drink spirits in the buffet. If no progress can be seen in trifles, I should look for it in vain in what is more important. When an actor wrapped from head to foot in stage traditions and conventions tries to recite a simple ordinary speech, "To be or not to be," not simply, but invariably with the accompaniment of hissing and convulsive movements all over his body, or when he tries to convince me at all costs that Tchatsky, who talks so much with fools and is so fond of folly, is a very clever man, and that "Woe from Wit" is not a dull play, the stage gives me the same feeling of conventionality which bored me so much forty years ago when I was regaled with

the classical howling and beating on the breast. And every time I come out of the theatre more conservative than I go in.

The sentimental and confiding public may be persuaded that the stage, even in its present form, is a school; but any one who is familiar with a school in its true sense will not be caught with that bait. I cannot say what will happen in fifty or a hundred years, but in its actual condition the theatre can serve only as an entertainment. But this entertainment is too costly to be frequently enjoyed. It robs the state of thousands of healthy and talented young men and women, who, if they had not devoted themselves to the theatre, might have been good doctors, farmers, schoolmistresses, officers; it robs the public of the evening hours — the best time for intellectual work and social intercourse. I say nothing of the waste of money and the moral damage to the spectator when he sees murder, fornication, or false witness unsuitably treated on the stage.

Katya was of an entirely different opinion. She assured me that the theatre, even in its present condition, was superior to the lecture-hall, to books, or to anything in the world. The stage was a power that united in itself all the arts, and actors were missionaries. No art nor science was capable of producing so strong and so certain an effect on the soul of man as the stage, and it was with good reason that an actor of medium quality enjoys greater popularity than the greatest savant or artist. And no sort of public service could provide such enjoyment and gratification as the theatre.



And one fine day Katya joined a troupe of actors, and went off, I believe to Ufa, taking away with her a good supply of money, a store of rainbow hopes, and the most aristocratic views of her work.

Her first letters on the journey were marvellous. I read them, and was simply amazed that those small sheets of paper could contain so much youth, purity of spirit, holy innocence, and at the same time subtle and apt judgments which would have done credit to a fine masculine intellect. It was more like a rapturous pæan of praise she sent me than a mere description of the Volga, the country, the towns she visited, her companions, her failures and successes; every sentence was fragrant with that confiding trustfulness I was accustomed to read in her face — and at the same time there were a great many grammatical mistakes, and there was scarcely any punctuation at all.

Before six months had passed I received a highly poetical and enthusiastic letter beginning with the words, "I have come to love . . ." This letter was accompanied by a photograph representing a young man with a shaven face, a wide-brimmed hat, and a plaid flung over his shoulder. The letters that followed were as splendid as before, but now commas and stops made their appearance in them, the grammatical mistakes disappeared, and there was a distinctly masculine flavour about them. Katya began writing to me how splendid it would be to build a great theatre somewhere on the Volga, on a co-operative system, and to attract to the enterprise the rich merchants and the steamer owners; there would

be a great deal of money in it; there would be vast audiences; the actors would play on co-operative terms. . . . Possibly all this was really excellent, but it seemed to me that such schemes could only originate from a man's mind.

However that may have been, for a year and a half everything seemed to go well: Katya was in love, believed in her work, and was happy; but then I began to notice in her letters unmistakable signs of falling off. It began with Katya's complaining of her companions — this was the first and most ominous symptom; if a young scientific or literary man begins his career with bitter complaints of scientific and literary men, it is a sure sign that he is worn out and not fit for his work. Katya wrote to me that her companions did not attend the rehearsals and never knew their parts; that one could see in every one of them an utter disrespect for the public in the production of absurd plays, and in their behaviour on the stage; that for the benefit of the Actors' Fund, which they only talked about, actresses of the serious drama demeaned themselves by singing chansonnettes, while tragic actors sang comic songs making fun of deceived husbands and the pregnant condition of unfaithful wives, and so on. In fact, it was amazing that all this had not yet ruined the provincial stage, and that it could still maintain itself on such a rotten and unsubstantial footing.

In answer I wrote Katya a long and, I must confess, a very boring letter. Among other things, I wrote to her:

“ I have more than once happened to converse

with old actors, very worthy men, who showed a friendly disposition towards me; from my conversations with them I could understand that their work was controlled not so much by their own intelligence and free choice as by fashion and the mood of the public. The best of them had had to play in their day in tragedy, in operetta, in Parisian farces, and in extravaganzas, and they always seemed equally sure that they were on the right path and that they were of use. So, as you see, the cause of the evil must be sought, not in the actors, but, more deeply, in the art itself and in the attitude of the whole of society to it."

This letter of mine only irritated Katya. She answered me:

"You and I are singing parts out of different operas. I wrote to you, not of the worthy men who showed a friendly disposition to you, but of a band of knaves who have nothing worthy about them. They are a horde of savages who have got on the stage simply because no one would have taken them elsewhere, and who call themselves artists simply because they are impudent. There are numbers of dull-witted creatures, drunkards, intriguing schemers and slanderers, but there is not one person of talent among them. I cannot tell you how bitter it is to me that the art I love has fallen into the hands of people I detest; how bitter it is that the best men look on at evil from afar, not caring to come closer, and, instead of intervening, write ponderous commonplaces and utterly useless sermons. . . ." And so on, all in the same style.

A little time passed, and I got this letter: "I have been brutally deceived. I cannot go on living. Dispose of my money as you think best. I loved you as my father and my only friend. Good-bye."

It turned out that *he*, too, belonged to the "horde of savages." Later on, from certain hints, I gathered that there had been an attempt at suicide. I believe Katya tried to poison herself. I imagine that she must have been seriously ill afterwards, as the next letter I got was from Yalta, where she had most probably been sent by the doctors. Her last letter contained a request to send her a thousand roubles to Yalta as quickly as possible, and ended with these words:

"Excuse the gloominess of this letter; yesterday I buried my child." After spending about a year in the Crimea, she returned home.

She had been about four years on her travels, and during those four years, I must confess, I had played a rather strange and unenviable part in regard to her. When in earlier days she had told me she was going on the stage, and then wrote to me of her love; when she was periodically overcome by extravagance, and I continually had to send her first one and then two thousand roubles; when she wrote to me of her intention of suicide, and then of the death of her baby, every time I lost my head, and all my sympathy for her sufferings found no expression except that, after prolonged reflection, I wrote long, boring letters which I might just as well not have written. And yet I took a father's place with her and loved her like a daughter!

Now Katya is living less than half a mile off. She has taken a flat of five rooms, and has installed herself fairly comfortably and in the taste of the day. If any one were to undertake to describe her surroundings, the most characteristic note in the picture would be indolence. For the indolent body there are soft lounges, soft stools; for indolent feet soft rugs; for indolent eyes faded, dingy, or flat colours; for the indolent soul the walls are hung with a number of cheap fans and trivial pictures, in which the originality of the execution is more conspicuous than the subject; and the room contains a multitude of little tables and shelves filled with utterly useless articles of no value, and shapeless rags in place of curtains. . . . All this, together with the dread of bright colours, of symmetry, and of empty space, bears witness not only to spiritual indolence, but also to a corruption of natural taste. For days together Katya lies on the lounge reading, principally novels and stories. She only goes out of the house once a day, in the afternoon, to see me.

I go on working while Katya sits silent not far from me on the sofa, wrapping herself in her shawl, as though she were cold. Either because I find her sympathetic or because I was used to her frequent visits when she was a little girl, her presence does not prevent me from concentrating my attention. From time to time I mechanically ask her some question; she gives very brief replies; or, to rest for a minute, I turn round and watch her as she looks dreamily at some medical journal or review. And at such moments I notice that her face has lost the

old look of confiding trustfulness. Her expression now is cold, apathetic, and absent-minded, like that of passengers who had to wait too long for a train. She is dressed, as in old days, simply and beautifully, but carelessly; her dress and her hair show visible traces of the sofas and rocking-chairs in which she spends whole days at a stretch. And she has lost the curiosity she had in old days. She has ceased to ask me questions now, as though she had experienced everything in life and looked for nothing new from it.

Towards four o'clock there begins to be sounds of movement in the hall and in the drawing-room. Liza has come back from the Conservatoire, and has brought some girl-friends in with her. We hear them playing on the piano, trying their voices and laughing; in the dining-room Yegor is laying the table, with the clatter of crockery.

"Good-bye," said Katya. "I won't go in and see your people today. They must excuse me. I haven't time. Come and see me."

While I am seeing her to the door, she looks me up and down grimly, and says with vexation:

"You are getting thinner and thinner! Why don't you consult a doctor? I'll call at Sergey Fyodorovitch's and ask him to have a look at you."

"There's no need, Katya."

"I can't think where your people's eyes are! They are a nice lot, I must say!"

She puts on her fur coat abruptly, and as she does so two or three hairpins drop unnoticed on the floor from her carelessly arranged hair. She is too lazy



and in too great a hurry to do her hair up; she carelessly stuffs the falling curls under her hat, and goes away.

When I go into the dining-room my wife asks me:

“Was Katya with you just now? Why didn't she come in to see us? It's really strange . . .”

“Mamma,” Liza says to her reproachfully, “let her alone, if she doesn't want to. We are not going down on our knees to her.”

“It's very neglectful, anyway. To sit for three hours in the study without remembering our existence! But of course she must do as she likes.”

Varya and Liza both hate Katya. This hatred is beyond my comprehension, and probably one would have to be a woman in order to understand it. I am ready to stake my life that of the hundred and fifty young men I see every day in the lecture-theatre, and of the hundred elderly ones I meet every week, hardly one could be found capable of understanding their hatred and aversion for Katya's past — that is, for her having been a mother without being a wife, and for her having had an illegitimate child; and at the same time I cannot recall one woman or girl of my acquaintance who would not consciously or unconsciously harbour such feelings. And this is not because woman is purer or more virtuous than man: why, virtue and purity are not very different from vice if they are not free from evil feeling. I attribute this simply to the backwardness of woman. The mournful feeling of compassion and the pang of conscience experienced by a modern man at the sight of suffering is, to my mind, far greater proof

of culture and moral elevation than hatred and aversion. Woman is as tearful and as coarse in her feelings now as she was in the Middle Ages, and to my thinking those who advise that she should be educated like a man are quite right.

My wife also dislikes Katya for having been an actress, for ingratitude, for pride, for eccentricity, and for the numerous vices which one woman can always find in another.

Besides my wife and daughter and me, there are dining with us two or three of my daughter's friends and Alexandr Adolfovitch Gnekker, her admirer and suitor. He is a fair-haired young man under thirty, of medium height, very stout and broad-shouldered, with red whiskers near his ears, and little waxed moustaches which make his plump smooth face look like a toy. He is dressed in a very short reefer jacket, a flowered waistcoat, breeches very full at the top and very narrow at the ankle, with a large check pattern on them, and yellow boots without heels. He has prominent eyes like a crab's, his cravat is like a crab's neck, and I even fancy there is a smell of crab-soup about the young man's whole person. He visits us every day, but no one in my family knows anything of his origin nor of the place of his education, nor of his means of livelihood. He neither plays nor sings, but has some connection with music and singing, sells somebody's pianos somewhere, is frequently at the Conservatoire, is acquainted with all the celebrities, and is a steward at the concerts; he criticizes music with great authority, and I have noticed that people are eager to agree with him.



Rich people always have dependents hanging about them; the arts and sciences have the same. I believe there is not an art nor a science in the world free from "foreign bodies" after the style of this Mr. Gnekker. I am not a musician, and possibly I am mistaken in regard to Mr. Gnekker, of whom, indeed, I know very little. But his air of authority and the dignity with which he takes his stand beside the piano when any one is playing or singing strike me as very suspicious.

You may be ever so much of a gentleman and a privy councillor, but if you have a daughter you cannot be secure of immunity from that petty bourgeois atmosphere which is so often brought into your house and into your mood by the attentions of suitors, by matchmaking and marriage. I can never reconcile myself, for instance, to the expression of triumph on my wife's face every time Gnekker is in our company, nor can I reconcile myself to the bottles of Lafitte, port and sherry which are only brought out on his account, that he may see with his own eyes the liberal and luxurious way in which we live. I cannot tolerate the habit of spasmodic laughter Liza has picked up at the Conservatoire, and her way of screwing up her eyes whenever there are men in the room. Above all, I cannot understand why a creature utterly alien to my habits, my studies, my whole manner of life, completely different from the people I like, should come and see me every day, and every day should dine with me. My wife and my servants mysteriously whisper that he is a suitor, but still I don't understand his presence; it

rouses in me the same wonder and perplexity as if they were to set a Zulu beside me at the table. And it seems strange to me, too, that my daughter, whom I am used to thinking of as a child, should love that cravat, those eyes, those soft cheeks. . . .

In the old days I used to like my dinner, or at least was indifferent about it; now it excites in me no feeling but weariness and irritation. Ever since I became an "Excellency" and one of the Deans of the Faculty my family has for some reason found it necessary to make a complete change in our menu and dining habits. Instead of the simple dishes to which I was accustomed when I was a student and when I was in practice, now they feed me with a purée with little white things like circles floating about in it, and kidneys stewed in madeira. My rank as a general and my fame have robbed me for ever of cabbage-soup and savoury pies, and goose with apple-sauce, and bream with boiled grain. They have robbed me of our maid-servant Agasha, a chatty and laughter-loving old woman, instead of whom Yegor, a dull-witted and conceited fellow with a white glove on his right hand, waits at dinner. The intervals between the courses are short, but they seem immensely long because there is nothing to occupy them. There is none of the gaiety of the old days, the spontaneous talk, the jokes, the laughter; there is nothing of mutual affection and the joy which used to animate the children, my wife, and me when in old days we met together at meals. For me, the celebrated man of science, dinner was a time of rest and reunion, and for my wife and children a

fête — brief indeed, but bright and joyous — in which they knew that for half an hour I belonged, not to science, not to students, but to them alone. Our real exhilaration from one glass of wine is gone for ever, gone is Agasha, gone the bream with boiled grain, gone the uproar that greeted every little startling incident at dinner, such as the cat and dog fighting under the table, or Katya's bandage falling off her face into her soup-plate.

To describe our dinner nowadays is as uninteresting as to eat it. My wife's face wears a look of triumph and affected dignity, and her habitual expression of anxiety. She looks at our plates and says, "I see you don't care for the joint. Tell me; you don't like it, do you?" and I am obliged to answer: "There is no need for you to trouble, my dear; the meat is very nice." And she will say: "You always stand up for me, Nikolay Stepanovitch, and you never tell the truth. Why is Alexandr Adolfovitch eating so little?" And so on in the same style all through dinner. Liza laughs spasmodically and screws up her eyes. I watch them both, and it is only now at dinner that it becomes absolutely evident to me that the inner life of these two has slipped away out of my ken. I have a feeling as though I had once lived at home with a real wife and children and that now I am dining with visitors, in the house of a sham wife who is not the real one, and am looking at a Liza who is not the real Liza. A startling change has taken place in both of them; I have missed the long process by which that change was effected, and it is no wonder that I can make nothing

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of it. Why did that change take place? I don't know. Perhaps the whole trouble is that God has not given my wife and daughter the same strength of character as me. From childhood I have been accustomed to resisting external influences, and have steeled myself pretty thoroughly. Such catastrophes in life as fame, the rank of a general, the transition from comfort to living beyond our means, acquaintance with celebrities, etc., have scarcely affected me, and I have remained intact and unashamed; but on my wife and Liza, who have not been through the same hardening process and are weak, all this has fallen like an avalanche of snow, overwhelming them. Gnekker and the young ladies talk of fugues, of counterpoint, of singers and pianists, of Bach and Brahms, while my wife, afraid of their suspecting her of ignorance of music, smiles to them sympathetically and mutters: "That's exquisite . . . really! You don't say so! . . . Gnekker eats with solid dignity, jests with solid dignity, and condescendingly listens to the remarks of the young ladies. From time to time he is moved to speak in bad French, and then, for some reason or other, he thinks it necessary to address me as "*Votre Excellence*."

And I am glum. Evidently I am a constraint to them and they are a constraint to me. I have never in my earlier days had a close knowledge of class antagonism, but now I am tormented by something of that sort. I am on the lookout for nothing but bad qualities in Gnekker; I quickly find them, and am fretted at the thought that a man not of my circle is sitting here as my daughter's suitor. His presence

has a bad influence on me in other ways, too. As a rule, when I am alone or in the society of people I like, never think of my own achievements, or, if I do recall them, they seem to me as trivial as though I had only completed my studies yesterday; but in the presence of people like Gnekker my achievements in science seem to be a lofty mountain the top of which vanishes into the clouds, while at its foot Gnekkers are running about scarcely visible to the naked eye.

After dinner I go into my study and there smoke my pipe, the only one in the whole day, the sole relic of my old bad habit of smoking from morning till night. While I am smoking my wife comes in and sits down to talk to me. Just as in the morning, I know beforehand what our conversation is going to be about.

"I must talk to you seriously, Nikolay Stepanovitch," she begins. "I mean about Liza. . . . Why don't you pay attention to it?"

"To what?"

"You pretend to notice nothing. But that is not right. We can't shirk responsibility. . . . Gnekker has intentions in regard to Liza. . . . What do you say?"

"That he is a bad man I can't say, because I don't know him, but that I don't like him I have told you a thousand times already."

"But you can't . . . you can't!"

She gets up and walks about in excitement.

"You can't take up that attitude to a serious step," she says. "When it is a question of our daughter's happiness we must lay aside all personal feeling. I

know you do not like him. . . . Very good . . . if we refuse him now, if we break it all off, how can you be sure that Liza will not have a grievance against us all her life? Suitors are not plentiful nowadays, goodness knows, and it may happen that no other match will turn up. . . . He is very much in love with Liza, and she seems to like him. . . . Of course, he has no settled position, but that can't be helped. Please God, in time he will get one. He is of good family and well off."

"Where did you learn that?"

"He told us so. His father has a large house in Harkov and an estate in the neighbourhood. In short, Nikolay Stepanovitch, you absolutely must go to Harkov."

"What for?"

"You will find out all about him there. . . . You know the professors there; they will help you. I would go myself, but I am a woman. I cannot. . . ."

"I am not going to Harkov," I say morosely.

My wife is frightened, and a look of intense suffering comes into her face.

"For God's sake, Nikolay Stepanovitch," she implores me, with tears in her voice — "for God's sake, take this burden off me! I am so worried!"

It is painful for me to look at her.

"Very well, Varya," I say affectionately, "if you wish it, then certainly I will go to Harkov and do all you want."

She presses her handkerchief to her eyes and goes off to her room to cry, and I am left alone.



A little later lights are brought in. The arm-chair and the lamp-shade cast familiar shadows that have long grown wearisome on the walls and on the floor, and when I look at them I feel as though the night had come and with it my accursed sleeplessness. I lie on my bed, then get up and walk about the room, then lie down again. As a rule it is after dinner, at the approach of evening, that my nervous excitement reaches its highest pitch. For no reason I begin crying and burying my head in the pillow. At such times I am afraid that some one may come in; I am afraid of suddenly dying; I am ashamed of my tears, and altogether there is something insufferable in my soul. I feel that I can no longer bear the sight of my lamp, of my books, of the shadows on the floor. I cannot bear the sound of the voices coming from the drawing-room. Some force unseen, uncomprehended, is roughly thrusting me out of my flat. I leap up hurriedly, dress, and cautiously, that my family may not notice, slip out into the street. Where am I to go?

The answer to that question has long been ready in my brain. To Katya.

### III

As a rule she is lying on the sofa or in a lounge-chair reading. Seeing me, she raises her read languidly, sits up, and shakes hands.

"You are always lying down," I say, after pausing and taking breath. "That's not good for you. You ought to occupy yourself with something."

"What?"

"I say you ought to occupy yourself in some way."

"With what? A woman can be nothing but a simple workwoman or an actress."

"Well, if you can't be a workwoman, be an actress."

She says nothing.

"You ought to get married," I say, half in jest.

"There is no one to marry. There's no reason to, either."

"You can't live like this."

"Without a husband? Much that matters; I could have as many men as I like if I wanted to."

"That's ugly, Katya."

"What is ugly?"

"Why, what you have just said."

Noticing that I am hurt and wishing to efface the disagreeable impression, Katya says:

"Let us go; come this way."

She takes me into a very snug little room, and says, pointing to the writing-table:

"Look . . . I have got that ready for you. You shall work here. Come here every day and bring your work with you. They only hinder you there at home. Will you work here? Will you like to?"

Not to wound her by refusing, I answer that I will work here, and that I like the room very much. Then we both sit down in the snug little room and begin talking.

The warm, snug surroundings and the presence of a sympathetic person does not, as in old days, arouse



in me a feeling of pleasure, but an intense impulse to complain and grumble. I feel for some reason that if I lament and complain I shall feel better.

“ Things are in a bad way with me, my dear — very bad. . . . ”

“ What is it? ”

“ You see how it is, my dear; the best and holiest right of kings is the right of mercy. And I have always felt myself a king, since I have made unlimited use of that right. I have never judged, I have been indulgent, I have readily forgiven every one, right and left. Where others have protested and expressed indignation, I have only advised and persuaded. All my life it has been my endeavour that my society should not be a burden to my family, to my students, to my colleagues, to my servants. And I know that this attitude to people has had a good influence on all who have chanced to come into contact with me. But now I am not a king. Something is happening to me that is only excusable in a slave; day and night my brain is haunted by evil thoughts, and feelings such as I never knew before are brooding in my soul. I am full of hatred, and contempt, and indignation, and loathing, and dread. I have become excessively severe, exacting, irritable, ungracious, suspicious. Even things that in old days would have provoked me only to an unnecessary jest and a good-natured laugh now arouse an oppressive feeling in me. My reasoning, too, has undergone a change: in old days I despised money; now I harbour an evil feeling, not towards money, but towards the rich as though they were to blame: in old days I

hated violence and tyranny, but now I hate the men who make use of violence, as though they were alone to blame, and not all of us who do not know how to educate each other. What is the meaning of it? If these new ideas and new feelings have come from a change of convictions, what is that change due to? Can the world have grown worse and I better, or was I blind before and indifferent? If this change is the result of a general decline of physical and intellectual powers — I am ill, you know, and every day I am losing weight — my position is pitiable; it means that my new ideas are morbid and abnormal; I ought to be ashamed of them and think them of no consequence. . . .”

“Illness has nothing to do with it,” Katya interrupts me; “it’s simply that your eyes are opened, that’s all. You have seen what in old days, for some reason, you refused to see. To my thinking, what you ought to do first of all, is to break with your family for good, and go away.”

“You are talking nonsense.”

“You don’t love them; why should you force your feelings? Can you call them a family? Non-entities! If they died today, no one would notice their absence tomorrow.”

Katya despises my wife and Liza as much as they hate her. One can hardly talk at this date of people’s having a right to despise one another. But if one looks at it from Katya’s standpoint and recognizes such a right, one can see she has as much right to despise my wife and Liza as they have to hate her.

“Nonentities,” she goes on. “Have you had dinner today? How was it they did not forget to tell you it was ready? How is it they still remember your existence?”

“Katya,” I say sternly, “I beg you to be silent.”

“You think I enjoy talking about them? I should be glad not to know them at all. Listen, my dear: give it all up and go away. Go abroad. The sooner the better.”

“What nonsense! What about the University?”

“The University, too. What is it to you? There’s no sense in it, anyway. You have been lecturing for thirty years, and where are your pupils? Are many of them celebrated scientific men? Count them up! And to multiply the doctors who exploit ignorance and pile up hundreds of thousands for themselves, there is no need to be a good and talented man. You are not wanted.”

“Good heavens! how harsh you are!” I cry in horror. “How harsh you are! Be quiet or I will go away! I don’t know how to answer the harsh things you say!”

The maid comes in and summons us to tea. At the samovar our conversation, thank God, changes. After having had my grumble out, I have a longing to give way to another weakness of old age, reminiscences. I tell Katya about my past, and to my great astonishment tell her incidents which, till then, I did not suspect of being still preserved in my memory, and she listens to me with tenderness, with pride, holding her breath. I am particularly fond of tell-

ing her how I was educated in a seminary and dreamed of going to the University.

“At times I used to walk about our seminary garden . . .” I would tell her. “If from some far-away tavern the wind floated sounds of a song and the squeaking of an accordion, or a sledge with bells dashed by the garden-fence, it was quite enough to send a rush of happiness, filling not only my heart, but even my stomach, my legs, my arms. . . . I would listen to the accordion or the bells dying away in the distance and imagine myself a doctor, and paint pictures, one better than another. And here, as you see, my dreams have come true. I have had more than I dared to dream of. For thirty years I have been the favourite professor, I have had splendid comrades, I have enjoyed fame and honour. I have loved, married from passionate love, have had children. In fact, looking back upon it, I see my whole life as a fine composition arranged with talent. Now all that is left to me is not to spoil the end. For that I must die like a man. If death is really a thing to dread, I must meet it as a teacher, a man of science, and a citizen of a Christian country ought to meet it, with courage and untroubled soul. But I am spoiling the end; I am sinking, I fly to you, I beg for help, and you tell me ‘Sink; that is what you ought to do.’”

But here there comes a ring at the front-door. Katya and I recognize it, and say:

“It must be Mihail Fyodorovitch.”

And a minute later my colleague, the philologist Mihail Fyodorovitch, a tall, well-built man of fifty,

clean-shaven, with thick grey hair and black eyebrows, walks in. He is a good-natured man and an excellent comrade. He comes of a fortunate and talented old noble family which has played a prominent part in the history of literature and enlightenment. He is himself intelligent, talented, and very highly educated, but has his oddities. To a certain extent we are all odd and all queer fish, but in his oddities there is something exceptional, apt to cause anxiety among his acquaintances. I know a good many people for whom his oddities completely obscure his good qualities.

Coming in to us, he slowly takes off his gloves and says in his velvety bass:

“Good-evening. Are you having tea? That’s just right. It’s diabolically cold.”

Then he sits down to the table, takes a glass, and at once begins talking. What is most characteristic in his manner of talking is the continually jesting tone, a sort of mixture of philosophy and drollery as in Shakespeare’s gravediggers. He is always talking about serious things, but he never speaks seriously. His judgments are always harsh and railing, but, thanks to his soft, even, jesting tone, the harshness and abuse do not jar upon the ear, and one soon grows used to them. Every evening he brings with him five or six anecdotes from the University, and he usually begins with them when he sits down to table.

“Oh, Lord!” he sighs, twitching his black eyebrows ironically. “What comic people there are in the world!”

“Well?” asks Katya.

“As I was coming from my lecture this morning I met that old idiot N. N—— on the stairs. . . . He was going along as usual, sticking out his chin like a horse, looking for some one to listen to his grumblings at his migraine, at his wife, and his students who won't attend his lectures. ‘Oh,’ I thought, ‘he has seen me — I am done for now; it is all up. . . .’”

And so on in the same style. Or he will begin like this:

“I was yesterday at our friend Z. Z——’s public lecture. I wonder how it is our alma mater — don't speak of it after dark — dare display in public such noodles and patent dullards as that Z. Z——. Why, he is a European fool! Upon my word, you could not find another like him all over Europe! He lectures — can you imagine? — as though he were sucking a sugar-stick — sue, sue, sue; . . . he is in a nervous funk; he can hardly decipher his own manuscript; his poor little thoughts crawl along like a bishop on a bicycle, and, what's worse, you can never make out what he is trying to say. The deadly dulness is awful, the very flies expire. It can only be compared with the boredom in the assembly-hall at the yearly meeting when the traditional address is read — damn it!”

And at once an abrupt transition:

“Three years ago — Nikolay Stepanovitch here will remember it — I had to deliver that address. It was hot, stifling, my uniform cut me under the arms — it was deadly! I read for half an hour,



for an hour, for an hour and a half, for two hours. . . . 'Come,' I thought; 'thank God, there are only ten pages left!' And at the end there were four pages that there was no need to read, and I reckoned to leave them out. 'So there are only six really,' I thought; 'that is, only six pages left to read.' But, only fancy, I chanced to glance before me, and, sitting in the front row, side by side, were a general with a ribbon on his breast and a bishop. The poor beggars were numb with boredom; they were staring with their eyes wide open to keep awake, and yet they were trying to put on an expression of attention and to pretend that they understood what I was saying and liked it. 'Well,' I thought, 'since you like it you shall have it! I'll pay you out;' so I just gave them those four pages too."

As is usual with ironical people, when he talks nothing in his face smiles but his eyes and eyebrows. At such times there is no trace of hatred or spite in his eyes, but a great deal of humour, and that peculiar fox-like slyness which is only to be noticed in very observant people. Since I am speaking about his eyes, I notice another peculiarity in them. When he takes a glass from Katya, or listens to her speaking, or looks after her as she goes out of the room for a moment, I notice in his eyes something gentle, beseeching, pure. . . .

The maid-servant takes away the samovar and puts on the table a large piece of cheese, some fruit, and a bottle of Crimean champagne — a rather poor wine of which Katya had grown fond in the Crimea. Mihail Fyodorovitch takes two packs of

cards off the whatnot and begins to play patience. According to him, some varieties of patience require great concentration and attention, yet while he lays out the cards he does not leave off distracting his attention with talk. Katya watches his cards attentively, and more by gesture than by words helps him in his play. She drinks no more than a couple of wine-glasses of wine the whole evening; I drink four glasses, and the rest of the bottle falls to the share of Mihail Fyodorovitch, who can drink a great deal and never get drunk.

Over our patience we settle various questions, principally of the higher order, and what we care for most of all — that is, science and learning — is more roughly handled than anything.

“Science, thank God, has outlived its day,” says Mihail Fyodorovitch emphatically. “Its song is sung. Yes, indeed. Mankind begins to feel impelled to replace it by something different. It has grown on the soil of superstition, been nourished by superstition, and is now just as much the quintessence of superstition as its defunct granddames, alchemy, metaphysics, and philosophy. And, after all, what has it given to mankind? Why, the difference between the learned Europeans and the Chinese who have no science is trifling, purely external. The Chinese know nothing of science, but what have they lost thereby?”

“Flies know nothing of science, either,” I observe, “but what of that?”

“There is no need to be angry, Nikolay Stepanovitch. I only say this here between ourselves. . . .



I am more careful than you think, and I am not going to say this in public — God forbid! The superstition exists in the multitude that the arts and sciences are superior to agriculture, commerce, superior to handicrafts. Our sect is maintained by that superstition, and it is not for you and me to destroy it. God forbid!”

After patience the younger generation comes in for a dressing too.

“Our audiences have degenerated,” sighs Mihail Fyodorovitch. “Not to speak of ideals and all the rest of it, if only they were capable of work and rational thought! In fact, it’s a case of ‘I look with mournful eyes on the young men of today.’”

“Yes; they have degenerated horribly,” Katya agrees. “Tell me, have you had one man of distinction among them for the last five or ten years?”

“I don’t know how it is with the other professors, but I can’t remember any among mine.”

“I have seen in my day many of your students and young scientific men and many actors — well, I have never once been so fortunate as to meet — I won’t say a hero or a man of talent, but even an interesting man. It’s all the same grey mediocrity, puffed up with self-conceit.”

All this talk of degeneration always affects me as though I had accidentally overheard offensive talk about my own daughter. It offends me that these charges are wholesale, and rest on such worn-out commonplaces, on such wordy vapourings as degeneration and absence of ideals, or on references to the splendours of the past. Every accusation, even

if it is uttered in ladies' society, ought to be formulated with all possible definiteness, or it is not an accusation, but idle disparagement, unworthy of decent people.

I am an old man, I have been lecturing for thirty years, but I notice neither degeneration nor lack of ideals, and I don't find that the present is worse than the past. My porter Nikolay, whose experience of this subject has its value, says that the students of today are neither better nor worse than those of the past.

If I were asked what I don't like in my pupils of today, I should answer the question, not straight off and not at length, but with sufficient definiteness. I know their failings, and so have no need to resort to vague generalities. I don't like their smoking, using spirituous beverages, marrying late, and often being so irresponsible and careless that they will let one of their number be starving in their midst while they neglect to pay their subscriptions to the Students' Aid Society. They don't know modern languages, and they don't express themselves correctly in Russian; no longer ago than yesterday my colleague, the professor of hygiene, complained to me that he had to give twice as many lectures, because the students had a very poor knowledge of physics and were utterly ignorant of meteorology. They are readily carried away by the influence of the last new writers, even when they are not first-rate, but they take absolutely no interest in classics such as Shakespeare, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, or Pascal, and this inability to distinguish the great from the

small betrays their ignorance of practical life more than anything. All difficult questions that have more or less a social character (for instance the migration question) they settle by studying monographs on the subject, but not by way of scientific investigation or experiment, though that method is at their disposal and is more in keeping with their calling. They gladly become ward-surgeons, assistants, demonstrators, external teachers, and are ready to fill such posts until they are forty, though independence, a sense of freedom and personal initiative, are no less necessary in science than, for instance, in art or commerce. I have pupils and listeners, but no successors and helpers, and so I love them and am touched by them, but am not proud of them. And so on, and so on. . . .

Such shortcomings, however numerous they may be, can only give rise to a pessimistic or fault-finding temper in a faint-hearted and timid man. All these failings have a casual, transitory character, and are completely dependent on conditions of life; in some ten years they will have disappeared or given place to other fresh defects, which are all inevitable and will in their turn alarm the faint-hearted. The students' sins often vex me, but that vexation is nothing in comparison with the joy I have been experiencing now for the last thirty years when I talk to my pupils, lecture to them, watch their relations, and compare them with people not of their circle.

Mihail Fyodorovitch speaks evil of everything. Katya listens, and neither of them notices into what depths the apparently innocent diversion of finding

fault with their neighbours is gradually drawing them. They are not conscious how by degrees simple talk passes into malicious mockery and jeering, and how they are both beginning to drop into the habits and methods of slander.

“Killing types one meets with,” says Mihail Fyodorovitch. “I went yesterday to our friend Yegor Petrovitch’s, and there I found a studious gentleman, one of your medicals in his third year, I believe. Such a face! . . . in the Dobrolubov style, the imprint of profound thought on his brow; we got into talk. ‘Such doings, young man,’ said I. ‘I’ve read,’ said I, ‘that some German — I’ve forgotten his name — has created from the human brain a new kind of alkaloid, idiotine.’ What do you think? He believed it, and there was positively an expression of respect on his face, as though to say, ‘See what we fellows can do!’ And the other day I went to the theatre. I took my seat. In the next row directly in front of me were sitting two men: one of ‘us fellows’ and apparently a law student, the other a shaggy-looking figure, a medical student. The latter was as drunk as a cobbler. He did not look at the stage at all. He was dozing with his nose on his shirt-front. But as soon as an actor begins loudly reciting a monologue, or simply raises his voice, our friend starts, pokes his neighbour in the ribs, and asks, ‘What is he saying? Is it elevating?’ ‘Yes,’ answers one of our fellows. ‘B-r-r-ravo!’ roars the medical student. ‘Elevating! Bravo!’ He had gone to the theatre, you see, the drunken blockhead, not for the sake of art,

the play, but for elevation! He wanted noble sentiments."

Katya listens and laughs. She has a strange laugh; she catches her breath in rhythmically regular gasps, very much as though she were playing the accordion, and nothing in her face is laughing but her nostrils. I grow depressed and don't know what to say. Beside myself, I fire up, leap up from my seat, and cry:

"Do leave off! Why are you sitting here like two toads, poisoning the air with your breath? Give over!"

And without waiting for them to finish their gossip I prepare to go home. And, indeed, it is high time: it is past ten.

"I will stay a little longer," says Mihail Fyodorovitch. "Will you allow me, Ekaterina Vladimirovna?"

"I will," answers Katya.

"*Bene!* In that case have up another little bottle."

They both accompany me with candles to the hall, and while I put on my fur coat, Mihail Fyodorovitch says:

"You have grown dreadfully thin and older looking, Nikolay Stepanovitch. What's the matter with you? Are you ill?"

"Yes; I am not very well."

"And you are not doing anything for it . . ."  
Katya puts in grimly.

"Why don't you? You can't go on like that! God helps those who help themselves, my dear fel-

low. Remember me to your wife and daughter, and make my apologies for not having been to see them. In a day or two, before I go abroad, I shall come to say good-bye. I shall be sure to. I am going away next week."

I come away from Katya, irritated and alarmed by what has been said about my being ill, and dissatisfied with myself. I ask myself whether I really ought not to consult one of my colleagues. And at once I imagine how my colleague, after listening to me, would walk away to the window without speaking, would think a moment, then would turn round to me and, trying to prevent my reading the truth in his face, would say in a careless tone: "So far I see nothing serious, but at the same time, *collega*, I advise you to lay aside your work. . . ." And that would deprive me of my last hope.

Who is without hope? Now that I am diagnosing my illness and prescribing for myself, from time to time I hope that I am deceived by my own illness, that I am mistaken in regard to the albumen and the sugar I find, and in regard to my heart, and in regard to the swellings I have twice noticed in the mornings; when with the fervour of the hypochondriac I look through the textbooks of therapeutics and take a different medicine every day, I keep fancying that I shall hit upon something comforting. All that is petty.

Whether the sky is covered with clouds or the moon and the stars are shining, I turn my eyes towards it every evening and think that death is taking me soon. One would think that my thoughts at



such times ought to be deep as the sky, brilliant, striking. . . . But no! I think about myself, about my wife, about Liza, Gnekker, the students, people in general; my thoughts are evil, petty, I am insincere with myself, and at such times my theory of life may be expressed in the words the celebrated Araktcheev said in one of his intimate letters: "Nothing good can exist in the world without evil, and there is more evil than good." That is, everything is disgusting; there is nothing to live for, and the sixty-two years I have already lived must be reckoned as wasted. I catch myself in these thoughts, and try to persuade myself that they are accidental, temporary, and not deeply rooted in me, but at once I think:

"If so, what drives me every evening to those two toads?"

And I vow to myself that I will never go to Katya's again, though I know I shall go next evening.

Ring the bell at the door and going upstairs, I feel that I have no family now and no desire to bring it back again. It is clear that the new Araktcheev thoughts are not casual, temporary visitors, but have possession of my whole being. With my conscience ill at ease, dejected, languid, hardly able to move my limbs, feeling as though tons were added to my weight, I get into bed and quickly drop asleep.

And then — insomnia!

## IV

Summer comes on and life is changed.

One fine morning Liza comes in to me and says in a jesting tone:

“Come, your Excellency! We are ready.”

My Excellency is conducted into the street, and seated in a cab. As I go along, having nothing to do, I read the signboards from right to left. The word “Traktir” reads “Ritkart”; that would just suit some baron’s family: Baroness Ritkart. Farther on I drive through fields, by the graveyard, which makes absolutely no impression on me, though I shall soon lie in it; then I drive by forests and again by fields. There is nothing of interest. After two hours of driving, my Excellency is conducted into the lower storey of a summer villa and installed in a small, very cheerful little room with light blue hangings.

At night there is sleeplessness as before, but in the morning I do not put a good face upon it and listen to my wife, but lie in bed. I do not sleep, but lie in the drowsy, half-conscious condition in which you know you are not asleep, but dreaming. At midday I get up and from habit sit down at my table, but I do not work now; I amuse myself with French books in yellow covers, sent me by Katya. Of course, it would be more patriotic to read Russian authors, but I must confess I cherish no particular liking for them. With the exception of two or three of the older writers, all our literature of today



strikes me as not being literature, but a special sort of home industry, which exists simply in order to be encouraged, though people do not readily make use of its products. The very best of these home products cannot be called remarkable and cannot be sincerely praised without qualification. I must say the same of all the literary novelties I have read during the last ten or fifteen years; not one of them is remarkable, and not one of them can be praised without a "but." Cleverness, a good tone, but no talent; talent, a good tone, but no cleverness; or talent, cleverness, but not a good tone.

I don't say the French books have talent, cleverness, and a good tone. They don't satisfy me, either. But they are not so tedious as the Russian, and it is not unusual to find in them the chief element of artistic creation — the feeling of personal freedom which is lacking in the Russian authors. I don't remember one new book in which the author does not try from the first page to entangle himself in all sorts of conditions and contracts with his conscience. One is afraid to speak of the naked body; another ties himself up hand and foot in psychological analysis; a third must have a "warm attitude to man"; a fourth purposely scrawls whole descriptions of nature that he may not be suspected of writing with a purpose. . . . One is bent upon being middleclass in his work, another must be a nobleman, and so on. There is intentionalness, circumspection, and self-will, but they have neither the independence nor the manliness to write as they like, and therefore there is no creative-ness.

All this applies to what is called belles-lettres.

As for serious treatises in Russian on sociology, for instance, on art, and so on, I do not read them simply from timidity. In my childhood and early youth I had for some reason a terror of doorkeepers and attendants at the theatre, and that terror has remained with me to this day. I am afraid of them even now. It is said that we are only afraid of what we do not understand. And, indeed, it is very difficult to understand why doorkeepers and theatre attendants are so dignified, haughty, and majestically rude. I feel exactly the same terror when I read serious articles. Their extraordinary dignity, their bantering lordly tone, their familiar manner to foreign authors, their ability to split straws with dignity — all that is beyond my understanding; it is intimidating and utterly unlike the quiet, gentlemanly tone to which I am accustomed when I read the works of our medical and scientific writers. It oppresses me to read not only the articles written by serious Russians, but even works translated or edited by them. The pretentious, edifying tone of the preface; the redundancy of remarks made by the translator, which prevent me from concentrating my attention; the question marks and “ sic ” in parenthesis scattered all over the book or article by the liberal translator, are to my mind an outrage on the author and on my independence as a reader.

Once I was summoned as an expert to a circuit court; in an interval one of my fellow-experts drew my attention to the rudeness of the public prosecutor to the defendants, among whom there were two

ladies of good education. I believe I did not exaggerate at all when I told him that the prosecutor's manner was no ruder than that of the authors of serious articles to one another. Their manners are, indeed, so rude that I cannot speak of them without distaste. They treat one another and the writers they criticize either with superfluous respect, at the sacrifice of their own dignity, or, on the contrary, with far more ruthlessness than I have shown in my notes and my thoughts in regard to my future son-in-law Gnekker. Accusations of irrationality, of evil intentions, and, indeed, of every sort of crime, form an habitual ornament of serious articles. And that, as young medical men are fond of saying in their monographs, is the *ultima ratio!* Such ways must infallibly have an effect on the morals of the younger generation of writers, and so I am not at all surprised that in the new works with which our literature has been enriched during the last ten or fifteen years the heroes drink too much yodka and the heroines are not over-chaste.

I read French books, and I look out of the window which is open; I can see the spikes of my garden-fence, two or three scraggy trees, and beyond the fence the road, the fields, and beyond them a broad stretch of pine-wood. Often I admire a boy and girl, both flaxen-headed and ragged, who clamber on the fence and laugh at my baldness. In their shining little eyes I read, "Go up, go up, thou baldhead!" They are almost the only people who care nothing for my celebrity or my rank.

Visitors do not come to me every day now. I

will only mention the visits of Nikolay and Pyotr Ignatyevitch. Nikolay usually comes to me on holidays, with some pretext of business, though really to see me. He arrives very much exhilarated, a thing which never occurs to him in the winter.

“What have you to tell me?” I ask, going out to him in the hall.

“Your Excellency!” he says, pressing his hand to his heart and looking at me with the ecstasy of a lover — “your Excellency! God be my witness! Strike me dead on the spot! *Gaudeamus egitur juventus!*”

And he greedily kisses me on the shoulder, on the sleeve, and on the buttons.

“Is everything going well?” I ask him.

“Your Excellency! So help me God! . . .”

He persists in grovelling before me for no sort of reason, and soon bores me, so I send him away to the kitchen, where they give him dinner.

Pyotr Ignatyevitch comes to see me on holidays, too, with the special object of seeing me and sharing his thoughts with me. He usually sits down near my table, modest, neat, and reasonable, and does not venture to cross his legs or put his elbows on the table. All the time, in a soft, even, little voice, in rounded bookish phrases, he tells me various, to his mind, very interesting and piquant items of news which he has read in the magazines and journals. They are all alike and may be reduced to this type: “A Frenchman has made a discovery; some one else, a German, has denounced him, proving that the discovery was made in 1870 by some American; while a

third person, also a German, trumps them both by proving they both had made fools of themselves, mistaking bubbles of air for dark pigment under the microscope. Even when he wants to amuse me, Pyotr Ignatyevitch tells me things in the same lengthy, circumstantial manner as though he were defending a thesis, enumerating in detail the literary sources from which he is deriving his narrative, doing his utmost to be accurate as to the date and number of the journals and the name of every one concerned, invariably mentioning it in full — Jean Jacques Petit, never simply Petit. Sometimes he stays to dinner with us, and then during the whole of dinner-time he goes on telling me the same sort of piquant anecdotes, reducing every one at table to a state of dejected boredom. If Gnekker and Liza begin talking before him of fugues and counterpoint, Brahms and Bach, he drops his eyes modestly, and is overcome with embarrassment; he is ashamed that such trivial subjects should be discussed before such serious people as him and me.

In my present state of mind five minutes of him is enough to sicken me as though I had been seeing and hearing him for an eternity. I hate the poor fellow. His soft, smooth voice and bookish language exhaust me, and his stories stupefy me. . . . He cherishes the best of feelings for me, and talks to me simply in order to give me pleasure, and I repay him by looking at him as though I wanted to hypnotize him, and think, "Go, go, go! . . ." But he is not amenable to thought-suggestion, and sits on and on and on. . . .

While he is with me I can never shake off the thought, "It's possible when I die he will be appointed to succeed me," and my poor lecture-hall presents itself to me as an oasis in which the spring is dried up; and I am ungracious, silent, and surly with Pyotr Ignatyevitch, as though he were to blame for such thoughts, and not I myself. When he begins, as usual, praising up the German savants, instead of making fun of him good-humouredly, as I used to do, I mutter sullenly:

"Asses, your Germans! . . ."

That is like the late Professor Nikita Krylov, who once, when he was bathing with Pirogov at Revel and vexed at the water's being very cold, burst out with, "Scoundrels, these Germans!" I behave badly with Pyotr Ignatyevitch, and only when he is going away, and from the window I catch a glimpse of his grey hat behind the garden-fence, I want to call out and say, "Forgive me, my dear fellow!"

Dinner is even drearier than in the winter. Gnekker, whom now I hate and despise, dines with us almost every day. I used to endure his presence in silence, now I aim biting remarks at him which make my wife and daughter blush. Carried away by evil feeling, I often say things that are simply stupid, and I don't know why I say them. So on one occasion it happened that I stared a long time at Gnekker, and, *à propos* of nothing, I fired off:

[ "An eagle may perchance swoop down below a cock,  
But never will the fowl soar upwards to the clouds. . . ."

And the most vexatious thing is that the fowl



Gnekker shows himself much cleverer than the eagle professor. Knowing that my wife and daughter are on his side, he takes up the line of meeting my gibes with condescending silence, as though to say:

“The old chap is in his dotage; what’s the use of talking to him?”

Or he makes fun of me good-naturedly. It is wonderful how petty a man may become! I am capable of dreaming all dinner-time of how Gnekker will turn out to be an adventurer, how my wife and Liza will come to see their mistake, and how I will taunt them — and such absurd thoughts at the time when I am standing with one foot in the grave!

There are now, too, misunderstandings of which in the old days I had no idea except from hearsay. Though I am ashamed of it, I will describe one that occurred the other day after dinner.

I was sitting in my room smoking a pipe; my wife came in as usual, sat down, and began saying what a good thing it would be for me to go to Harkov now while it is warm and I have free time, and there find out what sort of person our Gnekker is.

“Very good; I will go,” I assented.

My wife, pleased with me, got up and was going to the door, but turned back and said:

“By the way, I have another favour to ask of you. I know you will be angry, but it is my duty to warn you. . . . Forgive my saying it, Nikolay Stepanovitch, but all our neighbours and acquaintances have begun talking about your being so often at Katya’s. She is clever and well-educated; I don’t deny that her company may be agreeable; but at your age and with

your social position it seems strange that you should find pleasure in her society. . . . Besides, she has such a reputation that . . .”

All the blood suddenly rushed to my brain, my eyes flashed fire, I leaped up and, clutching at my head and stamping my feet, shouted in a voice unlike my own:

“Let me alone! let me alone! let me alone!”

Probably my face was terrible, my voice was strange, for my wife suddenly turned pale and began shrieking aloud in a despairing voice that was utterly unlike her own. Liza, Gnekker, then Yegor, came running in at our shouts. . . .

“Let me alone!” I cried; “let me alone! Go away!”

My legs turned numb as though they had ceased to exist; I felt myself falling into some one’s arms; for a little while I still heard weeping, then sank into a swoon which lasted two or three hours.

Now about Katya; she comes to see me every day towards evening, and of course neither the neighbours nor our acquaintances can avoid noticing it. She comes in for a minute and carries me off for a drive with her. She has her own horse and a new chaise bought this summer. Altogether she lives in an expensive style; she has taken a big detached villa with a large garden, and has taken all her town retinue with her — two maids, a coachman . . . I often ask her:

“Katya, what will you live on when you have spent your father’s money?”

“Then we shall see,” she answers.



"That money, my dear, deserves to be treated more seriously. It was earned by a good man, by honest labour."

"You have told me that already. I know it."

At first we drive through the open country, then through the pine-wood which is visible from my window. Nature seems to me as beautiful as it always has been, though some evil spirit whispers to me that these pines and fir trees, birds, and white clouds on the sky, will not notice my absence when in three or four months I am dead. Katya loves driving, and she is pleased that it is fine weather and that I am sitting beside her. She is in good spirits and does not say heavy things.

"You are a very good man, Nikolay Stepanovitch," she says. "You are a rare specimen, and there isn't an actor who could understand how to play you. Me or Mihail Fyodorovitch, for instance, any poor actor could do, but not you. And I envy you, I envy you horribly! Do you know what I stand for? What?"

She ponders for a minute, and then asks me:

"Nikolay Stepanovitch, I am a negative phenomenon! Yes?"

"Yes," I answer.

"H'm! what am I to do?"

What answer was I to make her? It is easy to say "work," or "give your possessions to the poor," or "know yourself," and because it is so easy to say that, I don't know what to answer.

My colleagues when they teach therapeutic advise "the individual study of each separate case."

One has but to obey this advice to gain the conviction that the methods recommended in the textbooks as the best and as providing a safe basis for treatment turn out to be quite unsuitable in individual cases. It is just the same in moral ailments.

But I must make some answer, and I say:

"You have too much free time, my dear; you absolutely must take up some occupation. After all, why shouldn't you be an actress again if it is your vocation?"

"I cannot!"

"Your tone and manner suggest that you are a victim. I don't like that, my dear; it is your own fault. Remember, you began with falling out with people and methods, but you have done nothing to make either better. You did not struggle with evil, but were cast down by it, and you are not the victim of the struggle, but of your own impotence. Well, of course you were young and inexperienced then; now it may all be different. Yes, really, go on the stage. You will work, you will serve a sacred art."

"Don't pretend, Nikolay Stepanovitch," Katya interrupts me. "Let us make a compact once for all; we will talk about actors, actresses, and authors, but we will let art alone. You are a splendid and rare person, but you don't know enough about art sincerely to think it sacred. You have no instinct or feeling for art. You have been hard at work all your life, and have not had time to acquire that feeling. Altogether . . . I don't like talk about art," she goes on nervously. "I don't like it! And, my goodness, how they have vulgarized it!"

"Who has vulgarized it?"

"They have vulgarized it by drunkenness, the newspapers by their familiar attitude, clever people by philosophy."

"Philosophy has nothing to do with it."

"Yes, it has. If any one philosophizes about it, it shows he does not understand it."

To avoid bitterness I hasten to change the subject, and then sit a long time silent. Only when we are driving out of the wood and turning towards Katya's villa I go back to my former question, and say:

"You have still not answered me, why you don't want to go on the stage."

"Nikolay Stepanovitch, this is cruel!" she cries, and suddenly flushes all over. "You want me to tell you the truth aloud? Very well, if . . . if you like it! I have no talent! No talent and . . . and a great deal of vanity! So there!"

After making this confession she turns her face away from me, and to hide the trembling of her hands tugs violently at the reins.

As we are driving towards her villa we see Mihail Fyodorovitch walking near the gate, impatiently awaiting us.

"That Mihail Fyodorovitch again!" says Katya with vexation. "Do rid me of him, please! I am sick and tired of him . . . bother him!"

Mihail Fyodorovitch ought to have gone abroad long ago, but he puts off going from week to week. Of late there have been certain changes in him. He looks, as it were, sunken, has taken to drinking until he is tipsy, a thing which never used to happen to

him, and his black eyebrows are beginning to turn grey. When our chaise stops at the gate he does not conceal his joy and his impatience. He fussily helps me and Katya out, hurriedly asks questions, laughs, rubs his hands, and that gentle, imploring, pure expression, which I used to notice only in his eyes, is now suffused all over his face. He is glad and at the same time he is ashamed of his gladness, ashamed of his habit of spending every evening with Katya. And he thinks it necessary to explain his visit by some obvious absurdity such as: "I was driving by, and I thought I would just look in for a minute."

We all three go indoors; first we drink tea, then the familiar packs of cards, the big piece of cheese, the fruit, and the bottle of Crimean champagne are put upon the table. The subjects of our conversation are not new; they are just the same as in the winter. We fall foul of the University, the students, and literature and the theatre; the air grows thick and stifling with evil speaking, and poisoned by the breath, not of two toads as in the winter, but of three. Besides the velvety baritone laugh and the giggle like the gasp of a concertina, the maid who waits upon us hears an unpleasant cracked "He, he!" like the chuckle of a general in a vaudeville.

## V

There are terrible nights with thunder, lightning, rain, and wind, such as are called among the people

“sparrow nights.” There has been one such night in my personal life. . . .

I woke up after midnight and leaped suddenly out of bed. It seemed to me for some reason that I was just immediately going to die. Why did it seem so? I had no sensation in my body that suggested my immediate death, but my soul was oppressed with terror, as though I had suddenly seen a vast menacing glow of fire.

I rapidly struck a light, drank some water straight out of the decanter, then hurried to the open window. The weather outside was magnificent. There was a smell of hay and some other very sweet scent. I could see the spikes of the fence, the gaunt, drowsy trees by the window, the road, the dark streak of woodland, there was a serene, very bright moon in the sky and not a single cloud, perfect stillness, not one leaf stirring. I felt that everything was looking at me and waiting for me to die. . . .

It was uncanny. I closed the window and ran to my bed. I felt for my pulse, and not finding it in my wrist, tried to find it in my temple, then in my chin, and again in my wrist, and everything I touched was cold and clammy with sweat. My breathing came more and more rapidly, my body was shivering, all my inside was in commotion; I had a sensation on my face and on my bald head as though they were covered with spiders' webs.

What should I do? Call my family? No; it would be no use. I could not imagine what my wife and Liza would do when they came in to me.

I hid my head under the pillow, closed my eyes,

and waited and waited. . . . My spine was cold; it seemed to be drawn inwards, and I felt as though death were coming upon me stealthily from behind. . . .

“Kee-vee! kee-vee!” I heard a sudden shriek in the night’s stillness, and did not know where it was—in my breast or in the street. “Kee-vee! kee-vee!”

“My God, how terrible!” I would have drunk some more water, but by then it was fearful to open my eyes and I was afraid to raise my head. I was possessed by unaccountable animal terror, and I cannot understand why I was so frightened: was it that I wanted to live, or that some new unknown pain was in store for me?

Upstairs, overhead, some one moaned or laughed. . . . I listened. Soon afterwards there was a sound of footsteps on the stairs. Some one came hurriedly down, then went up again. A minute later there was a sound of steps downstairs again; some one stopped near my door and listened.

“Who is there?” I cried.

The door opened. I boldly opened my eyes, and saw my wife. Her face was pale and her eyes were tear-stained.

“You are not asleep, Nikolay Stepanovitch?” she asked.

“What is it?”

“For God’s sake, go up and have a look at Liza; there is something the matter with her. . . .”

“Very good, with pleasure,” I muttered, greatly relieved at not being alone. “Very good, this minute. . . .”



I followed my wife, heard what she said to me, and was too agitated to understand a word. Patches of light from her candle danced about the stairs, our long shadows trembled. My feet caught in the skirts of my dressing-gown; I gasped for breath, and felt as though something were pursuing me and trying to catch me from behind.

"I shall die on the spot, here on the staircase," I thought. "On the spot. . . ." But we passed the staircase, the dark corridor with the Italian windows, and went into Liza's room. She was sitting on the bed in her nightdress, with her bare feet hanging down, and she was moaning.

"Oh, my God! Oh, my God!" she was muttering, screwing up her eyes at our candle. "I can't bear it."

"Liza, my child," I said, "what is it?"

Seeing me, she began crying out, and flung herself on my neck.

"My kind papa! . . ." she sobbed — "my dear, good papa . . . my darling, my pet, I don't know what is the matter with me. . . . I am miserable!"

She hugged me, kissed me, and babbled fond words I used to hear from her when she was a child.

"Calm yourself, my child. God be with you," I said. "There is no need to cry. I am miserable, too."

I tried to tuck her in: my wife gave her water, and we awkwardly stumbled by her bedside; my shoulder jostled against her shoulder, and meanwhile I was thinking how we used to give our children their bath together.



"Help her! help her!" my wife implored me.  
"Do something!"

What could I do? I could do nothing. There was some load on the girl's heart; but I did not understand, I knew nothing about it, and could only mutter:

"It's nothing, it's nothing; it will pass. Sleep, sleep!"

To make things worse, there was a sudden sound of dogs howling, at first subdued and uncertain, then loud, two dogs howling together. I had never attached significance to such omens as the howling of dogs or the shrieking of owls, but on that occasion it sent a pang to my heart, and I hastened to explain the howl to myself.

"It's nonsense," I thought, "the influence of one organism on another. The intensely strained condition of my nerves has infected my wife, Liza, the dog — that is all. . . . Such infection explains presentiments, forebodings. . . ."

When a little later I went back to my room to write a prescription for Liza, I no longer thought I should die at once, but only had such a weight, such a feeling of oppression in my soul that I felt actually sorry that I had not died on the spot. For a long time I stood motionless in the middle of the room, pondering what to prescribe for Liza. But the moans overhead ceased, and I decided to prescribe nothing, and yet I went on standing there. . . .

There was a deathlike stillness, such a stillness, as some author has expressed it, "it rang in one's ears." Time passed slowly; the streaks of moonlight on

the window-sill did not shift their position, but seemed as though frozen. . . . It was still some time before dawn.

But the gate in the fence creaked, some one stole in and, breaking a twig from one of those scraggy trees, cautiously tapped on the window with it.

"Nikolay Stepanovitch," I heard a whisper. "Nikolay Stepanovitch."

I opened the window, and fancied I was dreaming: under the window, huddled against the wall, stood a woman in a black dress, with the moonlight bright upon her, looking at me with great eyes. Her face was pale, stern, and weird-looking in the moonlight, like marble, her chin was quivering.

"It is I," she said — "I . . . Katya."

In the moonlight all women's eyes look big and black, all people look taller and paler, and that was probably why I had not recognized her for the first minute.

"What is it?"

"Forgive me!" she said. "I suddenly felt unbearably miserable . . . I couldn't stand it, so came here. There was a light in your window and . . . and I ventured to knock. . . . I beg your pardon. . . . Ah! if you knew how miserable I am! What are you doing just now?"

"Nothing. . . . I can't sleep."

"I had a feeling that there was something wrong, but that is nonsense."

Her brows were lifted, her eyes shone with tears, and her whole face was lighted up with the familiar look of trustfulness which I had not seen for so long.

"Nikolay Stepanovitch," she said imploringly, stretching out both hands to me, "my precious friend, I beg you, I implore you. . . . If you don't despise my affection and respect for you, consent to what I ask of you."

"What is it?"

"Take my money from me!"

"Come! what an idea! What do I want with your money?"

"You'll go away somewhere for your health. . . . You ought to go for your health. Will you take it? Yes? Nikolay Stepanovitch darling, yes?"

She looked greedily into my face and repeated: "Yes, you will take it?"

"No, my dear, I won't take it. . . ." I said. "Thank you."

She turned her back upon me and bowed her head. Probably I refused her in a tone which made further conversation about money impossible.

"Go home to bed," I said. "We will see each other tomorrow."

"So you don't consider me your friend?" she asked dejectedly.

"I don't say that. But your money would be no use to me now."

"I beg your pardon. . . ." she said, dropping her voice a whole octave. "I understand you. . . . to be indebted to a person like me. . . . a retired actress. . . . But, good-bye. . . ."

And she went away so quickly that I had not time even to say good-bye.

## VI

I am in Harkov.

As it would be useless to contend against my present mood and, indeed, beyond my power, I have made up my mind that the last days of my life shall at least be irreproachable externally. If I am unjust in regard to my wife and daughter, which I fully recognize, I will try and do as she wishes; since she wants me to go to Harkov, I go to Harkov. Besides, I have become of late so indifferent to everything that it is really all the same to me where I go, to Harkov, or to Paris, or to Berditchev.

I arrived here at midday, and have put up at the hotel not far from the cathedral. The train was jolting, there were draughts, and now I am sitting on my bed, holding my head and expecting *tic douloureux*. I ought to have gone today to see some professors of my acquaintance, but I have neither strength nor inclination.

The old corridor attendant comes in and asks whether I have brought my bed-linen. I detain him for five minutes, and put several questions to him about Gnekker, on whose account I have come here. The attendant turns out to be a native of Harkov; he knows the town like the fingers of his hand, but does not remember any household of the surname of Gnekker. I question him about the estate — the same answer.

The clock in the corridor strikes one, then two, then three. . . . These last months in which I am

waiting for death seem much longer than the whole of my life. And I have never before been so ready to resign myself to the slowness of time as now. In the old days, when one sat in the station and waited for a train, or presided in an examination-room, a quarter of an hour would seem an eternity. Now I can sit all night on my bed without moving, and quite unconcernedly reflect that tomorrow will be followed by another night as long and colourless, and the day after tomorrow.

In the corridor it strikes five, six, seven. . . . It grows dark.

There is a dull pain in my cheek, the tic beginning. To occupy myself with thoughts, I go back to my old point of view, when I was not so indifferent, and ask myself why I, a distinguished man, a privy councillor, am sitting in this little hotel room, on this bed with the unfamiliar grey quilt. Why am I looking at that cheap tin washing-stand and listening to the whirr of the wretched clock in the corridor? Is all this in keeping with my fame and my lofty position? And I answer these questions with a jeer. I am amused by the naïveté with which I used in my youth to exaggerate the value of renown and of the exceptional position which celebrities are supposed to enjoy. I am famous, my name is pronounced with reverence, my portrait has been both in the *Niva* and in the *Illustrated News of the World*; I have read my biography even in a German magazine. And what of all that? Here I am sitting utterly alone in a strange town, on a strange bed, rubbing my aching cheek with my hand. . . . Domestic wor-

ries, the hard-heartedness of creditors, the rudeness of the railway servants, the inconveniences of the passport system, the expensive and unwholesome food in the refreshment-rooms, the general rudeness and coarseness in social intercourse — all this, and a great deal more which would take too long to reckon up, affects me as much as any working man who is famous only in his alley. In what way does my exceptional position find expression? Admitting that I am celebrated a thousand times over, that I am a hero of whom my country is proud. They publish bulletins of my illness in every paper, letters of sympathy come to me by post from my colleagues, my pupils, the general public; but all that does not prevent me from dying in a strange bed, in misery, in utter loneliness. Of course, no one is to blame for that; but I in my foolishness dislike my popularity. I feel as though it had cheated me.

At ten o'clock I fall asleep, and in spite of the tic I sleep soundly, and should have gone on sleeping if I had not been awakened. Soon after one came a sudden knock at the door.

“Who is there?”

“A telegram.”

“You might have waited till tomorrow,” I say angrily, taking the telegram from the attendant. “Now I shall not get to sleep again.”

“I am sorry. Your light was burning, so I thought you were not asleep.”

I tear open the telegram and look first at the signature. From my wife.

“What does she want?”

“Gnekker was secretly married to Liza yesterday. Return.”

I read the telegram, and my dismay does not last long. I am dismayed, not by what Liza and Gnekker have done, but by the indifference with which I hear of their marriage. They say philosophers and the truly wise are indifferent. It is false: indifference is the paralysis of the soul; it is premature death.

I go to bed again, and begin trying to think of something to occupy my mind. What am I to think about? I feel as though everything had been thought over already and there is nothing which could hold my attention now.

When daylight comes I sit up in bed with my arms round my knees, and to pass the time I try to know myself. “Know thyself” is excellent and useful advice; it is only a pity that the ancients never thought to indicate the means of following this precept.

When I have wanted to understand somebody or myself I have considered, not the actions, in which everything is relative, but the desires.

“Tell me what you want, and I will tell you what manner of man you are.”

And now I examine myself: what do I want?

I want our wives, our children, our friends, our pupils, to love in us, not our fame, not the brand and not the label, but to love us as ordinary men. Anything else? I should like to have had helpers and successors. Anything else? I should like to wake



up in a hundred years' time and to have just a peep out of one eye at what is happening in science. I should have liked to have lived another ten years. . . . What further? Why, nothing further. I think and think, and can think of nothing more. And however much I might think, and however far my thoughts might travel, it is clear to me that there is nothing vital, nothing of great importance in my desires. In my passion for science, in my desire to live, in this sitting on a strange bed, and in this striving to know myself — in all the thoughts, feelings, and ideas I form about everything, there is no common bond to connect it all into one whole. Every feeling and every thought exists apart in me; and in all my criticisms of science, the theatre, literature, my pupils, and in all the pictures my imagination draws, even the most skilful analyst could not find what is called a general idea, or the god of a living man.

And if there is not that, then there is nothing.

In a state so poverty-stricken, a serious ailment, the fear of death, the influences of circumstance and men were enough to turn upside down and scatter in fragments all which I had once looked upon as my theory of life, and in which I had seen the meaning and joy of my existence. So there is nothing surprising in the fact that I have over-shadowed the last months of my life with thoughts and feelings only worthy of a slave and barbarian, and that now I am indifferent and take no heed of the dawn. When a man has not in him what is loftier and mightier than all external impressions a bad cold is really enough to

upset his equilibrium and make him begin to see an owl in every bird, to hear a dog howling in every sound. And all his pessimism or optimism with his thoughts great and small have at such times significance as symptoms and nothing more.

I am vanquished. If it is so, it is useless to think, it is useless to talk. I will sit and wait in silence for what is to come.

In the morning the corridor attendant brings me tea and a copy of the local newspaper. Mechanically I read the advertisements on the first page, the leading article, the extracts from the newspapers and journals, the chronicle of events. . . . In the latter I find, among other things, the following paragraph: "Our distinguished savant, Professor Nikolay Stepanovitch So-and-so, arrived yesterday in Harkov, and is staying in the So-and-so Hotel."

Apparently, illustrious names are created to live on their own account, apart from those that bear them. Now my name is promenading tranquilly about Harkov; in another three months, printed in gold letters on my monument, it will shine bright as the sun itself, while I shall be already under the moss.

A light tap at the door. Somebody wants me.

"Who is there? Come in."

The door opens, and I step back surprised and hurriedly wrap my dressing-gown round me. Before me stands Katya.

"How do you do?" she says, breathless with running upstairs. "You didn't expect me? I have come here, too. . . . I have come, too!"

She sits down and goes on, hesitating and not looking at me.

“Why don’t you speak to me? I have come, too . . . today. . . . I found out that you were in this hotel, and have come to you.”

“Very glad to see you,” I say, shrugging my shoulders, “but I am surprised. You seem to have dropped from the skies. What have you come for?”

“Oh . . . I’ve simply come.”

Silence. Suddenly she jumps up impulsively and comes to me.

“Nikolay Stepanovitch,” she says, turning pale and pressing her hands on her bosom — “Nikolay Stepanovitch, I cannot go on living like this! I cannot! For God’s sake tell me quickly, this minute, what I am to do! Tell me, what am I to do?”

“What can I tell you?” I ask in perplexity. “I can do nothing.”

“Tell me, I beseech you,” she goes on, breathing hard and trembling all over. “I swear that I cannot go on living like this. It’s too much for me!”

She sinks on a chair and begins sobbing. She flings her head back, wrings her hands, taps with her feet; her hat falls off and hangs bobbing on its elastic; her hair is ruffled.

“Help me! help me!” she implores me. “I cannot go on!”

She takes her handkerchief out of her travelling-bag, and with it pulls out several letters, which fall from her lap to the floor. I pick them up, and on one of them I recognize the handwriting of Mihail

Fyodorovitch and accidentally read a bit of a word  
“passionat . . .”

“There is nothing I can tell you, Katya,” I say.

“Help me!” she sobs, clutching at my hand and kissing it. “You are my father, you know, my only friend! You are clever, educated; you have lived so long; you have been a teacher! Tell me, what am I to do?”

“Upon my word, Katya, I don’t know. . . .”

I am utterly at a loss and confused, touched by her sobs, and hardly able to stand.

“Let us have lunch, Katya,” I say, with a forced smile. “Give over crying.”

And at once I add in a sinking voice:

“I shall soon be gone, Katya. . . .”

“Only one word, only one word!” she weeps, stretching out her hands to me.

“What am I to do?”

“You are a queer girl, really . . .” I mutter. “I don’t understand it! So sensible, and all at once . . . crying your eyes out. . . .”

A silence follows. Katya straightens her hair, puts on her hat, then crumples up the letters and stuffs them in her bag — and all this deliberately, in silence. Her face, her bosom, and her gloves are wet with tears, but her expression now is cold and forbidding. . . . I look at her, and feel ashamed that I am happier than she. The absence of what my philosophic colleagues call a general idea I have detected in myself only just before death, in the decline of my days, while the soul of this poor girl has known and will know no refuge all her life, all her life!

"Let us have lunch, Katya," I say.

"No, thank you," she answers coldly.

Another minute passes in silence.

"I don't like Harkov," I say; "it's so grey here — such a grey town."

"Yes, perhaps. . . . It's ugly. I am here not for long, passing through. I am going on today."

"Where?"

"To the Crimea . . . that is, to the Caucasus."

"Oh! For long?"

"I don't know."

Katya gets up, and, with a cold smile, holds out her hand without looking at me.

I want to ask her, "Then, you won't be at my funeral?" but she does not look at me; her hand is cold and, as it were, strange. I escort her to the door in silence. She goes out, walks down the long corridor without looking back; she knows that I am looking after her, and most likely she will look back at the turn.

No, she did not look back. I've seen her black dress for the last time: her steps have died away. Farewell, my treasure!

THE PRIVY COUNCILLOR





## THE PRIVY COUNCILLOR

AT the beginning of April in 1870 my mother, Klavdia Arhipovna, the widow of a lieutenant, received from her brother Ivan, a privy councillor in Petersburg, a letter in which, among other things, this passage occurred: "My liver trouble forces me to spend every summer abroad, and as I have not at the moment the money in hand for a trip to Marienbad, it is very possible, dear sister, that I may spend this summer with you at Kotchuevko. . . ."

On reading the letter my mother turned pale and began trembling all over; then an expression of mingled tears and laughter came into her face. She began crying and laughing. This conflict of tears and laughter always reminds me of the flickering and spluttering of a brightly burning candle when one sprinkles it with water. Reading the letter once more, mother called together all the household, and in a voice broken with emotion began explaining to us that there had been four Gundasov brothers: one Gundasov had died as a baby; another had gone to the war, and he, too, was dead; the third, without offence to him be it said, was an actor; the fourth . . .

"The fourth has risen far above us," my mother brought out tearfully. "My own brother, we grew up together; and I am all of a tremble, all of a

tremble! . . . A privy councillor with the rank of a general! How shall I meet him, my angel brother? What can I, a foolish, uneducated woman, talk to him about? It's fifteen years since I've seen him! Andryushenka," my mother turned to me, "you must rejoice, little stupid! It's a piece of luck for you that God is sending him to us!"

After we had heard a detailed history of the Gundasovs, there followed a fuss and bustle in the place such as I had been accustomed to see only before Christmas and Easter. The sky above and the water in the river were all that escaped; everything else was subjected to a merciless cleansing, scrubbing, painting. If the sky had been lower and smaller and the river had not flowed so swiftly, they would have scoured them, too, with bath-brick and rubbed them, too, with tow. Our walls were as white as snow, but they were whitewashed; the floors were bright and shining, but they were washed every day. The cat Bobtail (as a small child I had cut off a good quarter of his tail with the knife used for chopping the sugar, and that was why he was called Bobtail) was carried off to the kitchen and put in charge of Anisya; Fedka was told that if any of the dogs came near the front-door "God would punish him." But no one was so badly treated as the poor sofas, easy-chairs, and rugs! They had never before been so violently beaten as on this occasion in preparation for our visitor. My pigeons took fright at the loud thud of the sticks, and were continually flying up into the sky.

The tailor Spiridon, the only tailor in the whole

district who ventured to make for the gentry, came over from Novostroevka. He was a hard-working capable man who did not drink and was not without a certain fancy and feeling for form, but yet he was an atrocious tailor. His work was ruined by hesitation. . . . The idea that his cut was not fashionable enough made him alter everything half a dozen times, walk all the way to the town simply to study the dandies, and in the end dress us in suits that even a caricaturist would have called *outré* and grotesque. We cut a dash in impossibly narrow trousers and in such short jackets that we always felt quite abashed in the presence of young ladies.

This Spiridon spent a long time taking my measure. He measured me all over lengthways and crossways, as though he meant to put hoops round me like a barrel; then he spent a long time noting down my measurements with a thick pencil on a bit of paper, and ticked off all the measurements with triangular signs. When he had finished with me he set to work on my tutor, Yegor Alexyevitch Pobyedimsky. My beloved tutor was then at the stage when young men watch the growth of their moustache and are critical of their clothes, and so you can imagine the devout awe with which Spiridon approached him. Yegor Alexyevitch had to throw back his head, to straddle his legs like an inverted V, first lift up his arms, then let them fall. Spiridon measured him several times, walking round him during the process like a love-sick pigeon round its mate, going down on one knee, bending double. . . . My mother, weary, exhausted by her exertions and

heated by ironing, watched these lengthy proceedings, and said:

“Mind now, Spiridon, you will have to answer for it to God if you spoil the cloth! And it will be the worse for you if you don't make them fit!”

Mother's words threw Spiridon first into a fever, then into a perspiration, for he was convinced that he would not make them fit. He received one rouble twenty kopecks for making my suit, and for Pobyedimsky's two roubles, but we provided the cloth, the lining, and the buttons. The price cannot be considered excessive, as Novostroevo was about seven miles from us, and the tailor came to fit us four times. When he came to try the things on and we squeezed ourselves into the tight trousers and jackets adorned with basting threads, mother always frowned contemptuously and expressed her surprise:

“Goodness knows what the fashions are coming to nowadays! I am positively ashamed to look at them. If brother were not used to Petersburg I would not get you fashionable clothes!”

Spiridon, relieved that the blame was thrown on the fashion and not on him, shrugged his shoulders and sighed, as though to say:

“There's no help for it; it's the spirit of the age!”

The excitement with which we awaited the arrival of our guest can only be compared with the strained suspense with which spiritualists wait from minute to minute the appearance of a ghost. Mother went about with a sick headache, and was continually melting into tears. I lost my appetite, slept badly, and did not learn my lessons. Even in my dreams

I was haunted by an impatient longing to see a general — that is, a man with epaulettes and an embroidered collar sticking up to his ears, and with a naked sword in his hands, exactly like the one who hung over the sofa in the drawing-room and glared with terrible black eyes at everybody who dared to look at him. Pobyedimsky was the only one who felt himself in his element. He was neither terrified nor delighted, and merely from time to time, when he heard the history of the Gundasov family, said:

“Yes, it will be pleasant to have some one fresh to talk to.”

My tutor was looked upon among us as an exceptional nature. He was a young man of twenty, with a pimply face, shaggy locks, a low forehead, and an unusually long nose. His nose was so big that when he wanted to look close at anything he had to put his head on one side like a bird. To our thinking, there was not a man in the province cleverer, more cultivated, or more stylish. He had left the high-school in the class next to the top, and had then entered a veterinary college, from which he was expelled before the end of the first half-year. The reason of his expulsion he carefully concealed, which enabled any one who wished to do so to look upon my instructor as an injured and to some extent a mysterious person. He spoke little, and only of intellectual subjects; he ate meat during the fasts, and looked with contempt and condescension on the life going on around him, which did not prevent him, however, from taking presents, such as suits of clothes, from my mother, and drawing funny faces

with red teeth on my kites. Mother disliked him for his "pride," but stood in awe of his cleverness.

Our visitor did not keep us long waiting. At the beginning of May two wagon-loads of big boxes arrived from the station. These boxes looked so majestic that the drivers instinctively took off their hats as they lifted them down.

"There must be uniforms and gunpowder in those boxes," I thought.

Why "gunpowder"? Probably the conception of a general was closely connected in my mind with cannons and gunpowder.

When I woke up on the morning of the tenth of May, nurse told me in a whisper that "my uncle had come." I dressed rapidly, and, washing after a fashion, flew out of my bedroom without saying my prayers. In the vestibule I came upon a tall, solid gentleman with fashionable whiskers and a foppish-looking overcoat. Half dead with devout awe, I went up to him and, remembering the ceremonial mother had impressed upon me, I scraped my foot before him, made a very low bow, and craned forward to kiss his hand; but the gentleman did not allow me to kiss his hand: he informed me that he was not my uncle, but my uncle's footman, Pyotr. The appearance of this Pyotr, far better dressed than Pobyedimsky or me, excited in me the utmost astonishment, which, to tell the truth, has lasted to this day. Can such dignified, respectable people with stern and intellectual faces really be footmen? And what for?



Pyotr told me that my uncle was in the garden with my mother. I rushed into the garden.

Nature, knowing nothing of the history of the Gundasov family and the rank of my uncle, felt far more at ease and unconstrained than I. There was a clamour going on in the garden such as one only hears at fairs. Masses of starlings flitting through the air and hopping about the walks were noisily chattering as they hunted for cockchafers. There were swarms of sparrows in the lilac-bushes, which threw their tender, fragrant blossoms straight in one's face. Wherever one turned, from every direction came the note of the golden oriole and the shrill cry of the hoopoe and the red-legged falcon. At any other time I should have begun chasing dragon-flies or throwing stones at a crow which was sitting on a low mound under an aspen-tree, with its blunt beak turned away; but at that moment I was in no mood for mischief. My heart was throbbing, and I felt a cold sinking at my stomach; I was preparing myself to confront a gentleman with epaulettes, with a naked sword, and with terrible eyes!

But imagine my disappointment! A dapper little foppish gentleman in white silk trousers, with a white cap on his head, was walking beside my mother in the garden. With his hands behind him and his head thrown back, every now and then running on ahead of mother, he looked quite young. There was so much life and movement in his whole figure that I could only detect the treachery of age when I came close up behind and saw beneath his cap a fringe of



close-cropped silver hair. Instead of the staid dignity and stolidity of a general, I saw an almost school-boyish nimbleness; instead of a collar sticking up to his ears, an ordinary light blue necktie. Mother and my uncle were walking in the avenue talking together. I went softly up to them from behind, and waited for one of them to look round.

“What a delightful place you have here, Klavdia!” said my uncle. “How charming and lovely it is! Had I known before that you had such a charming place, nothing would have induced me to go abroad all these years.”

My uncle stooped down rapidly and sniffed at a tulip. Everything he saw moved him to rapture and excitement, as though he had never been in a garden on a sunny day before. The queer man moved about as though he were on springs, and chattered incessantly, without allowing mother to utter a single word. All of a sudden Pobyedimsky came into sight from behind an elder-tree at the turn of the avenue. His appearance was so unexpected that my uncle positively started and stepped back a pace. On this occasion my tutor was attired in his best Inverness cape with sleeves, in which, especially back-view, he looked remarkably like a windmill. He had a solemn and majestic air. Pressing his hat to his bosom in Spanish style, he took a step towards my uncle and made a bow such as a marquis makes in a melodrama, bending forward, a little to one side.

“I have the honour to present myself to your high excellency,” he said aloud: “the teacher and instructor of your nephew, formerly a pupil of the

veterinary institute, and a nobleman by birth, Pobyedimsky! ”

This politeness on the part of my tutor pleased my mother very much. She gave a smile, and waited in thrilled suspense to hear what clever thing he would say next; but my tutor, expecting his dignified address to be answered with equal dignity — that is, that my uncle would say “H’m!” like a general and hold out two fingers — was greatly confused and abashed when the latter laughed genially and shook hands with him. He muttered something incoherent, cleared his throat, and walked away.

“Come! isn’t that charming?” laughed my uncle. “Just look! he has made his little flourish and thinks he’s a very clever fellow! I do like that — upon my soul I do! What youthful aplomb, what life in that foolish flourish! And what boy is this?” he asked, suddenly turning and looking at me.

“That is my Andryushenka,” my mother introduced me, flushing crimson. “My consolation. . . .”

I made a scrape with my foot on the sand and dropped a low bow.

“A fine fellow . . . a fine fellow . . .” muttered my uncle, taking his hand from my lips and stroking me on the head. “So your name is Andrusha? Yes; yes. . . . H’m! . . . upon my soul! . . . Do you learn lessons?”

My mother, exaggerating and embellishing as all mothers do, began to describe my achievements in the sciences and the excellence of my behaviour, and I walked round my uncle and, following the ceremonial laid down for me, I continued making low

bows. Then my mother began throwing out hints that with my remarkable abilities it would not be amiss for me to get a government nomination to the cadet school; but at the point when I was to have burst into tears and begged for my uncle's protection, my uncle suddenly stopped and flung up his hands in amazement.

"My goo-oodness! What's that?" he asked.

Tatyana Ivanovna, the wife of our bailiff, Fyodor Petrovna, was coming towards us. She was carrying a starched white petticoat and a long ironing-board. As she passed us she looked shyly at the visitor through her eyelashes and flushed crimson.

"Wonders will never cease. . ." my uncle filtered through his teeth, looking after her with friendly interest. "You have a fresh surprise at every step, sister . . . upon my soul!"

"She's a beauty . . ." said mother. "They chose her as a bride for Fyodor, though she lived over seventy miles from here. . . ."

Not every one would have called Tatyana a beauty. She was a plump little woman of twenty, with black eyebrows and a graceful figure, always rosy and attractive-looking, but in her face and in her whole person there was not one striking feature, not one bold line to catch the eye, as though nature had lacked inspiration and confidence when creating her. Tatyana Ivanovna was shy, bashful, and modest in her behaviour; she moved softly and smoothly, said little, seldom laughed, and her whole life was as regular as her face and as flat as her smooth, tidy hair. My uncle screwed up his eyes looking after

her, and smiled. Mother looked intently at his smiling face and grew serious.

“And so, brother, you’ve never married!” she sighed.

“No; I’ve not married.”

“Why not?” asked mother softly.

“How can I tell you? It has happened so. In my youth I was too hard at work, I had no time to live, and when I longed to live — I looked round — and there I had fifty years on my back already. I was too late! However, talking about it . . . is depressing.”

My mother and my uncle both sighed at once and walked on, and I left them and flew off to find my tutor, that I might share my impressions with him. Pobyedimsky was standing in the middle of the yard, looking majestically at the heavens.

“One can see he is a man of culture!” he said, twisting his head round. “I hope we shall get on together.”

An hour later mother came to us.

“I am in trouble, my dears!” she began, sighing. “You see brother has brought a valet with him, and the valet, God bless him, is not one you can put in the kitchen or in the hall; we must give him a room apart. I can’t think what I am to do! I tell you what, children, couldn’t you move out somewhere — to Fyodor’s lodge, for instance — and give your room to the valet? What do you say?”

We gave our ready consent, for living in the lodge was a great deal more free than in the house, under mother’s eye.

“It’s a nuisance, and that’s a fact!” said mother. “Brother says he won’t have dinner in the middle of the day, but between six and seven, as they do in Petersburg. I am simply distracted with worry! By seven o’clock the dinner will be done to rags in the oven. Really, men don’t understand anything about housekeeping, though they have so much intellect. Oh, dear! we shall have to cook two dinners every day! You will have dinner at midday as before, children, while your poor old mother has to wait till seven, for the sake of her brother.”

Then my mother heaved a deep sigh, bade me try and please my uncle, whose coming was a piece of luck for me for which we must thank God, and hurried off to the kitchen. Pobyedimsky and I moved into the lodge the same day. We were installed in a room which formed the passage from the entry to the bailiff’s bedroom.

Contrary to my expectations, life went on just as before, drearily and monotonously, in spite of my uncle’s arrival and our move into new quarters. We were excused lessons “on account of the visitor.” Pobyedimsky, who never read anything or occupied himself in any way, spent most of his time sitting on his bed, with his long nose thrust into the air, thinking. Sometimes he would get up, try on his new suit, and sit down again to relapse into contemplation and silence. Only one thing worried him, the flies, which he used mercilessly to squash between his hands. After dinner he usually “rested,” and his snores were a cause of annoyance to the whole household. I ran about the garden from morning to

night, or sat in the lodge sticking my kites together. For the first two or three weeks we did not see my uncle often. For days together he sat in his own room working, in spite of the flies and the heat. His extraordinary capacity for sitting as though glued to his table produced upon us the effect of an inexplicable conjuring trick. To us idlers, knowing nothing of systematic work, his industry seemed simply miraculous. Getting up at nine, he sat down to his table, and did not leave it till dinner-time; after dinner he set to work again, and went on till late at night. Whenever I peeped through the keyhole I invariably saw the same thing: my uncle sitting at the table working. The work consisted in his writing with one hand while he turned over the leaves of a book with the other, and, strange to say, he kept moving all over — swinging his leg as though it were a pendulum, whistling, and nodding his head in time. He had an extremely careless and frivolous expression all the while, as though he were not working, but playing at noughts and crosses. I always saw him wearing a smart short jacket and a jauntily tied cravat, and he always smelt, even through the keyhole, of delicate feminine perfumery. He only left his room for dinner, but he ate little.

“I can’t make brother out!” mother complained of him. “Every day we kill a turkey and pigeons on purpose for him, I make a *compote* with my own hands, and he eats a plateful of broth and a bit of meat the size of a finger and gets up from the table. I begin begging him to eat; he comes back and drinks a glass of milk. And what is there in that, in a glass



of milk? It's no better than washing up water! You may die of a diet like that. . . . If I try to persuade him, he laughs and makes a joke of it. . . . No; he does not care for our fare, poor dear!"

We spent the evenings far more gaily than the days. As a rule, by the time the sun was setting and long shadows were lying across the yard, we — that is, Tatyana Ivanovna, Pobyedimsky, and I — were sitting on the steps of the lodge. We did not talk till it grew quite dusk. And, indeed, what is one to talk of when every subject has been talked over already? There was only one thing new, my uncle's arrival, and even that subject was soon exhausted. My tutor never took his eyes off Tatyana Ivanovna's face, and frequently heaved deep sighs. . . . At the time I did not understand those sighs, and did not try to fathom their significance; now they explain a great deal to me.

When the shadows merged into one thick mass of shade, the bailiff Fyodor would come in from shooting or from the field. This Fyodor gave me the impression of being a fierce and even a terrible man. The son of a Russianized gipsy from Izyumskoe, swarthy-faced and curly-headed, with big black eyes and a matted beard, he was never called among our Kotchuevko peasants by any name but "The Devil." And, indeed, there was a great deal of the gipsy about him apart from his appearance. He could not, for instance, stay at home, and went off for days together into the country or into the woods to shoot. He was gloomy, ill-humoured, taciturn, was afraid of nobody, and refused to recognize any authority.



He was rude to mother, addressed me familiarly, and was contemptuous of Pobyedimsky's learning. All this we forgave him, looking upon him as a hot-tempered and nervous man; mother liked him because, in spite of his gipsy nature, he was ideally honest and industrious. He loved his Tatyana Ivanovna passionately, like a gipsy, but this love took in him a gloomy form, as though it cost him suffering. He was never affectionate to his wife in our presence, but simply rolled his eyes angrily at her and twisted his mouth.

When he came in from the fields he would noisily and angrily put down his gun, would come out to us on the steps, and sit down beside his wife. After resting a little, he would ask his wife a few questions about household matters, and then sink into silence.

"Let us sing," I would suggest.

My tutor would tune his guitar, and in a deep deacon's bass strike up "In the midst of the valley." We would begin singing. My tutor took the bass, Fyodor sang in a hardly audible tenor, while I sang soprano in unison with Tatyana Ivanovna.

When the whole sky was covered with stars and the frogs had left off croaking, they would bring in our supper from the kitchen. We went into the lodge and sat down to the meal. My tutor and the gipsy ate greedily, with such a sound that it was hard to tell whether it was the bones crunching or their jaws, and Tatyana Ivanovna and I scarcely succeeded in getting our share. After supper the lodge was plunged in deep sleep.

One evening, it was at the end of May, we were

sitting on the steps, waiting for supper. A shadow suddenly fell across us, and Gundasov stood before us as though he had sprung out of the earth. He looked at us for a long time, then clasped his hands and laughed gaily.

“An idyll!” he said. “They sing and dream in the moonlight! It’s charming, upon my soul! May I sit down and dream with you?”

We looked at one another and said nothing. My uncle sat down on the bottom step, yawned, and looked at the sky. A silence followed. Pobyedimsky, who had for a long time been wanting to talk to somebody fresh, was delighted at the opportunity, and was the first to break the silence. He had only one subject for intellectual conversation, the epizootic diseases. It sometimes happens that after one has been in an immense crowd, only some one countenance of the thousands remains long imprinted on the memory; in the same way, of all that Pobyedimsky had heard, during his six months at the veterinary institute, he remembered only one passage:

“The epizootics do immense damage to the stock of the country. It is the duty of society to work hand in hand with the government in waging war upon them.”

Before saying this to Gundasov, my tutor cleared his throat three times, and several times, in his excitement, wrapped himself up in his Inverness. On hearing about the epizootics, my uncle looked intently at my tutor and made a sound between a snort and a laugh.

“Upon my soul, that’s charming!” he said, scrutinizing us as though we were mannequins. “This is actually life. . . . This is really what reality is bound to be. Why are you silent, Pelagea Ivanovna?” he said, addressing Tatyana Ivanovna.

She coughed, overcome with confusion.

“Talk, my friends, sing . . . play! . . . Don’t lose time. You know, time, the rascal, runs away and waits for no man! Upon my soul, before you have time to look round, old age is upon you. . . . Then it is too late to live! That’s how it is, Pelagea Ivanovna. . . . We mustn’t sit still and be silent. . . .”

At that point supper was brought out from the kitchen. Uncle went into the lodge with us, and to keep us company ate five curd fritters and the wing of a duck. He ate and looked at us. He was touched and delighted by us all. Whatever silly nonsense my precious tutor talked, and whatever Tatyana Ivanovna did, he thought charming and delightful. When after supper Tatyana Ivanovna sat quietly down and took up her knitting, he kept his eyes fixed on her fingers and chatted away without ceasing.

“Make all the haste you can to live, my friends . . .” he said. “God forbid you should sacrifice the present for the future! There is youth, health, fire in the present; the future is smoke and deception! As soon as you are twenty begin to live.”

Tatyana Ivanovna dropped a knitting-needle. My uncle jumped up, picked up the needle, and handed it to Tatyana Ivanovna with a bow, and for

the first time in my life I learnt that there were people in the world more refined than Pobyedimsky.

"Yes . . ." my uncle went on, "love, marry, do silly things. Foolishness is a great deal more living and healthy than our straining and striving after rational life."

My uncle talked a great deal, so much that he bored us; I sat on a box listening to him and dropping to sleep. It distressed me that he did not once all the evening pay attention to me. He left the lodge at two o'clock, when, overcome with drowsiness, I was sound asleep.

From that time forth my uncle took to coming to the lodge every evening. He sang with us, had supper with us, and always stayed on till two o'clock in the morning, chatting incessantly, always about the same subject. His evening and night work was given up, and by the end of June, when the privy councillor had learned to eat mother's turkey and *compote*, his work by day was abandoned too. My uncle tore himself away from his table and plunged into "life." In the daytime he walked up and down the garden, he whistled to the workmen and hindered them from working, making them tell him their various histories. When his eye fell on Tatyana Ivanovna he ran up to her, and, if she were carrying anything, offered his assistance, which embarrassed her dreadfully.

As the summer advanced my uncle grew more and more frivolous, volatile, and careless. Pobyedimsky was completely disillusioned in regard to him.

"He is too one-sided," he said. "There is noth-

ing to show that he is in the very foremost ranks of the service. And he doesn't even know how to talk. At every word it's 'upon my soul.' No, I don't like him!"

From the time that my uncle began visiting the lodge there was a noticeable change both in Fyodor and my tutor. Fyodor gave up going out shooting, came home early, sat more taciturn than ever, and stared with particular ill-humour at his wife. In my uncle's presence my tutor gave up talking about epizootics, frowned, and even laughed sarcastically.

"Here comes our little bantam cock!" he growled on one occasion when my uncle was coming into the lodge.

I put down this change in them both to their being offended with my uncle. My absent-minded uncle mixed up their names, and to the very day of his departure failed to distinguish which was my tutor and which was Tatyana Ivanovna's husband. Tatyana Ivanovna herself he sometimes called Nastasya, sometimes Pelagea, and sometimes Yevdokia. Touched and delighted by us, he laughed and behaved exactly as though in the company of small children. . . . All this, of course, might well offend young men. It was not a case of offended pride, however, but, as I realize now, subtler feelings.

I remember one evening I was sitting on the box struggling with sleep. My eyelids felt glued together and my body, tired out by running about all day, drooped sideways. But I struggled against sleep and tried to look on. It was about midnight. Tatyana Ivanovna, rosy and unassuming as always,

was sitting at a little table sewing at her husband's shirt. Fyodor, sullen and gloomy, was staring at her from one corner, and in the other sat Pobyedimsky, snorting angrily and retreating into the high collar of his shirt. My uncle was walking up and down the room thinking. Silence reigned; nothing was to be heard but the rustling of the linen in Tatyana Ivanovna's hands. Suddenly my uncle stood still before Tatyana Ivanovna, and said:

"You are all so young, so fresh, so nice, you live so peacefully in this quiet place, that I envy you. I have become attached to your way of life here; my heart aches when I remember I have to go away. . . . You may believe in my sincerity!"

Sleep closed my eyes and I lost myself. When some sound waked me, my uncle was standing before Tatyana Ivanovna, looking at her with a softened expression. His cheeks were flushed.

"My life has been wasted," he said. "I have not lived! Your young face makes me think of my own lost youth, and I should be ready to sit here watching you to the day of my death. It would be a pleasure to me to take you with me to Petersburg."

"What for?" Fyodor asked in a husky voice.

"I should put her under a glass case on my worktable. I should admire her and show her to other people. You know, Pelagea Ivanovna, we have no women like you there. Among us there is wealth, distinction, sometimes beauty, but we have not this true sort of life, this healthy serenity. . . ."

My uncle sat down facing Tatyana Ivanovna and took her by the hand.



“So you won’t come with me to Petersburg?” he laughed. “In that case give me your little hand. . . . A charming little hand! . . . You won’t give it? Come, you miser! let me kiss it, anyway. . . .”

At that moment there was the scrape of a chair. Fyodor jumped up, and with heavy, measured steps went up to his wife. His face was pale, grey, and quivering. He brought his fist down on the table with a bang, and said in a hollow voice:

“I won’t allow it!”

At the same moment Pobyedimsky jumped up from his chair. He, too, pale and angry, went up to Tatyana Ivanovna, and he, too, struck the table with his fist.

“I . . . I won’t allow it!” he said.

“What, what’s the matter?” asked my uncle in surprise.

“I won’t allow it!” repeated Fyodor, banging on the table.

My uncle jumped up and blinked nervously. He tried to speak, but in his amazement and alarm could not utter a word; with an embarrassed smile, he shuffled out of the lodge with the hurried step of an old man, leaving his hat behind. When, a little later, my mother ran into the lodge, Fyodor and Pobyedimsky were still hammering on the table like blacksmiths and repeating, “I won’t allow it!”

“What has happened here?” asked mother. “Why has my brother been taken ill? What’s the matter?”

Looking at Tatyana’s pale, frightened face and at her infuriated husband, mother probably guessed



what was the matter. She sighed and shook her head.

“Come! give over banging on the table!” she said. “Leave off, Fyodor! And why are you thumping, Yegor Alexyevitch? What have you got to do with it?”

Pobyedimsky was startled and confused. Fyodor looked intently at him, then at his wife, and began walking about the room. When mother had gone out of the lodge, I saw what for long afterwards I looked upon as a dream. I saw Fyodor seize my tutor, lift him up in the air, and thrust him out of the door.

When I woke up in the morning my tutor's bed was empty. To my question where he was nurse told me in a whisper that he had been taken off early in the morning to the hospital, as his arm was broken. Distressed at this intelligence and remembering the scene of the previous evening, I went out of doors. It was a grey day. The sky was covered with storm-clouds and there was a wind blowing dust, bits of paper, and feathers along the ground. . . . It felt as though rain were coming. There was a look of boredom in the servants and in the animals. When I went into the house I was told not to make such a noise with my feet, as mother was ill and in bed with a migraine. What was I to do? I went outside the gate, sat down on the little bench there, and fell to trying to discover the meaning of what I had seen and heard the day before. From our gate there was a road which, passing the forge and the pool which never dried up, ran into the main road. I looked at

the telegraph-posts, about which clouds of dust were whirling, and at the sleepy birds sitting on the wires, and I suddenly felt so dreary that I began to cry.

A dusty wagonette crammed full of townspeople, probably going to visit the shrine, drove by along the main road. The wagonette was hardly out of sight when a light chaise with a pair of horses came into view. In it was Akim Nikititch, the police inspector, standing up and holding on to the coachman's belt. To my great surprise, the chaise turned into our road and flew by me in at the gate. While I was puzzling why the police inspector had come to see us, I heard a noise, and a carriage with three horses came into sight on the road. In the carriage stood the police captain, directing his coachman towards our gate.

"And why is he coming?" I thought, looking at the dusty police captain. "Most probably Pobyedimsky has complained of Fyodor to him, and they have come to take him to prison."

But the mystery was not so easily solved. The police inspector and the police captain were only the first instalment, for five minutes had scarcely passed when a coach drove in at our gate. It dashed by me so swiftly that I could only get a glimpse of a red beard.

Lost in conjecture and full of misgivings, I ran to the house. In the passage first of all I saw mother; she was pale and looking with horror towards the door, from which came the sounds of men's voices. The visitors had taken her by surprise in the very throes of migraine.

“Who has come, mother?” I asked.

“Sister,” I heard my uncle’s voice, “will you send in something to eat for the governor and me?”

“It is easy to say ‘something to eat,’” whispered my mother, numb with horror. “What have I time to get ready now? I am put to shame in my old age!”

Mother clutched at her head and ran into the kitchen. The governor’s sudden visit stirred and overwhelmed the whole household. A ferocious slaughter followed. A dozen fowls, five turkeys, eight ducks, were killed, and in the fluster the old gander, the progenitor of our whole flock of geese and a great favourite of mother’s, was beheaded. The coachmen and the cook seemed frenzied, and slaughtered birds at random, without distinction of age or breed. For the sake of some wretched sauce a pair of valuable pigeons, as dear to me as the gander was to mother, were sacrificed. It was a long while before I could forgive the governor their death.

In the evening, when the governor and his suite, after a sumptuous dinner, had got into their carriages and driven away, I went into the house to look at the remains of the feast. Glancing into the drawing-room from the passage, I saw my uncle and my mother. My uncle, with his hands behind his back, was walking nervously up and down close to the wall, shrugging his shoulders. Mother, exhausted and looking much thinner, was sitting on the sofa and watching his movements with heavy eyes.

“Excuse me, sister, but this won’t do at all,” my

uncle grumbled, wrinkling up his face. "I introduced the governor to you, and you didn't offer to shake hands. You covered him with confusion, poor fellow! No, that won't do. . . . Simplicity is a very good thing, but there must be limits to it. . . . Upon my soul! And then that dinner! How can one give people such things? What was that mess, for instance, that they served for the fourth course?"

"That was duck with sweet sauce . . ." mother answered softly.

"Duck! Forgive me, sister, but . . . but here I've got heartburn! I am ill!"

My uncle made a sour, tearful face, and went on: "It was the devil sent that governor! As though I wanted his visit! Pff! . . . heartburn! I can't work or sleep . . . I am completely out of sorts. . . . And I can't understand how you can live here without anything to do . . . in this boredom! Here I've got a pain coming under my shoulder-blade! . . ."

My uncle frowned, and walked about more rapidly than ever.

"Brother," my mother inquired softly, "what would it cost to go abroad?"

"At least three thousand . . ." my uncle answered in a tearful voice. "I would go, but where am I to get it? I haven't a farthing. Pff! . . . heartburn!"

My uncle stopped to look dejectedly at the grey, overcast prospect from the window, and began pacing to and fro again.

A silence followed. . . . Mother looked a long

while at the ikon, pondering something, then she began crying, and said:

“ I'll give you the three thousand, brother. . . .”

Three days later the majestic boxes went off to the station, and the privy councillor drove off after them. As he said good-bye to mother he shed tears, and it was a long time before he took his lips from her hands, but when he got into his carriage his face beamed with childlike pleasure. . . . Radiant and happy, he settled himself comfortably, kissed his hand to my mother, who was crying, and all at once his eye was caught by me. A look of the utmost astonishment came into his face.

“ What boy is this? ” he asked.

My mother, who had declared my uncle's coming was a piece of luck for which I must thank God, was bitterly mortified at this question. I was in no mood for questions. I looked at my uncle's happy face, and for some reason I felt fearfully sorry for him. I could not resist jumping up to the carriage and hugging that frivolous man, weak as all men are. Looking into his face and wanting to say something pleasant, I asked:

“ Uncle, have you ever been in a battle? ”

“ Ah, the dear boy . . . ” laughed my uncle, kissing me. “ A charming boy, upon my soul! How natural, how living it all is, upon my soul! . . . ”

The carriage set off. . . . I looked after him, and long afterwards that farewell “ upon my soul ” was ringing in my ears.

THE MAN IN A CASE





## THE MAN IN A CASE

AT the furthest end of the village of Mironositskoe some belated sportsmen lodged for the night in the elder Prokofy's barn. There were two of them, the veterinary surgeon Ivan Ivanovitch and the schoolmaster Burkin. Ivan Ivanovitch had a rather strange double-barrelled surname — Tchimsha-Himalaisky — which did not suit him at all, and he was called simply Ivan Ivanovitch all over the province. He lived at a stud-farm near the town, and had come out shooting now to get a breath of fresh air. Burkin, the high-school teacher, stayed every summer at Count P——'s, and had been thoroughly at home in this district for years.

They did not sleep. Ivan Ivanovitch, a tall, lean old fellow with long moustaches, was sitting outside the door, smoking a pipe in the moonlight. Burkin was lying within on the hay, and could not be seen in the darkness.

They were telling each other all sorts of stories. Among other things, they spoke of the fact that the elder's wife, Mavra, a healthy and by no means stupid woman, had never been beyond her native village, had never seen a town nor a railway in her life, and had spent the last ten years sitting behind the stove, and only at night going out into the street.

“What is there wonderful in that!” said Burkin.

“ There are plenty of people in the world, solitary by temperament, who try to retreat into their shell like a hermit crab or a snail. Perhaps it is an instance of atavism, a return to the period when the ancestor of man was not yet a social animal and lived alone in his den, or perhaps it is only one of the diversities of human character — who knows? I am not a natural science man, and it is not my business to settle such questions; I only mean to say that people like Mavra are not uncommon. There is no need to look far; two months ago a man called Byelikov, a colleague of mine, the Greek master, died in our town. You have heard of him, no doubt. He was remarkable for always wearing goloshes and a warm wadded coat, and carrying an umbrella even in the very finest weather. And his umbrella was in a case, and his watch was in a case made of grey chamois leather, and when he took out his penknife to sharpen his pencil, his penknife, too, was in a little case; and his face seemed to be in a case too, because he always hid it in his turned-up collar. He wore dark spectacles and flannel vests, stuffed up his ears with cotton-wool, and when he got into a cab always told the driver to put up the hood. In short, the man displayed a constant and insurmountable impulse to wrap himself in a covering, to make himself, so to speak, a case which would isolate him and protect him from external influences. Reality irritated him, frightened him, kept him in continual agitation, and, perhaps to justify his timidity, his aversion for the actual, he always praised the past and what had never existed; and even the classical

languages which he taught were in reality for him goloshes and umbrellas in which he sheltered himself from real life.

“ ‘ Oh, how sonorous, how beautiful is the Greek language ! ’ he would say, with a sugary expression ; and as though to prove his words he would screw up his eyes and, raising his finger, would pronounce ‘ Anthropos ! ’

“ And Byelikov tried to hide his thoughts also in a case. The only things that were clear to his mind were government circulars and newspaper articles in which something was forbidden. When some proclamation prohibited the boys from going out in the streets after nine o'clock in the evening, or some article declared carnal love unlawful, it was to his mind clear and definite ; it was forbidden, and that was enough. For him there was always a doubtful element, something vague and not fully expressed, in any sanction or permission. When a dramatic club or a reading-room or a tea-shop was licensed in the town, he would shake his head and say softly :

“ ‘ It is all right, of course ; it is all very nice, but I hope it won't lead to anything ! ’

“ Every sort of breach of order, deviation or departure from rule, depressed him, though one would have thought it was no business of his. If one of his colleagues was late for church or if rumours reached him of some prank of the high-school boys, or one of the mistresses was seen late in the evening in the company of an officer, he was much disturbed, and said he hoped that nothing would come of it. At the teachers' meetings he simply oppressed us with

his caution, his circumspection, and his characteristic reflection on the ill-behaviour of the young people in both male and female high-schools, the uproar in the classes. . . .

“ Oh, he hoped it would not reach the ears of the authorities; oh, he hoped nothing would come of it; and he thought it would be a very good thing if Petrov were expelled from the second class and Yegorov from the fourth. And, do you know, by his sighs, his despondency, his black spectacles on his pale little face, a little face like a pole-cat's, you know, he crushed us all, and we gave way, reduced Petrov's and Yegorov's marks for conduct, kept them in, and in the end expelled them both. He had a strange habit of visiting our lodgings. He would come to a teacher's, would sit down, and remain silent, as though he were carefully inspecting something. He would sit like this in silence for an hour or two and then go away. This he called 'maintaining good relations with his colleagues'; and it was obvious that coming to see us and sitting there was tiresome to him, and that he came to see us simply because he considered it his duty as our colleague. We teachers were afraid of him. And even the headmaster was afraid of him. Would you believe it, our teachers were all intellectual, right-minded people, brought up on Turgenev and Shtchedrin, yet this little chap, who always went about with goloshes and an umbrella, had the whole high-school under his thumb for fifteen long years! High-school, indeed — he had the whole town under his thumb! Our ladies did not get up private theatricals on Sat-

urdays for fear he should hear of it, and the clergy dared not eat meat or play cards in his presence. Under the influence of people like Byelikov we have got into the way of being afraid of everything in our town for the last ten or fifteen years. They are afraid to speak aloud, afraid to send letters, afraid to make acquaintances, afraid to read books, afraid to help the poor, to teach people to read and write. . . .”

Ivan Ivanovitch cleared his throat, meaning to say something, but first lighted his pipe, gazed at the moon, and then said, with pauses:

“Yes, intellectual, right minded people read Shtchedrin and Turgenev, Buckle, and all the rest of them, yet they knocked under and put up with it . . . that’s just how it is.”

“Byelikov lived in the same house as I did,” Burkin went on, “on the same storey, his door facing mine; we often saw each other, and I knew how he lived when he was at home. And at home it was the same story: dressing-gown, nightcap, blinds, bolts, a perfect succession of prohibitions and restrictions of all sorts, and — ‘Oh, I hope nothing will come of it!’ Lenten fare was bad for him, yet he could not eat meat, as people might perhaps say Byelikov did not keep the fasts, and he ate fresh-water fish with butter — not a Lenten dish, yet one could not say that it was meat. He did not keep a female servant for fear people might think evil of him, but had as cook an old man of sixty, called Afanasy, half-witted and given to tipping, who had once been an officer’s servant and could cook after a fash-

ion. This Afanasy was usually standing at the door with his arms folded; with a deep sigh, he would mutter always the same thing:

“ ‘ There are plenty of *them* about nowadays! ’

“ Byelikov had a little bedroom like a box; his bed had curtains. When he went to bed he covered his head over; it was hot and stuffy; the wind battered on the closed doors; there was a droning noise in the stove and a sound of sighs from the kitchen — ominous sighs. . . . And he felt frightened under the bed-clothes. He was afraid that something might happen, that Afanasy might murder him, that thieves might break in, and so he had troubled dreams all night, and in the morning, when we went together to the high-school, he was depressed and pale, and it was evident that the high-school full of people excited dread and aversion in his whole being, and that to walk beside me was irksome to a man of his solitary temperament.

“ ‘ They make a great noise in our classes,’ he used to say, as though trying to find an explanation for his depression. ‘ It’s beyond anything.’

“ And the Greek master, this man in a case — would you believe it? — almost got married.”

Ivan Ivanovitch glanced quickly into the barn, and said:

“ You are joking! ”

“ Yes, strange as it seems, he almost got married. A new teacher of history and geography, Milhail Savvitch Kovalenko, a Little Russian, was appointed. He came, not alone, but with his sister Varinka. He was a tall, dark young man with huge hands, and one



could see from his face that he had a bass voice, and, in fact, he had a voice that seemed to come out of a barrel — ‘boom, boom, boom!’ And she was not so young, about thirty, but she, too, was tall, well-made, with black eyebrows and red cheeks — in fact, she was a regular sugar-plum, and so sprightly, so noisy; she was always singing Little Russian songs and laughing. For the least thing she would go off into a ringing laugh — ‘Ha-ha-ha!’ We made our first thorough acquaintance with the Kovalenkos at the headmaster’s name-day party. Among the glum and intensely bored teachers who came even to the name-day party as a duty we suddenly saw a new Aphrodite risen from the waves; she walked with her arms akimbo, laughed, sang, danced. . . . She sang with feeling ‘The Winds do Blow,’ then another song, and another, and she fascinated us all — all, even Byelikov. He sat down by her and said with a honeyed smile:

“ ‘The Little Russian reminds one of the ancient Greek in its softness and agreeable resonance.’

“ That flattered her, and she began telling him with feeling and earnestness that they had a farm in the Gadyatchsky district, and that her mamma lived at the farm, and that they had such pears, such melons, such *kabaks!* The Little Russians call pumpkins *kabaks* (*i.e.*, pothouses), while their pothouses they call *shinki*, and they make a beetroot soup with tomatoes and aubergines in it, ‘which was so nice — awfully nice!’

“ We listened and listened, and suddenly the same idea dawned upon us all:



“ ‘ It would be a good thing to make a match of it,’ the headmaster’s wife said to me softly.

“ We all for some reason recalled the fact that our friend Byelikov was not married, and it now seemed to us strange that we had hitherto failed to observe, and had in fact completely lost sight of, a detail so important in his life. What was his attitude to woman? How had he settled this vital question for himself? This had not interested us in the least till then; perhaps we had not even admitted the idea that a man who went out in all weathers in goloshes and slept under curtains could be in love.

“ ‘ He is a good deal over forty and she is thirty,’ the headmaster’s wife went on, developing her idea. ‘ I believe she would marry him.’

“ All sorts of things are done in the provinces through boredom, all sorts of unnecessary and nonsensical things! And that is because what is necessary is not done at all. What need was there, for instance, for us to make a match for this Byelikov, whom one could not even imagine married? The headmaster’s wife, the inspector’s wife, and all our high-school ladies, grew livelier and even better-looking, as though they had suddenly found a new object in life. The headmaster’s wife would take a box at the theatre, and we beheld sitting in her box Varinka, with such a fan, beaming and happy, and beside her Byelikov, a little bent figure, looking as though he had been extracted from his house by pincers. I would give an evening party, and the ladies would insist on my inviting Byelikov and Varinka. In

short, the machine was set in motion. It appeared that Varinka was not averse to matrimony. She had not a very cheerful life with her brother; they could do nothing but quarrel and scold one another from morning till night. Here is a scene, for instance. Kovalenko would be coming along the street, a tall, sturdy young ruffian, in an embroidered shirt, his love-locks falling on his forehead under his cap, in one hand a bundle of books, in the other a thick knotted stick, followed by his sister, also with books in her hand.

“‘But you haven’t read it, Mihalik!’ she would be arguing loudly. ‘I tell you, I swear you have not read it at all!’

“‘And I tell you I have read it,’ cries Kovalenko, thumping his stick on the pavement.

“‘Oh, my goodness, Mihalik! why are you so cross? We are arguing about principles.’

“‘I tell you that I have read it!’ Kovalenko would shout, more loudly than ever.

“And at home, if there was an outsider present, there was sure to be a skirmish. Such a life must have been wearisome, and of course she must have longed for a home of her own. Besides, there was her age to be considered; there was no time left to pick and choose; it was a case of marrying anybody, even a Greek master. And, indeed, most of our young ladies don’t mind whom they marry so long as they do get married. However that may be, Varinka began to show an unmistakable partiality for Byelikov.

“And Byelikov? He used to visit Kovalenko just

as he did us. He would arrive, sit down, and remain silent. He would sit quiet, and Varinka would sing to him 'The Winds do Blow,' or would look pensively at him with her dark eyes, or would suddenly go off into a peal — 'Ha-ha-ha!'

"Suggestion plays a great part in love affairs, and still more in getting married. Everybody — both his colleagues and the ladies — began assuring Byelikov that he ought to get married, that there was nothing left for him in life but to get married; we all congratulated him, with solemn countenances delivered ourselves of various platitudes, such as 'Marriage is a serious step.' Besides, Varinka was good-looking and interesting; she was the daughter of a civil councillor, and had a farm; and what was more, she was the first woman who had been warm and friendly in her manner to him. His head was turned, and he decided that he really ought to get married."

"Well, at that point you ought to have taken away his goloshes and umbrella," said Ivan Ivanovitch.

"Only fancy! that turned out to be impossible. He put Varinka's portrait on his table, kept coming to see me and talking about Varinka, and home life, saying marriage was a serious step. He was frequently at Kovalenko's, but he did not alter his manner of life in the least; on the contrary, indeed, his determination to get married seemed to have a depressing effect on him. He grew thinner and paler, and seemed to retreat further and further into his case.

“ ‘I like Varvara Savvishna,’ he used to say to me, with a faint and wry smile, ‘and I know that every one ought to get married, but . . . you know all this has happened so suddenly. . . . One must think a little.’

“ ‘What is there to think over?’ I used to say to him. ‘Get married — that is all.’

“ ‘No; marriage is a serious step. One must first weigh the duties before one, the responsibilities . . . that nothing may go wrong afterwards. It worries me so much that I don’t sleep at night. And I must confess I am afraid: her brother and she have a strange way of thinking; they look at things strangely, you know, and her disposition is very impetuous. One may get married, and then, there is no knowing, one may find oneself in an unpleasant position.’

“ And he did not make an offer; he kept putting it off, to the great vexation of the headmaster’s wife and all our ladies; he went on weighing his future duties and responsibilities, and meanwhile he went for a walk with Varinka almost every day — possibly he thought that this was necessary in his position — and came to see me to talk about family life. And in all probability in the end he would have proposed to her, and would have made one of those unnecessary, stupid marriages such as are made by thousands among us from being bored and having nothing to do, if it had not been for a *kolossalische scandal*. I must mention that Varinka’s brother, Kovalenko, detested Byelikov from the first day of their acquaintance, and could not endure him.

“ ‘ I don’t understand,’ he used to say to us, shrugging his shoulders — ‘ I don’t understand how you can put up with that sneak, that nasty phiz. Ugh! how can you live here! The atmosphere is stifling and unclean! Do you call yourselves schoolmasters, teachers? You are paltry government clerks. You keep, not a temple of science, but a department for red tape and loyal behaviour, and it smells as sour as a police-station. No, my friends; I will stay with you for a while, and then I will go to my farm and there catch crabs and teach the Little Russians. I shall go, and you can stay here with your Judas — damn his soul! ’

“ Or he would laugh till he cried, first in a loud bass, then in a shrill, thin laugh, and ask me, waving his hands:

“ ‘ What does he sit here for? What does he want? He sits and stares.’

“ He even gave Byelikov a nickname, ‘ The Spider.’ And it will readily be understood that we avoided talking to him of his sister’s being about to marry ‘ The Spider.’

“ And on one occasion, when the headmaster’s wife hinted to him what a good thing it would be to secure his sister’s future with such a reliable, universally respected man as Byelikov, he frowned and muttered:

“ ‘ It’s not my business; let her marry a reptile if she likes. I don’t like meddling in other people’s affairs.’

“ Now hear what happened next. Some mischievous person drew a caricature of Byelikov walk-

ing along in his goloshes with his trousers tucked up, under his umbrella, with Varinka on his arm; below, the inscription 'Anthropos in love.' The expression was caught to a marvel, you know. The artist must have worked for more than one night, for the teachers of both the boys' and girls' high-schools, the teachers of the seminary, the government officials, all received a copy. Byelikov received one, too. The caricature made a very painful impression on him.

"We went out together; it was the first of May, a Sunday, and all of us, the boys and the teachers, had agreed to meet at the high-school and then to go for a walk together to a wood beyond the town. We set off, and he was green in the face and gloomier than a storm-cloud.

"'What wicked, ill-natured people there are!' he said, and his lips quivered.

"I felt really sorry for him. We were walking along, and all of a sudden — would you believe it? — Kovalenko came bowling along on a bicycle, and after him, also on a bicycle, Varinka, flushed and exhausted, but good-humoured and gay.

"'We are going on ahead,' she called. 'What lovely weather! Awfully lovely!'

"And they both disappeared from our sight. Byelikov turned white instead of green, and seemed petrified. He stopped short and stared at me. . . .

"'What is the meaning of it? Tell me, please!' he asked. 'Can my eyes have deceived me? Is it the proper thing for high-school masters and ladies to ride bicycles?'



“ ‘What is there improper about it?’ I said. ‘Let them ride and enjoy themselves.’

“ ‘But how can that be?’ he cried, amazed at my calm. ‘What are you saying?’

“ And he was so shocked that he was unwilling to go on, and returned home.

“ Next day he was continually twitching and nervously rubbing his hands, and it was evident from his face that he was unwell. And he left before his work was over, for the first time in his life. And he ate no dinner. Towards evening he wrapped himself up warmly, though it was quite warm weather, and sallied out to the Kovalenkos’. Varinka was out; he found her brother, however.

“ ‘Pray sit down,’ Kovalenko said coldly, with a frown. His face looked sleepy; he had just had a nap after dinner, and was in a very bad humour.

“ Byelikov sat in silence for ten minutes, and then began:

“ ‘I have come to see you to relieve my mind. I am very, very much troubled. Some scurrilous fellow has drawn an absurd caricature of me and another person, in whom we are both deeply interested. I regard it as a duty to assure you that I have had no hand in it. . . . I have given no sort of ground for such ridicule — on the contrary, I have always behaved in every way like a gentleman.’

“ Kovalenko sat sulky and silent. Byelikov waited a little, and went on slowly in a mournful voice:

“ ‘And I have something else to say to you. I have been in the service for years, while you have only lately entered it, and I consider it my duty



as an older colleague to give you a warning. You ride on a bicycle, and that pastime is utterly unsuitable for an educator of youth.'

" 'Why so?' asked Kovalenko in his bass.

" 'Surely that needs no explanation, Mihail Savvitch — surely you can understand that? If the teacher rides a bicycle, what can you expect the pupils to do? You will have them walking on their heads next! And so long as there is no formal permission to do so, it is out of the question. I was horrified yesterday! When I saw your sister everything seemed dancing before my eyes. A lady or a young girl on a bicycle — it's awful!'

" 'What is it you want exactly?'

" 'All I want is to warn you, Mihail Savvitch. You are a young man, you have a future before you, you must be very, very careful in your behaviour, and you are so careless — oh, so careless! You go about in an embroidered shirt, are constantly seen in the street carrying books, and now the bicycle, too. The headmaster will learn that you and your sister ride the bicycle, and then it will reach the higher authorities. . . . Will that be a good thing?'

" 'It's no business of anybody else if my sister and I do bicycle!' said Kovalenko, and he turned crimson. 'And damnation take any one who meddles in my private affairs!'

" Byelikov turned pale and got up.

" 'If you speak to me in that tone I cannot continue,' he said. 'And I beg you never to express yourself like that about our superiors in my presence; you ought to be respectful to the authorities.'

“ ‘Why, have I said any harm of the authorities?’ asked Kóvalenko, looking at him wrathfully. ‘Please leave me alone. I am an honest man, and do not care to talk to a gentleman like you. I don’t like sneaks!’

“Byelikov flew into a nervous flutter, and began hurriedly putting on his coat, with an expression of horror on his face. It was the first time in his life he had been spoken to so rudely.

“ ‘You can say what you please,’ he said, as he went out from the entry to the landing on the staircase. ‘I ought only to warn you: possibly some one may have overheard us, and that our conversation may not be misunderstood and harm come of it, I shall be compelled to inform our headmaster of our conversation . . . in its main features. I am bound to do so.’

“ ‘Inform him? You can go and make your report!’

“Kovalenko seized him from behind by the collar and gave him a push, and Byelikov rolled downstairs, thudding with his goloshes. The staircase was high and steep, but he rolled to the bottom unhurt, got up, and touched his nose to see whether his spectacles were all right. But just as he was falling down the stairs Varinka came in, and with her two ladies; they stood below staring, and to Byelikov this was more terrible than anything. I believe he would rather have broken his neck or both legs than have been an object of ridicule. Why, now the whole town would hear of it; it would come to the headmaster’s ears, would reach the higher

authorities — oh, it might lead to something! There would be another caricature, and it would all end in his being asked to resign his post. . . .

“ When he got up, Varinka recognized him, and, looking at his ridiculous face, his crumpled overcoat, and his goloshes, not understanding what had happened and supposing that he had slipped down by accident, could not restrain herself, and laughed loud enough to be heard by all the flats:

“ ‘ Ha-ha-ha ! ’

“ And this pealing, ringing ‘ Ha-ha-ha ! ’ was the last straw that put an end to everything: to the proposed match and to Byelikov’s earthly existence. He did not hear what Varinka said to him; he saw nothing. On reaching home, the first thing he did was to remove her portrait from the table; then he went to bed, and he never got up again.

“ Three days later Afanasy came to me and asked whether we should not send for the doctor, as there was something wrong with his master. I went in to Byelikov. He lay silent behind the curtain, covered with a quilt; if one asked him a question, he said ‘ Yes ’ or ‘ No ’ and not another sound. He lay there while Afanasy, gloomy and scowling, hovered about him, sighing heavily, and smelling like a pot-house.

“ A month later Byelikov died. We all went to his funeral — that is, both the high-schools and the seminary. Now when he was lying in his coffin his expression was mild, agreeable, even cheerful, as though he were glad that he had at last been put into a case which he would never leave again. Yes, he

had attained his ideal! And, as though in his honour, it was dull, rainy weather on the day of his funeral, and we all wore goloshes and took our umbrellas. Varinka, too, was at the funeral, and when the coffin was lowered into the grave she burst into tears. I have noticed that Little Russian women are always laughing or crying — no intermediate mood.

“One must confess that to bury people like Byelikov is a great pleasure. As we were returning from the cemetery we wore discreet Lenten faces; no one wanted to display this feeling of pleasure — a feeling like that we had experienced long, long ago as children when our elders had gone out and we ran about the garden for an hour or two, enjoying complete freedom. Ah, freedom, freedom! The merest hint, the faintest hope of its possibility gives wings to the soul, does it not?”

“We returned from the cemetery in a good humour. But not more than a week had passed before life went on as in the past, as gloomy, oppressive, and senseless — a life not forbidden by government prohibition, but not fully permitted, either: it was no better. And, indeed, though we had buried Byelikov, how many such men in cases were left, how many more of them there will be!”

“That’s just how it is,” said Ivan Ivanovitch, and he lighted his pipe.

“How many more of them there will be!” repeated Burkin.

The schoolmaster came out of the barn. He was a short, stout man, completely bald, with a black

beard down to his waist. The two dogs came out with him.

“What a moon!” he said, looking upwards.

It was midnight. On the right could be seen the whole village, a long street stretching far away for four miles. All was buried in deep silent slumber; not a movement, not a sound; one could hardly believe that nature could be so still. When on a moonlight night you see a broad village street, with its cottages, haystacks, and slumbering willows, a feeling of calm comes over the soul; in this peace, wrapped away from care, toil, and sorrow in the darkness of night, it is mild, melancholy, beautiful, and it seems as though the stars look down upon it kindly and with tenderness, and as though there were no evil on earth and all were well. On the left the open country began from the end of the village; it could be seen stretching far away to the horizon, and there was no movement, no sound in that whole expanse bathed in moonlight.

“Yes, that is just how it is,” repeated Ivan Ivanovitch; “and isn’t our living in town, airless and crowded, our writing useless papers, our playing *vint* — isn’t that all a sort of case for us? And our spending our whole lives among trivial, fussy men and silly, idle women, our talking and our listening to all sorts of nonsense — isn’t that a case for us, too? If you like, I will tell you a very edifying story.”

“No; it’s time we were asleep,” said Burkin.

“Tell it tomorrow.”

They went into the barn and lay down on the hay. And they were both covered up and beginning to doze when they suddenly heard light footsteps — patter, patter. . . . Some one was walking not far from the barn, walking a little and stopping, and a minute later, patter, patter again. . . . The dogs began growling.

“That’s Mavra,” said Burkin.

The footsteps died away.

“You see and hear that they lie,” said Ivan Ivanovitch, turning over on the other side, “and they call you a fool for putting up with their lying. You endure insult and humiliation, and dare not openly say that you are on the side of the honest and the free, and you lie and smile yourself; and all that for the sake of a crust of bread, for the sake of a warm corner, for the sake of a wretched little worthless rank in the service. No, one can’t go on living like this.”

“Well, you are off on another tack now, Ivan Ivanovitch,” said the schoolmaster. “Let us go to sleep!”

And ten minutes later Burkin was asleep. But Ivan Ivanovitch kept sighing and turning over from side to side; then he got up, went outside again, and, sitting in the doorway, lighted his pipe.

# GOOSEBERRIES





## GOOSEBERRIES

THE whole sky had been overcast with rain-clouds from early morning; it was a still day, not hot, but heavy, as it is in grey dull weather when the clouds have been hanging over the country for a long while, when one expects rain and it does not come. Ivan Ivanovitch, the veterinary surgeon, and Burkin, the high-school teacher, were already tired from walking, and the fields seemed to them endless. Far ahead of them they could just see the windmills of the village of Mironositskoe; on the right stretched a row of hillocks which disappeared in the distance behind the village, and they both knew that this was the bank of the river, that there were meadows, green willows, homesteads there, and that if one stood on one of the hillocks one could see from it the same vast plain, telegraph-wires, and a train which in the distance looked like a crawling caterpillar, and that in clear weather one could even see the town. Now, in still weather, when all nature seemed mild and dreamy, Ivan Ivanovitch and Burkin were filled with love of that countryside, and both thought how great, how beautiful a land it was.

"Last time we were in Prokofy's barn," said Burkin, "you were about to tell me a story."

"Yes; I meant to tell you about my brother."

Ivan Ivanovitch heaved a deep sigh and lighted a pipe to begin to tell his story, but just at that moment the rain began. And five minutes later heavy rain came down, covering the sky, and it was hard to tell when it would be over. Ivan Ivanovitch and Burkin stopped in hesitation; the dogs, already drenched, stood with their tails between their legs gazing at them feelingly.

“We must take shelter somewhere,” said Burkin. “Let us go to Alehin’s; it’s close by.”

“Come along.”

They turned aside and walked through mown fields, sometimes going straight forward, sometimes turning to the right, till they came out on the road. Soon they saw poplars, a garden, then the red roofs of barns; there was a gleam of the river, and the view opened on to a broad expanse of water with a windmill and a white bath-house: this was Sofino, where Alehin lived.

The watermill was at work, drowning the sound of the rain; the dam was shaking. Here wet horses with drooping heads were standing near their carts, and men were walking about covered with sacks. It was damp, muddy, and desolate; the water looked cold and malignant. Ivan Ivanovitch and Burkin were already conscious of a feeling of wetness, messiness, and discomfort all over; their feet were heavy with mud, and when, crossing the dam, they went up to the barns, they were silent, as though they were angry with one another.

In one of the barns there was the sound of a winnowing machine, the door was open, and clouds

of dust were coming from it. In the doorway was standing Alehin himself, a man of forty, tall and stout, with long hair, more like a professor or an artist than a landowner. He had on a white shirt that badly needed washing, a rope for a belt, drawers instead of trousers, and his boots, too, were plastered up with mud and straw. His eyes and nose were black with dust. He recognized Ivan Ivanovitch and Burkin, and was apparently much delighted to see them.

“Go into the house, gentlemen,” he said, smiling; “I’ll come directly, this minute.”

It was a big two-storeyed house. Alehin lived in the lower storey, with arched ceilings and little windows, where the bailiffs had once lived; here everything was plain, and there was a smell of rye bread, cheap vodka, and harness. He went upstairs into the best rooms only on rare occasions, when visitors came. Ivan Ivanovitch and Burkin were met in the house by a maid-servant, a young woman so beautiful that they both stood still and looked at one another.

“You can’t imagine how delighted I am to see you, my friends,” said Alehin, going into the hall with them. “It is a surprise! Pelagea,” he said, addressing the girl, “give our visitors something to change into. And, by the way, I will change too. Only I must first go and wash, for I almost think I have not washed since spring. Wouldn’t you like to come into the bath-house? and meanwhile they will get things ready here.”

Beautiful Pelagea, looking so refined and soft,

brought them towels and soap, and Alehin went to the bath-house with his guests.

"It's a long time since I had a wash," he said, undressing. "I have got a nice bath-house, as you see — my father built it — but I somehow never have time to wash."

He sat down on the steps and soaped his long hair and his neck, and the water round him turned brown.

"Yes, I must say," said Ivan Ivanovitch meaningly, looking at his head.

"It's a long time since I washed . . ." said Alehin with embarrassment, giving himself a second soaping, and the water near him turned dark blue, like ink.

Ivan Ivanovitch went outside, plunged into the water with a loud splash, and swam in the rain, flinging his arms out wide. He stirred the water into waves which set the white lilies bobbing up and down; he swam to the very middle of the millpond and dived, and came up a minute later in another place, and swam on, and kept on diving, trying to touch the bottom.

"Oh, my goodness!" he repeated continually, enjoying himself thoroughly. "Oh, my goodness!" He swam to the mill, talked to the peasants there, then returned and lay on his back in the middle of the pond, turning his face to the rain. Burkin and Alehin were dressed and ready to go, but he still went on swimming and diving. "Oh, my goodness! . . ." he said. "Oh, Lord, have mercy on me! . . ."

"That's enough!" Burkin shouted to him.

They went back to the house. And only when the lamp was lighted in the big drawing-room upstairs, and Burkin and Ivan Ivanovitch, attired in silk dressing-gowns and warm slippers, were sitting in arm-chairs; and Alehin, washed and combed, in a new coat, was walking about the drawing-room, evidently enjoying the feeling of warmth, cleanliness, dry clothes, and light shoes; and when lovely Pelagea, stepping noiselessly on the carpet and smiling softly, handed tea and jam on a tray — only then Ivan Ivanovitch began on his story, and it seemed as though not only Burkin and Alehin were listening, but also the ladies, young and old, and the officers who looked down upon them sternly and calmly from their gold frames.

“There are two of us brothers,” he began — “I, Ivan Ivanovitch, and my brother, Nikolay Ivanovitch, two years younger. I went in for a learned profession and became a veterinary surgeon, while Nikolay sat in a government office from the time he was nineteen. Our father, Tchimsha-Himalaisky, was a kantonist, but he rose to be an officer and left us a little estate and the rank of nobility. After his death the little estate went in debts and legal expenses; but, anyway, we had spent our childhood running wild in the country. Like peasant children, we passed our days and nights in the fields and the woods, looked after horses, stripped the bark off the trees, fished, and so on. . . . And, you know, whoever has once in his life caught perch or has seen the migrating of the thrushes in autumn, watched how they float in flocks over the village on bright,

cool days, he will never be a real townsman, and will have a yearning for freedom to the day of his death. My brother was miserable in the government office. Years passed by, and he went on sitting in the same place, went on writing the same papers and thinking of one and the same thing — how to get into the country. And this yearning by degrees passed into a definite desire, into a dream of buying himself a little farm somewhere on the banks of a river or a lake.

“ He was a gentle, good-natured fellow, and I was fond of him, but I never sympathized with this desire to shut himself up for the rest of his life in a little farm of his own. It’s the correct thing to say that a man needs no more than six feet of earth. But six feet is what a corpse needs, not a man. And they say, too, now, that if our intellectual classes are attracted to the land and yearn for a farm, it’s a good thing. But these farms are just the same as six feet of earth. To retreat from town, from the struggle, from the bustle of life, to retreat and bury oneself in one’s farm — it’s not life, it’s egoism, laziness, it’s monasticism of a sort, but monasticism without good works. A man does not need six feet of earth or a farm, but the whole globe, all nature, where he can have room to display all the qualities and peculiarities of his free spirit.

“ My brother Nikolay, sitting in his government office, dreamed of how he would eat his own cabbages, which would fill the whole yard with such a savoury smell, take his meals on the green grass,



sleep in the sun, sit for whole hours on the seat by the gate gazing at the fields and the forest. Gardening books and the agricultural hints in calendars were his delight, his favourite spiritual sustenance; he enjoyed reading newspapers, too, but the only things he read in them were the advertisements of so many acres of arable land and a grass meadow with farm-houses and buildings, a river, a garden, a mill and millponds, for sale. And his imagination pictured the garden-paths, flowers and fruit, starling cotes, the carp in the pond, and all that sort of thing, you know. These imaginary pictures were of different kinds according to the advertisements which he came across, but for some reason in every one of them he had always to have gooseberries. He could not imagine a homestead, he could not picture an idyllic nook, without gooseberries.

“ ‘Country life has its conveniences,’ he would sometimes say. ‘You sit on the verandah and you drink tea, while your ducks swim on the pond, there is a delicious smell everywhere, and . . . and the gooseberries are growing.’

“ He used to draw a map of his property, and in every map there were the same things — (*a*) house for the family, (*b*) servants’ quarters, (*c*) kitchen-garden, (*d*) gooseberry-bushes. He lived parsimoniously, was frugal in food and drink, his clothes were beyond description; he looked like a beggar, but kept on saving and putting money in the bank. He grew fearfully avaricious. I did not like to look at him, and I used to give him something and send

him presents for Christmas and Easter, but he used to save that too. Once a man is absorbed by an idea there is no doing anything with him.

“Years passed: he was transferred to another province. He was over forty, and he was still reading the advertisements in the papers and saving up. Then I heard he was married. Still with the same object of buying a farm and having gooseberries, he married an elderly and ugly widow without a trace of feeling for her, simply because she had filthy lucre. He went on living frugally after marrying her, and kept her short of food, while he put her money in the bank in his name.

“Her first husband had been a postmaster, and with him she was accustomed to pies and home-made wines, while with her second husband she did not get enough black bread; she began to pine away with this sort of life, and three years later she gave up her soul to God. And I need hardly say that my brother never for one moment imagined that he was responsible for her death. Money, like vodka, makes a man queer. In our town there was a merchant who, before he died, ordered a plateful of honey and ate up all his money and lottery tickets with the honey, so that no one might get the benefit of it. While I was inspecting cattle at a railway-station, a cattle-dealer fell under an engine and had his leg cut off. We carried him into the waiting-room, the blood was flowing — it was a horrible thing — and he kept asking them to look for his leg and was very much worried about it; there were

twenty roubles in the boot on the leg that had been cut off, and he was afraid they would be lost."

"That's a story from a different opera," said Burkin.

"After his wife's death," Ivan Ivanovitch went on, after thinking for half a minute, "my brother began looking out for an estate for himself. Of course, you may look about for five years and yet end by making a mistake, and buying something quite different from what you have dreamed of. My brother Nikolay bought through an agent a mortgaged estate of three hundred and thirty acres, with a house for the family, with servants' quarters, with a park, but with no orchard, no gooseberry-bushes, and no duck-pond; there was a river, but the water in it was the colour of coffee, because on one side of the estate there was a brickyard and on the other a factory for burning bones. But Nikolay Ivanovitch did not grieve much; he ordered twenty gooseberry-bushes, planted them, and began living as a country gentleman.

"Last year I went to pay him a visit. I thought I would go and see what it was like. In his letters my brother called his estate 'Tchumbaroklov Waste, alias Himalaiskoe.' I reached 'alias Himalaiskoe' in the afternoon. It was hot. Everywhere there were ditches, fences, hedges, fir-trees planted in rows, and there was no knowing how to get to the yard, where to put one's horse. I went up to the house, and was met by a fat red dog that looked like a pig. It wanted to bark, but it was too lazy. The cook,

a fat, barefooted woman, came out of the kitchen, and she, too, looked like a pig, and said that her master was resting after dinner. I went in to see my brother. He was sitting up in bed with a quilt over his legs; he had grown older, fatter, wrinkled; his cheeks, his nose, and his mouth all stuck out — he looked as though he might begin grunting into the quilt at any moment.

“ We embraced each other, and shed tears of joy and of sadness at the thought that we had once been young and now were both grey-headed and near the grave. He dressed, and led me out to show me the estate.

“ ‘ Well, how are you getting on here? ’ I asked.

“ ‘ Oh, all right, thank God; I am getting on very well.’

“ He was no more a poor timid clerk, but a real landowner, a gentleman. He was already accustomed to it, had grown used to it, and liked it. He ate a great deal, went to the bath-house, was growing stout, was already at law with the village commune and both factories, and was very much offended when the peasants did not call him ‘ Your Honour.’ And he concerned himself with the salvation of his soul in a substantial, gentlemanly manner, and performed deeds of charity, not simply, but with an air of consequence. And what deeds of charity! He treated the peasants for every sort of disease with soda and castor oil, and on his name-day had a thanksgiving service in the middle of the village, and then treated the peasants to a gallon of vodka — he thought that was the thing to do. Oh, those horrible

gallons of vodka! One day the fat landowner hauls the peasants up before the district captain for trespass, and next day, in honour of a holiday, treats them to a gallon of vodka, and they drink and shout 'Hurrah!' and when they are drunk bow down to his feet. A change of life for the better, and being well-fed and idle develop in a Russian the most insolent self-conceit. Nikolay Ivanovitch, who at one time in the government office was afraid to have any views of his own, now could say nothing that was not gospel truth, and uttered such truths in the tone of a prime minister. 'Education is essential, but for the peasants it is premature.' 'Corporal punishment is harmful as a rule, but in some cases it is necessary and there is nothing to take its place.'

" 'I know the peasants and understand how to treat them,' he would say. 'The peasants like me. I need only to hold up my little finger and the peasants will do anything I like.'

" And all this, observe, was uttered with a wise, benevolent smile. He repeated twenty times over 'We noblemen,' 'I as a noble'; obviously he did not remember that our grandfather was a peasant, and our father a soldier. Even our surname Tchimsha-Himalaisky, in reality so incongruous, seemed to him now melodious, distinguished, and very agreeable.

" But the point just now is not he, but myself. I want to tell you about the change that took place in me during the brief hours I spent at his country place. In the evening, when we were drinking tea, the cook put on the table a plateful of gooseberries. They were not bought, but his own goosberries, gath-

ered for the first time since the bushes were planted. Nikolay Ivanovitch laughed and looked for a minute in silence at the gooseberries, with tears in his eyes; he could not speak for excitement. Then he put one gooseberry in his mouth, looked at me with the triumph of a child who has at last received his favourite toy, and said:

“ ‘How delicious!’

“ And he ate them greedily, continually repeating, ‘ Ah, how delicious! Do taste them!’

“ They were sour and unripe, but, as Pushkin says:

“ ‘ Dearer to us the falsehood that exalts  
Than hosts of baser truths.’

“ I saw a happy man whose cherished dream was so obviously fulfilled, who had attained his object in life, who had gained what he wanted, who was satisfied with his fate and himself. There is always, for some reason, an element of sadness mingled with my thoughts of human happiness, and, on this occasion, at the sight of a happy man I was overcome by an oppressive feeling that was close upon despair. It was particularly oppressive at night. A bed was made up for me in the room next to my brother's bedroom, and I could hear that he was awake, and that he kept getting up and going to the plate of gooseberries and taking one. I reflected how many satisfied, happy people there really are! What a suffocating force it is! You look at life: the insolence and idleness of the strong, the ignorance and brutishness of the weak, incredible poverty all about us, overcrowding, degeneration, drunkenness, hy-



pocrisy, lying. . . . Yet all is calm and stillness in the houses and in the streets; of the fifty thousand living in a town, there is not one who would cry out, who would give vent to his indignation aloud. We see the people going to market for provisions, eating by day, sleeping by night, talking their silly nonsense, getting married, growing old, serenely escorting their dead to the cemetery; but we do not see and we do not hear those who suffer, and what is terrible in life goes on somewhere behind the scenes. . . . Everything is quiet and peaceful, and nothing protests but mute statistics: so many people gone out of their minds, so many gallons of vodka drunk, so many children dead from malnutrition. . . . And this order of things is evidently necessary; evidently the happy man only feels at ease because the unhappy bear their burdens in silence, and without that silence happiness would be impossible. It's a case of general hypnotism. There ought to be behind the door of every happy, contented man some one standing with a hammer continually reminding him with a tap that there are unhappy people; that however happy he may be, life will show him her laws sooner or later, trouble will come for him — disease, poverty, losses, and no one will see or hear, just as now he neither sees nor hears others. But there is no man with a hammer; the happy man lives at his ease, and trivial daily cares faintly agitate him like the wind in the aspen-tree — and all goes well.

“That night I realized that I, too, was happy and contented,” Ivan Ivanovitch went on, getting up. “I, too, at dinner and at the hunt liked to lay down



the law on life and religion, and the way to manage the peasantry. I, too, used to say that science was light, that culture was essential, but for the simple people reading and writing was enough for the time. Freedom is a blessing, I used to say; we can no more do without it than without air, but we must wait a little. Yes, I used to talk like that, and now I ask, 'For what reason are we to wait?'" asked Ivan Ivanovitch, looking angrily at Burkin. "Why wait, I ask you? What grounds have we for waiting? I shall be told, it can't be done all at once; every idea takes shape in life gradually, in its due time. But who is it says that? Where is the proof that it's right? You will fall back upon the natural order of things, the uniformity of phenomena; but is there order and uniformity in the fact that I, a living, thinking man, stand over a chasm and wait for it to close of itself, or to fill up with mud at the very time when perhaps I might leap over it or build a bridge across it? And again, wait for the sake of what? Wait till there's no strength to live? And meanwhile one must live, and one wants to live!

"I went away from my brother's early in the morning, and ever since then it has been unbearable for me to be in town. I am oppressed by its peace and quiet; I am afraid to look at the windows, for there is no spectacle more painful to me now than the sight of a happy family sitting round the table drinking tea. I am old and am not fit for the struggle; I am not even capable of hatred; I can only grieve inwardly, feel irritated and vexed; but at night

my head is hot from the rush of ideas, and I cannot sleep. . . . Ah, if I were young! ”

Ivan Ivanovitch walked backwards and forwards in excitement, and repeated: “ If I were young! ”

He suddenly went up to Alehin and began pressing first one of his hands and then the other.

“ Pavel Konstantinovitch, ” he said in an imploring voice, “ don't be calm and contented, don't let yourself be put to sleep! While you are young, strong, confident, be not weary in well-doing! There is no happiness, and there ought not to be; but if there is a meaning and an object in life, that meaning and object is not our happiness, but something greater and more rational. Do good! ”

And all this Ivan Ivanovitch said with a pitiful, imploring smile, as though he were asking him a personal favour.

Then all three sat in arm-chairs at different ends of the drawing-room and were silent. Ivan Ivanovitch's story had not satisfied either Burkin or Alehin. When the generals and ladies gazed down from their gilt frames, looking in the dusk as though they were alive, it was dreary to listen to the story of the poor clerk who ate gooseberries. They felt inclined, for some reason, to talk about elegant people, about women. And their sitting in the drawing-room where everything — the chandeliers in their covers, the arm-chairs, and the carpet under their feet — reminded them that those very people who were now looking down from their frames had once moved about, sat, drunk tea in this room, and the fact that

lovely Pelagea was moving noiselessly about was better than any story.

Alehin was fearfully sleepy; he had got up early, before three o'clock in the morning, to look after his work, and now his eyes were closing; but he was afraid his visitors might tell some interesting story after he had gone, and he lingered on. He did not go into the question whether what Ivan Ivanovitch had just said was right and true. His visitors did not talk of groats, nor of hay, nor of tar, but of something that had no direct bearing on his life, and he was glad and wanted them to go on.

"It's bed-time, though," said Burkin, getting up. "Allow me to wish you good-night."

Alehin said good-night and went downstairs to his own domain, while the visitors remained upstairs. They were both taken for the night to a big room where there stood two old wooden beds decorated with carvings, and in the corner was an ivory crucifix. The big cool beds, which had been made by the lovely Pelagea, smelt agreeably of clean linen.

Ivan Ivanovitch undressed in silence and got into bed.

"Lord forgive us sinners!" he said, and put his head under the quilt.

His pipe lying on the table smelt strongly of stale tobacco, and Burkin could not sleep for a long while, and kept wondering where the oppressive smell came from.

The rain was pattering on the window-panes all night.

ABOUT LOVE



## ABOUT LOVE

AT lunch next day there were very nice pies, crayfish, and mutton cutlets; and while we were eating, Nikanor, the cook, came up to ask what the visitors would like for dinner. He was a man of medium height, with a puffy face and little eyes; he was close-shaven, and it looked as though his moustaches had not been shaved, but had been pulled out by the roots. Alehin told us that the beautiful Pelagea was in love with this cook. As he drank and was of a violent character, she did not want to marry him, but was willing to live with him without. He was very devout, and his religious convictions would not allow him to "live in sin"; he insisted on her marrying him, and would consent to nothing else, and when he was drunk he used to abuse her and even beat her. Whenever he got drunk she used to hide upstairs and sob, and on such occasions Alehin and the servants stayed in the house to be ready to defend her in case of necessity.

We began talking about love.

"How love is born," said Alehin, "why Pelagea does not love somebody more like herself in her spiritual and external qualities, and why she fell in love with Nikanor, that ugly snout — we all call him 'The Snout' — how far questions of personal happiness are of consequence in love — all that is un-

known; one can take what view one likes of it. So far only one incontestable truth has been uttered about love: 'This is a great mystery.' Everything else that has been written or said about love is not a conclusion, but only a statement of questions which have remained unanswered. The explanation which would seem to fit one case does not apply in a dozen others, and the very best thing, to my mind, would be to explain every case individually without attempting to generalize. We ought, as the doctors say, to individualize each case."

"Perfectly true," Burkin assented.

"We Russians of the educated class have a partiality for these questions that remain unanswered. Love is usually poeticized, decorated with roses, nightingales; we Russians decorate our loves with these momentous questions, and select the most uninteresting of them, too. In Moscow, when I was a student, I had a friend who shared my life, a charming lady, and every time I took her in my arms she was thinking what I would allow her a month for housekeeping and what was the price of beef a pound. In the same way, when we are in love we are never tired of asking ourselves questions: whether it is honourable or dishonourable, sensible or stupid, what this love is leading up to, and so on. Whether it is a good thing or not I don't know, but that it is in the way, unsatisfactory, and irritating, I do know."

It looked as though he wanted to tell some story. People who lead a solitary existence always have something in their hearts which they are eager to talk about. In town bachelors visit the baths and



the restaurants on purpose to talk, and sometimes tell the most interesting things to bath attendants and waiters; in the country, as a rule, they unbosom themselves to their guests. Now from the window we could see a grey sky, trees drenched in the rain; in such weather we could go nowhere, and there was nothing for us to do but to tell stories and to listen.

“I have lived at Sofino and been farming for a long time,” Alehin began, “ever since I left the University. I am an idle gentleman by education, a studious person by disposition; but there was a big debt owing on the estate when I came here, and as my father was in debt partly because he had spent so much on my education, I resolved not to go away, but to work till I paid off the debt. I made up my mind to this and set to work, not, I must confess, without some repugnance. The land here does not yield much, and if one is not to farm at a loss one must employ serf labour or hired labourers, which is almost the same thing, or put it on a peasant footing — that is, work the fields oneself and with one’s family. There is no middle path. But in those days I did not go into such subtleties. I did not leave a clod of earth unturned; I gathered together all the peasants, men and women, from the neighbouring villages; the work went on at a tremendous pace. I myself ploughed and sowed and reaped, and was bored doing it, and frowned with disgust, like a village cat driven by hunger to eat cucumbers in the kitchen-garden. My body ached, and I slept as I walked. At first it seemed to me that I could easily reconcile this life of toil with my cultured habits; to

do so, I thought, all that is necessary is to maintain a certain external order in life. I established myself upstairs here in the best rooms, and ordered them to bring me there coffee and liquor after lunch and dinner, and when I went to bed I read every night the *Vyestnik Evropi*. But one day our priest, Father Ivan, came and drank up all my liquor at one sitting; and the *Vyestnik Evropi* went to the priest's daughters; as in the summer, especially at the hay-making, I did not succeed in getting to my bed at all, and slept in the sledge in the barn, or somewhere in the forester's lodge, what chance was there of reading? Little by little I moved downstairs, began dining in the servants' kitchen, and of my former luxury nothing is left but the servants who were in my father's service, and whom it would be painful to turn away.

“In the first years I was elected here an honorary justice of the peace. I used to have to go to the town and take part in the sessions of the congress and of the circuit court, and this was a pleasant change for me. When you live here for two or three months without a break, especially in the winter, you begin at last to pine for a black coat. And in the circuit court there were frock-coats, and uniforms, and dress-coats, too, all lawyers, men who have received a general education; I had some one to talk to. After sleeping in the sledge and dining in the kitchen, to sit in an arm-chair in clean linen, in thin boots, with a chain on one's waistcoat, is such luxury!

“I received a warm welcome in the town. I made

friends eagerly. And of all my acquaintanceships the most intimate and, to tell the truth, the most agreeable to me was my acquaintance with Luganovitch, the vice-president of the circuit court. You both know him: a most charming personality. It all happened just after a celebrated case of incendiarism; the preliminary investigation lasted two days; we were exhausted. Luganovitch looked at me and said:

“ ‘Look here, come round to dinner with me.’

“ This was unexpected, as I knew Luganovitch very little, only officially, and I had never been to his house. I only just went to my hotel room to change and went off to dinner. And here it was my lot to meet Anna Alexyevna, Luganovitch's wife. At that time she was still very young, not more than twenty-two, and her first baby had been born just six months before. It is all a thing of the past; and now I should find it difficult to define what there was so exceptional in her, what it was in her attracted me so much; at the time, at dinner, it was all perfectly clear to me. I saw a lovely young, good, intelligent, fascinating woman, such as I had never met before; and I felt her at once some one close and already familiar, as though that face, those cordial, intelligent eyes, I had seen somewhere in my childhood, in the album which lay on my mother's chest of drawers.

“ Four Jews were charged with being incendiaries, were regarded as a gang of robbers, and, to my mind, quite groundlessly. At dinner I was very much excited, I was uncomfortable, and I don't know

what I said, but Anna Alexyevna kept shaking her head and saying to her husband:

“ ‘Dmitry, how is this?’

“Luganovitch is a good-natured man, one of those simple-hearted people who firmly maintain the opinion that once a man is charged before a court he is guilty, and to express doubt of the correctness of a sentence cannot be done except in legal form on paper, and not at dinner and in private conversation.

“ ‘You and I did not set fire to the place,’ he said softly, ‘and you see we are not condemned, and not in prison.’

“And both husband and wife tried to make me eat and drink as much as possible. From some trifling details, from the way they made the coffee together, for instance, and from the way they understood each other at half a word, I could gather that they lived in harmony and comfort, and that they were glad of a visitor. After dinner they played a duet on the piano; then it got dark, and I went home. That was at the beginning of spring.

“After that I spent the whole summer at Sofino without a break, and I had no time to think of the town, either, but the memory of the graceful fair-haired woman remained in my mind all those days; I did not think of her, but it was as though her light shadow were lying on my heart.

“In the late autumn there was a theatrical performance for some charitable object in the town. I went into the governor’s box (I was invited to go there in the interval); I looked, and there was Anna Alexyevna sitting beside the governor’s wife; and

again the same irresistible, thrilling impression of beauty and sweet, caressing eyes, and again the same feeling of nearness. We sat side by side, then went to the foyer.

“ ‘You’ve grown thinner,’ she said; ‘have you been ill?’

“ ‘Yes, I’ve had rheumatism in my shoulder, and in rainy weather I can’t sleep.’

“ ‘You look dispirited. In the spring, when you came to dinner, you were younger, more confident. You were full of eagerness, and talked a great deal then; you were very interesting, and I really must confess I was a little carried away by you. For some reason you often came back to my memory during the summer, and when I was getting ready for the theatre today I thought I should see you.’

“ And she laughed.

“ ‘But you look dispirited today,’ she repeated; ‘it makes you seem older.’

“ The next day I lunched at the Luganovitchs’. After lunch they drove out to their summer villa, in order to make arrangements there for the winter, and I went with them. I returned with them to the town, and at midnight drank tea with them in quiet domestic surroundings, while the fire glowed, and the young mother kept going to see if her baby girl was asleep. And after that, every time I went to town I never failed to visit the Luganovitchs. They grew used to me, and I grew used to them. As a rule I went in unannounced, as though I were one of the family.

“ ‘Who is there?’ I would hear from a faraway

room, in the drawling voice that seemed to me so lovely.

“‘It is Pavel Konstantinovitch,’ answered the maid or the nurse.

“Anna Alexyevna would come out to me with an anxious face, and would ask every time:

“‘Why is it so long since you have been? Has anything happened?’

“Her eyes, the elegant refined hand she gave me, her indoor dress, the way she did her hair, her voice, her step, always produced the same impression on me of something new and extraordinary in my life, and very important. We talked together for hours, were silent, thinking each our own thoughts, or she played for hours to me on the piano. If there were no one at home I stayed and waited, talked to the nurse, played with the child, or lay on the sofa in the study and read; and when Anna Alexyevna came back I met her in the hall, took all her parcels from her, and for some reason I carried those parcels every time with as much love, with as much solemnity, as a boy.

“There is a proverb that if a peasant woman has no troubles she will buy a pig. The Luganovitchs had no troubles, so they made friends with me. If I did not come to the town I must be ill or something must have happened to me, and both of them were extremely anxious. They were worried that I, an educated man with a knowledge of languages, should, instead of devoting myself to science or literary work, live in the country, rush round like a squirrel in a rage, work hard with never a penny to



show for it. They fancied that I was unhappy, and that I only talked, laughed, and ate to conceal my sufferings, and even at cheerful moments when I felt happy I was aware of their searching eyes fixed upon me. They were particularly touching when I really was depressed, when I was being worried by some creditor or had not money enough to pay interest on the proper day. The two of them, husband and wife, would whisper together at the window; then he would come to me and say with a grave face:

“ ‘ If you really are in need of money at the moment, Pavel Konstantinovitch, my wife and I beg you not to hesitate to borrow from us.’ ”

“ And he would blush to his ears with emotion. And it would happen that, after whispering in the same way at the window, he would come up to me, with red ears, and say:

“ ‘ My wife and I earnestly beg you to accept this present.’ ”

“ And he would give me studs, a cigar-case, or a lamp, and I would send them game, butter, and flowers from the country. They both, by the way, had considerable means of their own. In early days I often borrowed money, and was not very particular about it — borrowed wherever I could — but nothing in the world would have induced me to borrow from the Luganovitchs. But why talk of it?

“ I was unhappy. At home, in the fields, in the barn, I thought of her; I tried to understand the mystery of a beautiful, intelligent young woman's marrying some one so uninteresting, almost an old man (her husband was over forty), and having chil-



dren by him; to understand the mystery of this uninteresting, good, simple-hearted man, who argued with such wearisome good sense, at balls and evening parties kept near the more solid people, looking listless and superfluous, with a submissive, uninterested expression, as though he had been brought there for sale, who yet believed in his right to be happy, to have children by her; and I kept trying to understand why she had met him first and not me, and why such a terrible mistake in our lives need have happened.

“And when I went to the town I saw every time from her eyes that she was expecting me, and she would confess to me herself that she had had a peculiar feeling all that day and had guessed that I should come. We talked a long time, and were silent, yet we did not confess our love to each other, but timidly and jealously concealed it. We were afraid of everything that might reveal our secret to ourselves. I loved her tenderly, deeply, but I reflected and kept asking myself what our love could lead to if we had not the strength to fight against it. It seemed to be incredible that my gentle, sad love could all at once coarsely break up the even tenor of the life of her husband, her children, and all the household in which I was so loved and trusted. Would it be honourable? She would go away with me, but where? Where could I take her? It would have been a different matter if I had had a beautiful, interesting life — if, for instance, I had been struggling for the emancipation of my country, or had been a celebrated man of science, an artist

or a painter; but as it was it would mean taking her from one everyday humdrum life to another as humdrum or perhaps more so. And how long would our happiness last? What would happen to her in case I was ill, in case I died, or if we simply grew cold to one another?

“And she apparently reasoned in the same way. She thought of her husband, her children, and of her mother, who loved the husband like a son. If she abandoned herself to her feelings she would have to lie, or else to tell the truth, and in her position either would have been equally terrible and inconvenient. And she was tormented by the question whether her love would bring me happiness — would she not complicate my life, which, as it was, was hard enough and full of all sorts of trouble? She fancied she was not young enough for me, that she was not industrious nor energetic enough to begin a new life, and she often talked to her husband of the importance of my marrying a girl of intelligence and merit who would be a capable housewife and a help to me — and she would immediately add that it would be difficult to find such a girl in the whole town.

“Meanwhile the years were passing. Anna Alexyevna already had two children. When I arrived at the Luganovitchs’ the servants smiled cordially, the children shouted that Uncle Pavel Konstantinovitch had come, and hung on my neck; every one was overjoyed. They did not understand what was passing in my soul, and thought that I, too, was happy. Every one looked on me as a noble

being. And grown-ups and children alike felt that a noble being was walking about their rooms, and that gave a peculiar charm to their manner towards me, as though in my presence their life, too, was purer and more beautiful. Anna Alexyevna and I used to go to the theatre together, always walking there; we used to sit side by side in the stalls, our shoulders touching. I would take the opera-glass from her hands without a word, and feel at that minute that she was near me, that she was mine, that we could not live without each other; but by some strange misunderstanding, when we came out of the theatre we always said good-bye and parted as though we were strangers. Goodness knows what people were saying about us in the town already, but there was not a word of truth in it all!

“In the latter years Anna Alexyevna took to going away for frequent visits to her mother or to her sister; she began to suffer from low spirits, she began to recognize that her life was spoilt and unsatisfied, and at times she did not care to see her husband nor her children. She was already being treated for neurasthenia.

“We were silent and still silent, and in the presence of outsiders she displayed a strange irritation in regard to me; whatever I talked about, she disagreed with me, and if I had an argument she sided with my opponent. If I dropped anything, she would say coldly:

“‘I congratulate you.’

“If I forgot to take the opera-glass when we were going to the theatre, she would say afterwards:

“ ‘ I knew you would forget it.’

“ Luckily or unluckily, there is nothing in our lives that does not end sooner or later. The time of parting came, as Luganovitch was appointed president in one of the western provinces. They had to sell their furniture, their horses, their summer villa. When they drove out to the villa, and afterwards looked back as they were going away, to look for the last time at the garden, at the green roof, every one was sad, and I realized that I had to say good-bye not only to the villa. It was arranged that at the end of August we should see Anna Alexyevna off to the Crimea, where the doctors were sending her, and that a little later Luganovitch and the children would set off for the western province.

“ We were a great crowd to see Anna Alexyevna off. When she had said good-bye to her husband and her children and there was only a minute left before the third bell, I ran into her compartment to put a basket, which she had almost forgotten, on the rack, and I had to say good-bye. When our eyes met in the compartment our spiritual fortitude deserted us both; I took her in my arms, she pressed her face to my breast, and tears flowed from her eyes. Kissing her face, her shoulders, her hands wet with tears — oh, how unhappy we were! — I confessed my love for her, and with a burning pain in my heart I realized how unnecessary, how petty, and how deceptive all that had hindered us from loving was. I understood that when you love you must either, in your reasonings about that love, start from what is highest, from what is more important

than happiness or unhappiness, sin or virtue in their accepted meaning, or you must not reason at all.

“ I kissed her for the last time, pressed her hand, and parted for ever. The train had already started. I went into the next compartment — it was empty — and until I reached the next station I sat there crying. Then I walked home to Sofino. . . .”

While Alehin was telling his story, the rain left off and the sun came out. Burkin and Ivan Ivanovitch went out on the balcony, from which there was a beautiful view over the garden and the mill-pond, which was shining now in the sunshine like a mirror. They admired it, and at the same time they were sorry that this man with the kind, clever eyes, who had told them this story with such genuine feeling, should be rushing round and round this huge estate like a squirrel on a wheel instead of devoting himself to science or something else which would have made his life more pleasant; and they thought what a sorrowful face Anna Alexyevna must have had when he said good-bye to her in the railway-carriage and kissed her face and shoulders. Both of them had met her in the town, and Burkin knew her and thought her beautiful.

THE LOTTERY TICKET





## THE LOTTERY TICKET

IVAN DMITRITCH, a middle-class man who lived with his family on an income of twelve hundred a year and was very well satisfied with his lot, sat down on the sofa after supper and began reading the newspaper

“ I forgot to look at the newspaper today,” his wife said to him as she cleared the table. “ Look and see whether the list of drawings is there.”

“ Yes, it is,” said Ivan Dmitritch; “ but hasn’t your ticket lapsed? ”

“ No; I took the interest on Tuesday.”

“ What is the number? ”

“ Series 9,499, number 26.”

“ All right . . . we will look . . . 9,499 and 26.”

Ivan Dmitritch had no faith in lottery luck, and would not, as a rule, have consented to look at the lists of winning numbers, but now, as he had nothing else to do and as the newspaper was before his eyes, he passed his finger downwards along the column of numbers. And immediately, as though in mockery of his scepticism, no further than the second line from the top, his eye was caught by the figure 9,499! Unable to believe his eyes, he hurriedly dropped the paper on his knees without looking to see the number of the ticket, and, just as though some one had given

him a douche of cold water, he felt an agreeable chill in the pit of the stomach; tingling and terrible and sweet!

"Masha, 9,499 is there!" he said in a hollow voice.

His wife looked at his astonished and panic-stricken face, and realized that he was not joking.

"9,499?" she asked, turning pale and dropping the folded tablecloth on the table.

"Yes, yes . . . it really is there!"

"And the number of the ticket?"

"Oh, yes! There's the number of the ticket too. But stay . . . wait! No, I say! Anyway, the number of our series is there! Anyway, you understand. . . ."

Looking at his wife, Ivan Dmitritch gave a broad, senseless smile, like a baby when a bright object is shown it. His wife smiled too; it was as pleasant to her as to him that he only mentioned the series, and did not try to find out the number of the winning ticket. To torment and tantalize oneself with hopes of possible fortune is so sweet, so thrilling!

"It is our series," said Ivan Dmitritch, after a long silence. "So there is a probability that we have won. It's only a probability, but there it is!"

"Well, now look!"

"Wait a little. We have plenty of time to be disappointed. It's on the second line from the top, so the prize is seventy-five thousand. That's not money, but power, capital! And in a minute I shall look at the list, and there — 26! Eh? I say, what if we really have won?"

The husband and wife began laughing and staring at one another in silence. The possibility of winning bewildered them; they could not have said, could not have dreamed, what they both needed that seventy-five thousand for, what they would buy, where they would go. They thought only of the figures 9,499 and 75,000 and pictured them in their imagination, while somehow they could not think of the happiness itself which was so possible.

Ivan Dmitritch, holding the paper in his hand, walked several times from corner to corner, and only when he had recovered from the first impression began dreaming a little.

“And if we have won,” he said — “why, it will be a new life, it will be a transformation! The ticket is yours, but if it were mine I should, first of all, of course, spend twenty-five thousand on real property in the shape of an estate; ten thousand on immediate expenses, new furnishing . . . travelling . . . paying debts, and so on. . . . The other forty thousand I would put in the bank and get interest on it.”

“Yes, an estate, that would be nice,” said his wife, sitting down and ropping her hands in her lap.

“Somewhere in the Tula or Oryol provinces. . . . In the first place we shouldn't need a summer villa, and besides, it would always bring in an income.”

And pictures came crowding on his imagination, each more gracious and poetical than the last. And in all these pictures he saw himself well-fed, serene, healthy, felt warm, even hot! Here, after eating a summer soup, cold as ice, he lay on his back on

the burning sand close to a stream or in the garden under a lime-tree. . . . It is hot. . . . His little boy and girl are crawling about near him, digging in the sand or catching ladybirds in the grass. He dozes sweetly, thinking of nothing, and feeling all over that he need not go to the office today, tomorrow, or the day after. Or, tired of lying still, he goes to the hayfield, or to the forest for mushrooms, or watches the peasants catching fish with a net. When the sun sets he takes a towel and soap and saunters to the bathing-shed, where he undresses at his leisure, slowly rubs his bare chest with his hands, and goes into the water. And in the water, near the opaque soapy circles, little fish flit to and fro and green water-weeds nod their heads. After bathing there is tea with cream and milk rolls. . . . In the evening a walk or *vint* with the neighbours.

“Yes, it would be nice to buy an estate,” said his wife, also dreaming, and from her face it was evident that she was enchanted by her thoughts.

Ivan Dmitritch pictured to himself autumn with its rains, its cold evenings, and its St. Martin's summer. At that season he would have to take longer walks about the garden and beside the river, so as to get thoroughly chilled, and then drink a big glass of vodka and eat a salted mushroom or a soused cucumber, and then — drink another. . . . The children would come running from the kitchen-garden, bringing a carrot and a radish smelling of fresh earth. . . . And then, he would lie stretched full length on the sofa, and in leisurely fashion turn over

the pages of some illustrated magazine, or, covering his face with it and unbuttoning his waistcoat, give himself up to slumber.

The St. Martin's summer is followed by cloudy, gloomy weather. It rains day and night, the bare trees weep, the wind is damp and cold. The dogs, the horses, the fowls — all are wet, depressed, downcast. There is nowhere to walk; one can't go out for days together; one has to pace up and down the room, looking despondently at the grey window. It is dreary!

Ivan Dmitritch stopped and looked at his wife.

"I should go abroad, you know, Masha," he said.

And he began thinking how nice it would be in late autumn to go abroad somewhere to the South of France . . . to Italy . . . to India!

"I should certainly go abroad too," his wife said.

"But look at the number of the ticket!"

"Wait, wait! . . ."

He walked about the room and went on thinking. It occurred to him: what if his wife really did go abroad? It is pleasant to travel alone, or in the society of light, careless women who live in the present, and not such as think and talk all the journey about nothing but their children, sigh, and tremble with dismay over every farthing. Ivan Dmitritch imagined his wife in the train with a multitude of parcels, baskets, and bags; she would be sighing over something, complaining that the train made her head ache, that she had spent so much money. . . . At the stations he would continually be having to run

for boiling water, bread and butter. . . . She wouldn't have dinner because of its being too dear. . . .

"She would begrudge me every farthing," he thought, with a glance at his wife. "The lottery ticket is hers, not mine! Besides, what is the use of her going abroad? What does she want there? She would shut herself up in the hotel, and not let me out of her sight. . . . I know!"

And for the first time in his life his mind dwelt on the fact that his wife had grown elderly and plain, and that she was saturated through and through with the smell of cooking, while he was still young, fresh, and healthy, and might well have got married again.

"Of course, all that is silly nonsense," he thought; "but . . . why should she go abroad? What would she make of it? And yet she would go, of course. . . . I can fancy . . . In reality it is all one to her, whether it is Naples or Klin. She would only be in my way. I should be dependent upon her. I can fancy how, like a regular woman, she will lock the money up as soon as she gets it. . . . She will hide it from me. . . . She will look after her relations and grudge me every farthing."

Ivan Dmitritch thought of her relations. All those wretched brothers and sisters and aunts and uncles would come crawling about as soon as they heard of the winning ticket, would begin whining like beggars, and fawning upon them with oily, hypocritical smiles. Wretched, detestable people! If they were given anything, they would ask for



more; while if they were refused, they would swear at them, slander them, and wish them every kind of misfortune.

Ivan Dmitritch remembered his own relations, and their faces, at which he had looked impartially in the past, struck him now as repulsive and hateful.

"They are such reptiles!" he thought.

And his wife's face, too, struck him as repulsive and hateful. Anger surged up in his heart against her, and he thought malignantly:

"She knows nothing about money, and so she is stingy. If she won it she would give me a hundred roubles, and put the rest away under lock and key."

And he looked at his wife, not with a smile now, but with hatred. She glanced at him too, and also with hatred and anger. She had her own daydreams, her own plans, her own reflections; she understood perfectly well what her husband's dreams were. She knew who would be the first to try and grab her winnings.

"It's very nice making daydreams at other people's expense!" is what her eyes expressed. "No, don't you dare!"

Her husband understood her look; hatred began stirring again in his breast, and in order to annoy his wife he glanced quickly, to spite her at the fourth page on the newspaper and read out triumphantly:

"Series 9,499, number 46! Not 26!"

Hatred and hope both disappeared at once, and it began immediately to seem to Ivan Dmitritch and his wife that their rooms were dark and small and low-pitched, that the supper they had been eat-



ing was not doing them good, but lying heavy on their stomachs, that the evenings were long and wearisome. . . .

“What the devil’s the meaning of it?” said Ivan Dmitritch, beginning to be ill-humoured. “Wherever one steps there are bits of paper under one’s feet, crumbs, husks. The rooms are never swept! One is simply forced to go out. Damnation take my soul entirely! I shall go and hang myself on the first aspen-tree!”





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