W. W. STRICKLAND

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Halek's Stories

AND

Evensongs

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To Dr Josef Kořenský

with the author's best wishes

W. W. Strickland Praha 21.11.30

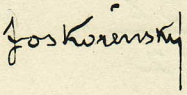
HALEK'S STORIES
AND
EVENSONGS

HALEK'S STORIES AND EVENSONGS

Translated from the Czech

by

W. W. STRICKLAND



1930
B. WESTERMANN CO., INC. / NEW YORK

NÁRODNÍ KNIHOVNA
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Dow. 258/32
94947

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CONTENTS

Preface 7
Publisher's Introduction to the Edition of 1923 15
Evensongs
I am that knight of fairy-love 18
All on earth is lapped in slumber 18
The brightness of the sun at noon 18
What boots it that yon nightingale 19
It seemed to me that thou wert dead 19
When to the earth I yield my dust 20
Ye little birds upon the tree 21
Ah! marvel not if thou shouldst hear 21
Your arm about some supple waist 21
The greatest hero is not he 22
Spring flutters home from far away 22
I am like the tufted linden 23
Full oft I think—so oft as e'er 23
Come, sweetheart, 'tis the very hour 23
Fair, passing fair, my Lord, is all 24
To Paradise God summoned me 24
Thine eye is a beautiful lake, lady 25
Come, sweetheart, and sit beside me 25
If all the sweet delights of life 26
Dark as is heaven's blue azure vault 26
That birdie that sings in the tree 27
What silence reigns around as when 27
I tried to think how life would be 27
Fair was the night and transparent 28
Those stars who scattered through the sky 28
I know not whether it were dream or no 29
All ye who labour sore-opprest 29
Two thoughts in God, as stars were set 30
Under the Hollow Tree 31
In Lordly Halls 85
Our Grandfather 119
The Domestic Teacher 169
Poldik, the Scavenger 211
Pensioned Off 249

PREFACE

IF THE reader will take a map of the world and draw three lines, one from Venice to Danzig, another from Constantinople to the White Sea, and a third from the Erz Mountains, west of Prague, to Kamchatka, he will be able to form some idea of the vast stretch of territory affected by Slavonic civilization.

No confraternity of nations, not even the Anglo-Saxon, occupies so large a portion of the earth's surface as the rapidly-increasing Slavonic brotherhood.

On this account alone, if for no other reason, any attempt to bring home to English readers something of the inner life of some of these peoples is worthy of attention. Bohemian literature, moreover, has several special claims upon English readers. In the first place more than once the royal families of England and Bohemia have been united. Then again the country to some extent in its configuration and the variety of its strata, still more in its plethora of coal, iron-stone, and other minerals has much in common with England. Bohemia has never broken entirely with the traditions of feudalism, and in the flourishing condition of its principalities and great estates, the richness of its woodland, the abundance of its game, its fine breed of horses, and the excellence of its beer, we seem to see a copy of old England, and are reminded that similar causes produce similar effects: not that this is exactly true of the last item, however, which is at once milder and of purer quality than our own. Lastly, the religious struggles of the Reformation were fought out in Bohemia much on the same lines as in England, and while we may proudly claim some spiritual affinity between our own Protestant martyrs and the victims of papal power in Prague, we are also reminded that in the national hero of Bohemia, John Hus, more than in any other of the great Protestant martyrs, were exhibited the most spotless purity of life, the most complete absence of self-seeking or worldly ambition, the most loyal devotion to duty, and the most simple and ready self-sacrifice in the cause of truth. The literature of a country which has produced the most perfect type of Christian piety which the world has yet seen, a man who of all others approximates most in his life and death to the originator of the Christian cult, merits something better than neglect at the hands of Christians steeped in the flimsy rhetoric of French triviality; and the latest production of a civilization which was of no mean order while England still revelled in barbarism, might occasionally be exchanged with advantage for the endless verbiage of our own school of novels or the edifying lucubrations of Emile Zola. Goethe, in a conversation with Eckermann, speaks with admiration of the simplicity and purity

of the Bohemian writers, and since his time there has been a great reawakening of the national spirit, and the language which had sunk to be a despised dialect of the common people of the towns and the peasantry of the rural districts, now claims half of the University of Prague, has its seat in one of the finest theatres in Europe, and is once more the proud mouthpiece of art and science.

The writer, some of whose stories are here brought to the notice of the English reading public, was one of those who helped on the attainment of this proud result. Palacky and Jungmann aroused the interest of the people in their own history by publishing historical and antiquarian works in the vernacular. Cajetan Tyl is still remembered as a patriotic dramatist and writer of fiction, and Erben's Slavonic folk-lore has a general interest, but none of the Bohemian writers has caught so speaking a likeness of the inner life of the Bohemian people as Viteslav Halek, no one is remembered with such enthusiastic affection by all classes, or strikes so responsive a chord in the feelings of high and low. Already throughout Bohemia societies have been formed for the reading of his works, although he has not been dead fifteen years, and when I lodged in Smichoff with an honest Bohemian stonemason and his wife, I found it difficult to keep their hands off my copy of his stories. The more cultivated classes admire him for the simplicity of his style, and even the Germans are constrained grudgingly to acknowledge his merits. A complete edition of his works has, indeed, been lately published in the original language edited by a writer, whom from his name (Ferdinand Schulz), I should judge to be a German.

These works consist of some half-dozen dramas drawn chiefly from Slavonic history. The first of these, *Czarevic Alecsej,* was acted about the year 1860, and is modelled to some extent on Goethe's *Egmont.* For another, composed and brought out about the same time, *Kral Rudolf,* the author had the honour of a short imprisonment at the hands of the Austrian Government. *Sergius Catiline, Zavis z Falkenstjerna, Kral Vukasin* (dealing with Serbian history), and *Amnon and Tamar* are the names of his other dramas. They are all tragedies, and somewhat heavy-reading. *Amnon and Tamar,* written in 1874, is the most powerful of them, but the subject is objectionable.

It is difficult for a foreigner with an imperfect knowledge of the language to judge correctly, but I should say that none of the other plays rise much above the level of Tennyson's and Swinburne's dramatic efforts. Most of them, however, are the work of the poet's earlier years as a writer, and it is noteworthy that his latest works are far above those of a more youthful period, and this makes his somewhat premature death the more regrettable. These dramas fill two volumes.

Another volume is devoted to lyrical pieces, ballads, and romances, written at different times between 1854 and 1870. A few samples are

given in the present book of translations. These were most of them written in 1858. They are very popular in Bohemia. In fact a large number of them have been set to music and are now the *volkslieder* of the people. The student of Heine will observe that several of the ideas in these Bohemian poems have been adapted from the Jewish writer. For example, one of Halek's lyrics beginning:—

> Nay, marvel not if thou shouldst hear
> The birds sing songs of thee, love, etc.,

is a very close copy of Heine's

> Wer hat euch dies Wörtlein gelehret,
> Ihr Vöglein in lustiger Höh?
> Schweigt still! Wenn mein Herz es höret,
> Dann tut es noch einmal so weh.
>
> Es kam ein Jungfräulein gegangen,
> Sie sang es immerfort,
> Da haben wir Vöglein gefangen
> Das hübsche, goldene Wort.

A wild poem by Heine, beginning, *Ich kam von meiner Herrin Haus,* in which the dead are supposed to rise from their graves and recount to one another what brought them there is also twice imitated by Halek in his idyllic poems. Once in a scene in a poem called *Alfred* (1858) and again most elaborately in a poetical historical retrospect, *Dedicove bile hory* (1869).

This brings me to mention his volume of *Idyllic poems* written at different times between 1858 and 1871, some of which I judge to be the most perfect of his works. In the latest of these idylls *Devce z Tater* [A maiden of the Carpathians] the splendour of the language and melody of the verse outshine that of any modern poet, Leopardi not excepted. The story is simple and interesting, the sentiment healthy, and the characters life-like; could it be adequately translated English critics would, I think, admit it to be one of the most perfect idylls in any language. *Krasna Lejla* and *Mejrima and Husejn,* Turkish stories in verse (1859), and *Alfred* (a Czech romance) are also readable and highly poetical. *Goar* and *Cerny prapor* [The black flag] are the names of two others.

A volume of prose stories written between 1857 and 1859 is of less interest. The stories are diffuse, full of criticisms about art and Wagner's music, the plot is slight and the characters commonplace. Two volumes of prose stories written at a much later period, a story called *In the cottage and on the estate,* and a volume or two of criticism comprise the rest of Halek's works.

One of these volumes of stories is here presented to the public in an English dress and of their merits the English reading public can therefore form its own opinion. The stories are for the most part translated literally and I must apologize for retaining here and there

Bohemian words, sometimes where an English equivalent is wanting, sometimes, in order to give an idea of the character of the original language, which also means the character of the people who speak it. The stories have been twice revised. Once by a learned Bohemian Jew in Prague, to whom I read them aloud and who was kind enough to appreciate them in their English dress. "They are written from the heart to the heart", he said. And again a second time by an English literary man to whom the sentiment of the stories was so obnoxious that he put his pen through about one third part of them. Most of his excisions I have rejected. In spite of these revisions I cannot hope to have avoided many errors of translation which I hope may be corrected by the critical reader, nor can I expect a wide circle of English readers. The stories appeal to a civilization developing on different lines from our own, and, although they are a true picture of Slavonic life and sentiment, they will no doubt often appear to English readers fantastic and overstrained. It may be worth noticing, in passing, that Poldik, the name of a character in one of the stories, is the diminutive of Leopold, and that of Bartos, in another of them, stands for Bartholomew.

He who can read between the lines will perceive in both these stories ingenious political allegories. These I will leave him to discover for himself, premising that in both the main idea is the maintenance of the Bohemian nationality against the encroachments of the centralizing Austrian power. The last story is based on a strange institution in the rural districts of Bohemia—that of *vejminkar*. In the case of small freehold estates or farms held on a long lease, the owner, as his sons grow up, pensions himself off; or, to put it differently, retires upon a settlement from the active management of the estate, in order that the eldest, youngest, or favourite son may marry and have the enjoyment of it. The pathetic fate of the village Lear in this story is an eloquent exposition of the abuses of the system which exists to this day in some parts of Bohemia.

I began this preface by pointing out what an immense portion of the globe forms the nidus of Slavonic civilization, and as many people have very indefinite ideas about Slavism and its languages, it may not be amiss to conclude with a few remarks upon the Czech or Bohemian language and its relation to other Slavonic dialects. As I do not profess to be a learned man, I have extracted the little I have to say on the subject from Mikes's Russo-Czech grammar.

The Slavonian nation, he writes, now contains eighty million souls, and is divided by its position into Southern, Eastern, and Western.

I.—In Eastern Slavonic we find

(1) The Cyrillian or Ancient Slavonic, used, like the Latin, but very much modified, as the language of the Church, by Russians, Serbians, Bulgarians, and part of the Dalmatians;

(2) The Russian language, divided into three slightly different dialects:—

(a) Great Russian, spoken by thirty-five million people;
(b) Little Russian, spoken by thirteen million people, and
(c) White Russian, spoken by three million people.

II.—South Slavonic is divided into

(1) Serbian, spoken by five million people;
(2) Croatian, spoken by one million people;
(3) Carinthian-Slovenian, spoken by one million people;
(4) Bulgarian, spoken by seven million people.

III.—Western Slavonic is divided into

(1) Polish, employed by about ten million people;
(2) Czech, divided into
(a) Czesko-Moravian, spoken by over four million people, and
(b) Hungarian-Slovenian, spoken by two million people;
(3) Lusatian-Serbian, divided into Upper and Lower, and spoken by 150,000 people in Saxony.

I will not weary the reader by going over in detail the relationship of these languages to one another; suffice it to say that the Czech or Bohemian is most closely related to the Upper Lusatian, the Croatian, and the Little Russian dialects. The Bohemians, like most of the Catholic and Western Slavonians, use the Latin characters, and thus their language forms a good introduction to the study of the rest.

York, 1886 *Author*

EVENSONGS

PUBLISHER'S INTRODUCTION
to the edition of 1923

The *Evening Songs* of Halek, like the song of the nightingale," says Richard Badger, the Boston publisher, "sweetest in the quietness of eventide, are songs of youth and love, glorifying the spring, the flowers, the birds, the heavens and the stars, speaking to the human heart whether wrapped in happiness or sorrow. As effusions of feelings from a heart laden with love's sweet passion, they appeal, above all, to the erotic spring of life. They are a bouquet of charming lyrics, full of light, colour, and fragrance, breathing spring, love, and poesy."

Halek was born in 1835 and died in 1874. He commenced his literary career in 1858 and was the leader of the romantic and lyric school of Czech poesy. The present translation of the Evening Songs was published by Sir Walter Strickland in 1886, at York. Another translation by Dr. Joseph Stybr was published at Boston in 1920. It is not too much to claim for Strickland's translation epic superiority over the American version. Compare Strickland's lines:—

Spring flutters home from far away,
And Nature's children, touched with longing,
Woke from their long, long winter's dream,
To meet the sun are thronging.

The chaffinch flutters from the nest
Fresh children from their cottage sally,
And varied flowerets on the lees,
Scent all the neighbouring valley.

Bursts forth the leaf upon the bough,
And from the young bird's throat are ringing
The first shy notes, and in young hearts
The germs of love are springing.

with Stybr's version of the same song:—

The spring came flying from afar;
With fresh desires all's teeming;
All things pressed forward to the sun—
So long all had been dreaming!

The finches flew out of their nest
And children from their bowers,
And on the meadows sweetest scents
Breathe countless little flowers.

Young leaves press their way from the twigs
And from birds' throats their voices,
And in the heart with budding love
The youthful breast rejoices.

Again, take Strickland's magnificent version of Halek's versified form of the legend that the life of every human being is bound up with a star in heaven:—

Two thoughts in God, as stars were set
In heaven's divine communion,
To shine of all the starry choir,
In fondest union.

Till one of them fell prone from heaven
And left its mate to languish,
Till God excused her, too, the skies
Pitying her anguish.

And many a night on earth they yearned—
Sad earth—for their lost Eden,
Till once again they met as men,
As youth and maiden.

And looking in each others eyes
They recognized straightway,
And lived thrice blest till heaven to rest
Called one away.

Who dying out of earth recalled
Her love to heaven's fair shore,
And God forbade it not, and now
They're stars once more.

Stybr renders this beautiful poem after the manner of a catalogue recital, as follows:—

There were two thoughts, two thoughts of God,
Two stars beside each other,
And from all of the heaven's stars
They most loved one another.

Once one of them fell to the earth—
The other pined in sorrow,
And God, touched by her grief and love,
Sent her down on the morrow.

They sought each other many nights
As lonely souls their Eden,
Until one day they chanced to meet
As a young man and maiden.

Their eyes met, and they recognized
Each other, tender-hearted,
And lived together in great bliss
Till one of them departed.

And when she died, she always called
And languished for the other,
Till God summoned the other one,
And they're again together.

After which comparison I invite the reader to enjoy the fragrant sadness of Halek's eventide musings in the knowledge that they owe their beauty not less to translator than to author. A word about the translator will not be out of place.

In appreciation of his services to Czech literature the translator has been made a citizen of the Czech Republic and has formally repudiated his baronetcy so far as the title applies to himself.

I

I am that knight of fairy-lore
  Who rode so boldly into the world,
To see the maiden whose beauty
  Like a rose on its bush is unfurled.

And they said that who so beheld her
  With an endless curse was opprest,
Either changed to a stony statue
  Or his heart torn out of his breast.

But I thought in my pride and madness
  Some haply escape sometimes,
Forth rode I, and, for my presumption,
  Am changed to a rhymer of rhymes.

II

All on earth is lapped in slumber,
  All save the heart in my breast;
Tell me, Lord of the firmament,
  Why hath that heart no rest.

This world so divine is silent all,
  All save my heart that throbbeth ever,
Tell me, Lord of the firmament,
  Why doth it tire never?

Thought is lulled to rest on the lap of slumber,
  Day and night alternate watch are keeping,
But the heart, true guardian of love eternal,
  Throbs on for ever unsleeping.

III

The brightness of the sun at noon,
  That is my love to thee,
And night, fair shadow of the day,
  Thy silent love for me.

Thou litst in me a fire as hot,
As burns earth's central zone,
But now that fire unfed by thee,
Feeds on itself alone.

I thought with thee on love to feast,
Now crumbs are all my share,
What wonder if in lonely grief,
My face is shrunk with care.

But human hearts can suffer much,
And sickness tames their might,
And I, i' faith, can scarcely say,
If mine be day or night.

Thus is it writ. And day and night
Eternally are fleeting,
And only one brief kiss is theirs,
In twilight's hour of meeting.

IV

What boots it that yon nightingale
So sweetly sings to me, love,
When this estranged heart of mine,
Dallies alone with thee, love?

Ah! were his song that charms the sense,
The sweetest e'er created,
What boots it—when my soul with thee,
And thy sweet soul is sated?

Ah! little mortal man suspects,
How sweet 'tis thus to adore thee,
I'd drag the stars from heaven to thee,
And sell my soul, love, for thee.

V

It seemed to me that thou wert dead,
I heard the death-knell tolling,
And through the air a voice of woe,
And lamentation rolling.

How strange a couch they strewed thee there,
A stone the coverlid,
And bade me write a verse thereon
In memory of thy shade.

Oh! people! people! hearts of stone,
Here take my heart among you,
Be graven on the funeral slab,
What yet I have not sung you.

My living love ye trusted not,
My words were for your jeering,
Now shall the stones cry out on you,
And win my words a hearing.

VI

When to the earth I yield my dust,
My soul to God from whom it came,
I pray that I may buried be,
As best befits a poet's fame.

Around my brows the laurel wreath,
And lodge the lyre within my hands,
That my new neighbours well may know,
Who entereth last their silent lands.

Sacred to me my lyre hath been,
And not the plaything of an hour,
Then let it rest upon my breast,
When death's long shadows lower.

And when it irks us in the grave,
I'll wreath a song around their heart,
And sing them songs of such delight,
The dead to life shall start.

But if ye living idly dream
Good ne'er achieved, reforms unsped,
I'll rouse the dead against you, ay!
I'll wake the living with the dead!

VII

Ye little birds upon the tree
  Whose very dreams are song,
Which of you thinks of me, your friend,
  Who dies of cruel wrong?

Thou little moon ride high in heaven,
  I hail thee for my brother,
My passion's beam is chill as thine,
  We suit with one another.

The last faint flickering warmth is quenched,
  And only words remain,
Yet, could I fan them into life,
  I'd live my griefs again.

VIII

Ah! marvel not if thou shouldst hear,
  The birds sing songs of thee, love,
Since once they came at eventide,
  To hear and look on me, love.

And once they came and yet again,
  As to an elder brother,
For I am free as they, and we
  Are kin to one another.

And many a song I sang of thee,
  Songs full of love and passion,
To which those small birds tuned their throat,
  And sang them in their fashion.

So when I visited the copse,
  Where those sweet birds were singing,
I marvelled much to hear the grove,
  With my own love-notes ringing.

IX

Your arm about some supple waist,
  To thread the waltz—what joyous pleasure!
Come, pale-face, join the dance with us,
  I'll bid them play a measure.

But pale-face shivered e'en as though
Chill frost was o'er his limbs congealing,
And o'er that pale wan face of his,
I saw the hot tears stealing.

X

The greatest hero is not he,
Who being struck returns the blow,
But he is great who, though deceived,
Will not his faith forgo.

He never knew love's holiest flame,
Who dares her sacred shrine defame,
Love learns forgiveness unto men,
And, cursed, curseth not again.

Who cannot sacrifice himself,
Shall ne'er to love's pure empire rise,
And false the priest who loveth self,
More than the sacrifice.

Ah! sweetheart, taught by thee to love,
Earth's joys I'd give e'en heaven above.
Meek as the lamb submissive dies,
If love demand the sacrifice.

XI

Spring flutters home from far away,
And Nature's children, touched with longing,
Woke from their long, long winter's dream,
To meet the sun are thronging.

The chaffinch flutters from the nest,
Fresh children from their cottage sally,
And varied flowerets on the lees,
Scent all the neighbouring valley.

Bursts forth the leaf upon the bough,
And from the young bird's throat are ringing
The first shy notes, and in young hearts
The germs of love are springing.

XII

I am like the tufted linden
  All in gala dress arrayed,
Thou art the lovely rose of May,
  Come, seat thee in my shade.

Here every leaf is breathing sweetly,
  Here the buzzing swarm resorts,
Hither fly the birds at even,
  And the birds they are my thoughts.

And far away, away they fly,
  As children from their home they flee,
But they will fly away no more,
  When thou seatst thyself by me.

XIII

Full oft I think—so oft as e'er
  I press thy heart to me, love,
That thou for me alone art here
  On earth, and I for thee, love.

'Tis hard to journey in the world,
  And never be benighted,
And the best bliss on earth is this,
  When kindred hearts are plighted.

And hath the king his coronal,
  And God his heaven above,
The little bird his bower of spring,
  Oh! I have thee, my love.

XIV

Come, sweetheart, 'tis the very hour,
  For holiest prayer on bended knee,
The moon is rising o'er the tower.
  Time flies—oh! loved one, come to me.

Nay, do not clasp thy hands, my sweet,
But clasp me, love, as I clasp thee,
And 'stead of hands—two hearts shall meet,
In prayer to heaven eternally.

Be lip to lip, love, thine to mine,
That from one mouth our prayers may rise.
I'll breath the words, dear, into thine,
Thy breath shall waft them to the skies.

And thus our mutual prayer shall rise,
The purest truest sacrifice.
For thus united seraphs raise,
Eternal prayer, eternal praise.

XV

Fair, passing fair, my Lord, is all,
In love that's o'er us beaming,
All lives for love and would dissolve
In love's poetic dreaming.

Yon cloudlet hastening o'er the skies,
Love's messenger is wending,
The bird that's dozing on the bough
Still dreams of love unending.

Man here on earth, till death shall bow
His head—'tis love supplieth
The theme of all his joys and tears,
For love he lives and dieth.

Ay! heavenly angels when from harps
Of gold their songs are springing,
What could they sing of, being forbade
Love's music for their singing.

XVI

To Paradise God summoned me,
There to learn songs of heavenly might,
'Tis ill for man alone to be,
And God formed Eve for my delight.

No rib he chose from out my side,
  My very heart he did divide,
And therefore doth this heart of mine,
  So fondly nestle, love to thine.

And therefore yearnings passing strange
  Are lodged within this heart so lone,
As tho' 'twere fain our hearts again,
  Should grow together into one.

And therefore when afar I roam,
  My feet unbidden turn to home,
And 'stead of blood this heart supplies,
  Only the tear drop to my eyes.

XVII

Thine eye is a beautiful lake, lady,
  That glitters all bright in the gloaming.
In it bathes the fond light of the stars of the night.
  Of the stars in the azure sky roaming.

And 'tis clear as the crystal of ice, lady,
  And its depths are transparent as ether.
Youth, gaze not too deep, tho' the sea seem asleep,
  There are many lie buried beneath her.

XVIII

Come, sweetheart, and sit beside me,
  With my arms let me enshroud thee.
With a spirit as fair as an angel's
  Out of heaven, hath God endowed thee.

And oft I would make confession,
  And give thee some secret token,
But the words, like a corpse in the grave enclosed,
  Remain by my lips unspoken.

And what I so oft would tell thee,
  Oh! no syllables can spell it,
My spirit is full of it,
  But my lips refuse to tell it.

But when my spirit melts in thine,
And heart unto heart is pressing,
Oh! then methinks that thou knowest all
That I would be confessing.

XIX

If all the sweet delights of life
Should turn to dreary slaving,
And only love were left to cheer,
Still life were worth the having.

If truth were everything on earth
And love were only dreaming,
I'd shun this waking life and plunge
In dreams where love was beaming.

And granted it were all a dream,
Still ever I'd remember,
That sweet fond dream, that shed a beam,
O'er waking life's November.

XX

Dark as is heaven's blue azure vault
So golden is the starlight,
Strange fancies fill the heart of him
Who gazes on that far light,

Of star dust eddying far and far
Beyond the range of seeing,
Where yet not one small star reveals
The secret of its being.

Only when in two virgin hearts
Love's earliest breath is breathing,
Yon heaven, 'tis said, another star
Among her orbs is wreathing.

And if in one of those two hearts
Untimely fades love's blossom,
Also a golden star falls prone
From heaven's eternal bosom.

XXI

That birdie that sings in the tree
As himself were the song that he singeth—
Hearts wonder not that he so sings
Where love's divine harmony springeth.

Oh! that bird he so sings from the heart
To the heart of the hearer believe it,
He might force e'en a mortal to weep
With a heart that's attuned to receive it.

And methinks that his plaintive refrain
To my own songs is closely related,
For this the light foam of my lyre
Is only a dirge iterated.

XXII

What silence reigns around as when
A dream o'er weary eyes descends,
As when the bird in downy nest
Her callow offspring tends.

So gently night her pinions fold
Above the star-bespangled skies,
And haply many a heart shall gain
What carking day denies.

And haply many a heart shall win
What envious earth no more may give,
And kindly dreams make real the gleams
That scarce in memory live.

XXIII

I tried to think how life would be
Were love from this world banished,
Earth would be but a naked waste
Whence every flower had vanished.

The heart would wander through the world
  Till canker care decayed it,
And gloomier than this world itself,
  Ere God in light arrayed it.

So gloomy that terrestrial man
  Would loath the earth he cherished,
And God himself would abdicate
  A heaven where love had perished.

XXIV

Fair was the night and transparent,
  You might look into heaven's portals,
And the scent and the song and the murmur,
  Enchanted the hearts of mortals.

Alas! that thou wert not beside me
  To list, love, beside me staying.
How the oak-leaves whisper together,
  And the wind with the woodbine is playing.

How the universe is but a song
  From the bosom of Nature springing.
And how weak is the echo in human hearts
  Of the star music round us ringing.

XXV

Those stars who scattered through the sky
  With their own beauty strew it.
Look fondly down as they would fain
  Have called me to it.

Ah! no ye little twinkling stars
  Yours be the circling heaven,
Dearer to me this earth—its joys
  And woes—earth's leaven.

Ye have no notion, loved stars,
  Through your chill ether racing.
How fair a heaven unfold's o'er earth
  At love's embracing.

XXVI

I know not whether it were dream or no,
But still in memory linger night's creations,
How on the judgment page of God I gazed
And read the fate of nations.

Thoughts weighty as the mind of God himself
Above his head a hundredfold were streaming,
And beauteous as a starlit night of spring
O'er his fair body gleaming.

Many a thought—the germ of a whole world—
And many like some song of gentlest being,
Many—the history of a coming race—
Still hid from human seeing.

There, too, I found the type of my own passion.
And thy sweet heart with every charm invested.
There, too, our mutual loves in heaven's pure ray
Like two bright cloudlets rested.

And on this love of ours the Lord divine
Looked kind and fondly from his throne of glory,
And choirs of youthful angels ranged around
Chanted its simple story.

XXVII

All ye who labour sore-opprest,
Come unto me to compass rest.
Here from your loins the burden loose,
And quench the spring of sorrow's sluice.

Love's empire I establish here,
Where heart meets heart in friendship dear,
And what so grief the spirit tries
Shall melt in heavenly harmonies.

Here envy shall revenge forgo,
And speech in sweetest song shall flow.
Here, lions modify their throat,
And harpies stock the pigeon-cote.

Here shall be balm for every sore,
Here hearts be young for evermore,
Here shall the rose unwithering bloom,
And harsh unkindness find no room.

XXVIII

Two thoughts in God, as stars were set
  In heaven's divine communion,
To shine of all the starry choir,
  In fondest union.

Till one of them fell prone from heaven
  And left its mate to languish,
Till God excused her, too, the skies
  Pitying her anguish.

And many a night on earth they yearned—
  Sad earth—for their lost Eden,
Till once again they met as men,
  As youth and maiden.

And looking in each others eyes
  They recognized straightway,
And lived thrice blest till heaven to rest
  Called one away.

Who dying out of earth recalled
  Her love to heaven's fair shore
And God forbade it not, and now
  The're stars once more.

UNDER
THE HOLLOW TREE

CHAPTER I

WHEN Venik was twelve years old his father Riha took him from school. "You must help us now", he said. "You will be our little shepherd, and will drive off the sheep to the hill-side; then in the afternoon I will bring you your dinner there, and you will come home yourself for the evening meal."

Venik spun round with delight on his right heel. His teeth flashed out from his gums, and his father added, "Take your violin with you to the pasturage." After this, Venik was like one possessed; he skipped about the apartment, till he had skipped up to his violin, taken it down from its nail, stretched several of the strings, and played and skipped about at the same time.

Venik, it must be understood, learnt the violin at school, and on Sunday used to play primo in the gallery so well that the schoolmaster composed a solo in the gloria expressly for him; and when Venik played, people at church turned their eyes to the gallery instead of looking at the altar. But no one could see him from below, he was still so small that he scarcely touched the rail of the gallery with his head. Then year after year the head emerged just over the rail, but the violin was yet invisible from below.

So then pretty early next morning Venik drove off the sheep to the hill-side below the wood, and took with him his violin. Below the hill-side murmured a river, on the hill-side began to murmur the oak-wood. Venik skirted the wood, and at the edge of it he noticed a single old tree whose trunk was hollow, so that four people could comfortably seat themselves inside. This tree looked as though it had stepped out from the wood. It had a sort of door and threshold; on the threshold, beside the entrance, squatted Venik, that he might look after the sheep, and he said to himself, "Here I like to be: beside this tree I shall remain."

When he had sat thus a short time and saw how the river fled away below him, and how the sheep kept creeping over the hill-side, and how the wood behind him kept murmuring so softly, something stirred within him like the river, and something murmured softly like the woodland.

But when birds began to call to one another from the wood, Venik thought that he ought to answer them. He took his violin to make them some response. He played a whole mass in their

behoof and his own, just as he had played it last in chapel. He thought that in that way he should soonest make friends with them by showing them what he knew.

He played: and when he came to the gloria, where he had the solo in chapel, he thought he ought to do his very best. He did his best, and played till his face shone. If those birds had understood anything about playing they must have been well contented with him. When he had finished playing you might have heard an answer, but it was not the birds who answered, it was the little Krista who, when Venik had finished playing, began to sing over her solo for last Sunday's mass. Unseen she had crept behind the tree, and now betrayed herself by her singing.

Venik was the violinist of the gallery, and Krista was its chief songstress; she had a voice like a little angel, and when she sang people said it was like stringing pearls on a silken thread. Venik and Krista made music in the gallery side by side; and when one accompanied the other people said the chapel was like paradise; they were not brother and sister, but people called them "those children", because they always learnt together, together walked home from school, and from home to school, and stood together in the gallery. The village folk talked about "those children" on their way to the chapel; "those children" were like a miracle to them when they heard them in chapel, and they talked about "those children" again all the way from chapel.

Krista was an orphan; she was now nine years old, and had no recollection of her parents. She was attached to the home of Venik's father like the swallow's nest which hung from the eaves, and which no one thought of pulling down. Venik's father, perhaps, did not the least know why he had her at his house. It may have been because she was an orphan; or, perhaps, it may have been because of her sweet little voice. She was like that swallow's nest under the cornice: no one pulled down that nest.

Venik's father was sometimes known as the cottager, because there was another Riha in the village—a peasant proprietor—the brother of Riha the cottager. They also talked of Riha as Riha the widower, because Venik had already lost his mother.

When Krista began to sing behind the tree, Venik put down his violin, turned in the direction where sat the little songstress, beat time to her, nodded with his head, and was well satisfied. But when she had quite ended he roughly accosted her: "Krista, why are you not at school", he said.

"Why are you not there, too", said Krista.

"I, indeed! I am twelve years old and belong to school no longer, but you are only nine."

"I don't belong there either now," retorted Krista, "and I won't go!"

"How dare you? If papa knew of it he would drive you there", retorted Venik angrily.

"I am come to feed the sheep with you, and you want to drive me away", pleaded Krista.

On this Venik stood up, took her by the hand, and said imperiously, "Go at once, or I will drive you hence. Hie away to school!"

"I won't go, and you know it", retorted Krista.

And when she wouldn't stir an inch, Venik took her round the waist and dragged her as far as his strength sufficed. Krista staggered back, sank to the ground, burst into tears, and cried plaintively, "Ah! I am only a poor orphan girl."

These words touched Venik. He forgot all at once that he had to send her to school, and only saw that Krista was in plaintive mood, and that he was the cause of it. He stood as if fixed to the ground, and did not know in which direction to move, whether towards Krista or towards the tree; then he went to the tree and sat himself there. He wished to play but it wouldn't come. No mass, no song even occurred to him. Then he looked round at Krista and could have cried with her, could have gone to her, could have soothed her, could have asked her pardon and have excused her school, but he did not know how he could do that.

He felt even worse when Krista ceased to cry, when she raised her head and in silent sort reiterated what she had said before in words. When having her hands clasped and herself sunk to earth, and when having her eyes full of salt tears and fixed on the vague distance, like an actor in his part, she confirmed even by the expression of her countenance the signature over which was written, "Ah! I am but a poor orphan girl."

As she sat thus plunged in her childish grief, Venik silently approached her, squatted himself beside her, and after a few moments said, "Krista, how does it feel to be an orphan?"

He said it with all the sympathy of which, at his age, he was capable. He said it as if he would have told her, "Tell me how it feels and I will share it with you."

"How does it feel?" said Krista, in reply to his question. "When I have only you, and you drive me from you, how can I be any-

thing but an orphan?" and her eyes still moist with weeping turned from the vague distance to him, and were full of mute reproach.

"Nay, I do not drive you from me, but I want you to go to school, and to school you must go, for you are not twelve years old like me", said Venik.

"I don't want to go to school any more," retorted Krista, "I like to be here on the hill-side, and stay here I will."

"And where will you learn to sing?" asked Venik as a last resource.

"With you", said Krista, and this quite beat Venik what to say next.

However, he answered, "You might go to school, and after school come here on the hill-side. Lord! how we should get on if you learnt at school and here as well!"

At these words Krista fell a-thinking, then she looked at Venik, took him by the hand and said, "You are right, I will do so. I will go to school, and after school I will come to you on the hill-side."

Thus did these two young diplomatists come to a mutual understanding. And when both were satisfied, Venik said, "Are you still a poor orphan girl, Krista?"

"You know that I am an orphan, I have neither papa nor mamma", she said, and Venik felt again so sorry, that he thought he must still try to do something for Krista to make her less an orphan.

And he said, "I have no mother either." He said it as if he gloried in it, and as if he made Krista a sort of present, and as if that present was the mother whom he had lost.

Venik thought then that he had effected in Krista what he wanted to effect in her. Renouncing his own mother, he laid that renunciation in the balance, and Krista seemed by so much nearer to him. He gloried in his own orphanhood that Krista might bear to be an orphan more easily. He discarded his own mother as though he would discard even life itself for Krista's sake.

Krista's case was indeed different. She had never seen Venik's mother; she had not known her, and so she thought that at the Rihas's there had never been a Mrs. Riha, and that Venik all his life had never had a mother. But now when Venik announced his loss, Krista perceived that what he did not possess he had really lost. "Did they bury your mamma?" asked Krista, as if all at once his misfortune presented itself to her imagination.

"They did not bury her," said Venik, "because I was still quite little and it was winter, but in the cemetery she lies for all that."

Venik's mind was haunted by a notion that when his mother's death took place people had said that they were not going to bury her; and he had clung to this idea ever since, just as it happens still oftener that a chance word which we have heard in childhood, and which we have clothed with a wholly incorrect meaning, hampers us with that incorrect meaning years after our reason has learnt the right one. So Venik till now would have it that his mother was not buried, that thus she was perhaps not entirely a corpse, and that consequently he was exaggerating a little when he said that he had not a mother either.

"Stay, if she is not buried let us bury her here on the hill-side," said Krista, "and then you will always be near her; you shall dig the grave and I will bring her here."

Very little of all this certainly did Venik understand, either of what Krista wanted to do or what she had got in her mind. But children quickly adapt themselves to everything. They pretend a tile to be a basin, a fragment of crumbling earth to be a cake, a pebble is a house, a bit of wood is a shopkeeper, the trestle of a table is a school, a scrap of rag is a shop full of dresses, a scrap of paper is a book. The fancies of children are omnipotent, and if a child says, "Our apartments with papa and mamma are better than the whole world", it is true from the moment that the child says it.

So when Krista got up to bring Venik's mamma, Venik got up also and began to make his mamma's grave beside the hollow tree. He grubbed in the earth with his pocket-knife. And when he had done with the grave Krista brought his mamma. She had her lapful of her, and had collected her all over the wood and over the hill-side.

And now they began to lay her in the tomb. First Krista strewed the grave with moss that mamma might feel it soft beneath her. Then she took a brier in full bloom and said, "Look, that is her heart", and she laid the brier in the middle of the grave. Then she took two willow-wands and said, "Look, those are her hands", and laid them next the heart. Then two other wands were for two feet, and finally she took from her lap sweet marjoram, and said, "Look, that is her head", and laid it on the top. Nothing more was wanted in her opinion to make a woman. So the corpse was done with and Venik's little mother lay in the grave.

After this began the funeral in the due form. Krista began to weep, and Venik wept with her. And they wept in earnest. Then Venik took his violin and played a miserere, just as he usually

did in the cemetery, and Krista sang. Then Krista sang over the funeral hymns, and Venik accompanied her on his violin. They sang and played everything they knew; they sang funeral hymns for a burial of a child; then those for youth, and lastly those for adults. And they sang and played with so much earnestness and with so much warmth of feeling that they were both quite ill after it, and hiccuped with emotion. A more touching funeral never took place in reality than the imaginary one conducted by these children. If the spirit of Venik's mother hovered above them, doubtless it rejoiced and wept with them.

Then the little grave-digger filled in the grave with earth, and his little mother was buried. They still had to sing over, "Oh! rest in peace", and afterwards, "We bid adieu to this body, we bury it in peace." Thereupon they quitted the tomb to the sound of the song and the violin. But once more they returned, not indeed to the grave exactly, but aside to the hollow tree, for Venik said that he would compose a requiem, and that there should be a full choral mass. And he played and Krista sang. They played and sang through all the solos, and the hollow tree was both church and gallery.

Even when late that evening they drove home the flock they were still sobbing and crying, and the next day Krista wouldn't think of going to school, "for you know," she said, "it is the vigil after the funeral."

CHAPTER II

FROM that day forth these children felt that they were equals. From that day forth one was no more an orphan than the other. From that day forth the hill-side was their consecrated ground, it was also their home. In the house they had a father, even Krista had a father in old Riha; and on the hill-side they had a mother, even Krista had there a mother. Immediately after school she used to be with Venik, and when there was no school she was with him the whole day.

Such days were like saint's days to both of them. Then she sang till her voice rang all through the woodland, and Venik would play on his violin, till people going past used to pause, and all the shepherds of the village would most gladly have pastured their flocks on the hill-side if they had had the right of pasturage there. When it rained the two crept into the hollow tree, and then it

seemed as if the tree was resonant with string and song, as if in its old age it grew young again in heart and mouth, and as if itself played and sang.

The raindrops fell splashing among the leaves of the old tree, and from its hollow, from its extinct portion, issued songs as though the tree had a young heart and a young mouth. When the sun shone the children seated themselves before the tree in the cool shade; and while all around the faded grass drooped and died, in the cool shade of that hollow it grew rich and strong as if it had been watered by the dew.

After a time Venik learnt also to imitate the birds on his violin, and when he had a mind could arouse such a concert that Krista herself sat beside him in astonishment, and as if in the presence of a revelation.

In the meantime Krista learnt to sing at school, and learnt also with Venik; at school with more ardour than formerly, in order to give pleasure to Venik, and when with Venik with more ardour still, in order to give pleasure to him and herself too. And so over the hill-side these two young artists fluttered like two birds with happy notes. They reanimated it, for all its life the like of these had never there been heard. They were like the living heart of that hill-side; they were its language and its speech, and could well have been a consolation to any who chose to listen to their conversation.

They were developed beyond their years; the girl's little throat was as consonant to Venik's strings as the two children were to one another, one was the complement of the other, so that I might have called the tones of her voice and the tones of violin comrades, if there had been as many likings and dislikings in the kingdom of tones as there are among men.

And they grew. When Venik was fifteen and Krista twelve, Krista also quitted school; and proud she was, as Venik had been before, to think that she was now twelve years old. But what delighted her most was that now she could linger on the hill-side all day long; and then at that time Krista desired nothing more than this; she had everything; twelve years of age, the hill-side, and on the hill-side singing and, besides singing, Venik and his violin. A loftier ideal of happiness she had not. Her little heart panted for no other bliss, but was filled to the brim with that of the present hour. Nay, it was even overflowing. She even felt that the world had a superfluity of joy and brightness, the sky a superfluity of blue transparent ether, the world a superfluity of

song and all sweet scents. It never oppressed her now—the thought that she was an orphan. She felt no special want to be supplied, and if she could have managed to give full expression to her feelings, she must have said that she rejoiced to live in the world.

But all at once Venik was again a solitary on the hill-side. Riha, his father, began to fail in health, he took to his bed and Krista had to stop at home with him. From that moment Venik ceased to take his violin with him: the song and the playing were silenced; death, like the shadow of a heavy pinion, hovered over Riha's cottage, and our children all at once ceased to be children. The world all at once took on a different colour; it suddenly lost for him its brilliance, and his breast was overflowing with anxiety. When Venik from the hill-side saw his cottage-home it looked to him as though it could be singled out from all the other buildings by particular signs, and to Krista sitting in complete silence in the sick-room with the ticking of the old clock and the groans of the failing Riha, it seemed as though an invisible finger had wiped off from the world all mirth and all sweet singing. All who came into the sick-room were gloomy and grave; those who went away from it seemed to be without hope, and Krista, who sat continually in the sick-room, felt as if all that gloom and hopelessness had concentrated itself on her; and time elapsed.

* * *

Krista flung herself on the bed sobbing, and out of doors the death-knell was sounding far and wide. When its deep vibration thrilled over the hill-side Venik started to his feet like a wounded hart. With weeping and lamentations he collected his sheep, and with weeping and lamentations drove them home. He had no need to ask for whom the death-knell was tolling, he knew it in an instant, and if he had not known it, a single glance at the sick-room would have told him all. The sign of death was visibly scored upon the house. That heavy wing had swooped down upon it, and the expression of everything was one of gloom and sorrow.

Krista knelt by the bedside on which Riha had just expired, Venik knelt beside Krista, and in broken syllables—for in such the deepest anguish is wont to speak if it finds words at all—thus addressed her, "Now I also am a poor orphan"; now he had sacrificed his father also; now Krista was at last in no sort poorer

than himself. Ay, it seemed to him that he was the most wretched of all. Then both felt as if in presence of an apparition; they could not grasp the truth, and it seemed to them as though this truth was somehow not quite true; and then again it appeared beyond all suspicion to be the truth. And the truth was yet more irresistible when people brought a coffin to the house. Then Venik went to meet this coffin, and felt as though he himself must be lodged therein; he embraced it and cried out, "So this is now papa's only chamber."

After this anguish silenced him; perhaps it deafened and stifled him. Venik found no more words; he neither wept again nor lamented. Not even when they bore away his father in that new, narrow chamber to the cemetery, to lay him beside Venik's mother, who perhaps after all was already buried there. Venik took his violin, to conduct his father to that last resting-place, and when the singing and the weeping above the grave were ended, Venik began to weep above it. He wept on his violin; he wept so that all the people burst forth into tears afresh. He played "The Orphan Child". It was a language which every one understood better than words—it was the language of the heart already inaccessible to words, those tones opened for themselves every fastening, and pierced and saturated all. People had never heard speech so moving, and Venik hitherto had never spoken in such moving language.

Every one was astonished at him, and Krista stood as though changed to a statue. Those tones were not the outcome of mere memory; they were the offspring of anguish, and Krista again found force to weep. They were the tones of orphanhood, and where in the world are there tones more touching?

This time Venik for long would not detach himself from his violin, and long was the burial-speech he spoke upon it.

Only now for the first time he saw exactly how people are laid in the grave, because he whom they laid there was his father.

When all was over Riha's cottage had a new owner. Instead of Riha the cottager came Riha the peasant, brother of the defunct, and now Venik's guardian. He was already at the cottage with his wife when Venik and Krista returned from the funeral, and he at once began to order this and order that.

Venik and Krista did not understand what all these orders meant. They were still in fancy by the father's grave, and when they came home they heard many words. All they understood was that from that moment everything would be different.

All that had been heretobefore began to crumble beneath the children's feet: with their father perished even their home. It was unloving words which they now heard, and loveless home is no home at all. They listened like frightened birds, and longed to flee away to the hill-side.

"You Venik," said Riha, "can't you leave that precious violin to be a violin? A great boy like you and nearly grown up to go mooning about the hill-side; what a pretty affair it is! Thy father was too good-natured to thee, and when he saw thee and thy violin together, he thought—God knows what he thought. But what will become of the house and farm, I wonder, if you treat it like that? Until harvest you shall still pasture the sheep. When harvest comes I will take a turn with thee in the field myself, and after harvest I will find some one to put you in the way of things."

"And thou," said Riha's wife, turning to Krista, "don't let me see thee running out of the house any more after Venik. A girl like thee, who could already be in service, to go prowling and howling in the woods! Once I miss thee from the house and I make short work of all thy caterwauling! Just remember that thou hast but a slippery foothold in this house and that we can manage to do without thee. Thy howlings won't make the cottage bloom, and we cannot have thee here to be muffled in cotton-wool for the sake of thy singing. Mercy on us! I suppose thou thinkest thyself a cut above all our peasant girls."

It is possible that many of these words were true, but they were all ill-timed. At that moment it was cruel to scourge hearts already in any case bowed with grief. I have already said that Venik and Krista did not fully understand all they heard; only so much as this, they felt that every word inflicted a wound upon them, and that each wound smarted.

That day, at even, maybe by accident, Venik and Krista met at the hollow tree on the hill-side. Krista was already there, and Venik came somewhat later.

"I am come to say good-bye", said Krista, and flung herself on the little grave which three years before they had dug for his mother.

"And I came to say farewell to the hill-side and my violin", said Venik plaintively.

"And I to say adieu to thee, dear Venik", added Krista. "Ah, heavens! I mustn't dare to be beside thee any more. I mustn't

dare to sing with thee, they have taken my all. Oh, now I am a poor orphan girl", and she fell a-weeping.

"Come when you like, Krista", said Venik with sudden determination. "Who ever heard of such a thing! You not to sing! I not to play! This very night I will bring away my violin and hang it on the tree, and play I will whene'er I have a mind to, and you shall come here when you choose—upon my word you shall."

"I shall not dare", said Krista, plaintively, though Venik's determination revived her considerably. "I am already but a cipher at the cottage. I have nothing more in the world. Why did they not bury me in the grave!"

At mention of the grave, Venik again gave way; but after a pause he said, "Meet here we will, you shall see, and if they pursue us we will away to the woods."

And after this they went home as if from a second funeral. That same evening Venik took down his violin, even tore the nail out of the wall, and went with both to the hill-side, hammered the nail into the hollow tree and hung the violin upon it. But he soon took down the violin and played upon it its own farewell and its own lament. Possibly the Rihas heard him—and how could they fail to hear him when the village was close to the hill-side? However, they said nothing when he came home. But Krista was the worse off of the two. Already she had no hill-side to fly to. Already she had no breathing-time to look forward to as a consolation. Already she had only a hard couch on which to weep herself to sleep at night.

The home which but yesterday was like a warm nest now breathed upon them like a winter's gust. Venik now encountered no loving looks responsive to his own, and heard no loving words. And if Krista was still attached to the house like the swallow's nest to the cornice—now the cornice itself began to totter—there were already people to be found who would pull down the nest.

One day, just before harvest, Venik, seated on the hill-side, began to reckon how long the hollow tree and the hill-side would be still a portion of his world. The wheat already pricked to maturity, it was but a short time to harvest.

Krista was at work in the house when her peasant mistress stepped up to her, tore her work out of her hands, trampled it on the ground, and screamed, "Why, hast thou no hands, thou awkward slut?"

Krista stood before her in amazement; and the peasant woman continued, "Perhaps you expect me to pick it up from the ground for you."

To this Krista replied, "Kind mistress, I cannot do it any better, and if you will not show me how to do it, I shall not be able to work for you."

"Then be so good as to be off to-day better than to-morrow. Come, come, none of thy threats to me. Tie up your rags at once, and don't let me see you here by nightfall."

After this Krista began to implore forgiveness, for she felt that perhaps she had been hasty. But the peasant woman would not hear a word. "Don't let me see you in the house a moment longer", she roared, and Krista did not venture to address her again.

She collected her clothes, tied them in a bundle, and with the bundle tramped off to Venik on the hill-side.

"Now I am going, now it is all over", she said when she came there. "Now I dare not venture into the cottage." She said it with a smile, for her grief assumed the guise of smiles, which were indeed a kind of determination. And then she said what had happened.

"Where shall you go?" said Venik, as if beside himself, for indeed he had never before had to face so horrible a calamity.

"I know not," said Krista, "I only know that I must say good-bye to you in earnest." And again she laughed a short constrained laugh, so that Venik began to be embarrassed to know whether it was all jest or earnest.

But it was all so perfectly true, that Venik for a long time lost the power of speech. When he found words to speak the first he uttered were, "You shall not go alone; I will go with you."

"Where would you go," said Krista with surprise and terror.

"Do you think I shall stop here without you? We will go and be in service together", spoke out Venik.

Then Krista could have fallen on Venik's neck and have kissed him all over. To have only him and he not to cast her off—he to wish to entwine his fate with her's—was not that enough to make her feel at that instant twice a woman? was not that enough to bring all at once into her heart springtime, fair weather, flowers, and all sweet songs?

"We will find a place where we shall be allowed to play and sing together", said Venik warmly, and as if in proof thereof, he forthwith loosed his violin from its nail and began to play as if

he wished to say good-bye to all the birds in the wood, and as if he gave them to understand that he was going to search for himself a hill-side, a wood, and a hollow tree—everything in another corner of the world. Krista sang to his accompaniment, and it seemed quite impossible for these two beings ever to be separated, for that playing and that singing to be isolated from one another. They were so closely united that it was impossible to think of them as two.

"Do you know what," cried Venik of a sudden, with as much delight as if he had found a treasure, "we will not go out to service anywhere. We will go into the world, I with my violin, and you shall sing to it."

They knew what the world was like which they would have entered on as farm-servants behind the barn, and wished to enter it. But they might quit their home for other scenes, and that would be also to go into the world. They had been willing to take service with people; now they would go and make people merry with singing and music—would that be worse than service?

All that Venik now thought about was how he could get his clothes quietly into their wallet as Krista had done, and then they would be off. And they arranged between them that Krista should pass the night in the hollow tree, and keep watch over Venik's violin, lest haply they should lose it just at the very time when they had most need of it. Then he was to bring his clothes there at night and they were to be off before the break of day.

The seed which is no longer sheltered by the husk is easily carried away by the wind: these children had lost the sheltering husk of home, and the wind carried them away. They quickly came to an understanding about a plan and the means of carrying it out.

When that day at even Venik drove his flock homeward, he drove them quickly, as he did on the day when he heard the funeral bell toll out the news of his father's death. But he drove them with different feelings. For indeed the circumstances were different. Venik was in high spirits. To-day he longed for something to occur which should bring down upon him the wrath of the peasant Riha, his uncle; such wrath that he would have to fly his home, and then he and Krista would be just in the same plight. This he did not succeed in bringing about, but it was not for want of trying.

Riha's wife greeting him with these words, "Haven't you said farewell to that precious bride of yours?" she said. "At last we

have got rid of her, the bread-wasting vagabond—that little pet of thine. We shan't have to scrape together cotton gowns for her any longer, nor take care lest her soft hands get callosities upon them."

To that Venik replied, "For all you say I know why you have driven her forth. It is because my dead father loved us dearer than the cottage. You would gladly be rid of me, too, because all you care about is the cottage. But you won't succeed in that, I tell you."

These words enraged Riha's wife because they were true, and because she saw that Venik began to have an inkling of her own bad intentions. And when at supper she told her goodman what Venik had said, the Day of Judgment was rehearsed in that building. Riha hunted for Venik to teach him how to speak to his aunt in future, and when Venik was not to be found, he said that it should stand over till morning, and that he would give it him with his breakfast.

But he never gave him anything more at breakfast. Venik had already migrated, wallet and all, to the hollow tree; and when Riha brought him his breakfast next day, where then were Venik and Krista?

In the house an alarm was raised. No one knew aught about Venik; none of the servants had an idea what had become of him. And in the village people laughed at Riha and told him that now he would have to pasture the sheep alone.

And so Venik and Krista threw themselves upon the world. Very early, when above the tops of the old oak-wood crept the first rays of dawning, he and she stood prepared for the journey. They stood before the hollow tree as by their sanctuary, as if it were their true home. Thither from the cottage they had fled with light hearts: now that they had to flee from it they felt a load upon their hearts. Here was their church in which they had been both angels and pious listeners. Perhaps that tree had roots even in their hearts. And certainly even the flowerets which grew upon the hill-side had in their hearts both soil and sustenance. Now they felt a load upon their breasts. And they knelt beside that little tomb in which, many a long day since, they had buried the sweetbrier, the willow-wands, and the sweet marjoram, and of which they had made Venik's mother.

"Venik, thou weepest", said Krista, and wept also.

"Krista," said Venik, "if in the world we ever fall sick, we will come here to get well."

And it felt very hard to take the first step. Then yet once again Venik took Krista by the hand, held it firmly, and said, "Krista, if thou art lost to me in the world, I shall come here to seek thee—remember the way."

And both felt heavily oppressed, as though some one was taking their heart out of their breast piece by piece.

The first step was so hard to make that they scarcely managed to take the second. Then their steps soon became lighter, and when village, river, hill-side, and wood were lost to view, they were already as light as two birds. Youth alone easily adapts itself to all, and quickly forgets both weal and woe.

CHAPTER III

THAT day they tramped many a long mile, and passed many a village. As yet hunger had not importuned them, and they had tramped along easily enough, but when hunger began to hint its presence, they had to reflect how to rid themselves of that unwelcome guest. So far they had marched through villages only for the fun of the thing, and had not wished to post themselves by the door and explain by their music that they were in want of food. But when reality was more powerful than their weak thought, they were fain to discuss what decided step should now be taken. It was already afternoon when they reached a new village, and their feet began to ache. They sat themselves down near the village under some willow-trees, and Venik said, "Now we must try our fortune, and now we must arrange what we are going to play and sing." And they began to compose and arrange. At this very time a large group of children wended their way to the village school. Hearing young musicians, a youth and a girl, who might well have been going to school with them, they paused to listen; and as the musicians and their listeners were both equally juvenile, they quickly came to understand one another. The young public paid what it could, and Venik promised to accompany them with his music to school.

And he accompanied them. Krista paced beside him, and Venik played all he could think of to made them dance and laugh and whistle. After him trotted the youthful group of scholars, and a procession so gay debouched into the village that the like of it the villagers had never seen before. To school advanced so cheery a procession of children that even the school had never

seen anything like it. In a moment school was deserted, and round Venik and Krista gathered an audience which was composed of all the children in the village. Then Krista began to sing, Venik accompanying her on his violin, and the school-children were almost beside themselves. When it was rumoured among them that the musicians were orphans, gifts rained upon them from all sides. Kreuzers, all kinds of sweetmeats and sugar-plums which the children had with them for school. Venik soon had his hand full of kreuzers, and eatables and dainties filled Krista's apron.

This happy beginning filled them with hope and courage. As the children were now obliged to go into school, they made a compact with Venik and Krista to meet them again as soon as school was over. And who would have thought it? these young rascals marched out of school to the sound of music, as proud as the gay fellows who swagger home from the ale-house on festival or gala days, to the accompaniment of fife and tabor.

Venik and Krista went thus from house to house everywhere playing and singing some piece. Everywhere the school-children trooped after them, and they seemed to have brought back spring with them into the village, and surprising it was to see how many gifts they collected at the various homesteads.

Then they also played and sang pathetic songs. Krista sang "The Orphaned Child", Venik accompanied the song on his violin, and when the village children again mentioned to their parents that the musicians themselves were orphans, tears started from every eye—young and old wept aloud, just as though some one had been dead—such were the laments they made. We have already seen how Venik played this piece at his father's funeral; now to his playing was superadded Krista's singing, and she in no wise lagged behind her companion. Those around who listened were not orphans; and yet no single heart was unimpressed. The children of the village felt as though they had lost a mother; the mothers felt as though they were already laid in the grave, and their children were covering them with pine-needles.

The effect which the piece produced was almost terrible. The people knew the song, but never in all their lives had they heard it sound as it did then. They seemed to be hearing it for the first time; they seemed to hear in it tones completely new; no one had a suspicion that it contained a fund of pathos such as no one could resist. In the tones of our musicians that song was heard in all its grandeur, aye, in majesty, and every heart was rent.

After that piece, if they had implored any one of the masters and mistresses of the several homesteads to be their father and mother, not one of them would have reflected a moment but would have led them away and treated them as their own children. They might have asked what they chose, and they would not have appealed in vain.

They had already no need to feel any anxiety about victuals. They were at once taken to a house, and on the morrow some one else asked them out, and on the following day some one else; and so they could be a whole week here just as at home. Every one felt that they were not mere strolling musicians; Venik and Krista were just like their own children to them, and were treated royally.

Early on the morrow they again accompanied the young people of the village to school; after school, they accompanied them home, and in the village this seemed to be accepted as the natural order of things. Never in their lives before had the young people gathered so willingly to school, and never in their lives had they marched so merrily from school.

On the Sunday our young musicians asked to be allowed to play and sing in chapel, and Lord! how completely people forgot to look at the altar and fixed their eyes upon the gallery.

When in days gone by they had sung and played thus in the chapel of their native village, people, when they talked about "these children", were quite accustomed to them. Here people heard them for the first time, and also heard such playing and singing for the first time. That Sunday they might have selected whichever farm they pleased to sup at; plates were laid for them at every house.

It was fortunate for these young souls, at this period of their lives, that strangers treated them as if they were of their own family and at home.

Possibly, if things had fallen out otherwise, they would have lost their way and ended in filth and obscurity, out of which there is no means of extrication. But as it was, they never stumbled on to the false track to ruin; their path led them otherwither.

The fame of the young musicians spread rapidly. The young people of neighbouring parishes also desired to be accompanied to and from school with music; an invitation was sent, and when Venik and Krista departed from the place where they had begun their musical pilgrimage, young and old escorted them a good

piece of the way, as if the two wanderers had been their own children.

Just before bidding adieu, Venik and Krista struck up the "Orphan Child", and the procession was drowned in tears. Then Venik struck up a lively tune, and the parting was a merry one. Their kind friends embraced them, and promised them whenever they chose to revisit the village, to receive them with open arms.

So they separated. In the next village the young people were all expectancy, and Venik and Krista were welcomed as brother and sister.

All marched together to the accompaniment of music to and from school, then to the different houses in the village; and on the way there was a repetition of what took place in the first parish the two children had entered. The whole village went into raptures, and when the "Orphaned Child" was played people were drowned in tears.

This song had everywhere the power of enchantment. People were quite beside themselves, and yet they could have listened to it till nightfall and beyond. They scrutinized Venik and the strings of his violin, to see whether the instrument really was the source of what they heard issue from it. But the music must have been there evolved, although to them it appeared exactly as though the music came from Venik himself. As to Krista it was easier to satisfy oneself, she obviously spoke with a real mouth, and so it was easier to believe in her heart.

On Sunday afternoon, young and old disported themselves on the village green, and there, too, Venik performed and Krista sang. All the youth of the village were soon in a ring round them, and behind the young people came the old, and then I really do not know who remained at home. Then might wicked people have gone from house to house and walked off with everything. No one would have prevented them, for no one was left at home to prevent them. But those wicked people who had slipped out to pilfer, hearing Venik and Krista, would have left off thieving, and would have gone and listened like the rest. Then Venik and Krista made a grand display of their stock of songs, playing what they just remembered and what they knew; they even sang and played masses, and people said that they never before felt so festive even on a Sunday.

Their fame increased. Scarcely had they begun to feel somewhat at home here, before invitations came from two—from five villages all at once, begging them to come and delight the in-

habitants. The whole district spoke of them, and if they had spent all their lives in going from village to village in the district, taking them in succession, our musicians would never have stood in need of their daily bread.

They even visited the town on market-days, and when they posted themselves in the square, people ceased their bargaining and came to listen. The shopkeepers went so far as to be angry with them, and jealous of them for hindering business, but as soon as they heard them, they gave them gifts like the rest. They were looked upon, however, with still less favour by some other singers who had posted a large booth in the market-place, and notified on a painted board what they were going to perform. These latter had not a living soul on their side, and soon had to clear off, and lamentably bewailed the state of trade. But they dared not grumble too loudly, for our child musicians had so completely won over the listeners to their side that they had as many champions as they had listeners. Besides, in all their audiences, they found old acquaintances—people who listened to them here on market-days, and heard them long before in their own native village, and introduced themselves to the children as friends or, perhaps, even as relations of their family.

It is needless, therefore, to add that Venik and Krista prospered in their tramping mode of life. They were dressed very becomingly. Venik wore his shepherd's costume, only that everything was brand-new, and fitted him like his own skin, in fact, the boy himself was like a bouquet. Krista was dressed in peasant's costume, but in gala trim. On her head was a short silken handkerchief tied in a hood, a string of ducats on her neck, a neat corselet showed off her trim figure, and a short skirt let one catch a glimpse of a pretty foot in white stockings and low shoes.

They were like a picture. Everywhere they were taken for brother and sister, and to all intents and purposes were as brother and sister.

A year floated by like a day, and three years like three days. Venik was now eighteen years of age, and Krista fifteen. The boy was like an ash-sapling. As for the girl it was a pleasure to look at her. And, of course, people did look at her. Venik himself sometimes stole a furtive glance into her eyes as he used to look into the fresh mountain spring. It happened that once again they came to the town, but it was not market-day; there was a performance at the town theatre, and the villagers of the various parishes putting on their best suits for the play, and happening

to talk about the theatre, invited Venik and Krista also to accompany them thither. Krista looked at Venik, and Venik went with her.

All the way there they scarcely spoke a word. Krista was wondering what it would be like in the theatre, and Venik's mind was perhaps similarly engaged. They were about to look upon an unknown world, and their eyes were downcast.

They had never yet been at the theatre, and when they had taken their places in it they felt as though a ton weight had fallen upon them. They saw a number of people before the curtain, and behind the curtain—who could tell what there might be? Then the curtain was drawn up and they saw a wood, and here both bethought them of that wood which stretched behind their hill-side; they bethought them of the hollow tree and of that river which ran below the hill-side; they were half inclined to weep, and again they were half inclined to rapture. But all was different in that wood behind the curtain. There people walked and conversed and acted together, and our two spectators felt even that wood behind the curtain grew dear to them. Their whole attention was fixed upon it, and everything happened quite naturally in it, and like real life. Now they were constrained to laugh, and the next moment they were fain to cry.

The play was over, and in the body of the hall twilight reigned. When they listened they seemed to hear their own names called, and that by many voices. It really was their names, and before they could recover from their surprise they felt themselves touched by hands, many hands, and again before they could recover from their surprise, they were gently lifted off their feet, and pushed behind the curtain into the wood, and a hundred throats clamoured for Venik to play and Krista to sing.

It was like a revelation. They did not know how it all happened, but they sang and played. It half seemed to them as though they were standing on their own hill-side, and yet somehow it was quite different. When they had concluded the theatre was all agape with excitement, and like one mouth, and they were obliged to play and sing afresh, and when even this was concluded Venik saw that a body of fine gentlemen had gathered round Krista and were conversing with her about the stage, and about matters which he himself did not understand, and which she, perhaps, also did not understand. And then again they talked to her about matters which pained him, and which he did not wish

to hear. Then he felt quite fit to cry, and so he took Krista by the hand and led her out of the theatre and out of the town.

Then Venik felt as though he had a different pair of eyes, and as though Krista had become changed from what she had been hitherto. Lovelier, a hundred, a thousand times lovelier than she had been hitherto, and than they told her she was in the theatre. Venik thought that he must tell her so; but when he sought words to express himself he could not find them, and when he had found them they stuck in his throat. And then he felt as though he had a different heart. What was that strange resonance in his bosom which he had never felt before, but the beating of that poor heart? It seemed to beat more audibly: it was full to overflowing; and when he asked himself what that was within it, he was fain to answer that it was Krista. He wished to tell her so, but his heart throbbed worse than ever. And while he hesitated, he grew pale as a wall, and was fain to fetch a sigh from the very depths of his soul.

He could not the least recollect how long Krista had now been linked with him. So far as memory carried him she had always been at his side. With him in school, in church, on the hill-side, on the road—everywhere she had been with him, and it could not be otherwise. But now he felt as though the Krista who walked with him was a different Krista from her with whom he used to walk. She was no longer like a deserted orphan whose brother he was, now she was a girl—Krista, and when he thought about her he trembled.

Until that hour they had shared the same couch, and when they had laid them down were like two birds of a single nest. To-day when they came to the farmhouse in which they were to pass the night, Krista lay down alone on the couch—for the first time alone, and Venik went out in front of the building and cried. He was alone at night for the first time in his life, and kept awake all night long.

The next day he scarcely dared to raise his eyes to Krista. He felt as though she were much above him, and as though he ought to beg her to allow him to remain by her side. He was gloomy and sorrowful, and when Krista looked upon him she, too, was gloomy and sorrowful, and her eyes were downcast. And yet they had not wronged one another in anything, they had done nothing to one another to merit blame, no single too familiar word had ever passed between them.

That day the violin was left hanging on its nail, and Venik was

wellnigh heartbroken. He longed continually to meet with Krista, and when he had met her he longed to be away again, as though he had committed a crime. Then he fancied that Krista was ailing, and longed to inquire about her health; but when he saw her he saw, too, that she was as pink and fresh as a rose, and as beautiful as a day in spring; only her lips quivered for a moment as though they wished to whisper something, but they closed and did not whisper it. She was sadder and more gloomy than Venik himself, and conversed even less than he did.

Yet several days floated by, and they were more estranged. Venik did not play, Krista did not sing, they did not converse, they did not laugh together, they had no sweet confidences; and yet it seemed to Venik that he was happier then than he had ever been before. Until one morning Venik said, "Krista, I think that I am going to be ill."

Krista looked at him apprehensively and said, "Why shouldst thou be ill?"

"I feel so oppressed, Krista. Let us go to the hill-side to the old oak-wood. If I am to get well again I shall get well there: if not, I had rather die there."

"Why should you die?" said Krista. "You are so young", she added, and felt as though she had said too much, and as though in saying those words she had already sinned. She turned away from him, and after a long pause said, "If you feel so oppressed let us go. It is now three years since we were there."

And they went. They went to the spot where they had first met one another, where together they had played and sung, where they had been like two angels, with the hollow tree for their sanctuary, and whence they had first gone forth together into the world.

The return journey was a dreary pilgrimage to both. Venik loitered wearily the nearer he approached the hill-side; and once when he looked at Krista he said, "Krista, we are going each as it were alone." They went, each as it were alone, immersed in his own private thoughts. At this Krista took him by the hand, and their hands were moist and like fire. In speech and manner they were equally embarrassed. Their mouths were parched, their steps tottered, and after this they again unclasped hands, and again went each as it were alone.

When they were exhausted by their walk they sat down under some willows, by a streamlet which fled away to the river, that they might rest themselves. Their feet rested, indeed, but in their soul they seemed to fret more and more.

In a neighbouring wood a cuckoo cuckooed. Krista looked at Venik, then yielded to tears, laid her head on Venik's bosom and sobbed aloud. Venik stroked her hair, stroked her face, and was like one distraught. After this Krista ceased to weep, rose, went to the streamlet, gathered at it "fishes eyes", and entwined them with her hair, and when Venik saw her it seemed to him that he could go mad with love of her—so dear she was to him.

Then they rose, went forward, and conversed. Venik felt that the previous burden had fallen from him, that his words were once more unfettered, and that he could breathe freely.

Only he still could not say the particular thing he wanted to say; and several times as he thought about it his words again became more constrained. But on the whole they felt freer. Already they could not say that they were going each by himself. Already they almost tripped along together.

So the next time they sat themselves down, under pretence of resting a little, Krista did not again fling herself weeping on to Venik's bosom, but none the less did Venik take her head in his hands, none the less did he lay her on his bosom, stroke her hair and face, and wipe her eyes, although they were no longer bedimmed with tears.

It drew towards evening as they approached the hill-side. The sun had set, and left but a faint blush in the western heavens; the day was over and had left but a shadow of itself; evening stole upon the world, and with it came faint odours and the song of birds.

When they reached the hill-side and saw the hollow tree at the outskirts of the wood, Venik was like a child once more, and when he had seated himself at the threshold with Krista beside him he said: "Krista, now I feel ill no longer."

And here it seemed to Venik that never in all his life had he felt his breast so full as it was just then, and that never in all his life he had felt what he then felt. If he had had to explain it all, he would not have succeeded, but when he looked at Krista he thought his looks alone explained it. He was half inclined to weep, but much more to rejoice. The river and the village far below them already veiled themselves in filmy mists; that cuckoo which had cuckooed to them as they sat beside the streamlet under the willows, seemed to have accompanied them even hither; here it cuckooed from the wood.

And it seemed to them, as if they had departed thence but yesterday. Village, river, field, wood, hollow tree—everything

was the same: even the nail on which Venik had hung his violin still stuck in the hollow tree. Only when he looked at Krista all seemed different. And he looked at her very much, and then everything was very different. Krista's eye was inflamed and moist with tears, and when he touched her hand it was again as hot as fire.

When the moon rose, Krista said to Venik that he never was to think of her again, and Venik to this replied, "Prithee, why shouldst thou unlink thyself from me."

But, as her only reply, Krista again laid her head on his bosom, and wept and sobbed as if she would unlink herself from him for ever. She kissed his face, his eyes, his forehead, his mouth—it was the first time that she had kissed him.

Then Venik said, "Krista, be mine."

On this Krista nestled yet closer to his side—but then of a sudden she rose and ran away to the wood.

Venik sat a long time alone, and it seemed to him as though he had seen happiness flutter round him, and as if he had actually caught hold of it. He held it in his hands, he looked for and did not know what had become of it. After this he shouted, "Krista! Krista!" and when Krista responded not he went into the wood, gathered leaves and moss with both hands, carried them in his arms to the tree, and in its hollow trunk strewed a couch. Then he sat on the threshold, and was like a sentinel on guard.

There were no signs of Krista, but still it seemed to Venik as though she was there, and as if he saw her at every glance, and at every glance she seemed more fair. Then she was there, she stood behind him like a shadow, she never stirred, her head drooped upon her bosom, and her hands clasped together.

"Krista, I have but now prepared thy couch in the tree", said Venik, and his voice trembled so that it was not in him to say anything more. Krista without a word went and laid herself down in the tree on the leaves and moss.

Venik retired a few paces toward the wood, and laid himself down beside it.

But he did not sleep. It seemed to him as though he must make certain whether Krista slept or not. He rose, stole silently to the tree, looked in a brief moment, and in that moment Krista raised her head.

Venik as though with a knife in his heart retired to his previous resting-place, and laid himself down once more.

Then he fell asleep, and all his dreams ran on Krista. And he fancied that she laid her head on his hand; he fancied that he

awoke, and that as he held it so his eyelids opened upon the happiest moment of his life. He fancied that he was completely happy, that nothing more was wanting to him, and in the consciousness of that happiness he again fell asleep.

And again he seemed to see upon her face a fire and a hot enthusiasm, and in presence of that fire and that hot enthusiasm all girlish modesty was effaced, so that she had it neither in her looks nor her words. He dreamt so vividly that he fancied it could not be a dream. And even when he awoke in the morning he did not know how far waking realities differed from a dream, for that past night was to him both reality and a dream. And he dreaded lest it was reality, and he dreaded yet more lest it was a dream.

Krista had not yet awoke, she had not yet risen. He went to rouse her, and went to the tree along with the rays of the rising sun, which aimed its level beams into the hollow trunk. And when he had reached the spot along with them, at first he looked in furtively and then more boldly—the couch was vacant. Krista was not on it.

Venik felt as though only now he was immersed in dreams, as if only now he was laid in bed. He looked again and again into the tree, he looked again and again around him, leant his head on his hand to collect his thoughts—but he was not dreaming. He was awake. He tossed about the moss and leaves as though Krista might be under them, but she was not there.

And all at once it seemed to Venik as though the whole heaven had crumbled at his feet, as though the stars had fallen from the sky, and the last day had already come upon him. He grew as livid as a corpse, he longed to hurry away and bury himself in the grave, that he might the sooner rise from the dead; and his eyes were suffused with blood, so that they looked like bleeding suns.

And then he thrust his fingers through his hair, ran along the hill-side and past the wood, and shouted "Krista! Krista!" But there was no reply, then he ran into the wood, searched it cross by cross, and shouted, "Krista! Krista!" But there was no reply anywhere.

Then it seemed to Venik as though he had roved that wood for several days, as though he had grown old, as though he had lost the power of speech, as though he was exhausted, and his feet refused to stir. On this he staggered towards the hollow tree, and rested in weariness, and was still.

He waited.

He waited for Krista to come—for her return. But even if she had returned, it seemed to him that now the world would be the world no longer, that the heaven would be the heaven no longer, since once the sun had stooped from the sky and had lost its pathway in the heavens. And Krista returned not.

Venik waited that day and that night: he waited the next day and the next night. At night he slept on that couch of leaves and moss from which Krista had vanished. He only felt that he was alone, and the hollow of the tree resounded with his sighs.

And once again he went out like a sportsman to the wood, and as though he was bent on sport, and shouted, "Krista! Krista!" But he was an unlucky sportsman, and then he felt as though a wound had been made in his side by some one, and as though blood trickled over that side of his body.

Krista had made that wound, she had deserted him, and now for the first time he was an orphan.

CHAPTER IV

IT seems to me that then for the first time was Venik without a public, without listeners, when seated again on the hill-side, he took once more his violin in his hands and played "The Orphaned Child".

He was that orphaned child. Long ago, when Krista had accompanied him with her voice for the first time in the gloria, she had burst into tears because she was an orphan; and Venik convinced her that she was not an orphan. Then his father died: Krista was driven from the house, and when she had to begin her wandering in the world he had taken her by the hand, and wandered with her, and pointed out the way; again she was not an orphan. And when it was all finished, she voluntarily departed from him, at the moment when he had hoped with her to enter paradise. That paradise closed upon him—where was it now?

Venik's thoughts had no beginning and no end, they were like an unbroken wilderness, where the eye tires itself. There was nothing for it to rest upon, nothing to look upon with pleasure. He had desired so little for himself; and when he lost even that little, it seemed to him that he had lost the whole world. He also had cherished her; and when he looked and saw how she had torn

herself, root and all, from his very heart, he saw that where those roots had been was a bleeding heart.

He had moments when it still appeared to him that what had befallen him could not really have happened. Surely he was befooled, surely Krista would return to him all at once. And then he seemed to hear her step, and the rustling of her dress: for a moment he saw her dancing eyes, her heavenly look, and heard her glorious voice. He turned his eyes in the direction whence that step and that rustling seemed to come, and when he perceived that it was but a mere delusion he cursed his fate.

If some one had asked him how long he had already sat thus, he would have said, "A whole eternity", and he would have spoken the truth. And if he had been further asked how long he had walked with Krista in the world, he would have answered, "Two or three days", and would equally have spoken the truth.

Then Venik arose and went again into the world. Sometimes he played and sometimes he did not play, as the fancy took him. Sometimes it seemed to him as though he wandered in the world in search of Krista; and again it seemed to him that if he found her he should cast her from him that he might have her no more with him.

First he came to the parishes in which he had dwelt long since with Krista; and when his old comrades saw him desolate, they asked him, where he had left Krista. Then he sometimes answered with a word, sometimes with a smile, sometimes with a tear, just as was consonant with the answer. But through it all it was apparent that each of these modes of reply tormented him; he felt it, too, himself, and, therefore, made up his mind not to go to villages where he was known, but only to go among strangers.

In villages where he was not known, indeed, no one inquired for Krista, because no one had known her. But even that was not a clear gain to him, for he observed that he himself also on that very account made fewer inquiries about her. Already he had not inquired about her for many a long day.

Sometimes the whole business of strolling through the villages and of playing to people also wearied him; he was sick of it all; and then if he could find any gay young fellows anywhere he would attach himself to them as long as they wished to listen. By his playing he lured them to the dance, and he played so that any one who had wished to tarry always beside him would perhaps have been led to destruction. And then although at the beginning he was but sombre and melancholy, the further his

merry companions prolonged their orgies, the gayer he became. His gaiety waxed in proportion as his youthful followers slackened and grew weary.

If people from the villages in which he had been so dear, when he and Krista were still their young musicians, had seen him at such orgies, verily they would have shrugged their shoulders at him, and the mothers would have cried, "What a pity it is, poor boy, so young and bonny as he is, and once so good and honest." Now people began to nickname him "Wild Venik".

Then again it would happen that he had nothing to say to any one. He shunned the villages, or at most seated himself or laid him down somewhere behind the barn under the willows, as long ago he had done with Krista. And here, just as he who praying with a rosary takes and pushes one bead after another, so Venik dwelt in memory on Krista, and word by word repeated everything he had ever said with her, everything he had ever felt for her, each single recollection was like a single bead of the rosary, and the whole remembrance was like a single prayer. Sometimes these prayers soothed him, but yet it was so only apparently. Then again it seemed to him either that he felt surfeited, or that he had not begun to be satisfied at all.

Sometimes wishing neither to go to villages where he was known, nor to those where he was unknown, he prowled around so purposely and futilely, that when he tried to recall that wandering to mind, all he knew was that he sat on the hill-side at the outskirts of the wood beside the hollow tree. It was passing strange to him. Like a heavy dream rested upon him all that had taken place beyond that spot of ground, and that had ended there. He peered into the tree, and there yet lay Krista's couch of leaves and moss as though he had strewed it there that very day. And here he flung himself on this couch and embraced the whole of it in a wild frenzy of passion. Then he laid himself down on it and lay awake or dreamt. He reflected how constant were those fallen leaves and that shrunken moss in comparison with man. Deprived of the sunlight and the sun's warm beams, it had not proved unfaithful to its post. In the hollow, worm-eaten tree, he had laid that moss and foliage, and he found it there whensoever he returned.

Here it seemed to him that after all it was impossible that he was so deserted as he held himself to be. He got up, ranged the wood once more, and shouted "Krista! Krista!" but there was no reply; there was not even her footprint, there was not even her

shadow. And when he turned back without success, he did not wish to go again to the tree, or to the couch within it.

Then he cast his eyes over his own native district, and felt as though here he was in his own home once again. He longed to go back once more to the Rihas's to offer to tend his flock, and even to leave behind him that violin which he knew not whether he ought to curse or bless. Once, indeed, under cover of evening he approached the village and wended his way to his own parental roof, and debated long with himself as to whether he should enter the house or not. He passed the court-yard and stood behind the hall-door, next to which was the kitchen. In the kitchen on the hearth burnt a fire, beside the hearth stood Riha's wife preparing the evening meal. The fire flashed into her face, that face had the colour of the fire, and it was a strict face. But still it seemed to him like an honest face, and one that he could trust. Always it had never promised him anything, always it had only threatened him; and just because it realized its own threats, it was honest. Krista had never threatened him; there was no strictness in her words or face, and yet how had she sinned against him in comparison with yon poor old beldam.

Perhaps he would have entered, perhaps he would have offered to drudge at anything, and nothing would have been too burdensome for him. But at that moment Riha's wife carried away the supper from the hearth, she returned no more, and Venik departed. He paused awhile at the window, and looked into the lighted room. And here it flashed across him that the cottage with its bit of land was his property, that it was a rare stroke of fortune for his uncle and aunt, the Rihas, when he went a-roving in the world, and that he might even now enter the chamber where they sat and demand of them an account of their stewardship over his farm and rights. He might settle here, leave his vagabond life far behind him, and become a well-ordered man. A well-ordered man!

Hereupon Venik turned from the windows and from the cottage, and went once more toward the hill-side.

To be a well-ordered man. What was that? Venik laughed sarcastically. When he had fled into the world with Krista he was a well-ordered man. When she departed from him—an end to orderliness! even though he should be the master of a farm. Perhaps Krista was well-ordered, and now he could be so, too. Fie upon it all! Where was the good of perfunctorily saying, "I will be a well-ordered man"—and then to have in one's bosom

everything in disorder. A cottage and a settled life do not create orderliness. And yet something still drew him back toward the cottage.

Then Venik struck off again from the hill-side, bent his steps into the world once more and hurled himself upon it like a drop of the mountain torrent which blindly hurls itself into the river that it may reach the sea at last.

He was again the wild Venik who made merry all night long with a merry gay brotherhood; who tippled with them heart and soul, who made them merry with music and jesting, and who would not feel the dint of care till morning. Venik was again the centre of a group of lads in their prime; only that at this time mothers would no longer have invited him to their homes: rather, they would have slammed the door in his face lest he should entice their son to drunkenness and debauch.

But he only acted thus in unfamiliar villages where he was not known in the days when he walked with Krista. When he came to the villages he knew he was different, as though he fain would humble himself, and as though he did penance for his nights of revelry elsewhere. He was gloomy and melancholy. Here he seemed to be still treading in Krista's footprints: and sometimes he fancied that he was tracing her and on the search for her. His familiar listeners perceived in his silent moods something sinister and had him in compassion.

And even here summer sped away. Sometimes the days were indeed as interminable as the sea, but summer whirled away with them as with all else: it engulphed them and there was never a trace of them. Three years floated by from that time when Krista took to flight from her couch in the hollow tree.

Then Venik went again to the same town in which he and Krista had been in a theatre for the first time, and where the people had lifted him and Krista on to the stage for him to play to them.

And when he saw the theatre, he reconnoitred it and pryed about it, and felt he hated it so bitterly that he would not have hesitated to throw a burning brand upon it: if any one else had done so, he would have looked on with delight, while the tongues of flame devoured and reduced to nothing a place whence began his hardest turn of destiny. He would have helped the flames yet further to devour and annihilate it, till there remained no trace of it, just as no trace of Krista had survived.

This hatred of the building, be it understood, did not hinder him from entering the theatre. He was now already of riper years than on the memorable day when he was first here, and he looked on things with different eyes. What he saw on the stage amused him: it amused him to see others the sport of adverse fate, it provoked him when they succumbed to their fate, and although it provoked him, yet it tempted him thither, and he seemed to read there a fragment of his own life and to be thereby consoled.

And now he frequented the theatre every day, and when he saw that there was but a spare supply of musicians in the orchestra, he offered himself with his violin, and was accepted. Then he looked from this orchestra on to that theatre as it were at first hand, he drank from it, as it were, the first draught, and when the curtain fell, he concluded all with his playing. And sometimes he was glad of this, and sometimes he laughed at it.

It pleased him well to have his mind diverted and employed. But it did not please him when he saw how those theatrical princesses to-day proffered love to this man, and to-morrow to that; to see them kiss and embrace one man to-day, and to-morrow another. This ran so counter to his ideas that sometimes he would not have grudged his words, if he could have told them what place they had in his esteem.

Sometimes also on the stage was the wood which he had seen here for the first time with Krista, and which reminded him of the hill-side and wood, with the hollow tree at the outskirts of the wood.

Sometimes also he was asked to play a tune in that wood; and he played till he made people weep or whistle; for from his strings spoke both weeping and laughter.

Then they held Venik in respect and honour: they led him to a music master, with whom he studied and played all day long. They also taught him many things which he played to their admiration finely and touchingly. But still he only rose far above the rest, when he played those songs of his own just as he had taught them to himself on the hill-side. Then, indeed, it was just as though the whole hill-side breathed out of him, as though all the wood resounded in his strings, as if even the birds were full of voice, as if even the river played which gurgled far below. Of these songs people could not have enough, and called for them again and again. But, indeed, when he played his "Orphaned Child", the public was enthralled by the magic of his art. Now it was as though every full-grown man were again an orphan, and as though

they were gathered together to one common grave to weep their fill.

At length rumours reached the town about other theatres, about theatres in the capital town of Prague. The newspapers wrote about them, and in the town they talked about them, in the theatre, everywhere they talked about them. And with these rumours came one certain piece of news, about a sort of prima donna who carried away the palm, both by her voice and execution, so that hitherto she had not her equal. When she stepped on to the boards, the wonder was that the garlands and bouquets did not smother her; and when she had finished her performance and prepared to drive home, people unyoked the horses from her carriage and with torches and hurrahings conducted her to her house. Rumour further said that she was young and beautiful, that she had been a strolling musician, until some one interested himself in her and had her carefully instructed, and that now she was a perfect miracle.

When Venik heard these and other things, a pang shot through him and he could not rest a moment. He left the orchestra, took his violin and as though everything was on fire behind him and around him, he hastened onward toward Prague. And in Prague he soon learnt all about the matter. Here, whatever place he entered, people spoke about her. In the beerhouses, hostinets, and cafés they were preparing for the theatre, all the afternoon, and evening was spent in conjecturing how many garlands she would get and who would throw them to her.

Venik listened and held his breath, and he had no need to begin the conversation anywhere. In every hole and corner he heard about her.

Was it possible that it was Krista?

CHAPTER V

TWO hours before the beginning of the play he had already reconnoitred the theatre in the hopes of gleaning some certainty without the need of asking questions. The moment the ticket-office was opened, in spite of the jostling crowd, he was already to the front, and when he felt the ticket in his hands, it seemed to him to give him admission to the kingdom of heaven. But, indeed, who knows whether it were the kingdom of heaven to which it gave admission: possibly that ticket led quite otherwither.

At any rate he would not have parted with it for all the world, and when he looked at it as it lay in his hand, he seemed to be looking upon a portion of his own existence.

He had been seated in the theatre a long time before the beginning of the opera. He saw how they lit the lights one by one, he saw how the public sauntered in, he saw how the orchestra filled with musicians, and he saw below the curtain a swarm of pretty feet already upon the stage. Who could say whom they might belong to?

Everything seemed to spin round him, and he hardly seemed to be in the world. And again all around him roared with the din of a thousand voices, as when the wind crashes through the woodland and a tree is mere stubble in its path. The words spoken merged into one constant hum, and he seemed to be a tiny portion of that humming.

Then they began to play in the orchestra, and then the curtain was furled up. The stage represented a wood. Then she stept forth whom all awaited with breathless expectation; and when she stept forth, garlands and bouquets fell thick at her feet; it was a rain of flowers, and the people made the tempest. Through this rain and through this tempest it was impossible to distinguish anything clearly, and yet Venik fancied that he had distinguished something. Then the tempest subsided and the singing began. She sung.

It was Krista in every movement and in every tone. Full well he knew her every movement; full well he knew her every tone. And when she began to sing Venik felt a choking in his throat, and as though no heart beat any longer within him; as though he was no longer alive; as though it could not be the least true which yet was true; as though everything around him was enchantment, and he alone was in that enchantment. Would to Heaven it were only enchantment!

At the first touch, when he saw, heard, and recognized Krista, he felt only unembittered delight. Delight—to see her so beautiful, and to hear her so touchingly powerful, that she seemed like a superior being. As though she had got wings and flown to the stars. It was Krista, but a heaven-descended Krista. It was a different Krista from the one he had known, but it had grown out of the old Krista.

He smiled and the tears stood in his eyes. So near he was to her, so far away he was from her. From the hollow tree hither the road was one which had taken three years to traverse, and he

had reached the goal at last. Through a whole world, through an eternity he had to go, through nights of waking and debauchery, through a whole river of tears, and through many sighs that path had led—and now he had reached the goal at last. And now he seemed on a bed of roses, and to hear the song of the nightingale. And it was all Krista.

His heart now beat so audibly that he fancied every one heard it, that even Krista heard it. But no one heard it, all eyes were turned to her, and Krista never heard it: at least she never thought of running to his side.

When her song was at an end they clapped and shouted; Venik did not clap nor applaud, but he was greatly delighted. If he had clapped, perhaps he would have called attention to himself; if he had shouted, perhaps he would have shouted Krista. He felt delight—unembittered delight.

Then the delight began to be embittered. A singer stepped forward, and here Krista was already not alone upon the stage. This singer pledged his love to her, and she pledged her love to him. Then they embraced and kissed each other. Already Venik was pretty well awakened from his dreaming and wellnigh stricken to the ground. Here already he was not on a bed of roses, here he began to feel only its thorns. Here his heart began to beat differently, but his face grew pale and wan.

Then they sang together, the singer and Krista, and they sang about their love, continually about their love; when people after this again clapped and shouted, Venik neither clapped nor shouted, then if he had wished to shout he would have called out "a theatrical princess". And after that he would have burst into a mocking laugh.

It was Krista. And now began to drum in his head the words, "It is not Krista, that being yonder was, it is she no more." The path to her had taken three years to traverse, it went through sorrow, tears, and sighs, and now that he had reached the goal at last, he said to himself, "I have found her and it is not she."

It was Krista and it was not.

When the opera was concluded, he heard voices round him saying, "They drag her home again." He ran out of the theatre and looked for the carriage in which they were going to drag her home. He saw a carriage, it was chock-full of the garlands which were flung to her in the theatre, and young men were detaching the horses, and yoking themselves to the carriage in place of them. It appeared to him past all conception loathsome—but it was

a lucky chance for him. He also harnessed himself to the carriage. When the road to her had taken three years to traverse, surely he might have one close look at her when they were in the same town together; and he awaited by the shafts.

Krista stepped into the carriage and seated herself in the midst of the garlands and bouquets. All the young men took off their hats and yelled. Venik also tossed up his hat and yelled. Krista smiled blandly in all directions and bowed in all directions; she smiled on all alike, and she bowed to all alike. A portion of these smiles also fell to Venik's lot, and a portion of those bows, just as much as to the rest; he might go shares with them, and he went shares with them.

While they drew her along with yells and shouts Venik went almost close beside her, he could have touched her. When they approached a street-lamp, and it cast a stream of light into the carriage, Venik cast a glance there likewise, but only for an instant, that he might not meet her eyes. But indeed he need have been under no apprehension on that score—she had no time to meet his eyes—she had to smile blandly in all directions, and to bow in all directions. Then he took a long look at her, for he observed that they all took a long look at her. He took a long look and their eyes never met; then it appeared to him, that their eyes did meet, but it was dark, and a man easily becomes the sport of fancy when the lights are out.

Also a man in a multitude sees less and is less of a man, just as among many voices our own voice is lost, so also each particular individual is lost in a multitude of individuals. When a multitude is unwise—and it always is unwise—we are infected by the multitude and by its wisdom. A single person would not have drawn Krista in her barouche: he would have said, "Horses are for that purpose." But the multitude yoked itself without reflection, said to itself, "I am a horse"—and horse it was. In that multitude Venik tore along and yelled with the rest of them. He ceased to be Venik. He was at that moment only one of those who dragged and yelled and tossed up their hats.

Then they halted before a house, and Krista stepped out of the carriage. The crowd and the carriage stood before her dwelling, and those young gentlemen assisted her out of the carriage and conducted her up the staircase, others took the garlands out of the carriage and carried them after her. Venik also took one and carried it after the rest. He wished to see what sort of life she

led, but he went more from mere instinct and merely because he was a portion of that multitude which carried garlands.

He saw but little of her abode, but enough to see that it was rich and costly. In the front hall the young men laid down the garlands and then went away: Venik did so, too—laid his garland down and departed.

When he reached the street, a procession approached with torches and halted before the mansion. Singers sang and Krista came out into the open air on to the balcony, and thanked them all quite composedly and quite impartially: she paid him his due also and he accepted it. He heard her speak and when she opened her lips he seemed as though only now he saw and heard her, for in the theatre she merely sang.

Then all the pageant began to disperse in different directions, and Venik was in the street before Krista's house alone. And when he was alone he ceased to be a member of that multitude, became again a man, and was Venik.

He posted himself opposite the house, and his glance ranged over the illuminated windows. But, of course, he well knew which windows were hers, for he had a few moments previously laid a garland in the first floor.

And now he stood there, and looked and watched, to see whether he could hear any voice, and he heard many. There was a subdued hum of voices, perhaps there was a dinner-party or some sort of entertainment, and numerous pleasure seekers with her. He heard conversation and laughter, he saw lights, he heard the singing of divers voices, then he heard Krista also sing, and here he began to parley with himself. He would have gladly posted himself at the very window, if need be, in order to gain a clear view of everything; but it was impossible. So he drew on his imagination for what he could not see.

A gas-lamp was glaring near the window, and when the lamplighter came with a ladder to put out the lamp, he longed to ask to be allowed to mount the ladder himself. He could then have peered into the interior of the house and have seen whom she conversed with, and with whom she sang and laughed. But he felt himself frozen to the spot where he stood and could not stir.

Then he asked himself what he wanted there exactly, and whether he was in his right place there. It is hard to say, it is hard to answer. Rather let us philosophize on the very substance of spirit: we shall more easily answer the question what man is, than I can say whether Venik was here in his right place or not. He

was, and he was not. Instinct prompted him to fly hence, and yet held him here so that he could not stir.

When he heard Krista's song above, everything pressed him to reply. She sang a song from the hill-side, she sang what she had once sung with him in the villages. Had he had his violin with him, he would have answered—he would have announced his presence. For a minute or two he thought he must run and fetch his violin, and that he must announce his presence. But he never went. Then he ruminated. If he had gone for his violin, and had played under the windows, it would have been peculiar: Krista would have heard him, and what then? Would she have started? or would she have continued to sing and jest? Would the song and jest have deserted her? Granted that it did desert her, then everything would have cleared away from her and Venik have been left in the street alone, and she would have been alone in yonder house. If he were to play below her window, she would be left desolate, her guests would disperse, and what he saw and heard would be all over. So in his ruminations he came to this conclusion, that it lay in him to say how long they had for the jest and for the song. If he should say, "Hold! enough!" it would be enough. He granted them that feast; he prolonged it for them; and which of them had the least idea that so it was?

Verily Venik smiled to himself to think what a puissant lord he was, until he began to feel an arrogant conviction that everything which happened on that first floor was under his control.

But he did nothing, and yet he waited until everything was at an end. Gentry and ladies dispersed from Krista's house, and throughout the first floor silence began to reign. In the street where he stood not a living soul was to be heard.

The lights in Krista's window were extinguished and then a single window opened. It was a warm summer night and the window could remain open all night long.

The moon shone just in the direction of Krista's window, and Venik stood in the shadow of the opposite houses.

From Krista's window a head peeped out, and perhaps it was her head. Venik at that time stood facing her and was alone. Even she was alone at last. Then the head vanished and did not appear again.

If he had wished to address her, he could have done so before, but now it was too late. And what was there to say? Where to begin and where to end? His speech might need to be a very

long once or it might be a single word. And what was the word? Where was it to be found?

If at that period when he sought her three years ago he had been ten times further away from her, he would have spoken to her, now he was but a few paces from her and yet he did not open his lips. Now he was simultaneously moved to anger, to weeping, and to laughter, and he neither wept nor laughed nor stormed. Where then was he to find a word that should express both anger and weeping and laughter? And yet he found it. When the head had vanished from the window and all was silent for a long time, Venik called aloud from his hiding-place "Krista!" and in that word was both anger and weeping and laughter.

He had not long to wait before the head again appeared at the window and looked up and down the street in great surprise. It looked up and down and in all directions, but because Venik was in shadow it did not see him. And Venik did not stir any more. The head after a few moments again vanished from the window. Doubtless it thought that there was some trick in it all and that it was a voice without reality. After this complete silence reigned in the first floor, perhaps Krista was dozing, perhaps she had already gone to sleep.

Venik after this crept from his lair under cover of the shadow and only determined further that he would come pretty often to trick her with his voice unless he thought better of it.

And then he wandered about the streets of Prague and wandered in his own consciousness. He wandered even in his thoughts—he wandered even in his imagination. Yet unceasingly he heard voices, laughter, songs: he saw torches and a glowing face and in the midst of it all he himself seemed to shout out "Krista!" and when he had thus shouted all was over for ever.

Then it appeared to him that he again stood before Krista's house, and there he stood. No living soul was stirring anywhere, the house and the street were plunged in sleep—not a voice was to be heard anywhere as though that day had never been at all.

All that to-day had been, already now spoke only in Venik, it was already only an echo, though this echo was very distinct indeed and sometimes wellnigh found a voice. The torches seemed to be aflame in his bosom and a cry seemed perforce to be wrung from it as if he had to shout for the whole troop.

The next time when Krista once more sang he was again first in the theatre. This time when the curtain was furled up, the wood was not on the stage: there was a garden and in it was a

hum of voices. One might suppose a fête represented in this garden, and Krista sang at it while the guests amused themselves. The action on the stage was concluded by the first violin playing a solo melody which the public clapped: but Krista on the stage had to feign herself conscience-stricken by the melody and finally to fall fainting on the ground whereupon the curtain fell.

When Krista fell fainting on the ground, Venik could scarcely refrain from calling out to her. But then the public kept on clapping, the curtain rose, Krista stepped before it, as if she had never in her life fallen on the ground in a fainting fit, thanked them, smiled blandly, and as often as the curtain furled up was ready with more smiles and with more thanks. When Venik saw all this thanking, he was no longer disposed to call out to her, disdain again played around his mouth and half to the neighbour who sat beside him he audibly exclaimed, "A theatrical princess!"

His neighbour took these words for eulogy and to heighten their force, said, "Yes, a perfect queen of the theatre!" and asseverated it to himself, which was also a kind asseveration to Venik.

"Yes, a perfect queen of the theatre!" repeated Venik after him, as if he himself could heighten the force of his neighbour's criticism by repeating it.

What then happened after this in the theatre Venik scarcely saw or heard. All that was stereotyped in his mind was that solo of the first violin from the orchestra, then how Krista sank in a fainting fit, how the curtain fell, how the curtain was raised, and how Krista had her fainting fit over in a twinkling, and was able to thank them all and to smile blandly.

When the theatre was over there was no watchword given to-night that they were to take out the horses from Krista's carriage and drag her home.

But still Venik again posted himself by the exit from the theatre, and just where Krista had the other night stepped into her carriage: and there he waited.

There was the carriage again ready prepared, but Krista did not step into it, she told the coachman that she would go afoot, and the coach only drove home her wardrobe. She went afoot, and she did not go alone. There walked by her side a very stately young man. Krista hung on his arm and they conversed together very amicably. After them at a respectful distance followed more young men, doubtless some of those who the other day had drawn

her carriage in place of horses: to-day they only followed as a kind of escort or body-guard.

Along with these young fellows followed Venik and learned from their conversation both the name and rank of the person who accompanied Krista: but he did not much care about his name or his rank. Then he learnt that he escorted her almost always; that the barouche in which Krista drove was his and she drove in his barouche, even in the day-time, whenever and wherever she chose.

Now this was not a matter of indifference to Venik: when he heard it the red blood rushed to his face. But then, yet again, he affected indifference and said, half to himself half to his neighbour, "Ah! well; I knew it from the first."

His neighbour doubtless paid scant attention to these words or to him who spoke them.

As soon as they had reached the house in which Krista dwelt, her cavalier bade her good night very heartily, kissed her hand, and made many polite bows. After this he departed, Krista entered the house and the rest dispersed to their several homes. Only Venik again was left standing just on the spot where he stood the other day.

He was again overshadowed by the shadow of the opposite houses, while the moon's radiance fell in full lustre on Krista's house and upon her window.

This time there was no din of voices in that house. Krista was seemingly alone. Now he could have spoken to her. But what was there to say?

While he looked thus at those windows of hers, behind which floated rich curtains, he felt as though he fain must again cry out "Krista!" Then perhaps the window would be opened and she would appear at it. But he did not call out to her, and yet the window was opened and Krista appeared at it. She looked into the sky and to a star. Then she went away from the window and Venik heard her hum to herself snatches of song, and amongst them he recognized many from the hill-side, and from the hollow tree. At this his flesh crept. Then she came to the window again, again for a moment looked toward the sky, and toward the star, and then Venik heard her humming to herself half aloud "The Orphaned Child".

And here Venik shivered as if the cold of winter had come upon him. Was she yet orphaned, was she yet in sorrow? Did she remember? Did the gorgeous life which she now led fail

to satisfy her? Could he have spoken to her, could he have questioned her, could he have announced his presence, he would have learnt all and perhaps they would have found one another.

They might have found one another, they had all but found one another, and here Venik again said to himself, that he wanted her not. And once more his mind ran upon the solo of the first violin, her fainting, the curtain, her smiles, her bows, her thanks, then her escort home, their confidential conversation, the barouche, and at the end of it all, her humming melodies and the "Orphaned Child"—and out of the chaos again emerged the title "a theatrical princess". If he had then wished to know and call her by name neatly and elegantly, he would not have shouted "Krista," but "Oh! Theatrical Princess", and there was humiliation to him in the expression.

So when Krista's head once more vanished from the window and when the song and that day's excitement was hushed for him, Venik hurried away from the spot not, however, stealthily to-day nor did he wander on the way. To-day he went direct to his temporary dwelling and on the road only "The Orphaned Child" kept buzzing in his head just as he had heard Krista hum it.

Next day he inquired for the manager of the orchestra, went to him and announced himself as a violinist and begged to be received into the orchestra. The manager gave Venik something to play over and was fully satisfied with him, and told him that he would take down his name and use his influence to have him accepted. On this Venik further begged that he might be allowed on the next performance, as if to approve himself to the public, to play that violin solo in the orchestra. The conductor gave Venik the solo to play through then and there to test him. As Venik played the conductor smiled and told him that he was satisfied with it.

And Venik also was quite satisfied.

CHAPTER VI

WHEN the appointed day arrived, the theatre did not differ from its ordinary appearance except perhaps that the public interest was somewhat less than heretofore. The public knew the opera, and it knew Krista's song in it and was already accustomed to it as we accustom ourselves at last to all. Even

popular enthusiasm in the end smoothes out its waves. Krista was an apparition above all dear to them but they were already habituated to it. To-day they went to the theatre pretty much from habit, not from any inward necessity, not because something drew them to it with irresistible force. Nothing that they could see and hear to-day could be any more either novel or striking. They saw and heard it already in their recollection, to-day those recollections had only to be sprinkled with a few drops of dew and then they would be tolerably revived, and ever recollection is but pale and wan beside the full-blown roses of novelty.

The theatre then had a more ordinary appearance. Among the public there was no expectation—only certainty, comfortable certainty. Just as, when we travel through a country for the second or third time we know where we ought to look out of the window and where we may spare ourselves the pains.

True, one new violinist sat yonder in the orchestra, but does that change the aspect of a theatre? Is the aspect of a country changed because there is one tree there more or one tree there less? In the orchestra! The orchestra is not the stage. On the stage we mark at once every change—but in the orchestra! Who gives so much as a passing look to that? If a young drummer is seated by the drum instead of the old one whom they buried yesterday—what of that? If a bald pate stands by the bass-fiddle who a few years before had not yet grown bald—what of that? Not a single person paid the slightest attention to his head while it was hairy, why should he pay attention to it any more, now that it is smooth and polished?

A new violinist! Plenty of them are seated in the orchestra; whether there is one more or one less concerns only the members of the orchestra, and among these perhaps only the violinists, it does not change the aspect of the theatre. True there were in the orchestra artists as good as those on the stage, but it is the fashion with the public to look only at the stage—let us piously adhere then to the fashion.

And now the curtain was furled up. When the violin solo came, Venik settled himself to his violin and played. In this solo the violinist was allowed some liberty and was not obliged to confine himself rigidly to the written score, he might improvise and he did improvise.

When Venik began to play, something thrilled the audience and caused it to cast a languid look at the orchestra and it was observed that some one different was performing to-day. Even those

tones were different. And scarcely had people listened a moment longer when they held their breath.

That violin was all at once in tears and lamentation. The hill-side and the woodland sobbed out in it, and man bewailed. And he bewailed with anguish and with wrath.

The theatre was thrilled anew, it was thrilled again and again. Its aspect was completely changed by the mere swaying of a hand. Venik had brought the public to their senses, and now he played "The Orphaned Child".

It was a horrible outpouring of grief, and beneath it all lay a hidden tempest of emotion. People wiped away their tears, and their flesh crept.

And that violin seemed to wish to speak as follows: "Like two flower-cups, we grew together on one stalk, and thou, rapacious hand of society, hast torn away the one and I, the other, am orphaned."

And that violin seemed to say, "Like two birds we fluttered together over the hill-side when they take counsel together of what they shall weave their nest; and thou, insatiable maw of society, didst devise a cunning springe. Thou need'st must catch my mate and I am orphaned."

And further it seemed to say, "Two hearts we grew together side by side, and one struck root in the other, 'twas I who cherished those hearts till they were like as one, but ye have rent away the one, the roots which ye have torn out with it have left but wounds, and those which ye have not torn out anguish yet more—ye have that heart and I—I am orphaned of it."

And then it said, "We were that sportive, laughter-loving Nature which maketh music in itself: but ye had a craving for mere craftmanship; ye outraged Nature, and Nature thus outraged has found her way hither, and calls aloud in me because I am orphaned."

And yet again it said, "Faith have ye expunged out of my life, and what exotics have ye planted there instead? Who of you dares still to submit his prayers to Heaven, when ye have plucked the heart out of my breast for life? But I indeed have a right to tears and bitter accusations and wrath and cursing, and I fling my curse upon you—I hate you and I curse you—I, only an orphaned child."

And much more in the like strain did that violin say to them, and the public heard it and understood it, trembled, and wept salt tears. It was like a trumpet-call to judgment; an invisible

hand wrote the words of fate, and the words were comprehensible to all. The audience half rose from their places, to see who it was that could thus speak with his strings, and their hearts heaved with one common emotion. He who but a little moment before was last in the theatre was now first. He singly had changed the whole aspect of the theatre—changed, nay, revolutionized it. They were but simple tones, but they crashed and sawed. The public swayed the head in one common movement, it seethed in one common turmoil of feeling, but it was silent. That silence was ominous.

And how passed it on the stage? On the stage was a garden and in it a gay company.

When Krista heard that melody, she left her gay companions, ran across the stage even to the footlights, ran even to the orchestra, and staggered back amongst her gay company. But it was not given her to rest there. She sprang to her feet once more, wrung both her hands, raised them clasped to heaven, then pressed them to her heart, then tore over the stage like one distraught, then seemed to shrink cowering into herself, then again raised herself to her feet with an effort as if she wished to retain her self-command, but in that over-tension of the nerves her strength seemed shattered at a single blow, she uttered a shriek which cleft every heart in twain and sank on the ground all at once, crushed and broken—sunk in a last and deadly faint.

If it was the mimic art, it was past all conception perfect; if it was the mimic art it seemed as though her every gesture had been fashioned by the Creator of the world himself.

So she remained lying and Venik still played on, and the public was carried away by the perfect acting of Krista, and was wrought almost beside itself by the perfect playing of Venik.

Thus they played together once again. The curtain remained for a moment still lifted, and when Venik concluded, it fell. And here arose such a clamour in the theatre, such a tempest of excitement, as was never before seen or heard in any theatre.

The public was by a single touch driven beside itself.

The curtain rose but Krista lay there still, she did not thank them, she did not smile upon them.

The curtain fell, but the public stormed on. And, hereupon, those in the orchestra told Venik that the applause belonged to him, and that he ought to turn toward the public and express his thanks. Venik turned, thanked them and smiled, thanked them and smiled also in the name of Krista.

Still the public wished to see Krista again, and here those in the orchestra told Venik that he must hie on to the stage that he and Krista might express their thanks together. They lifted him quite on to the stage, and when the curtain rose, the public could perceive that Venik knelt beside Krista, he cried "Krista! Krista!" but that was inaudible to the public because of its own tremendous clamour.

Then the curtain fell and all at once it seemed as though a knife had stabbed the public, and as though each man felt that knife in his own breast.

Then some one stepped forward before the curtain and announced that Krista had fallen in an actual fainting fit, and in the public silence succeeded to the storm.

Then no one stepped forward again before the curtain, but something like a flash of lightning ran through the public and with that lightning a hoarse thunder-peal: "Krista is dead!"

After this lightning-stroke the public was stupefied.

Meanwhile on the stage Venik had started back from Krista and now wandered over the stage just as Krista had done a little while before. Then he again knelt beside her and thus remained kneeling. They brought Krista round, physicians hastened to her and vaguely stated that there might yet be hope of her recovery. Krista raised her eyes, seemed to whisper something, seemed to seek some one's hand and no one understood it all.

Venik cried out "Krista! Krista!" and Krista seemed to collect her ebbing strength into one ray of light, fixed both her eyes on Venik, fixed them on him with a smile and said, "We have found each other at last!"

Venik knelt as if in a dreadful ecstasy and said, "Krista! Krista! we have found each other."

Then they carried her away from the stage, out into the open air, to the carriage, and Venik accompanied her. He was seated in the carriage before they placed her in it, and when they laid her there he took her in his arms, and he held her softly and warmly so that she might have been upon a bed of roses; he held her to his heart, his breath mingled itself with hers, his eyes intercepted the rays of light which fell from hers, and at intervals as if from the very depths of his soul, re-echoed the words, "Krista, we have found one another." But now it was as though Krista could speak no more in words, her spirit spoke only by a glance and by a smile, and in that glance was a smile.

And yet once again she forced herself to speak, "I knew that thou wouldst come but I did not expect thee thus."

The carriage drove along at a slow pace. It was in solemn pomp that Krista drove home to-day and yet she smiled. Her smile this time belonged to one alone, it was genuine and came from the heart, it was the reflection of her whole being, of her whole life, but of a life which already flickered in the socket. Krista knew it. Venik guessed it too well, and cried out, "Krista, Krista, we shall yet tell one another all."

"Salute the hollow tree," said Krista, "I wished to have found thee there, thou hast been beforehand with me—'tis better thus."

The carriage stopped before Krista's door, Venik lifted her in his arms, bore her to her chamber, there laid her on her bed and Krista still sought his face with her hand. And her own face was smiling, though now her eyes grew cold, and fixed; her whole being already ceased to speak, and she moved no more. Venik again knelt by her side, but she was already speechless.

The public dispersed from the theatre, many walked up and down before Krista's dwelling and spoke about her and about the violin-player, and over Prague the news flew like wild-fire that Krista was dead.

The storm now emptied itself out of the theatre into the town and as it enlarged its area, diminished somewhat of its tragic force and vehemence.

"It was a stroke", some whispered. "She fell unfortunately", said others. But it never occurred to any one that there was any connection between Krista's death and Venik's playing, or indeed between Krista and Venik. When they asked him Venik assented, "It was an unfortunate fall", he said.

Then Venik was alone in the chamber of death. At Krista's head the waxen tapers were burning, and they and Venik were the only watchers. And here Venik looked musingly at those well-loved features. Ah! how like they were to their living self—how fair they were and the lips scarce cold, as though they might yet move in speech. It was not like the sleep of death, it was not like sleep at all. But just as though she had closed her eyes in sportive jest and pursued her lips together to simulate an easy slumber, and could throw away the mask and thaw the wells of speech whenever she choose.

Venik seemed to see her once again on her couch of leaves and moss within the hollow tree. His hand had strewn the couch of leaves and moss in the old days—the couch from which she fled

so faithlessly. And his hand also had strewn the couch on which she lay to-day, but she was not truant now.

Then Venik questioned the shade of her—the lost one. "Krista, why didst thou desert me in the old days?" But Krista's lips were mute and her shadow answered not, and on her face she smiled the same cold smile. And Venik's tongue faltered his reproaches—"Only once in the old days thou didst desert me." But the dead Krista treated both his questions and his repinings with the same icy calm and smiled the same cold smile which froze the life-blood within him.

And he gazed at the fair corpse again and sighed and wondered. "Was it to sleep in fruitless beauty on a gilded couch and silken cushions that thou didst leave so recklessly my couch of moss and leaves?"

And then Venik whispered to himself that he would carry her away by stealth and lay her on the couch of moss and leaves and then perhaps she would awaken—perhaps she would rise once more. And then he thought that it would be easier to go to the hollow tree, bring away the leaves and moss, and strew it here, and then perhaps she might awaken. But, however he planned and plotted, Krista treated all his day-dreams with the same icy calm and smiled the same cold smile as though she wished to say, "I am contented with everything thou dost", or again just as though she said, "Fool, fool, all is over, I am well-cared-for now."

Then Krista in that calm unnatural repose was such a riddle to him that he turned away and vowed that he would strive to unriddle it no more. He turned away and taking his violin in his hand examined it all over inch by inch to see where lay that secret source whence had issued words so shrewdly tempered that they had smitten Krista to the death, and then as if to solve the secret his fingers closed idly round the bow and he swept it gently across the strings. But only as though he coaxed and stroked them lest they should utter their words of death anew, only just as Krista had done that night when stepping to the window and gazing at the evening star, she had sung half whispering, half aloud "The Orphaned Child".

And Venik, too, stepped to that open window and looked toward the heaven, looked wellnigh in the same direction as did Krista ere death had robbed her of the light for ever. And his strings sighed out in whispers "The Orphaned Child". Did Krista listen as she used to listen in the old days? He turned to look at her once more and she smiled as smoothly as before and seemed to

say, "I know all, but what of that?" She took all his questionings and all his musings so lightly that his questions died away upon his lips.

Then he stroked her hair just as in the old days he had stroked it by the streamlet under the willows when the cuckoo cuckooed to them, and Krista smiled placidly even at this and seemed to say, "How soft your hand is." And he kissed her eyeballs but now no salt tears oozed from under the heavy eyelids, and he kissed her on the mouth but now, alas! it chilled all kissing that fell upon it. And do what he would Krista repulsed him not, at everything she only smiled, to everything she made but one response, "I am contented with everything thou dost."

She smiled the same cold smile whatever Venik did or thought. Be it subtle questioning, be it doubting, be it the outpouring of affliction—for it all she had but one cold smile.

Then he took his violin into his hands again and turning towards Krista with it he said, "A little while ago these strings breathed life, now only the icy wind of death streams from them. Oh! Krista, a little while ago they charmed thee to my side, now they have murdered thee and driven thee away for ever." And Krista ever smiled the same cold smile.

And she still smiled when they brought her coffin and when they laid her to rest in it on a bed of flowers. And when the singers came with whom in times gone by she had wrought her audience to a frenzy of delight, and when above her pealed the funeral dirge its last farewell she smiled the same cold smile. And she smiled when priests came and above her coffin pattered prayers which sounded already like the rattling of the clods of earth upon its lid. And still she smiled when the lid was laid upon the coffin, even when that lid had all but closed upon her, even when in one last lingering gleam the light of this world died away into eternal darkness. The lid concealed her face and concealed her smile. And Venik in spirit saw her still smile on, even in the coffin, even in the carriage in which they laid her.

Now when he saw the horses gird to and move away with her he would gladly have unyoked them and himself drawn Krista to her burial. Now it seemed a shameful thing to leave it to horses to draw her to her last resting-place, just as in her hour of triumph it had seemed a shameful thing that the people should yoke themselves to her car. The people paced behind her coffin. There was a countless multitude and Venik was but one of them, and felt the oppressive presence of that crowd. Oh! that he could

have carried Krista far away with no one by—carried her away wherever he chose, free from the curious gaze of the inquisitive and where he might vent the anguish of his soul alone.

But in all that multitude sorrow was but a forced unnatural plant. It was but the mere semblance of sorrow and struck no deep root.

That was soon apparent. By the time the procession reached the barriers of the city all but a very few of the mourners had slunk away and ere the earth was wellnigh shovelled over the coffin all were gone but he and two or three grave-diggers. Then even the grave-diggers departed and Venik remained alone. And here beside the grave it seemed as if he talked once more with Krista, as if the bonds of sorrow were loosened and as if even in the midst of bitter anguish he was himself once more.

He stayed long beside the grave and paid his sad court there several days—its living monument. And at evening he went to Krista's previous dwelling and looked long and wistfully at the yet open casement. But from that casement no one now looked forth either into the street or toward the sky or toward the star.

Then it seemed to Venik as though the book of fate was closed and all was accomplished, he quitted Prague, aimed straight for home, and came one evening to the hill-side, beneath which flowed the river and on which stood the hollow tree at the outskirts of the old oak-wood.

CHAPTER VII

IN the old oak-tree was yet strewed the couch of moss and leaves. He laid himself down to rest upon it and was utterly alone. And now even his thoughts had no basis in reality. He began to smile vacantly at everything just as Krista had.

And a strange numbness stole upon him, and though it was a warm summer's evening, winter seemed to close in around him.

And the birds sang now no more their carol of the spring, the tuneful stream was stayed, the full-voiced choir was hushed, only from time to time they piped a dreary call-note as if to tell the world they still were there. And then when Venik took into his hand his violin it seemed as though, like the song of those birds, the melody had vanished from its strings. The tale he had to tell upon them was already told, his joy had throbbed itself out upon them, his grief had sobbed itself to rest upon them, and now he

scarcely knew what had come over them. Already they held but empty tones, already their melody had ceased to speak.

The river hummed its old perpetual song and above the neighbouring village, his home and birth-place, the sleep of dreams descended. And fitful slumber seemed to flap about the hollow tree and to mock and gibe at Venik.

But perhaps only that aged tree understood the deep delight of slumber. Venik crept out of it and then he began again to muse and speculate and question within himself, whether all must be that had been, and whether there was not some power in Nature to efface and roll back the past. And his own soul answered him that all must be as it was and that he and Krista had understood one another at last. Krista had always smiled and smiled, and still she smiled even in the earth.

Then it seemed strange to him that he and Krista, who had grown up together like folded leaves upon a single bough, should have diverged so far from one another, that one could neither see nor touch the other; or they were like two mountains set side by side—for half their height they were like one single growth, for the other half their summits grew wider and wider apart, and nevermore encountered, or only when the snow-wreath and the tempest swept over them, and one summit sent its message to the other on the wings of the lightning. Thus he had sent his message to Krista on the wings of the lightning, and it had stricken her to death.

And he began to feel oppressed within that hollow tree, or perhaps it oppressed him to be on that couch of leaves and moss, which now so vainly began to be a couch. He laid himself down before the tree just on the spot where in the old days he and Krista had buried his mother, that is to say, the sweetbrier and the willow-wands and the sweet marjoram, and out of it had made his mother. And here on that little tomb he felt more at peace.

And it was just as if he saw and heard around him everything that he saw and heard here in yonder distant past, when here he shepherded the sheep.

There stood the little Krista, whose piping treble sang the gloria to his violin, and who wept because he chased her from him, and because she was a poor orphaned girl!

And he began anew to smile vacantly at everything, just, ah! just as he had seen the dead Krista coldly smile.

And then a cuckoo cuckooed and its note rang lonely through that lonely wood, where now but few birds sang, rang out as if

in witness of a desolate world, and as if it tolled a dirge of endless woe. "Ah! ha! thou hast scarce any one to whom to cuckoo now", said Venik, and smiled to himself thereat.

Then a bat flew out and fluttered round the tree, just as if it sought something.

And Venik smiled tauntingly and said, "Brother mine, seek." Then he perceived that there were two bats and that they had found one another, and in the tree a piping from a nest of young bats made itself heard. And after this Venik said, "Ha! ha! how fares it with the young vampires, how fares it with the young vampires?" And again he added, "I also am but a hollow tree."

Then he began to look to the horizon and saw the river glittering dead white below him, and above him a wan firmament and wan stars. And again his eyes looked deep into those star-depths, and far away in that direction whither Krista's eyes had strayed, and he began to murmur fitful snatches of melody.

The hill-side and his life upon it began to skip about in his memory, like the ignes fatui of the night. And thus, too, wildly rose and fell his snatches of wild melody.

Then he said to himself, "What is it all worth? When chill autumn comes, the birds must hie away, away home!"

And he felt the chill winter round him once again. And once again he peered into the tree, at the couch of moss and leaves and said, "What shall I do with thee?"

And he arose and gathered up about half the leaves and moss. "Thou shalt smile too", he said, and made a fire of it. All was winter in his heart, and he warmed himself and smiled inanely and said to himself, "It was a merry bout to warm himself at Krista's couch." Then he patted down the leaves and moss and added more fuel until he made a roaring bonfire of it, and it burnt higher and higher and crackled and smiled as he said. And he smiled, too. And there was yet merrier sport to come: for the old hollow tree took fire from the bonfire and burnt like a gigantic fiery column, scattering sparks in all directions. The whole horizon was aflame, the smoke stretched ruddy to the firmament, and Venik thought the sport grew merrier and merrier, so that now everything smiled upon him, even the whole world.

Then he took his violin once again for the last time, and played just as if he had gathered all the dust of life into a single pinch and would scatter it to the winds by the vibrations of his instrument.

The hollow tree was a gorgeous theatre. It shone and crackled and Venik played by its fitful glare. He played and imitated all the birds which had already fled in terror. In sooth he played feelingly and finely, just as Krista had done, when she fell in a fainting fit, and Venik smiled madly at it all.

Then in the village a bell rang out from the very chapel in which he and Krista once played and sang together. The bell rang out an alarm, and when the people from the village streamed on to the hill-side, Venik was still playing underneath the tree so that it looked and all fell out just as in the old song where the linden-tree burns and its sparks fall upon the girl lying beneath it, only that there an oak-tree burnt and under it was Venik.

And just as the people began to throng the hill-side the hollow tree collapsed with a horrible crackling and in its embers the song of Venik was silenced. The people saw exactly how it buried him, and a shriek ran along the whole hill-side as if from a single throat.

The family of the bats fluttered round. Then all burnt out, all was extinguished, all was silenced, the music of two human lives was hushed and on the face of death the smile was turned to stone.

The hollow tree, Krista's couch, Venik, the violin—all was one cinder.

IN LORDLY HALLS

THE HURKAS were young married people and all that was known about them was that they had a fine establishment. They lived in the finest street in Prague, their rooms occupied a whole story and were full of everything which, according to current notions, is indispensable to comfort. As to Pan Hurka it was thought that he was a millionaire. His name headed all public subscriptions with a considerable sum: he took part in every new scheme both in word and deed, he was a railway shareholder, he set afloat a coal-mining company and among his nobler passions must be reckoned a fondness for gambling at cards in which pursuit he showed himself a model gentleman.

About his particular business but little was known. Some said he lived on his capital, others as broker and money-lender, and people in general agreed that he was the owner of mines, and a farm somewhere or other, and took it for granted that he had plenty of everything. Company enough was invited by the Hurkas, not indeed very select as to taste or education but such as makes pretentions to luxurious evening entertainments, and the guests of the Hurkas always went away thoroughly contented. People there were indeed who calculated the money squandered at these festivities, but above these, as water above a stone, always closed the plausible truism that one cannot live like that without the wherewithal.

There were, however, people independent of the Hurkas and with long memories, among whom it was pretty generally admitted that Pan Hurka was a crafty charlatan and that those games and mines existed more in his imagination and in his wishes than in reality and that he was in truth so stretching the last thread that he might pick up a wealthy bride, but these murmurers were silenced one and all when the rich bride appeared and not long after her marriage came in for a large property, for both her parents died and she was an only daughter and sole heiress. After this occurrence everything was ascribed to Pan Hurka with perfect certainty of which he had given himself out to be possessor, public opinion endowed him with mines and farms and added also everything beforehand of which, perhaps, at a later date it would have been glad to find him possessed.

With these general sentiments Pan Hurka was very content, and as we have seen, did everything in his power to cause it to strike deep root in the grounds of faith. Every one found a warm welcome at his home, he borrowed money, he lent it out at interest, Christians and Jews gave the hand of friendship to one another under his roof, and what matters if there were more Jews than Christians?

Pani Hurka, whom her husband called Caroline or, more shortly, Karla had not chosen Hurka as her husband for love's sake. She had had in her youth a romance with a young brewer, a citizen son of Prague whom she had adored with all the warmth of a girlish heart. Brewer Havel loved her with genuine affection and it must be admitted that they were made for another. People even said that they would form a pair to realize the dream of an artist. But Havel did not suit Karla's parents because he was a brewer and, "you know, my dear, anything but refined", so when Pan Hurka knocked at their door and began to give an account of his far-reaching plans and bold speculations they soon bowed Havel out of the house and became partisans of Pan Hurka. It caused Karla many a sleepless night and many a salt tear but the daughter was finally overruled by her parents' persistency and when, not long after, Havel, out of pique as it was said, married some one else, Karla almost mechanically gave her hand to Hurka. Havel had tasted the honey and Hurka had only got wife and money.

We cannot say that Karla would have made her first lover an exemplary wife. In Hurka's home she had not hitherto given a thought to her special calling, or if she gave it a thought it was more in connection with Havel's home than her own. Complete indifference ruled in her own establishment and she was mistress only so far as Hurka was master. For the rest he might undertake what he chose, he might look about for anything to please her, he might prepare her any sort of pleasant surprise—she shared in his amusements with as much spiritual warmth as a third person might have done to whom he had given an account of them.

She received visitors because it was the custom, she was in society not because she felt a need of diversion but because she could not excuse herself and she conversed with people not because her heart prompted her but because she had ears and could not help herself. Pan Hurka was well aware of his wife's state of mind and nothing leads me to suppose that he took much

pains to cure her of it. He was complete master at home, no one stood in his way, he might even speculate with her fortune, according to his inclination, he might play at cards all night, he might be at home or not as he pleased. Even the servants did not grumble at their mistress. She never scolded them, she did not tire them with many orders nor was she too particular about their work. Everything appeared as it really went on, there were no subterfuges; no one had to complain of the mistress nor did any one really love her, and the lady bore with them all.

It was a condition of married life such as we see frequently. Tenderness was not yet developed in Karla. She did not live with her husband in any sort of intimacy, and if her husband was at home, it seemed as natural to her as that day should follow night, if he went away she was as little apprehensive about him as about the coming of night.

Formality ruled her world: she felt no pressing wants and the warmth of her conjugal affection was no greater than her appetite for the fifth course at table. She enjoyed it but she did not need it.

Karla's intelligence was moreover such as we frequently find. She was cultivated because it is necessary to be so and people expect something of the sort. Neither Karla's parents nor her instructors nor herself understood what is the true substance of a cultivated mind. Her instructors developed in her a series of merely mechanical accomplishments, spiritual warmth and earnestness slept like the combustible matter in a piece of wood, when it is taken out of the fire. She learnt to read and read—but only because there were books in the world: if there had not been any she would not have yearned for them. She took a walk in her books so to speak—like an indifferent man in a fine country. If you ask him what he has seen in it, he will tell you that there are trees in it and also grass.

A rose is a rose to him because it is not called a nettle, a butterfly is a butterfly to him because it flutters over the wild flowers in a manner different from a bird.

In the most beautiful gallery he sees only frames, painted canvass. He pauses before a picture because people are talking about it and many are standing before it. He who has not soul sees soul nowhere and where the mind has no innate loftiness, neither Tiziano nor Michelangelo can win a hearing. Karla's cultivation was like that of many a girl and woman. They know more or less, but no one cares to talk about it with them. Their

cultivation is like the playing of an indifferent actor. If you catch a few words you will soon know all the rest down to the last full stop. The actor himself does not know why he is made to talk as he does, his soul has no share in it all and his tones are bristling with disgust: in place of soul memory plays the part.

Even Karla knew more or less, but just as a sleeping person hears a lively conversation—he hears the words but he does not understand their meaning. To know much is not happiness: but how we know something, how we ourselves add to it—in this lies the true test of knowledge. Karla visited the theatre, like others; she clapped, when she heard others clap. And when she went out of the theatre she was as little purified and exalted as when she entered.

That holy instinct which opens its thousand doors of inward life to a woman's heart, the spring tide of feeling and of all sweet scents, with which the zephyrs of a gentle mind disport themselves: she had indeed some conception of it once, when the passion for Havel inspired her with the full breath of a warm spring. But this spiritual insight did not last long, the lamp was extinguished and if memory sometimes melted in the light of that dawning, it only vaguely smote her with a dim desire for the truth.

Even Havel was enshrined more in her memory than her soul and when she saw that fate had for ever separated him from her, she preserved him indeed in memory but was not constrained to tears.

With all her indifference, however, she felt extremely lonely and would have been unhappy had she been capable of feeling unhappiness. She was not herself alone to blame, the age in which she was brought up was at fault. If they had taught her less and striven rather to awaken her sleeping soul she would have even acquired more knowledge. She would also have acquired the power of self-analysis, and that is a priceless treasure in adversity. He is not happy who is merely incapable of feeling his unhappiness. Those who are incapable of great suffering are incapable of great pleasure. We delight in tragedies because they render us capable of the highest pleasure. Only the stunted generation of Karla's contemporaries and with it Karla herself objected to seeing tragedy because everything turned out dolefully.

Karla's spiritual inheritance was to her what alms are to a beggar. Do not blame her, she had many like her. They were

a whole generation who vainly warmed themselves in the sunshine of art. At the moment certainly, they felt themselves touched by something agreeable, but when they turned away it was winter in their hearts again. They were a whole generation who considered artists a mere beggarly caste. How poor would have been that generation, if art had not unrolled before them its treasures! Karla belonged to that beggarly age though she never begged for alms. Her education had taught her certain movements that she might not be unattractive, it had taught her certain rules that she might know when she was to blush, but instruction never so came home to her that she could be her own instructor. They taught her even to sketch a little that she might have patterns for embroidery. They taught her a little music, because the piano when properly handled gives out a pleasant sound.

But with it all Karla never once caught the fire of enthusiasm, with it all her spirit continued poor and narrow, without parents, without roof, without home, without clothing, and without warmth. She even learnt something of rhetoric, but as many others learn, the phrases were indeed in her as in grammarians, she got them by rote with the printer's errors and no fire of enthusiasm breathed upon them to kindle them into life. Her very thoughts moved only in a set circle of phrases and in that grass-grown bed no single flower expanded into beauty or originality.

The fashionable maxims of that generation had but little profundity, and it is to be understood that Karla did not rise above her generation. The maxims of utility ruled supreme, and therefore people were advised only to read books from which it was possible to draw some definitive advantage. Girls might only find amusement in books with which they could conclude a holy alliance. Patriotism entered into their programme that they might feel themselves somebodies and cut a pretty figure in the world: female virtue was preserved because without it there was some difficulty in procuring a husband. The spiritual ties uniting society were weighed in the balance and measured by the ell: if nobleness did not come under the shopkeepers' measure it was assumed to be of little general utility with mercenary minds; people went to church and paraded themselves triumphantly before the world because they had been to church. They felt the brotherhood of race, but only as people of one castle, against all others they fortified and barricaded themselves.

Karla differed from her compeers only in this that she played her part unconsciously and indifferently while the others knew what they were about. Karla only knew that life to her was barren: it little mattered under what form this was brought home to her, now that she had failed to win him whom she had desired.

The indifference, whether she were definitely conscious about it or not, was no secret to her husband. She did not take the trouble to deceive him by devotion. She had not married him on any understanding of the sort, and Hurka was too dissipated to have any feeling that could be outraged. Indeed if she passed Havel's home with her husband, Pan Hurka permitted her to look longingly towards it, even to breath forth sighs, and never suggested by word or look that she ought to put some restraint upon her reminiscences.

Hurka was occasionally tender, at least he seemed to be so, and that would be enough for many women to make them forget their loneliness. But his tenderness had no effect upon Karla. It was natural to her—was he not her husband?—and if his affection seemed to slacken—was he not harassed by business? Karla cradled her little daughter, a child like a small bud, and what would have raised any other woman to be a madonna only touched her so far that she knew she had a few more agreeable cares to attend to. If it had been Havel who approached the cradle and kissed their little daughter with half the love that Hurka showed I dare say she would have spent the whole day in looking into its blue eyes. Laid by Hurka's side she sometimes failed to hear its childish wail at night.

We cannot say that in wedlock such as this any day is likely to become sacred. To both of them the wedding-day was only a day of change of life and from that time nothing occurred which could have exalted their sentiments. Even the birth of a child did not make the day sacred and after that I know not of anything that could have surprised them out of their indifference. Pan Hurka might perhaps have succeeded in some of his speculations, but Karla would certainly have maintained her attitude of indifference.

It is often said that passion becomes vulgarized after marriage: to vulgar commonplace people everything becomes vulgar and commonplace. The inhabitants of a pretty country are for ever wondering why people flock to see what they themselves see every day. But between Hurka and Karla no affection had ever sprung up; as they were the first day so they had remained ever

since; we cannot speak about cooling towards one another when there was never any warmth.

But latterly indeed it had occurred to Karla that Hurka showed himself unusually gentle and caressing, occasionally, indeed, he appeared distrait, but not enough to injure their relations to one another.

He called her his dear soul, his dearest friend, and declared it would kill him if fate ever were to separate them for any length of time. Her goodness to him was unbounded he said, and though he had frequently deserved reproaches he had never been troubled by a single one.

Karla reasoned very little about these pretty speeches, indeed scarcely at all. More especially in regard to their separation she conjectured that her husband meant her to understand that he had to undertake some unavoidable journey and not wishing to give her full particulars, he put her off with specious formulas. But she was soon enlightened as to her husbands designs.

* * *

Hurka now invited to his home more company than ever and entertained them with reckless extravagance. Karla more than once complained of having so often to play the part of hostess, and several times it happened that she spent the evening in her own room or retired early on the ground that she must attend to her child. Hurka had indeed latterly opened wide his purse-strings to play the gentleman and was oftener seen at cards than at any other occupation. And very much surprised was Karla one day when preparing for another grand entertainment she put her hand into their money-box and found it empty. She asked Hurka for money, but he told her smilingly that the chest would be full again by the morrow and she made no further inquiries.

On the day of the dinner-party Hurka appeared more beaming than ever. His face shone with satisfaction, he rubbed his hands as if he wished to announce to every one the news of his good fortune, his eyes glowed with fire, and if the inner man corresponded with the outer there was not a happier person that day than Hurka.

Ideas and words played above the surface like the pearl-bubbles of champagne wine, he amused every one or was pleased to think he was irresistible. A psychologist might have detected, however, in all this display something spasmodic and feverish and

in his playful humour more than one trace of despair. Possibly among his guests there was such a psychologist, if so he must have confessed that the actor played his part to perfection. The cup went merrily round and Pan Hurka did all in his power to inoculate his guests with the same good humour as that which beamed on his own countenance. Karla was not present on this occasion but no one had observed her absence. It does not appear either that Pan Hurka missed her particularly. He was so devoted to every one, so polite to all, so entirely subservient to their wishes, that at least just then there was no room for Karla in his thoughts. It was already midnight and the good humour of the company blossomed like flowers in a garden. Pan Hurka all at once began to converse about a certain new speculation of his the advantages of which he depicted in glowing colours, and he thought doubtless that he had already proved to all present what profits were to be made by a subscribed capital. At the same time half jestingly he brought a roll of paper, inscribed the names of all present and turning quickly to his guests asked whether he might put down their names and distribute the shares.

But contrary to his expectation the day's festivities were soon at an end. The guests present looked inquiringly at one another and excused themselves to Pan Hurka on the ground that they must think over and coolly weigh the matter at home: and they said that they would let him hear from them on the morrow. And they began to file off home one after another for really it was getting so late they said. Pan Hurka at this occurrence grew pale and had it not been for his presence of mind which prompted him to let fall a pen and search long for it, his pallor could not fail to have been noticed by all his guests.

He felt that drops of sweat stood on his brow and when he gave his hand to his guests at the door it trembled not a little and was as cool as his forehead. However, he whispered to let him know for certain on the morrow what they decided upon at home about his projected scheme. When Pan Hurka was alone and the lamps illuminated in the empty chamber the relics of that day's feasting the expression of his countenance was terrible. He sat down on one of the chairs and crushing spasmodically the paper with the names inscribed he opened his eyes so wide that any one who had seen him would have shuddered.

For a long time he walked up and down the dining-room, and when he turned to his bedroom and saw Karla sleeping by herself without a suspicion in her dreams of what her husband had done

he kissed her lips, perhaps for the first time, fervently, and with anguish bent over his little baby daughter and could not refrain from tears. He lay on his bed dressed as he had been at the dinner-party, but never slept the whole night and when he got up early in the morning and Karla raised her head from the couch he begged her almost with childish tenderness to forgive him—he had to leave her for a long time.

Karla looked at him with indifference, and when he had gone, seeing her child still asleep she also went to sleep again.

Karla had no suspicion of the blow that awaited her. Both Hurka's property and her own had been lost at that evenings feast. Hurka had staked everything that by this new speculation he might gain everything or lose all hope. Fortune had not favoured him. Hurka lost everything. He did indeed spend the next day in going from one to another of his evening guests to collect their answers in person, but if these guests had already felt suspicion about him in the evening they trusted him less than ever next day reading sufficient warning in his restless impatience.

Pan Hurka only learned with precision what he already knew in the evening when he walked up and down his empty dining-room. The news of his failure spread like the wild-fire and before evening arrived Pan Hurka was known to be a defaulter and liable to justice for the crime of forgery.

When he came to the last of his night's guests, this friend kept him in his house on various pretexts, and when the servant announced that "those gentlemen" were already there, he hinted to Hurka that he had better go to prison with a good grace, for all resistance would be futile, and he pointed to the half-opened door.

Karla did not feel this blow very acutely when they broke it to her. She did not understand all it implied. It never occurred to her that her fate was involved in that of her husband. She thought that her life would change only so far that she would live just as she had done hitherto, only without a husband. This did not cause her great tribulation, and to be without the means of existence was an idea she literally could not understand because all her life such a conception had never occurred to her. She looked on with surprise, however, while the commissioners put all the furniture under an official seal and when nobody paid any attention to her orders but obeyed everything which was ordered by the gentlemen in spectacles. She thought that in the evening

everything would be unsealed just as it had been sealed up: but when they gave her the child into her arms and told her that they had to seal up all the dwelling, and she all at once found herself with her infant outside her own home on the threshold, then she grew still as a stone statue and in her mind the waves began to rise so high that she was almost deafened by their roar.

Whither was she to turn? Karla sat on her doorstep and was unable to realize in her mind the true state of her fortune. He who finds himself in a desert and hits upon a little path follows it and though every hope should close before and behind him, yet trusts that this little path will somehow lead him to safety. And he concentrates his whole attention on it lest he should lose sight of what measures space in the infinity. But when a desert in all its infinity stretches out before a man, he loses at first even his very consciousness. He has no standard of measurement, his very being loses itself like a grain of sand in a sand-hill, he is a mariner without reckoning or compass.

Ought she to cry out? ought she to fly for succour? Aid no doubt would be easily obtained. He who has always had abundance of everything believes also in the superfluity of others. It was not possible that all these people should not care whether the seal should be torn off her doors as soon as may be; so that she might again enter her rooms and there put her little one to bed. It was not possible that people should dwell hard by in ease and comfort seeing how Karla had neither one nor the other.

Such thoughts forced themselves upon her, and she put faith in them because they were natural. She did not know or she did not choose to know that one can drown within a stone's throw of the bank. Karla trusted in the security of those banks: surely some boat would put out from them to save her: always hitherto she had seen them. The trees blossomed above them, people walked along them and conversed, birds twittered, grass put on fresh tints of green, and children frolicked upon them. The inexperienced sailor cannot believe that his vessel may split upon a rock and that when he stretches forth his hands for succour, it will be flung off with a heart of stone. Wealth appeared to Karla to be a natural necessity: hitherto she had never met any one without it. How, then, could it be possible that she was forbidden to step across the threshold of her own home and dwell there according to her own pleasure?

Karla had not yet risen in order to test whether the latch pressed would permit her to enter her own dwelling. She felt quite

confident it would do so and thought there was still plenty of time to get up to make the trial.

It had already grown dark and Karla sat on the doorstep. The doorkeeper [domovnica] came and pitied her very much. She called her her good mistress and invited her at least for that night to her own room saying that she would arrange that she and her child slept comfortably, for out of doors they could not remain. Karla thanked her and replied curtly that there was no necessity. Karla fully believed that there was no necessity and that it would be foolish to quarter herself upon the housekeeper when she had herself plenty of comfort behind her closed doors. The housekeeper without doubt interpreted this differently and as she went up the staircase muttered loud enough to be heard that pride would soon have a fall.

It was night. The moon shone in a clear sky and the stars twinkled like living eyes. Through the house complete quiet reigned: in the window the lights were extinguished and everything rested in the calm peace of sleep. It horrified Karla to see darkness in her own dwelling and when she had not extinguished the lights herself.

She determined to light them again, she took hold of the latch, as she believed, but the locked doors were harder than her weak hand. She fell back on the doorstep covering her little daughter with everything she had, rested her head against the door, hoping that would yield next morning which at present opposed her.

She slept sufficiently peacefully. She had not yet a suspicion of the truth that she was a beggar.

Early the next day the housekeeper hurried to her with a message from the master of the house to say that she must be off and be gone from the doorstep. What more she added on her account Karla did not listen to. But it seemed to her as if the whole affair was a mere mockery. She turned from the housekeeper in disdain and never answered her a word.

But when day had fairly dawned there did seem to dawn in her mind also some consciousness of the terrible change in her fortunes.

Already at the first glimmer of light she started from her sleep; she thought for a moment that she still slept in a room and that the cradle stood just in the same place where it had hitherto stood. But when her little daughter began to wail in her arms, the cradle vanished from her memory and in place of a soft couch she

pillowed herself on stone and wood. The cold racked her, whether because she was unaccustomed to pass the night in the open air or that now reality yawned upon her in full certainty. People passed from home to their daily callings, stopped by her partly from pity to her, partly from curiosity. Popular curiosity is always distasteful, but if one is in misfortune it pains more than the misfortune itself.

And it stung Karla. When several children trooped after the domovnica, to see how Pani Hurka was bereft of everything save what she had on her back and what she carried in her arms, she was so exasperated that she drove them away with nasty words.

But children have not strength enough either to comprehend anguish or to enter into the state of mind of the miserable. Children thus as gaily disport themselves with grey-haired eld over which hangs the shadow of death as with the floweret cup, which has just expanded on the meadow. The children burst out laughing at Karla's. Her indignation amused them. It was to them but a momentary plaything like the dolls which they had received more than once from her hands.

Against these light thoughts which weigh the cradle and the grave in one balance, Karla had no weapon. But their meaning flashed upon her at a single gleam which with awful strength illuminated a whole abyss—an abyss which had no end, and beginning from her own threshold, had no resting-place or turning-point. No more need now for the housekeeper to come and repeat the message which the master of the house had sent her.

The children's eyes burnt Karla like living coals, the earth seemed to reel under her feet as she arose, and hurried down the steps. She felt as if she had just arisen from a burning fever. It was all one to her whither she turned.

The world which unrolled itself before her was a wide one and if she had no aim and object it was all one which way she chose. She was above all things anxious to lose sight of the people who knew her and to reach some place where their pitying or curious looks would no longer haunt her.

The world has leered at the apparition of misery so long that it spares the wretch with whom it is unacquainted.

With these thoughts she at once hurried out of the main street to a smaller one hard by. The further she went, the emptier grew the street and more rare the glances which where directed towards her. It had not yet occurred to her that she was dressed in fine

clothes and bearing an infant in her arms. Her misery had not yet imprinted on her face that writing which is legible to every one.

Karla felt more at ease. The narrow street to which she had come was flanked by a few cottages rather than houses and in front of them all stretched a long wall. Behind the wall were gardens and the little houses were almost invariably closed, because the people who inhabited them were employed during the day in other parts of the city. From the observation of people Karla was for the present free and that was all she just now demanded. Every place is not equally pleasing to us, the young look out for streamlets, woods, and meadows, old people yearn for the domestic circle, the fond beloved moon, stars, and the breath of evening—poverty is most at home amidst squalor and desolation. It is not always from insufficient conception of cleanliness that poverty associates more readily with dirt than with purity, poverty takes shelter in indifference so that it may not too vividly realize its wretchedness: clothe a beggar in rich garments and he either laughs at himself or weeps for himself. In rags he does not feel his humiliation, in splendour he is crushed beneath its weight.

To Karla at all events it seemed as though this deserted street nodded to her with a look of home. Not only because nothing in it outraged her feelings, but also because when she reflected on her previous home she said to herself with a flash of conviction that the old home was but borrowed but this was genuine. There was something of the humour which springs from anguish in all this, but without some ideal trappings her anguish of mind would have been intolerable. Another in Karla's place would perhaps have committed suicide. But Karla's feelings were not sufficiently developed to hurry her on with fatal exaltation to so dreadful a deed. She had not yet been driven to genuine tears, for if a few fell on the face of her baby daughter, they were more the tears of childhood than those of despairing misfortune.

Karla had not tasted a mouthful of food since the previous day, and her attention had not yet been drawn to this fact. That near threatening tension of nerves, that feverish frenzy of the mind had not as yet suffered the mere craving for nourishment to assert itself. Hence also it was that she had not hitherto shrunk from her misery because she did not know the whole of it. But when she was somewhat reconciled to her new existence in the deserted street and that tension of the nerves permitted it, hunger began

to press upon her in all the forms of its unappeasable cravings. He who knows not what hunger is has never yet wrestled in his soul about the dignity of man. Hunger has its awful tragedies as soon as it steps out of the mean where it rather tends to comedy. If a man feels even the merest necessities of existence are failing him, he too often ceases to believe that he is a man. Hunger has a roar so cruel that it deafens all else within us, love, nobility, self-sacrifice, magnanimity, even disdain of the populace. Ay, even the dignity of man shrinks into nothingness. When growing plants have neither soil nor moisture, it is hard to expect flowers from them. Do not, then, condemn as debased creatures those, who have thrown away their dignity through the pression of hunger, do not condemn women who from the same cause have prostituted their bodies. So long as society closes its doors to their cries, it has no right to pass judgment on such people, and it judges harshly if it condemns them.

Where had Karla now to turn when hunger began to oppress her? Should she beg?

The thought horrified her like a sudden vision of death, and perhaps at the moment she would sooner have died than have allowed herself to beg. Must she again go among people, when only a moment ago she had felt relieved to lose sight of them? Must she learn the prayer of poverty and disclose her wounds to the world that it might laugh at her without offering her relief? Must she go among strangers and force herself upon their generosity with phrases which nowadays every one can get by rote? She did not falter but determined that she would rather bear hunger than have any dealings with her fellow-creatures.

But one thought seized upon her with such force that she could not repress it and for some time she cherished it with a certain feeling of satisfaction. Havel occurred to her: all the eager words of youth, in which a little year ago he had depicted his passion for her, came back to her mind. She believed in the genuineness of his passion for her and felt herself near to him although marriage and fate had separated her from him.

She felt his warm breath and his bright eyes upon her as though he himself had come to meet her and she had called out to him. Her image dominated his fancy perhaps in a manner a thousand time more powerful than when she still thought about him with perfect frankness. Besides his personal charms she adorned him with generosity and seemed to see his arms thrown open into which she had only to throw herself. If she went to him, he

would understand her difficulties without the need of long speeches, he would aid her without entreaties for aid.

Karla in her strength grew young again at these thoughts. She cast a longing look after them, just as a child after the bubbles which it has formed, as in glittering colours they hovered before her and when one burst she quickly formed a second and a third. Suddenly her visions gave place to the thought: If Havel had encountered a similar fate, she would not have tarried longer than was needed to pass from thought to action. She would have sought him out and offered him her assistance. Havel without doubt already knew of her distress; he would undoubtedly have sought her out if he had been disposed to help her. She quickly determined that it would be easier to beg than to be an incubus upon Havel. With his love and means, she would have sought him out, she would never hang about his door with prayers for help.

In this decision Karla felt her mind strengthened and elevated. She felt herself free as a bird which left its lowly nest and wings its way aloft. It looks on well-known objects from a height: it is not subject to them, it is above them, it can leave them, it can return to them. She did not dispute his love for her, but she felt that she must be free.

Evening approached, night came, and the moon arose to greet it like as a virgin lights herself to her secret bed-chamber. Karla had a hard couch and felt with anguish that now it was too late to seek assistance. The child cried for hunger and Karla discovered to her surprise that she was already too weak to afford it its wanted nourishment. She started up, and like as the kid searches the parched rocks to find some green root that it may satisfy its bleating young, so Karla looked about by the light of the moon for the sustenance she so sorely needed. She went along the wall, her whole attention concentrated on a search for food. She looked on the road as if food might have been placed there purposely. She dragged herself along with difficulty and paced the lane several times without finding a morsel of food. All at once her eyes fell on the wall. Behind it were gardens: it was August and the ripe fruit hung, so that she needed only to stretch out her hand to gather it. Karla shook some plums into her lap. According to law she committed a theft; according to instinct she preserved herself and child. For that day she was saved, for the morrow poverty takes no thought. It has no to-morrow.

The wall had in it a recess where long ago stood the statue of a saint. Here Karla sank exhausted and benumbed, muffled her child in her wraps to the last fold to guard it against the bitter air and slept from very faintness.

The second day was raining and autumnally chilly. The niche did not afford sufficient shelter to ward off the rain. Damp and shivering she recognized with horrible forebodings that she must again seek out her fellow-creatures. She retreated to a small house where the door stood ajar and there sat behind the door. The rain no longer fell on her but her clothes were soaked and the cold racked her limbs. Something warm would have been a godsend to her: but the house was deserted. There was nothing for it but to seek aid once more and she braced herself to take this step with a heavy heart.

She no longer feared inquisitive looks owing to the inclemency of the weather: few people were astir in the streets. The want of home sickened Karla to-day, just as hunger had done the day before, and hunger returned again like an unpaid creditor. She went into the more populous thoroughfares where she thought that scarcely any one would recognize her. The rain poured in torrents, Karla was drenched and stopped in the entrance of a large house. She did not remain standing, but fled up the staircase that she might not be seen of passers-by.

She stopped in a hall on the first floor. Her eyes fell on an open kitchen through which was the entrance to the living-rooms. The odour of the dishes which were being prepared beguiled the senses of Karla. If a man is in want of everything, the instincts become all powerful. The warm and pleasing smell of victuals issuing from the kitchen drew Karla towards it like a magnet.

But still she never begged for anything. They let out the warm air because they had plenty of it and the warm air going out sufficed and comforted the starving Karla. Her feet mechanically moved step by step toward the threshold. And she sat on the steps leading to the second landing and warmed herself in the hot air.

In the kitchen several children frolicked and played at helping to cook the dinner. Here one dainty was tasted and approved, there another, and when one child after another complained that his brother took all the sweetmeats, the mother pretended to scold them all. But when, on that, the children burst out laughing she gave each of them some of the sweetmeats that they might have no cause to reproach her.

At this scene hot tears for the first time filled Karla's eyes. She was only now affected by domestic bliss when deprived of all means of winning it for herself. Now for the first time she understood the meaning of domestic happiness, and in watching those frolicking children she seemed to eye a paradise from which she was for ever debarred. In this penetrating warmth she completely forgot the inclement weather she had endured, and gazed so long and fondly at those beaming merry childish faces that she could have kissed them as though she were their own mother.

What had hitherto never spoken to her heart now made itself felt when she was bereft of everything. As if at the touch of an enchanter's wand the scales fell from her eyes and what all her instructors failed to awaken in her, now began to speak with a hundred tongues.

The name of family had hitherto struck her ear, as only an empty formula, now she seemed to hear a fountain which bubbled from the ground.

From the kitchen they did not observe Karla. They were too much occupied with one another, too full of what we call happiness: the mother at the sight of her children, the children in the consciousness of having their mother with them. That look sated Karla like the scent of fruit and flowers, she felt there was spring in the world only that she had never been touched by its warmth. The icy crust which had hitherto surrounded her life melted at the sight: she felt how greatly impoverished she had been hitherto as to all the sentiments of bliss, she comprehended what bliss is, but that bliss was no more her own but others.

The smell of the dishes awakened the child in her arms and it began to wail. The children exclaimed that some woman was outside and their mother closed the door.

This sickened Karla. What had she done to them that they grudged her even a sight of themselves? Were they the poorer because some one looked at them and envied their happiness? And she had never begged for anything; the door had been opened because the heat oppressed them and Karla appropriated no more of that heat than the wall by the door would have absorbed. Did the looks she cast on them outrage them and did it disturb their tranquillity by resting with pleasure on the picture of their domestic happiness? Might her glances have penetrated as far as the door, and were they forbidden to cross the threshold? As a moment before felt touched and softened she now saw clearly the full extent of her misery.

The streets lay open before her, she might drag herself along them as far as the threshold; what was behind the threshold even her looks outraged and yet what was to forbid her from knocking at the doors and beseeching for relief in her necessity?

She descended the staircase and determined that she would not go to a house again. But whither was she to turn? The rain lashed her face and her clothes scarcely somewhat dried began to be wetted afresh.

Opposite the house, which she had just left, stood a church. From it she heard the sound of the organ and singing. She used often to go to church because it was the fashion. She went in the same spirit as she took a drive, to look at people or to show her clothes. Nothing drew her to church and her religion was only a pretext. But as she now looked at the open doors, it seemed as though a new world was drawing her to itself. She saw at least some aim in life, some shelter which the street and rain denied her.

She entered the church. By the doorway stood a group of beggar women, brawling their paternosters, and as Karla went past them they involuntarily stretched out their hands, Karla knelt close by the doorway. She did not pray in words for her soul was overflowing like a stream of fire. Karla rejoiced that doors were not closed against her here also, and though she comprehended not the peace which reigned within them, she did at least comprehend that she had found some shelter from the wind and rain. When she knelt she did not see people nor did she hear what they sung: but yet it seemed to her as though the organ spoke for them even from their very soul. Its tones rolled along in as full a stream as the song from their hearts. Both were without definite words but they filled her whole existence with new courage.

When the service was over, people jostled out of the church and as Karla was close to the door, she was also obliged to follow the stream. She came to the porch and because outside the rain did not greatly tempt her, she involuntarily ranged herself among the beggars. These paid little heed to her, for their eyes were directed and their hands stretched out to the people who were leaving the church.

The beggar women prayed their paternosters in chorus and when they came to the passage "Give us this day our daily bread", Karla shivered all over, the tears streamed down her face and she

sobbed aloud. Who understood those words of misery better than Karla?

Several young ladies went past them, and the voices of the beggar women became more plaintive than ever. One young lady gave something to every one of them and before Karla expected it she had in her palm a silver coin—her first alms. She had not yet recovered herself and though it grieved her to the heart she still felt that to receive alms was after all easier than she had imagined. She did not know the hand which had proffered it to her but was soon recalled to herself when on the exit of every one from church, the beggar women flung themselves upon her and declared that she cheated them of their rights without having asked for admission to their gang. But they were silent when Karla showed them her child and said: "I have nothing in the world save this."

The beggars settled themselves in their several corners and Karla found herself once more in church. The idea that Karla was yet a novice in the trade, tickled the fancy of one of the beggar women. "She must place herself in our hands a bit," said the woman, "for after, she will not greatly curtail our gains."

Day elapsed: the shades of evening fell and the church-warden closed the doors. Karla saw that she could only take up her abode there till the evening. So she again went among the beggar women and when they had all collected outside the door she asked one of them: "Where are you going for the night?"

The beggar woman burst out laughing.

"We for the night? Look at her; look at the young innocent. Perhaps you had better try if you are so anxious to learn. We for the night? My little daughter, anywhere. We cover ourselves now with leaves, now with grass, sometimes with nothing at all. One sleeps best, my little dear, after drinking a good pint-pot of home-brewed that warms one and makes one think of good bags full of alms. Ach! truly I forgot, to-day it rains. If you will treat us once all round, we will take you somewhere for the night and we shan't be in the dumps I tell you: we shall have story-telling and drinks and victuals, because you have honoured us with your company. Come just a drop of drink-money and you shall be one of us. So if you like come along."

Karla was dead-tired from the effect of the day and would perhaps have followed these women to the pit of destruction at the mere mention of drink and victuals. Benumbed with want she heard only a voice crying out for food.

They led her to a by-street. There they entered a low house and groping in the dark through a narrow court, reached at length a door by which they entered. Karla found herself in a chamber blackened with soot and rendered yet more gloomy by the faint glimmer of an oil-lamp. The lamp stood on a barrel-organ which squeaked an accompaniment to the song of an old man and a young boy. Some beggars who had already collected here repeated in chorus the whole stanza after the two singers.

The atmosphere was oppressive, a large fire burnt in the fire-place, and on the range food of various kinds was cooking. Beggars male and female kept pouring in and though the chamber was sufficiently spacious the benches were already crowded, and those who could not find seats sat or stretched themselves on the ground. Tables in the chamber there were none. Each new-comer threw his little bag with the alms he had collected into a corner, where to use their own words they made their "charity muck-heap"—they had lugged it about enough for that day, they said.

The new-comers all removed their disguises. The blind unbound the bandages from their eyes, the dumb found their tongues, the cripples divested themselves of their splints, compresses were torn from wounds and crutches thrown aside. Among beggars truth is of small account—a lie is to them, they said, what orders are in the breast of the great—a symbol of merit among a long suffering people.

Soon their dissipated natures displayed themselves. Old or young gathered into a circle, curses and the laughter of despair issued from every mouth. Words of double meaning were heard on all sides. Misery here celebrated its orgies and gorged itself with food and drink, here drunkenness and debauchery showed themselves undisguised.

There is something tragical in the revelry of misery. Only in this utterly unbridled licence is it possible for us to see whether society has not sinned in all its grades, by shutting itself completely against them and by making the result of its struggles inaccessible to them. What has the world for the beggar that, while he is in it, he should preserve and develop the human part of himself? Law does not defend him and all that you glory in has value only when he is excepted. He alone sinks to the level of a beast, you wed him to his vileness and, therefore, when he thinks of his fate the beast in him triumphs over the man. It is possible that he is aware of his degradation: but out of these dungeons

is there no road to the sunshine? Might not civilization empty these dungeons and might not all stand in the light?

But society chases the beggar to the dens; it monopolizes the light for itself and leaves only rags, filth, and squalor.

Karla shuddered all over at the spectacle. Something impelled her to hurry away, but the wonder which overruled her was so powerful that she had not the strength to rise. She felt greater unhappiness than all these present, for she had not yet reached a point at which she could with a debauched conscience lose herself in the ravishing creed which swallows both feelings and consciousness. And yet she could not judge them. Society had always cruelly rid itself of them: they stood within their rights then when they turned to ridicule everything that society holds dear and sacred.

One of the male beggars observed that Karla looked as though she did not enjoy her company. He stepped up to her and with a look of cruel candour began to address her:—

"Ah, ha! What has brought thee among us? Thou art young and yet thou wouldst not chum with our quality. Thou art pretty, and yet knowest of nothing better to do with thy beauty than to beg. I ask it of all you—shall we put up with beauty and youth? And what do I see—thou art dressed as thou wouldst hail us to a feast. I ask it of all of you: are we to put up with dresses that make it appear as though the world went well with us so that even these last doors shall be closed against us? Are we to put up with dress such as this which will drive us from house and comfort and shut us out from victuals, from warmth, from everything?"

This beggar threw himself on Karla and at a jerk tore her dress from top to bottom. Then he turned triumphantly to his comrades who gloated with coarse and brutal laughter over the stripped and humiliated Karla.

All the wrath and indignation which slumbered within her took fire at this insult. Was, then, the sentiment of respect for women no longer theirs?

Karla arose and ran out of the house into the streets in all the uncertainty of the weather and in the darkness of night. She did not measure her steps, nor had she the least idea whither she betook herself. It seemed to her as though she was rescuing her very life from the knife of the executioner. The ground lost its steadiness under her, the houses changed into haunts of brigands and those who rested in comfort seemed to pour on her a hissing stream of darts and poison. Even that pink darling in her arms

was deprived of its last shelter. What had shielded it from cold and rain, was rent in twain as by a gust of infuriated wind.

Where she wandered all that night it is hard to say. Drenched to the skin she ran later into a house which still remained half-open. The house was empty, she found there a small corner, dusky and empty, where she felt assured that no one would disturb her.

The next day when she awoke in the morning she saw that her little daughter was dead: at the same time she recognized that she was in the house of Havel.

* * *

Summer past and Karla grew accustomed to misery as though it had been her native element. She grew accustomed to it as the eyes to darkness. She grew accustomed to the bread of charity, she grew accustomed to imploring pitiously on the threshold and at the door, she grew accustomed to a quiet nod of assent, and to seeing the door rudely closed in her face.

A gentle word seemed to her like the dawn of a saint's day, a hard word was common enough, she had plenty of such words every day. She grew accustomed to hunger and cold, she grew accustomed to the dress of poverty and a hard couch and her home was everywhere and yet nowhere. She was like a tender shrub which clings to a rock where there is little soil. It clings with its small roots where it can: it is exposed to wind and scorching sun, the earth beneath is continually burning and its spare foliage excites more pity than delight.

About her husband she only learnt that he was imprisoned. She did not inquire further and as he had never grown dear to her heart, he easily fell out of her recollection. She did not curse him for having prepared this fate for her; she felt somehow as though things could not have been different from what they were. Her young life seemed to her utterly valueless. She was so poor, so very poor that the brief gleam that had first enveloped her, seemed like a fair vase in which grew poverty. The vase split, poverty fell out of it and the world called her a beggar. She felt it now too well; but if she were to speak the full truth she felt richer now than when they called her Pani Hurka.

She gained feeling, when she recognized how contention weakens, she gained knowledge, when she recognized how sympathy endears; having nothing to call her own, she felt none the less that inward warmth which multiplies our existence so that in ourselves we feel strength after many sufferings and manage to

bear all that fate designs. She felt that in her burned a portion of that light, which drives the sage into the wilderness, that there it may kindle a torch for the discovery of uncounted treasures and of a new world.

Having at times a few alms to spare, she gave them to those who were more destitute than herself. Only one thing she was sorry for that with the warmth she could not endow those who enjoying indeed all the luxuries of life, were yet with all this as poor as she had remained while she had abundance of everything.

Her nightly resting-place was always the little niche at Havel's house. That place was always empty, and no one guessed that it could possibly be occupied. She always came unobserved and unobserved withdrew. At first she had betaken herself there unwittingly. Later she came there wittingly and felt that little corner to be her home. Havel knew nothing about it and Karla narrowly guarded every occasion that might have betrayed her. She felt that in his heart there was no corner left to her to compare with this one, but she felt happy to know that no one hitherto had forbidden her to rest in this despised retreat.

In this small room she forgot all her sufferings, she forgot that she was a beggar, and in her fancy Havel lived like an infant swaddled in silk. She never dwelt on the season of his love for her, but occupied her thoughts about him in his present condition. If she had ever been made aware that he could not sleep at night, she herself would not have closed an eye, and if she learnt that things went well with him and that he felt happy, she felt herself blessed on the same account. Once returning in the evening to her little chamber she found the door locked and had to pass the night outside. It had happened by accident, but that night Karla spent in bitter weeping for she fancied that they had discovered her lurking-place and wished to deprive her of it. Next evening she approached it with infinite apprehension; but finding the door opened and her little chamber untouched she felt such bliss in her heart that the whole house did not contain that night so happy a soul as Karla.

She still received a few sparks of happiness to increase her inward warmth. Havel had a little daughter four years of age, an engaging little floweret as like her father as if she had dripped from his eye. From the neighbouring house it was possible to overlook Havel's balcony where the little daughter played with a doll, dressing and undressing it and tucking it into its little bed. Karla often looked privily for a whole hour at the child as

we look at smooth water in a streamlet. Once the doll was disobedient and the child set it for punishment on the rail of the balcony and the doll fell down below. The little girl cried, but before it expected it, Karla had run out of the neighbouring house, lifted the doll up to the balcony and giving it to the little girl changed her weeping into smiles.

The child remembered it well, but Karla was vexed because the doll in its fall had spoilt its face and hair. Karla scarcely slept for several days. She saved kreuzer after kreuzer from her alms, and after one or two Sundays had bought so pretty a doll that she almost fell in love with it herself. This puppet slept with her several nights until the little girl once more showed herself on the balcony. The little girl seemed to notice her and Karla observed her descend the stairs. She went quickly to the child and placed in its hands a beautiful doll which sparkled up to its blue eyes. The old doll was thrown aside and Karla was filled with delight to see that the little girl only played with this new gift.

Once Karla was again in the neighbouring house and the little girl played on the balcony with its new toy. She was now accustomed to look out for Karla and observed her. Quickly running into the room to father she called out, "There", and pointed with her baby finger toward the neighbouring court-yard. The father did not understand his child's excitement and did not at once pay attention to her. And before he turned to look in Karla's direction she had vanished. Tears of pleasure fell on her hands at the thought that the little girl valued her present and to see how happy Havel was in his family.

Here was a floweret in her deserted hours, which filled her with delight. Any one accustomed to promenade in gardens would not have paid any attention to it but Karla at sight of it not only forgot that her path lay through a desert but even dreamt she was in a rich and pleasant garden. These moments were such a precious possession that nothing in her previous life could at all compare with them. She felt in them the bliss of the fond father and mother. She felt the child's bliss, and being a mother deprived, alas! of her own infant, she still exalted herself so high that her heart united itself with theirs in the purest sentiment of love.

Karla under her present circumstance soon lost the freshness of personal charms, but her soul regained its elasticity and her eye was endued with that kindling light which is the sign of a

charming spirit. I am certain that Karla need have had no apprehension that Havel would recognize her at that time even if they had met in full daylight. If he yet retained her in his thought, it was certainly not in the likeness of her present existence—she who in the rags of penury at eventide sought for shelter in Havel's little outhouse. Nor did her eye when inflamed by passion burn with half the brilliance which now adorned it—now when within her the spark of knowledge was enkindled and she knew that what she felt was the very truth. Karla on her stony path reached at length those heights where one learns to forgive much because one has received much. She was already contented with her destiny. It appeared to her part of the course of Nature, to repine would have been as reasonable as to look for pomegranate fruit on willow-trees.

It was a March day in spring, when it is almost possible to see in the heart of Nature the yearning for active life. The green leaflet does not yet sprout, but every breath shows how it feels within itself the power of youthful germination. The first sun of spring smiles upon the earth and the earth to prove that it has understood smiles with the first spring violets. Beyond the city and in the city you encounter the poor who meet you with bundles of these blue-eyed offsprings of renovated earth.

Karla also went to gather violets, not that she might offer them for sale in the streets but lo leave them as presents with those families who by their gifts had hidden her poverty from the world. Each spring she paid her thanks in this way and to-day she had just completed her round of visits and held the last posy in her hands. This was destined for Havel's little daughter and was perhaps more beautiful than any of those she had given away. Karla already congratulated herself on the delight which she would afford the little girl when she placed it in her little hand and looked once again into the little eyes which were as deep a blue as the violets themselves.

A gentleman met Karla and pressed her to sell him the flower, offering her some silver money. And much surprised was he, when Karla said it was her last but to-morrow he might have any one he chose, this one, however, she refused to sell.

Karla was rewarded for her heroism: the offer he made for that little present was tempting, and poverty finds it a hard matter not to stretch forth its hand for money, but yet she would not at that moment at any cost have forgone the pleasure which she promised herself when she made a present of it to the child.

KNIHOVNA

The rattling of chains startled her from these reflections. A melancholy procession approached her, a file of men in grey coats and trousers and their feet shackled together with heavy irons. Karla felt a sudden pang of surprise and she stopped still and looked at the faces of the criminals, who were returning from their day's labour. Her eye rested on the last of the row. It was hard to distinguish between the faces of the men: they were most of them unshaven and a look of discontent and oppression gave them a common expression. But that face in the rear drew her observation upon itself as though there were something in it she had to discover, something she understood but which was nevertheless unexpected. Yes, Karla was not mistaken. She recognized her husband, fallen, degraded as he was. They were alike only that he was more unfortunate than herself. Hurka regarded her, recognized her, and his eyes filled with tears of dismay, he trembled with remorse, on his face was depicted the question, "Who can forgive me for all the suffering I have brought upon you." If he had dared to fall out of the line, he would have sunk at her feet and have watered with his tears her shrunken hands. Karla read all that was written in his face. She felt that her forgiveness if he knew of it would be a strength to him and a blessing in his present terrible condition.

She felt in a moment the whole weight of his misfortune. She felt herself great in comparison and that the look which pleaded for forgiveness was the expression of a soul so truthful that she would have been unworthy of the sentiment he felt for her if she had not responded to it. In an instant she tore away a small bunch of violets and going to Hurka's side pressed it into his fettered hands, saying in a voice above measure gentle, "May God comfort thee!"

"And our little one?" asked Hurka.

"It is cared for above", Karla answered.

Hurka went his way after the other criminals and Karla stood as if turned to stone and followed him with her eyes as the criminals wheeled round the corner. Hurka looked once again at her, pressed the violets to his lips and she saw him no more.

It was a melancholy meeting. Karla did not love Hurka, but his horrible fate evoked in a moment all her sympathy and wakened in her the consciousness that she was the wife of an unfortunate man whose fate was linked with horror. The figure of Hurka impressed itself so strongly on her imagination that even when she lay down to rest in her little chamber at Havel's house, it

continually stood before her and appeared in her dreams and yet it would not permit her to approach it. If she had thus encountered Hurka the first time they met, it is possible he would have won her affection, it is possible they would have been still entirely his own.

She could not sleep. When she had rearranged the violets which yet remained for Havel's little daughter she looked at Havel's window, which still illuminated threw a dusky shadow on the balcony and court-yard. As she smelt the violets her heart trembled with a strange sensation. That portion of the bouquet which she had given to Havel was laid to rest in a living tomb: all the remnant of it which she wished to give his little daughter seemed to awaken out of its tomb.

It occurred to Karla that in the silence of night she might unobserved crawl to Havel's lighted window and through it look at his domestic happiness. This idea had never before occurred to her. Perhaps it was a crazy whim, but it possessed her like the fixed idea of a crazy brain. What would result from acting thus? Might she not by one unguarded look destroy the happiness she had enjoyed in her quiet corner?

Karla arose, and like a marten when it steals upon its prey, crawled over the staircase. Her heart beat with a strange unrest. If she carried away a picture of his tranquillity perhaps it would pain her more than if she had never seen it. But the strange influence which had prompted her to leave her hard couch hurried her forward and if at that moment she had been about to commit a crime, she could not have turned aside. Perhaps some objections did occur to her mind but her heart felt a need of what she did even if she had at the next moment to atone for it by death.

She drew near to the window and her first look fell on Havel's little daughter, who slept in a little bed by the window and had put Karla's doll to rest beside her. An air of calm repose breathed throughout the chamber. A little bird in a cage suspended by the window dreamt of its image reflected in the opposite mirror. Havel slept by the other window: by his bed on a small table a candle still burnt and beside it lay a half-opened book which he had been reading. She recognized the book. It was one from which Havel used to read aloud to her and she used to listen listlessly enough. If she had had a single leaf out of that book now, it would have been sacred to her, it would have been her most highly prized possession. A soft carpet covered

the floor, on the walls hung various pictures, and among them she recognized her own.

Havel had not forgotten her, but that picture cut her to the heart. She was represented with a rose in her hands, she was dressed in a white dress, her features bloomed, on them were youth and smiles and in her figure fullness and health. Karla stood by the window and seeing the image of the little song-bird in the opposite mirror, she unexpectedly caught her own reflection and saw what changes sorrow had wrought. That cowering posture, those wrinkled features, the dress of poverty, the shrunken body—and in her hands violets. She was transfixed by the contrast and retreated from herself as if before some awful spectre. What had dared her to this comparison? She turned again to the other window beside which slept the little daughter. How pleased she would have been to give it those violets in bed, only once to kiss it as doubtless Havel kissed it every day, and then never show herself again! The violets in her hand seemed to burn her. She tried the window to see if it was bolted and found that the pane which opened was ajar. In the window stood a large vase with water. Karla carefully opened the window-pane, placed her violets in the vase with water and closed the window with as much care as she had opened it.

The act was unobserved. The picture affected Karla more than she had expected. She did not feel strength in herself to bear her whole burden of sorrow. Her steps strayed again towards the house and she stopped by Havel's window. Only once again she wished to look closely at his face and then never again to torment either his sleeping or his waking hours. Only once again she wished to cast her eyes over that peaceful chamber and then to go away for ever, lost among the measureless sufferings of life.

She stood by the window like a child which looks for the first time at an elegantly appointed salon, feasting upon it with delighted eyes, and fearful of disarranging its beautiful furniture. How that window made all the difference! Within was a world of comfort kept safe like a tree in a garden, outside it was a world of misery, despised like the wild brier on which are only thorns. Once they had gone hand in hand together, now there was no bridge to unite their severed lives.

Yet one moment more and Karla meant to turn away, she looked a last look at Havel's face and it seemed to her as though he smiled, he evidently struggled with something in his sleep,

threw his hand beside him and overturned the candle which was burning itself out beside him.

Karla held her breath. Should she go away or should she raise the alarm? The candle fell on the book whose leaves began to burn and Karla by its light caught sight of a small wreath of Italian lilac, which she herself had placed in it. The leaves smouldered one after another, the wreath was already half devoured. Karla felt herself rooted to the ground so that she could not advance a step, her breast heaved and yet she could not utter a syllable.

The book was already half consumed, of her wreath nothing remained but a cinder which glowed for a moment and then fell in fragments in which no one could recognize its original form.

Karla only now observed that above the fire hung a curtain which would certainly catch fire as soon as the flames leapt higher and that might happen at any moment.

Karla fell a choking in her throat, a voice broke forth in a terrible shriek. She threw herself like a tigress on the window, wrenched it till the very house shook, with a piercing voice exclaimed: "It burns!"

Havel started out of sleep as though he had roused himself by a violent effort. Sleepy though he was, he yet recognized the danger his house was in, quickly sought for water and in his haste seized the vase in the window by his little daughter's bed, quickly drenched the curtain and the burning book. He trembled all over and stood as if turned to stone. In the room it was quite dark.

Then he lit another candle to see what the fire had consumed. The book was almost wholly a cinder. Karla's souvenir was destroyed and Havel held in his hands a bunch of violets. He knew not whence they came nor what had saved his life.

* * *

At the entrance to the Volskansky cemetery, just as at this day, stood a group of beggars male and female. They lived by appealing for alms at the dwelling-place of death. People bringing forth their relations for burial in that place where all must pause at last were more easily inclined to offer some small tribute to those living bones, who stand out in testimony against the vaunted progress of our age in which spiritual excellence must perish that the body may survive.

By them sat an aged woman whom they called "garland grandmother". She only differed from the rest in this that she did not

beg for alms, but offered garlands for sale. She had settled herself here beside a single tomb which belonged 'twas said to a certain brewer. From that time she found in the spot a veritable home and never left it.

She conducted a small sale of nosegays, but every beggar woman declared that she was a bad manager. She need not have lived in want—they said—if she had been more chary of her earnings. Of the garlands which she bought from time to time, she laid one on the tomb of the brewer, another on that of her husband, and a third on the tomb of her child. But as to her child she did not know exactly where it was laid—so they said—because it was buried in the common pauper's grave. But in order not to miss the spot she each day placed the garland on a different part of the common grave, and thus she was certain not to pass over her child. Besides there was this advantage in so doing she said that other children also got a garland who otherwise would have been forgotten by every one.

From time to time a widow with a grown-up daughter came to visit the brewer's tomb. They were not unmindful of the tomb it is true; but said the beggars what was all that worth compared with "garland grandmother". She never separated herself from the tomb. And if ever she found a pretty flower, she planted it there. Havel's tomb was in reality a very pretty flower-bed and the garlands on it were always the freshest.

Karla, this "garland grandmother", haunted Havel's tomb even when the moon flung a network of mysterious rays among the crosses, the tomb-stones, and trees of the cemetery. Many a star tired in the heaven and fell below the horizon. Many a drop of dew collected and dried upon the flowers; but the heart of Karla beat without weariness on that tomb. Not even the firmament of heaven was so constant a guardian of Havel's tomb as she. The birds wheeled and fluttered around the tomb, and winter scared them all away; but in the heart of Karla sprang feelings like the first-sown corn of spring.

Whether the dead arise from the tomb it were hard to say; but that Karla was worthy that Havel should embrace her a thousand times is true enough. Those flowerets which she planted on the tomb struck their rootlets only a few inches into the soil; but the heart of Karla penetrated all the ground to the coffin. She understood those flowers, many a word she confided to them. Many an answer she feigned from them. Karla felt blessed in the thought that Havel had not known about her. If ever he had gained

knowledge of her, where indeed could she have found home and shelter?

But Karla here rested in calm content. Beneath the rays of the moon one night she lay down and her heart ceased to beat. She had no one to close her eyes and the last thought which gleaned in her was that though they were fated not to live together no one had hindered them from dying close beside each other.

Who among the living could compare with her or say that he had raised himself so high? She drooped in rags, but in those she raised herself as high as the lark when from full throat it trills its carol of the spring.

OUR GRANDFATHER

"Why should the wisdom that destroyed the one safeguard the many?"

CHAPTER I

IT has often been said to me that rural life is not a happily chosen subject for a story: that in the country uniformity prevails in life, in customs, in everything; and that the persons of the rural drama cannot interest us because there is no variety in them. If any of my readers hold such views, I must request them to suspend judgment until the end of my story. It is, indeed, possible that the narrative will take us along unfrequented paths where the form of life is not so stirring as in the town. But yet man in essence is an exact copy of the citizen, for man is always interesting in so far as he is human; and he appreciates his good fortune just as little in the country as in the town; at the same time I do not wish to constrain my reader's judgment.

We were still "wee scraps" when our father took us to visit grandfather. Grandfather dwelt in a house about an hour's journey from ours. It was, then, a great event when father told us we were going there. Very wisely, he used always to tell us the week before, and though, to be sure, we were restless enough at all times, and each day tore our clothes, we were sure to be good children for the whole week if he told us where we were going the week after.

So then it was that we were to go to spend St. Lawrence's festival with grandfather. This festival occurs at the beginning of August, when cocks begin to crow soon after midnight, and the sun still rises very early. But still earlier than those cocks did we children awake, and before the first cock had cock-a-doodled, we were already dressed; and before the first ray of sunrise had shown itself, we were already seated, smart and tidy, before the manse, on the door-step, congratulating ourselves that we were going to spend the festival at grandfather's.

Our parents slept in the room next to ours, and we had sneaked out so quietly that they had not the least idea of our secret preparations. How mother must have started when coming to wake us she found our beds empty and not a sign of us.

We heard entreaties and outcries—mother ran from room to room, then about the court-yard, looking for us everywhere, at last even in the well, while we all the time nestled against one another like chickens, and scarcely breathed with fright lest mother should find us, and we, early at is was, should be punished, for there was already a great disturbance about us. And now it occurs to mother to look for us on the village green, to see whether she should find some trace of us. Opening the door she found us cuddled close together on the door-step. Mother almost smothered us with delight when she caught sight of us, and we told her that we wanted to set off that instant to the feast at grandfather's.

"But you cannot go without breakfast", said she, leading us back again, and glowing with delight, because her dismal fears were so soon dispelled.

What did we understand about breakfast just then? We would have set off if need be at midnight, and of course grandmother would have given us breakfast as soon as we reached her house.

We helped mother to prepare breakfast—blew up the fire like young backsmiths, only that breakfast might be ready the sooner; burnt our tongues with hot coffee only that that we might the sooner have breakfasted; and in general conducted ourselves solely with a view to be off and away as soon as possible.

At last we are off.

Our father was a pedagogue. He never allowed our minds to flag, and kept relating things to us that we were just capable of understanding. He did not invade our questions in his answers as we so frequently see done; and if we had gone on asking questions till doomsday, he would have gone on answering till doomsday.

And thus he made up a story for us—how that grandmother was already on the look out for us—how that she was coming to meet us as we never saw her do before, with a plate of cakes in one hand and a plate of red cherries in the other—red cherries, which are so scarce. Yet further did we picture grandmother to ourselves. She must have something also in her pockets—a doll, sugar-plums, etc. And finally, how could it be grandmother unless she had brought something also in her lap? We certainly did not understand how she could carry it all; but if it was our grandmother she must be able to contrive everything.

And so also in every woman whom we observed in the distance, we saw grandmother approaching even with the plates, even with her pockets full of goodies. Although she was a quarter of an hour from us we saw to a hair everything, down to the least detail, just as if she was already present with us. She smiled at us, smoothed her grey locks and just as she comes near to us takes us each by one hand and tells us what perhaps father did not the least know when we asked him. But what was our astonishment when, in place of grandmother's tranquil face, we saw another—cold and wholly unknown to us. No! Such a one we could never love, not if she had all her pockets full, and two plates in each hand.

And now father had to explain to us how it was that he failed to discern at a distance that it was not our grandmother, while we discovered it the instant she had come the least bit nearer to us, and yet we did not know half of what father knew. Then he began to excuse himself and to say that he had made a mistake; but that yonder, see, it really was she who was just coming on the hill-top. Children are easily contented as soon as their mind finds some new object of interest. And thus even we ourselves discovered once more with all the force of youthful imagination grandmother's tranquil face in the person who was approaching us.

But when even this person proved to be quite a stranger to us, father began to excuse himself, saying that no doubt her plates had fallen out of her hands in the village, and so she had had to return to the house, and that no doubt we should see her as soon as we came into the village.

And certainly we did see her. Not, indeed, as we pictured her coming to meet us, but at home in the living-room, about the oven.

The first greeting put all questions out of our heads, and it was only after a few minutes that we asked her why she did not come to meet us before and she told us that she was on the point of setting out to look for us when we entered the hall. But she placed cakes and ripe cherries on the table for us without delay, and we reconnoitred her pockets, in which there was always something ready stowed away for us.

While we were at our meal she took into her hands a plate from the range, and wiping it with her apron, kept continually balancing on tiptoe, just as if she was going to dance. This sort of dancing made her appear almost a young woman, and you

always seemed to see it in her face when she told you anything of auld lang syne.

Grandfather was slightly lame of one foot, and he always sat in an arm-chair, having this foot on a low stool. He wore the old-fashioned Bohemian dress of Manchester velveteen; this he always had new at festival time, and never ceased to wear it until a new festival again changed it for another suit.

As this dress was always of a black colour it contrasted very strongly with his greyness. He always wore his hair cut short in front, but long behind, so that it hung down over the collar of his velveteen camisole.

We only concerned ourselves with grandfather when we had completely done with grandmother. Then only we went to him, told him about what we had learnt at school, who of us could make the best whistles, who won at ball, and similar things, at which grandfather always smiled. After that we all of us got a few coppers for sugar-plums from him, and all at once it seemed to us that even grandfather had something in him which pleased us children, though it was something totally different from what we liked in grandmother. But now we have already had quite enough for indoors. Hurrah then for the farmyard!

Grandfather had a large farm, and in the farmyard was more than enough of things we were longing to have a look at. Here we crept into the stable and observed how that the white mare had got well; then again how that the dun cow had a little straw laid under her; immediately after this we visited the rabbits and chevied them all over the court; then we explored the pigeon-cote, the granary, the hayloft, even the summer house, and before an hour had elapsed, we had made such friends with the grey-haired dog, Vorjech, that he performed a quite unique somersault for our benefit, and at the same time we put him through tricks which no one on the whole farm had given a thought to all the past year.

And now the rest of our relations also gathered together—uncles, aunts, their children, and so on. We kissed the hands of all our relations: this ceremony being repeated at every fresh arrival called forth from each uncle a few coppers for goodies. We took it for granted that we only kissed their hands to show them that they must carry small change at festival time.

After this we young people immediately divided into two camps; the girls to themselves, that they might inspect one another's dresses, and to see how they had their hair plaited;

and we boys to ourselves, that we might take counsel about things of greater dignity.

Then began a comparing of notes as to who knew of any nests, how many eggs the chaffinch lays, how the partridge makes its nest, what nestlings have yellow beaks, and what the nightingale's eggs look like. Some of us knew also already of cuckoos' nests—aye, even of pies' nests, and such among us were worthy of special admiration.

Next in order came bird-traps, which all of us knew how to make, and how proud was he who had already caught most birds, and how very high and mighty he who had succeeded in catching a tom-tit! By doing this he had proved that he was a master of trap-making, for the tom-tit will creep through the smallest crevice in a trap.

Grey-haired Vorjech also listened: and so we caught him by both ears and put him through tricks I had taught him here before the others had yet arrived at grandfather's.

This made us lively. After a little time we released Vorjech, and began to wrestle with one another.

In this way each had the best opportunity of showing what he had learnt since last festival, and which of us was "captain".

If sometimes on these occasions a smarter blow than usual fell, or if blood showed itself, that was no great matter. Besides, we knew that if the battle became serious our papas would soon appear on the threshold and read us a homily, although we were allowed special freedom at festival time at grandfather's. And even if all our papas had come with the warmest proofs of paternal affection, we knew that grandmother would take us under her wing, and indeed at festival time our consciences were very accommodating.

After battles people usually make peace that they may drub one another afresh, but in a different manner. So also did we. We ceased blood-letting and divided ourselves into two camps to compete in notching pennies against a wall. This game diverted us most of all, for it touched our pockets and our livelihood. And he who lost most was very glad if he had not vexed his father too much in the previous battle, for uncles don't give coppers twice and so father must make up deficiencies.

Having then quite exhausted in the forenoon all the amusement the farmyard could furnish, we were not at all sorry when grandfather summoned us to dinner. On this occasion he always presented himself in company with his sons, our uncles and

fathers, and reviewed us, his grandchildren. He who had a bruise concealed it; he who had lost sidled up to his father, and he who was safe and sound continued to play with Vorjech.

We distributed ourselves in the corners of the room and sat in silence. But even our fathers did not carry on the conversation, and grandfather, who was a confirmed smoker, continually puffed away at his pipe, and did not seem to wish to notice us. Grandmother hovered about the kitchen-range, plates and spoons jingled, and we increased the clatter with our forks. But she wouldn't so much as smile at us. A child has an instinctive feeling about the sort of look she wore. He very soon discovers when it is in earnest and when it is feigned, and thus we children had no need to ask questions in order to discover that something very much out of the common was brewing at the old folks'.

After a short time grandfather said: "Come, set the dinner on the table."

Grandfather, be it understood, always nagged at grandmother. Grandmother began to excuse herself, saying that dinner was not so easily served up as he seemed to think, that she had still this and that root to peel, and soon grandfather began to puff his meerschaum yet more frequently, and smoked until he almost vanished from our eyes in a cloud of tobacco.

Father was wont to say that this augured nothing good with him.

After this they began to talk about one thing and another, but through it all it was evident that they only talked for the sake of talking, and such conversation never succeeds, because it does not come from the heart. All of them had some topic continually in his mind, which he kept trying to lead up to, and on that account kept saying "yes", and nodding and answering in a formal manner, until all again languished.

"What a piece of work the dinner takes to-day", said grandfather again after a pause.

"You always have something to complain of", answered grandmother, and kept bustling about the kitchen-grate.

"To be sure, let him learn to come in time", said grandfather, and began again to smoke furiously.

"It is just to-day you are aware that he is not coming; on other occasions you scarcely trouble yourself about him", answered grandmother.

"Let him hang about your neck like a spoilt child", said grandfather contemptuously.

"After all he is my son, and if I do not stand by him you certainly will not stand by him", she answered.

It was only then that we children noticed that we had not seen Uncle John. And about him the matter was.

Uncle John was two-and-twenty years old—of an age then when a young man is generally on the look out for a bride, particularly if he has the prospect of a farm, and grandfather's farm was already as good as John's.

At this moment a servant from a farm in the neighbouring village came and saluted.

"Welcome, welcome! Krejza", said grandfather. "What is it you have brought us?"

"Young Mister John sends to say that he will not be at home to dinner; he has stopped with us for dinner", said Krejza, giving his message.

"Tell him, if you please, Krejza, that if he doesn't come to dinner to-day he need not come home any more", said grandfather, almost perfectly coldly.

"Oh! no; don't take any message, there is no need. Why shouldn't he stay there for dinner", interposed grandmother.

"Because I do not wish it. Only be so good as to give my message just as I have told you", said grandfather yet more precisely.

Krejza departed.

My father and uncles began to excuse Uncle John.

"Well, well, I know what I am doing", answered grandfather curtly. "So now set on table; who is not here, perhaps will be more punctual another time."

Dinner was served. Grandfather generally said grace aloud before beginning; but to-day it would have been more a curse than a prayer.

It was a strange repast. No one relished talking and no one relished eating either. To us children it seemed as if we sat at table more for penance; and if we had only known how to do it, we should have fled pell-mell to the court-yard without caring a straw for the victuals. But both fathers and mothers when out visiting take a particular pride in their children behaving well at table. But just now it seemed to us that we dared, verily, ten times more boldly dance a hornpipe than sit quiet and well-behaved at table.

After we had been seated thus about half an hour at table Uncle John entered the room.

All rose and greeted him in a friendly manner, but everything was carried on constrainedly, or rather with a kind of indescribable fear as if behind each greeting lurked a dagger. Only formal inquiries were made as to how he was, what he was doing, and so forth. Uncle John answered drily; on his brow was something like spite, and he fixed his eyes on the ground, and would not look at us. And then when we children greeted him he made no response to our salutation, and it never occurred to us that we could possibly have got from him any coppers for goodies.

He sat at table. Grandmother gave him soup on a plate, but Uncle John did not touch it.

"Lord save us," said grandfather, with the short laugh which was natural to him, "and welladay! When a man cuts his mutton elsewhere he looses his appetite for what he gets at home."

"Particularly with the seasoning one gets at home", answered Uncle John, and leant his head on his hands.

Grandfather after that was silent, but his hands trembled. Indeed, he cut some meat and the knife slipped on the plate.

Grandfather certainly did not look at uncle, but all the same he saw what uncle was doing.

"Did you learn to sit slouching thus at Kubista's?" he said after a while, as if indifferently.

"I cannot always be here merely to be stared at by you", said Uncle John, as he got up from the table and left the room.

It was well that he left the room, and happy for him that grandfather hobbled on one foot. Grandfather was not aware certainly that he held a knife in his hand, but sure enough he would have hurried after Uncle John with the first thing he got hold of. And perhaps he would actually have run after him had not the bystanders withheld him.

Grandmother trembled all over, but she saw that speaking would be of no avail. But for us children the sitting was over so to say, just as if the word had been passed round, we dispersed in flight to the farmyard, and troubled our heads no further about what was doing in the dining-hall.

We just caught a glimpse of Uncle John as he passed out by the gate.

In the afternoon we went to spend the coppers we had collected from our uncles at the hostinets k poutavé babê [hostelry-sign of the Pilgrim Grandmothers]. Boys with plenty of goodies trouble

themselves about nothing in the whole world. But for me I saw very well how Uncle John ordered song after song, and how he drank and danced more than any one at the hostinets.

In the evening every one poured out of the ale-house—children first of all, after them the music, after the music Uncle John, accompanied by a bevy of gay young men, and last of all the old women. Uncle John, be it understood, would have the musicians accompany him home, a thing which even the richest and wildest young men seldom do except in the morning.

As it was in the evening the whole village was afoot, Uncle John whistled, and the musicians had to accompany his whistling. Before grandfather's house stood all his guests. Grandfather trembled all over.

"And now play till they hear you in the neighbouring village at Kubista's", cried Uncle John, and whistled till they became alarmed about him.

They had to lead grandfather away lest he should forget himself and injure uncle, and they had to humour Uncle John somewhat in order to quiet him. The musicians were well paid with drink-money; these went back to the hostinets and the people after them, but this affair which I am relating just as it happened was already in everybody's mouth.

They led Uncle John away to bed. And they locked fast his door that grandfather might not discover where his son slept.

CHAPTER II

BETUSKA, daughter of Kubista, fed poultry. First came the cock and chose himself a few nice morsels, but the best he gave to one hen who was before all dear to him. The other hens clucked and said that she was his wife. But for all that the others were not idle either. They jumped on to Betuska's hand, her shoulder, and into her lap, and complained to her as their good friend that the cock cheated them of their due by paying attention to only one of them, while after all it was they who laid all the eggs for the egg-basket. Betuska was their judge; she cursed the cock for a reprobate and permitted the hens to take their corn out of her lap.

But these chickens were like children: order them with an affable countenance and something for dainties, and they do not desert you. Provided it kept coming they would most willingly have got

all their food by themselves. Betuska called them to her with empty maws, and sent them away well-primed. They hopped away clucking, sidled up to the cock, and kept on gabbling that they were not at all inferior to the cock's wife. They knew thus much about her, and even hinted at her infidelity, until the cock himself ceased to peck, his comb swelled, and he measured them with a look such as a choir master gives to naughty choir boys.

But, indeed, they were not long left to themselves. There flew down to them even the aristocratic birds who dwelt one story higher—there flew down to them the pigeons. Where there was something for the gullet the pigeons forgot about their exalted origin. Only one, a pouter, thereupon cooed something about ancestors, and how many of them used to wear stars. He himself, he said, was formed of better flesh and better leaven than chickens and pullets, and only so far humbled himself as to eat with them, because he wished to show them honour. "Let 'em move out of his road," said he, "that he might sit down in the first place and show 'em who he was." And he took their chickens' food out of their very beaks, like a regular brigand, as Betuska had nicknamed him. And even then he was not satisfied, but disputed until the chickens allowed him some scrap or another which he then ordered to be carried away to the pigeon-cote.

This was about the year 1848: the chickens had not even then a notion of equal rights. They gave where they had anything to give, they always retreated out of the pigeons' way, and the pigeons took where there was anything to take. Now, however, things are already different.

But the pouter pigeon fared ill with his boastings. Wherever the pigeons betook themselves thither the democratic sparrows betook themselves, and showed up the wisdom of the pigeon-cote without mercy. One sparrow in particular, who to all appearance might have been an editor, smirked at the first nobility until they ran after him. But this did not distract him from his purpose. He described how they, the sparrows, all dwelt in perfect equality, whereas the pigeons settled by themselves, in order that they might look with scorn on other birds. "But a time must come," said he, "when they will have to look out for another nest", and the like—briefly he smoked them.

The other sparrows pecked and laughed in full chorus, until they toppled over with their wings flapping against their sides.

But this clique, which wished to live at the expense of others, did not end here. Hither came also the proletarian hog, which

routs in the earth and wallows in filth. At one side sneaked and lurked the cat, on the look out to see whether she could not arrest one of those impudent sparrows. Then came the geese and paraded like ladies in long dresses, and after them the little golden goslings, fresh and lively, but the geese so took them in hand with drill and schooling, that they turned out nothing but geese after all. Out of their holes the rabbits crept, and licked their lips and showed their teeth, but hearing the sparrows gasconade, they got frightened and crept back again into their holes. Even the poetical butterfly also hovered here. But, of course, no one gave him a thought, for who could eat a butterfly?

Like a true sage, dog Danube behaved himself. He constantly had for his aim an objective standpoint, frisked and sported in the sun like a Diogenes, and stretched himself idly like a very Sultan; but he had the intellect of a Doctor of Letters, only that he kept it all to himself.

And above it all shone the old sun, and the heaven smiled like the face of Betuska.

Betuska spent many a happy hour with her poultry, and, as it were, they completely understood each other.

She understood housewifery, too, excellently, but the poultry seemed to grow dear to her very heart. So whenever she came to the farmyard all hurried after her as if in procession. The sparrows gave notice on the eaves that Betuska was coming, and from time to time a cackling hen would exhort the rest to renewed efforts that they might at least approach their mistress.

The men might improve their master's fields and meadows as they liked; to that Betuska did not oppose a single word; but also it never occurred to any one's mind to meddle with Betuska's occupation. And the poultry would have stared with astonishment had any one dared to say that Betuska did not take care of them, or if at any time he had wished to effect some reform in the farmyard.

Betuska had known Uncle John ever since the time when they first went to school. Even then the one tried to please the other as it might. If one child learnt its lessons well at school, it chiefly congratulated itself, because the other knew about it, and if Betuska was "mentioned" for good, Uncle John also tried his best to be mentioned that day also. If after school the boys played in a different place from the girls, Uncle John purposely let his ball roll to where the girls were playing, and he might be sure that Betuska would separate herself from her companions in order

to give the ball into his hand. Thereupon she looked down, he pressed her hand, and the boys went on playing. Also Uncle John learnt to catch the ball like any other boy. He knew very well that not only the boys were looking at him, but that there were also two blue eyes watching, which sparkled with delight to see that he was the most skilful of the players. Even then the lads nicknamed him Kubista's boy. But Uncle John did not at all mind this; rather it encouraged him to say to them, "When I am not Kubista's boy, then laugh at me."

Betuska was about three years younger than Uncle John, consequently in her ninth year when he ceased to go to school. Bitterly indeed they missed each other at first, for they were like children who had grown accustomed to one another. And Uncle John when afield often looked towards the school, and if Betuska was ever distracted in school-time, it was only when her thoughts fled to the field.

But even then they saw one another sufficiently often though they belonged to different villages. These villages were only about a ten minutes' walk apart from one another, and grandfather's fields just bordered Kubista's fields. Thus it happened more than once, that the cattle of both fed on the same clover, because the young shepherd had so much to say to the young shepherdess.

They grew like plants from water. When Betuska was fifteen and Uncle John eighteen he already did not know where to find all the pictures with which he would compare those lovely blue eyes; for the corn-flowers appeared already pale and bleached. He did not know to what he should compare those beautiful thick raven locks; for night was seldom so black as they were. And Betuska could think about none else except him; for by day he smiled on her, and by night he was present to her dreams.

How he loved her! He never let her stir sickle when she came to cut clover, and he was anywhere near. He took her sickle and before she expected it, he was in full swing. Betuska meantime sat at the boundary, and told all about her domestic life, only pausing now and then to admire Uncle John's manly figure and athletic attitude, as though he had painted it for her to look at.

Uncle John was now nearly grown up. He went to hear the music, and as he belonged to a wealthy farm he treated those also who were less well off. But whenever a new polka appeared the musicians must take it at once to Uncle John, so that next Sunday he and Betuska might show all the village how it had to be danced. And what a lovely garland hung before Betuska's

window on May-day morning. It was certainly the best of all; for only such has the honour of being taken down by the boys, and of being carried round from house to house—and for the last two years this garland had been uncle's giving, and had hung before Kubista's dwelling.

Of course Betuska returned the compliment. As soon as Great Night [Easter] drew near she had already chosen her best egg, and no one on the day of the festival had so finely and delicately painted an egg as Uncle John. There was a tiny heart, and round it tiny leaves and flowers, so that Uncle John was sorry to have to crack such a beautiful egg, which afforded great pleasure to Betuska.

Perhaps this was the reason she so loved her poultry, for she congratulated herself all the year on having afforded Uncle John so much pleasure.

The parents thwarted not their two children, who could thus meet openly, for they did so with their parents' consent and knowledge.

Old Kubista and our grandfather had been comrades since their school-days. They also served together during the French invasion, and together bore all the hardships which that invasion brought upon the farmers. Moreover, one without the other would never undertake anything that they had not previously discussed together, and nothing pleased them more than to see their mutual predilection inherited by their children, and develop in these into true love.

Grandmother doted above measure on Uncle John, for he was the youngest son—who frequently gets a little spoiled. She it was who put into his hand all he had to give to Betuska, and if she had saved a few coppers in her household management she knew perfectly who would be pleased to have them.

But fortune began all at once to become overcast, so that perhaps it was nevermore destined to shine out clear and bright.

Kubista and grandfather were invited to the chase by the nobles and gentry—and they looked upon this as a special mark of distinction, for in those days even farmers scarcely knew the smell of powder, and if the father had not been a poacher the son would scarcely know how to load a gun, and where to pull the trigger.

But grandfather and Kubista were renowned all through the neighbourhood as good shots—granted, their hands shook slightly now—when they aimed with their flint-locks they never failed

to hit. No considerable shooting-party therefore took place in the neighbourhood without their being invited, and they always accepted the invitation with pleasure.

So then it was, once ofter a shooting-party and the sportsmen had separated and were returning homewards, Kubista had just met grandfather, and forgot that he had yet one barrel loaded, which he did not wish to take home in that state. When he saw grandfather he aimed at him in jest, on a level with his feet, drawing the trigger. As I say, he did it in jest, but it was a jest very much misplaced, and perhaps we may even call it besotted. Grandfather could never have believed that the barrel with which Kubista aimed would injure him, for he must have known that it was only a jest of his faithful friend. But just then there came upon him a kind of pang and sudden panic, and though after that Kubista immediately turned the gun from him and fired in the air, in quite a different direction, yet it seemed to grandfather as though he felt the charge in his foot.

"You have done me an ill turn, Kubista", said grandfather, and caught himself by the foot.

Kubista fancied this was merely a jest and laughed at grandfather.

But grandfather from that time forth never looked on him again. No entreaty, no protestation of Kubista could affect a reconciliation. He so hardened himself in his heart that he would not be moved from the belief that perhaps Kubista had fired at that place.

They separated. After that grandfather had a restless night. He started continually, for he fancied that Kubista was aiming at him, and these visions repeated themselves even in his waking hours. Briefly, grandfather after some days became so restless that he felt his foot in actual pain, was laid up with it and never recovered the full use of the limb to the day of his death.

Then after he had lain awake many a long night there developed in him so intense a hatred towards Kubista that a year before he would have shuddered at the thought of. This hatred had no substantial foundation—at least none but what reason could overthrow. But just on that very account, grandfather reasoned too much about it, until he actually reasoned himself into his hatred.

Then to the general astonishment all learnt from grandfather that Kubista all his life had abused his friend's kindness, had cheated him, and even now wished to make capital out of him

and prey on him. Moreover, as soon as he was somewhat better, grandfather began to set real disputes afoot between himself and Kubista about a certain boundary-stone which divided their fields, and he ordered to have this boundary-stone pushed forward, thus continually pouring oil on the fire.

At the beginning every one still imagined that it was only a jest, and Kubista least of all of them imagined it to be in earnest. But when there now began to come to him official notices, and he had frequently to present himself to the law-court and there reply to questions about which he had never given a thought—then at last the affair assumed a more serious aspect and he began to think of effecting a reconciliation.

He actually did go to grandfather, but as soon as the latter saw him arrive in the court-yard he went off to his bedroom, locked the door, shut himself in, and nothing on earth would make him alter his mind. At this grandmother was in the highest degree distressed. She accompanied Kubista on his way home and urged him to pay no heed to things which originated solely from grandfather's state of health, saying that she trusted that these troubles would pass over before their children were old enough to marry, for certainly her husband could not give them his blessing so long as his heart was so overflowing with hatred.

But in all this grandmother showed that she did not know grandfather well. Nothing in the world would induce him to give up an idea which he had once taken into his head and set his heart on.

So also he at once gave notice to Uncle John not to venture a single step in the direction of Kubista's and gradually to wean himself from all thoughts of a marriage with Betuska.

Such commands, however, are more easy to speak than to execute. While things went well Uncle John and Betuska met openly, and when this was no more possible their meetings were clandestine. Grandfather was not so inventive in his hatred as these young people were in their mutual passion. And had he been a hundred times more watchful his vigilance would have been in vain. Here was it once more demonstrated that nothing can strengthen true passion more than the stimulus of opposition, and if Uncle John and Betuska met often before, they now met oftener than ever. He could not wait for morning to see at least the village in which she dwelt, and when he was afield he could have dragged evening down to earth that he might meet Betuska at the boundary of their field.

It must be confessed, however, that their passion manifested itself in a somewhat changed form. What before flowed on in calm delight like a peaceful streamlet, now dashed along like the same streamlet after rain. Heretofore they kissed like turtle-doves; now they wept their fill, now they stifled kisses in sobs, and soothed their sobs with kisses. And all the time they protested that their passion was eternal, with hearts so sincere, so overflowing, that it never occurred to them that it could be doubted. Uncle John exhorted Betuska to constancy, and Betuska in fond despair protested that she would cease to breathe on the day when uncle should turn away from her. Here they came to the conviction that they were promised man and wife, that they were eternally predestined to make each other happy, and on this they built all their future plans.

When evening came and clover and corn-fields were moist with dew, there fell and mingled with the dew, certainly more than one tear from the blue eyes of Betuska. Then she said, poor thing, that it seemed to her that matters must take a bad turn, for she could not realize how she could figure as the dutiful happy daughter in a family where her own father was detested. Only the genuine love and affection which Uncle John felt for her could have succeeded in wholly quieting her, at least long enough to give her breathing-time in her anguish.

Certainly the poultry noticed more than once, that Betuska did not show them the same predilection as formerly. She spread their chicken's food, it is true, but she did not talk to them: she remained pensive, and if her eyes had not been bedewed with tears, the chickens could not have in the least conjectured why she was thinking of anything except themselves.

The chickens were also from this time most troublesome, and judgment fell upon them. They hopped on to her, fed themselves in her lap, and lodged mutual complaints against one another, till Betuska fairly drove them from her. The cocks had a perfect torment with them.

But at our house, at grandfather's, it seemed as though contentment was completely banished to some foreign land; it scarcely appeared there once a month, seldomer than the toyman, who stopped to ask whether we wished to buy aught of his wares. Grandfather remained obdurate, and at last no one dared to mention the name of Kubista. Moreover, it ended at last in Kubista winning, to grandfather's great grief, one side of the disputed boundary. Then every hope of reconciliation was

at an end. He did not wait until some one began to talk about Kubista. No, he began himself; in every way and on every occasion looking out for some pretext to abuse his late friend. He said that Kubista had bribed the officials, and by this had put the climax to his dishonesty, and that all his whole life he had been thinking of nothing but how to cause him trouble and expense.

This stubborn immobility had something morbid, not to say spasmodic, in it, which was the more obvious to all because it was quite inconsistent with grandfather's age and his grey hairs.

Grandmother more than once wished to take upon herself the role of peacemaker. And then she reproached grandfather telling him that he was greatly in fault to give himself to be so blinded in his old age by wrath, and that it became him now least of all when both he and Kubista stood with one foot in the grave.

But this only exasperated his anger to the highest degree. He upbraided her, telling her that she had no affection for him; that she stood up for a man whose affection for himself was shown by his own lame foot; that she depraved Uncle John by her fondness and partiality; that she ought never to have permitted him to begin those visits to Kubista's, and more to the safe effect. Then no excuses were of any avail. Grandmother did not venture to remind him that he himself had once approved of their son paying court to Betuska.

And now grandfather became hardened not only against Kubista, but also to some extent against grandmother, and against his own son. He vowed that their only wish was to hurry him to the grave in order that they might conclude a match to which while living he would never give his consent. Aye, that he would even disinherit his son by will if he ventured to espouse the daughter of Kubista. Let the gentlemen at the office cancel this will or not, possibly they might, for Kubista had a happy knack of bribing, still he never swerved a hair's breadth from his fixed determination.

In this state grandfather was an object of pity, but not less so grandmother and Uncle John. Uncle John avoided his father where and how he could. Already he had given up coming to supper, and always urgently entreated grandmother to lay his meals somewhere in his bedroom. No doubt grandmother did so, but she had thus to bear alone the weight of grandfather's displeasure. Though what burden would not a mother bear

seeing that by so doing she alleviated the distress of her own son?

Sometimes it happened that grandfather did not see Uncle John for several days, so that he could not give him orders early as to how to arrange his work, and where to go in the field, and more than once grandfather had to look for his son in the field to consult with him about the farm. Once one of the servants was so ill-advised that one evening when grandfather inquired for uncle, the servant replied, "He! Why, he sleeps soundly at Kubista's, to be sure."

It was well that grandmother heard this. She scolded the servant thoroughly, and in order to prove to grandfather that the man had lied grossly, she led him to the summer-house where Uncle John now made his bed and had already gone to rest.

Grandfather bade grandmother leave him alone with their son. She immediately complied, but did not go far, for she dreaded lest grandfather should do some injury to his son.

But it was not so bad as that then.

Uncle John did indeed affect to be asleep, but when he heard that grandfather desired to speak with him he sat up and grandfather beside him.

"Listen John," said grandfather, "to-morrow is the festival, do this for my sake, stop at home to-morrow for the festival that it may not appear to our guests, at least, that we cannot agree."

Uncle John objected that really on the morrow he had settled with Betuska to go to church with her, and perhaps she would fall ill if he did not keep his word.

Whereupon grandfather said, "Oh! well, I shall see whether you have yet any affection left for me, for I shall not speak to you twice."

Uncle John did not reply to this, and grandfather left him.

The next day was the festival about which I have narrated from the beginning.

CHAPTER III

ABOUT a week after this they had just sat down to supper at grandfather's, when a certain man entered having first knocked at the door. Uncle John was not at table.

A knocking at the door is almost an event at a farmhouse, all the more so at grandfather's, because the village lay far from any

high road. Thus it occasioned no little surprise if ever a stranger stopped there to ask his way.

The neighbours here still lived almost in a state of nature. The slight stock of reading which they had learnt at school, would have been long ago forgotten had not the prayer-books which they took with them to church on Sunday, been printed in plain black letters.

As for writing they remembered just so much that most of them could subscribe their names, he who could not manage it did not trouble his head about it, for three crosses set all right. Without these, indeed, they scarcely ever subscribed their names.

The learning which they called ready reading and running hand they considered to be the privileged possession of the nobility, while it was their business to look after tilth and pasturage.

A book never strayed into this village, and if one had wandered out of the road hither, it would have been like a deserted orphan. No one would have received it into his house, nor even given it a night's lodging. The parents only bought those ABC's, first and second part, which they called reading-books. To give money for any other sort of book would have been to squander money godlessly. Even at grandfather's the calendar formed the whole library; grandmother always put a large pair of spectacles on her nose to read it in winter, and its dog-eared leaves always sufficed just so far that it held out till St. Vaclav's Day [28th September] when it was changed for a new one.

Now, however, things are somewhat changed there, but not much.

It was fortunate for them that they possessed a good soil, for that was what specially affected them. At that time it had never occurred to any of them to improve their land; if it did not deteriorate still it did not get better.

The furniture which ancestors had used came without change to their descendants who in turn left it unchanged.

Even when a more enlightened age opened for our people they did not pay much attention to it here; it did not speak to them. This is the more curious, because in the surrounding parishes their neighbours comprehend everything that bears the name of progress, and in this respect stand in the van of all our peasantry.

It is plain enough, indeed, that not only the sea hath its islands: even human progress hath them, and only here and there where the sea is tossed by storms and wind, fall on these islands some benign drops, but only as it would seem by accident.

Then, as I was saying, a knocking at the door was here in reality an event, and grandmother started so that she trembled down to the hand in which she held her spoon.

The man who entered the room saluted very obsequiously and was nothing but bows. Grandmother took against him immediately, at first sight, and specially repugnant to her was his cynical piercing eye. But he impressed grandfather favourably.

Grandfather was a strange man. Come to him and lay your grievance before him frankly and openly that obtained much; but let a man come obsequiously, fawn upon him, and praise him to the skies, and he obtained everything.

Grandmother must immediately lay yet another cover, and the new-comer must sit down to table, which he did with many ceremonious excuses to the effect that he had once before been to our house.

All this pleased grandfather but it disgusted grandmother.

Grandfather asked who he was, whence he came, and the like. But Novak (for such was his name) so managed even in this that after many ceremonious phrases, from their questions and his answers, they should learn little about him except his name.

A kind of secret horror came over grandmother as if this man had come to them as an enemy to the house, and she shuddered at every word he spoke as if it was measured out for their ruin.

After supper he began at last, and then grandmother at once recognized his colours.

"I'm told you have an unmarried son", quoth he inquiringly.

"We have, we have", answered grandfather, gasping for further questions.

"Is he going to marry?"

"And who ever thought about that yet?" broke in grandmother, not being able to restrain herself.

"And who has thought about it if not we", said grandfather, taking her up as if he wished to rectify what she had spoiled.

Grandmother said no more, and went out of the house, and there outside she told Uncle John who had come, and what was the matter.

What further conversation Novak had with grandfather is of no consequence, but so much as this is certain, that when he departed grandfather shook hands with him, as if he was his best friend, and promised himself the pleasure of more frequent intercourse.

When Novak inquired for grandmother she shut herself in the kitchen and would not even see him.

Uncle John did not trouble him to wait. The candle still burnt on the table, and grandmother was still stewing something at the hearth.

Grandfather told grandmother that he should like her to leave them alone, and that she should soon hear all about it. But he said this with an air of affability and grandmother obeyed at once.

In this affability of his there lay something very engaging so that in that moment grandfather was again like himself, and what he formerly used to be.

Uncle John was struck by it.

And he began like a diplomatist.

First about the work that had been done that day, then about what was to be done to-morrow, until he approached to the very threshold of what he had in mind.

"You see, John dear," he said, "when you reflect upon your life it has always been something sacred to me. Thou wert yet a little child when we two grey-headed folk wept over thee for joy to see what a merry little thing thou wert; so ready, too, to take hold of anything good. And thou wast worthy of the pride we felt in thee. Thou didst prosper in every thing and wert everywhere well-spoken-of. I well believed that I was sowing good seed in thy heart. If it was not all good, forgive me, my will was good, and if all did not turn out as I expected, who is to blame for that? We always sow in hope that the harvest will succeed, but also it does not always depend upon ourselves. Sometimes the sky grows overcast, and when I ponder everthing from thy young days it does not yet come into my head that thou deliberately desirest my affliction. Tears of joy and tears of affliction are two quite different things, and a father is hardly reconciled to weep in affliction over his son. What I have instilled into thee, impart again to thy children, but recollect that it is very sickening to be no longer obeyed by a son, on whom one has lavished every attention, and, indeed, I should not wish that thou shouldst ever experience it in thy children."

Grandfather stood there almost meek and gentle. Even Uncle John felt that much, very much, of what had so long separated him from grandfather's heart fell from him all at once. Those remembrances of early life, of that family union and that peace which had never been disturbed, awakened in him an eager longing to win back that peace which had been banished from their home as if by enchantment.

A man has moments when he slackens in his opposition. The harsher characteristics of those against whom we struggle disappear, and there emerge in place of them better sides to which we had been blind for many a long day. This relaxation of mind is, in fact, a pause, and in moments of repose a man makes plans. If in such moments he should all at once stand hand in hand with his opponent, perhaps he would then and there give his hand in reconciliation.

As I say these moments are moments of rest and reconciliation. Sometimes, however, opposition slackens in them only that it may afterwards exhibit itself with new force, and develop to a truly amazing degree.

Uncle John did not slacken in his opposition. Sometimes a child takes a weapon out of our hands which we would not have surrendered before for all the world.

Grandfather disarmed Uncle John by his moderation; he was meek and gentle as a child.

"Do you really think you cannot give up Betuska?" inquired grandfather, after a pause, during which he narrowly observed his son.

Grandfather's voice almost quavered.

"Oh, father, have you called me to you only to demand this?" answered Uncle John, almost with anguish.

"Come, I did not wish to hurt your feelings, and you see that we separate in good part."

Uncle John listened submissively.

"You think that Betuska really loves you."

"As surely as I believe in God", answered uncle.

"See, now, I do not wish to dissipate this belief. If you think you are acting rightly settle it with your own conscience. Only one thing I implore of you. If you are to undertake the farm you will require a wife who is a good manager. For my part I do not wish to detract from Betuska, or suggest that she could not undertake our household. But yet there can be no harm in looking elsewhere also, in order that you may compare. In look-

ing elsewhere, you by no means fetter yourself, and if you are convinced then at all events you act from conviction."

Uncle John saw what grandfather was aiming at.

"The Horakoffs, of Brizoff, begged us to send you to see them. I hear their daughter is pretty, and with expectations; if you do not like her you need not take her."

"Oh, father, by everything in the world I implore do not tempt me so cruelly", cried Uncle John with clasped hands.

"Nay, nay, I do not intend anything so bad as you seem to think. But about this one girl I pray you to listen to me, in order that I may see whether my grey hairs have yet any respect paid to them by you. Go then to see her. I leave your will entirely free. I do not the least fetter you; but only about this one thing, I pray you. If you are not suited there you may then do as you like. And if you still wish it you may then take—even Betuska."

This last word grandfather scarcely pronounced at all—his voice was as it were broken.

But Uncle John did not oppose his will. It appeared to him that this road was open to him in order that by it he might win Betuska. A moment before he had not the least idea that he was so near the realization of what was the single wish of his soul.

Uncle John kissed grandfather's hand, and grandfather felt that on it fell a tear. "I shall go there", he said, and went out of the room.

In appearance all was now again at peace at grandfather's, and reconciliation, as it were, now drew them all to one another....

When Novak departed from grandfather's he betook himself by a direct road to Kubista's. I do not know whether he did this by an impulse of his own, or whether grandfather had given him some hint. But this is certain that Novak was so crafty that he managed to extort everything from grandfather which might have endangered the success of his conspiracy.

Such people do everything for the sake of gain, and from the like motives pervert young people to passion, worse than in the olden times they perverted the barbarians to faith.

At Kubista's Novak again introduced himself as before with humble bows, flattery, and subtle speeches, and his eyes flashed from side to side like the sting of a wasp.

There is no need of the horse's hoof, and of horns on the forehead for a man to think, speak, and act, like a very devil.

Novak did not inquire for the daughter, for he at once recognized Betuska, when her mother signed to her to put bread and butter on the table.

"Thank you kindly, I will not eat; in fact, I have just risen from table." And here he mentioned the name of grandfather, and said he had dined with him.

He was not at fault in mentioning grandfather's name. By so doing he so far constrained Betuska at least to his purpose that she wished to listen to him. Passion is not particular about the messenger, but is very observant of the message.

Then Novak began jestingly to speak about betrothals, and weddings, and what a grand wedding had but lately been arranged by him, and how people thanked him wherever he went, and said he was like a father to young people; and indeed they almost everywhere called him father; and he ran on in the like strain about good deeds of his own that would have been sufficient to make a man glorious to the third generation.

"Oh! ho! little daughter", he said, as if it slipped his tongue, and blinked at Betuska's mother in a particular way which is vulgarly called "tipping the wink".

Her mother smiled slightly, and Kubista said, "Come, Betuska, what do you say to that?" But he said it in a jesting tone of voice, and not as though he had anything in his mind.

"I have a husband on hand," said Novak, and thereupon he snapped the fingers of his right hand, "of regular habits, comme il faut, spruce as a cedar, and with plenty of these."

And he slapped the pocket in which his money jingled.

"Perhaps I might bring him to you next Sunday", said Novak aiming straight to his purpose.

Betuska, seeing that he really meant something stayed in the room, and with imploring eyes looked at her father and mother.

"Come, come, you know," said Kubista, "that might have been; but then you know, that cannot be, for there is a certain hitch in the affair."

Could anything in the world have surprised Novak?

Novak put on an expression of countenance just as if he wished to say that he thought as much all along, but his eyes darkened with a peculiar venom, and around his mouth just such a sneer formed itself as though he wished to say frankly, "How I pity you for trusting him."

And out loud he said, "Perhaps some family friend, eh?"

"Possibly something of the kind", answered Kubista.

"Hm!" sneered Novak. "There is a hitch in this affair also."

All thought that Novak alluded to the well-known relation of old Kubista to grandfather, and paid no further attention to what he had said.

But Novak perceiving that they failed to catch his real drift, put on a fresh grimace, as though he had hit upon just the right trump.

"For John is making friends somewhere else."

"That is a lie!" cried out Betuska, enraged at the light manner in which he spoke of Uncle John, and her face flushed scarlet.

"Lie, or no lie," continued Novak, "I cannot know everything; still less, for that matter, can a young schoolgirl. But next Sunday John is off to Brizoff on a visit to the Horakoffs."

"You lie in your throat," cried out Betuska again, and trembled all over. The storm of passion which then for the first time came in a kind of paroxysm, did not allow her time to find any other defensive weapon. But at the same time her countenance reflected all the indignation she felt at the lightly spoken words of Novak.

Betuska went to her mother, laid her head on her mother's shoulder, and gave way to a bitter fit of weeping.

Sobbing she reproached her parents for suffering any one to speak—any godless miscreant.

Kubista loved his daughter above measure. He did not permit Novak to say any more in that daughter's presence, but at the same time, for the sake of her mother, he wished to test whether the matter had any substantial foundation. He took Novak by the hand, went out with him into the parlour, and then cross-questioned him at considerable length.

The end of the interview was this, that Kubista told Novak not to come to his house again, and as to the visit of that youth to which Novak had pledged himself—that nothing more must be said about it.

Novak excused himself with many fresh bows and obsequious speeches, without retracting a word of what he had said. He begged them to forgive him for having come. "My intention", said he, "never was to disturb your domestic tranquillity—indeed, I assure you I came with the purest intentions." And when he had said everything that he meant to say he departed.

But now they had to comfort Betuska. She reproached her parents for confiding their anxiety about her to any one, though it broke her heart, and for having more regard to strangers than to their own daughter. The poor girl was only quieted when her parents assured her that they did not believe anything that Novak had said in their house.

Betuska met Uncle John about two days after this, in the evening, at the fatal boundary-stone of grandfather's and Kubista's field.

Uncle John noticed at once that she had been crying, and asked her the reason of it.

Instead of answering Betusha burst out into a fresh fit of crying, and tears, hot as the anguish in her heart trickled over her poor face, testifying to the measureless disquietude of her soul.

The more Uncle John questioned her the more she sobbed. He refrained from further attempts, and kissed her face with so much warmth that her tears fell afresh over it.

When this struggle had somewhat subsided in her she began to bewail the misfortune of their parent's mutual estrangement. She augured nothing good from this, and for some time she could not rid herself of a certain presentiment which foreboded misfortune. Even a stranger began uninvited to meddle with their affairs, and who could say but his sole business was to separate them.

Uncle John consoled her. He succeeded after this natural explosion of a sensitive soul, for Betuska was so shy that she did not dare to mention a single word about Novak's visit and what she had heard from him. She was in her heart of hearts convinced that it was all a scandalous lie, and only trumped up by gossips in order to separate them. And yet this conviction paved the way to fresh tears, just because it failed to find words to express itself.

Uncle John encouraged her to be patient. Nothing, he said, could occur even the least to dissipate their mutual trust and confidence. Next, as to the relation in which their angry parents stood to one another he thought he might soon hope to see an end of it. For grandfather—his father—had just begun to show himself much more amenable to reason, much more conciliatory, than he had ever done before. Let interlopers say what they liked, for himself he meant to show them by deeds what he thought of their speeches, and by means, certainly, check all unbridled gossip.

Twilight had already gathered, and the scent of mown clover and meadow land was wafted over the fields, while birds winged their way to a neighbouring coppice, there to spend the evening and the night according to their wont.

Betuska seemed to be already quite easy in mind.

Only as it were involuntary she hinted that she was looking forward to next Sunday, and glanced up at uncle's eyes to see what he thought of it. But Uncle John seemed as if he had not paid much attention: at first he was slightly abstracted, then he smiled and kissed Betuska.

And Betuska was soon as she had been before; she even jested a little—aye, even hinted that next Sunday she would put on a new dress, which she hoped uncle would like, and think suited her.

After that Uncle John hinted, only as it were involuntarily, that on Sunday he would not be at home.

A pang went to Betuska's heart, but she made as though it were a laughing matter to her.

"Certainly I cannot guess where you are going", she said, half jestingly.

"And perhaps I don't mean to tell you", said Uncle John, and pressed her hand more warmly than before.

"I will guess in what direction you are going", and she guessed, pointing with her hand in different directions, until at last she pointed as if by accident in the direction of the place where uncle was to go on Sunday.

"Come, come, I will tell you no more", said uncle, and kissed her mouth to prevent hearing any further questions.

But Betuska now apparently meant to have her own way. She said she could never bear to await Sunday for she would not dare to be looking in the direction of the place whither uncle had to go.

Uncle John now slightly hesitated, for he was afraid of occasioning her superfluous anxiety. He already consoled himself in fancy by picturing how on his return he would communicate his message to her, and tell her how he meant very soon to take her home with him to his own farm, with the words, "You see, in this farm, you are mistress, and my wife. I am merely going for a walk to Brizoff", he said, and as if to make up for his reticence, he added, "I must do it to please my father."

Betuska had heard enough: more she did not wish to know. All the blood in her body crowded to her heart, and in that heart resounded something like the tolling of a funeral bell. But she

never let it appear. And this was the fault, just as though she thought that Uncle John had not been perfectly sincere with her. She smiled, but her lips trembled; she would perhaps have soonest burst out crying, but already tears refused to flow. But she concealed it all in the presence of Uncle John. While he conducted her home she jested, and when he gave her a kiss at parting she returned it as warmly as if she wished to empty all her store of affection, and had no more cause to think of a future day.

Just as they separated she said almost jestingly that she wished him success at Brizoff....

Sunday came and Uncle John set off to go to Brizoff just at the same time when people were setting out for church. Thus among others he met Betuska, who was dressed in her new white dress, but even her face was dressed in a new dress: it was paler than ever before. Betuska long held Uncle John by the hand, and begged him in a voice almost painful to hear, to forgive her if she had ever wronged him in anything. "For", she said, "I am going to church to-day, and would gladly be reconciled with all."

These words struck Uncle John to the heart, but he felt himself happy beyond measure.

Then she said that she would wait for him in the evening, so he must return pretty early. And when they had bade one another adieu, Betuska looked long after him, until he vanished behind the nearest hillock.

The whole afternoon she waited at a spot on the road to Brizoff. Already early the shades of evening settled over the fish-pond, while she waited for uncle. The stars came out and the moon rose, and uncle yet came not. Betuska knelt on the bank, looked up to a firmament full of light and beauty, looked down to the waters in which all that beauty and all that light were reflected; she yearned for that beauty and prayed for her lover.

Her parents already missed her from home, and went to seek her. They found her, but Betuska belonged no more either to them or to herself. The waves on the margin of the pool frolicked with her dress, raven locks emerged for a moment above the glimmering water, her white hands were clasped in prayer, the beautiful mouth breathed no more.

CHAPTER IV

THE corn which had sprung up in spring matured to yellow spikes, and sickles converted the copious crop of the field into rows of sheaves. Boldly now over it wander grey-fleeced sheep after a piping shepherd; the cricket hops insolently about the boundary-stone, the partridge with her young scarce hides herself from the searching looks of the pointers, and St. Martin's summer hangs from stalk to stalk in glittering threads.

The breast of mother earth now needs the showers of the spring —no young corn bursts from it to ripen into fruit—or if some tinge of green yet bedecks the field, it is but the memory of that which was, but which alas! shall be no more.

And man is like the divine field of Nature, capable of all—of passion, learning, puissant deeds, noble actions—happy is he in whom all ripens which germinated in his spirit of lovely and exalted.

But the spiritual sowing hath also its ill seasons, which though perhaps they do not shake the world can drive to despair him whom they encounter—can even perchance annihilate him. The spiritual sowing hath also its hailstorms, which splinter the beautiful, hopeful stalks, batter down what was destined to life, and so crush it, that what awakened in us hopeful delight is now but a source of pity and astonishment.

It is easily said—Betuska was buried. On a coffin adorned with garlands young men and maidens threw handfuls of earth, the grave-diggers raised a mound, and parents spread over the grave fresh turf and adorned it with flowers.

But if by the grave closing over us everything else that was bound up with us could also come to an end, perhaps it were better it should die with us; but perhaps yet better it should live.

I am, in truth, in difficulties how to find words if I am to depict the spiritual state of Uncle John. Despair is little, and at the same time also much. He had moments when not the least anguish survived in his breast; hatred and wrath took its place, but he had moments also in which all this gave way to a horrible quietude, a sort of stupor, so that he could laugh with him who laughed, and curse with him who cursed.

And this before grandfather, who spoke but little with his son, and avoided his looks, which were full of reproach and horrible accusation, partly perhaps justified, but partly not so.

And at other times again, he went like a man crushed at heart, without will and feeling, chilled in all his perceptions, inaccessible to grief, and indifferent to pleasure.

Then he almost jested: he told grandfather that now he need not dread a hated marriage, and in general that affairs had turned out better than had ever been looked for.

Grandfather was now more afflicted than his son. The misfortune which he had caused to fall on the head of old Kubista, did not suffer him now to sleep more often than did the hatred which before he had felt for that trusty friend.

Even in his work Uncle John was like two different beings. Sometimes he did everything thoroughly and conscientiously; sometimes again he took no pains, and at times he did not work at anything for a whole day.

Once he came to the boundary-stone which divided grandfather's field from that of old Kubista.

Old Kubista was afield. Uncle John went to him, kissed his hand, and said to him, "You know, Kubista, you only yet remain till death my father."

Kubista's tears fell fast. Without speaking a word he went home, and his people who worked with him afield ceased in their work for the anguish which they felt with their honoured master.

Then uncle's horses had a rest. He loosed them from the plough, and sat himself down alone at the boundary-stone and thought—God alone knows of what; perhaps even he did not think of anything.

They brought him his dinner and he did not touch it. He sat till evening and perhaps would have sat even till next morning if Kubista had not gone back to the field and sat down beside him.

"I have not spoken to you about your daughter," said Uncle John, as if between the time that Kubista departed and returned not a minute had intervened, "and trust me I am more intent upon reconciling myself with you than with my own father."

"What avails hatred here? We know you grew up together, and I, without her, might have been a happier father than as it is I am. Would that your father were now also happier than he has been hitherto."

They spoke long together, and Uncle John in his presence unbosomed himself completely, as if he had seen in the father the spirit of poor Betuska—so he disclosed in his presence everything without reserve. He added that he desired but one thing, and that

was that Kubista should recognize that he was worthy of his daughter.

And Kubista did indeed stand to him in place of a father, at least according to sorrow.

Whenever they saw one another afield they always came together, and their first salutation was dedicated to the memory of Betuska.

Only sometimes uncle came here alone, alone, and then complained to heaven and earth, fell on his face, and drowned his grief in tears. Aye, he could not see this place without shuddering, but his eyes in vain sought the village, to see whether Betuska would come from it, to make all clear to him as none else could.

Coming home again he was so variable that neither grandfather nor grandmother could understand him.

Sometimes indeed quite affable, and at other times again he shut himself like a monastic in his cell.

He did not speak much with people, and if he spoke he touched on matters entirely indifferent, so that it might appear to others as if this misfortune had not so very deeply affected him.

Sometimes also he jested with them—even cruelly. He said, "So! I told you to laugh at me when I was no more Kubista's boy. Laugh now, you have a right to do so."

And he began himself to laugh, as though he wished to give them a taste for laughing.

Who saw him thus found his taste for laughing with him soon gone.

And after that again he was so leaden-hearted that grandmother felt grave concern about him, lest, perhaps, he should attempt his own life. Meek and gentle sometimes like a child, and sometimes again he dealt out his words as though he would speak daggers.

"You know excellently how to take care of children," he said to grandfather, "not only of your own but even of Kubista's—for you have taken care of Betuska better than he himself did. No one could have provided for her better. Faith 'tis quite a peculiar talent when a man can so prettily blast another's happiness."

Grandfather was scared at these words. There lay in them an enormous weight of accusation and yet they were pronounced with as much coldness as if he had said, "My pipe has gone out."

Grandfather, however, did not dare evade the charge implied, but began to consider how he might divert Uncle John to other pursuits. He sought counsel of grandmother, but with her he did

not succeed very well, for she told him curtly, that he had already shown how clever he was at managing, so then let him manage again according to his own sweet will.

Grandfather began to feel himself veritably isolated. At home all avoided him, and indeed he avoided others more than they avoided him. He then began to drive out to his sons and married daughters, but there also he did not gain much help. None of them was willing to take upon himself the responsibility of advising when matters might turn out badly—for they knew grandfather well.

And after all what advice could they give? Even could they have disentangled his eager confused questions as easily as he entangled them, grandfather would still not have wanted any of their advice. He always knew best himself the author of the confusion—if he could not find the clue who was to find it. When, therefore, he returned home from these visits to his children, he felt his own desolateness even more strongly than before. He had no one to whom to unburden himself and was an object of pity like all the rest.

It is said, "Paint not the devil upon a wall or verily he will appear."

In fact, grandfather began to hanker after Novak, and when Novak appeared quite unexpectedly, grandfather felt it almost a blessing to have him to converse with.

Novak well knew that he would find it no jesting matter with grandmother, or with Uncle John. He did not come to grandfather at the house, but managed to call him behind the barn, where stood in about seven rows the huge ancestral lindens, in whose shadow he rested as on a feather-bed. To their branches had migrated, at some time or other, a family of starlings, and because the place pleased them had settled themselves there, and multiplied to an innumerable colony. Here it was "chiff-chaff" all day long, and if the old ones flew away, why, then the young ones piped.

Here then Novak awaited grandfather, and when grandfather told him that he thought the weight on his heart grew lighter, Novak said he knew of a remedy, but it must be taken at once if it was to have any effect.

Grandfather, however, had been starving for want of advice, and he inquired what the remedy was. Novak answered without circumlocution, "Your son must get married."

And at once he had so many reasons for it at the tip of his tongue that grandfather's head went round.

He said that Uncle John dissipated his energies by reflections which afflicted him, that his looks and thoughts fastened only on women, and that what the women altogether had so long failed to effect a single woman would effect if he could be brought acquainted with her.

Grandfather thought all this supremely wise, and wondered at himself for not thinking of it before, and as for Novak, faith he was a man more sensible than a Doctor of Law.

Novak, however, reasoned according to his trade, and if he had been a butcher he would have recommended that uncle should eat plenty of meat. Had he been an innkeeper he would have recommended plenty of beer. Being a go-between in love-affairs, he recommended that uncle should wive.

And all at once he knew everything about a bride in prospect, and described her in such glowing colours that Horakoff's daughter at Brizoff vanished before her, and was not fit to reach her water at table.

Grandfather thought that he had won "terns", and he had no need to trouble himself further about anything; for Novak took upon himself all trouble and eased grandfather's mind by promising that Uncle John should conform to everything.

After this grandfather himself took Uncle John in hand. After suitable circumlocutions, he asked him, as if casually, whether he yet thought of marriage, seeing that his parents were growing old and could not manage the household much longer.

"And why not then?" said Uncle John, as if in good humour, "then I shall have obeyed you in everything."

Grandfather was quite accustomed to his biting sentences, and already sometimes failed to feel their incisiveness. But here, at any rate, he had at last managed to know what he wished to know. He thought, then, that he must be contented with the reply.

And in reality the business began to make satisfactory progress, and before any one expected it a letter came to the house. Uncle John was, moreover, so resigned to grandfather's wishes, that grandfather must have been delighted with him.

Whether Uncle John read this letter I do not know, but certain it is that when grandfather told him he must write a reply, Uncle John told him he had an answer all prepared.

And the messenger took a letter from him to his intended bride, only that it was the same which he had brought from her to him.

Grandfather must have had satisfaction in seeing how everything succeeded—and he had it.

When, after several days, the evenings began to close in, a wedding was already openly mentioned, the servants continually agitated the matter, and after some days even the poultry at Kubista's talked it over.

Old Kubista's head spun round.

Now even Novak began to present himself openly at the farm, and when Uncle John greeted him affably enough it followed that the last stumbling-block was quite removed. He flew from the bride to our farm, and thence to the bride elect like one possessed.

It was a wonderful message which Novak carried to the young lady. When he asked Uncle John what proposal he should take to her, Uncle John referred him to grandfather, and in reality grandfather was as well able to compose a marriage proposal as if he had been going to take a wife himself.

Things went on apace.

All unexpectedly one morning grandmother got a command from grandfather to see how many calves were ready for the butcher, what number of fat pigs, how many geese were fit to kill, and she herself was to see to the poultry, for the marriage was even at the doors.

Novak ran to the registry office; put out the banns; briefly, Novak had a matter to settle, and he succeeded in it.

Only one thing was still wanting. Uncle John had not as yet made the acquaintance of his intended bride. That indeed was a very trifling hitch. Still it was all in the day's work that Novak should put that matter straight also.

Novak, then, must bring them together. He must put the matter before Uncle John in all its different aspects until the latter assented to it.

He might very well have spared himself his pains, for Uncle John scarcely listened with one ear. So much, however, he understood of it all as this, that next Sunday he was to pay a visit to his intended bride, and was to order the servants to have the carriage as smart as possible.

When Novak further assured him that he would be thoroughly satisfied with everything, uncle answered, "You see that I am always satisfied as it is."

Grandfather took a fresh lease of life, and even his foot ceased to pain him; he walked to the farmyard with Novak, under the lindens, and again from the farmyard to the house. He was more active than Uncle John.

Grandmother did, indeed, often look into uncle's eyes thus inviting him to confidence, that he might unbosom himself to her, for she felt, as no one else could, that what she had heard from grandfather, Novak, and others, could not be his genuine desire and will. A kind of terror fastened itself at her heart.

But Uncle John only looked at her from time to time with anguish, and that was all his answer. At other times he was inaccessible to all. No one could find the key to his soul; perhaps at times he could not even find it himself.

Sunday came, the vehicle was prepared, the horses harnessed. They went for Uncle John, but they did not find him. Grandmother could scarcely speak for terror and surprise, and if she could have concealed the truth from grandfather, she would not have told it for the whole world.

Servants ran hither and thither to look for Uncle John. Even Novak, whose mind was bewildered, and whose countenance paled at the unexpected turn things had taken, set off to search; even grandfather himself looked where he could, calling out and searching, not without fear.

But it was not so bad as that. They soon found Uncle John, at the very boundary-stone of grandfather's and Kubista's fields. They found him with his face to the ground, in tears and protestations. Without witnesses he poured out laments to heaven for his affliction and burden of misery, seeking the comfort which he found not among men.

They did not venture to disturb him. They returned home and mentioned to grandfather where and how they found him, adding that he would return by himself.

And uncle soon returned. Not with tears in his eyes, but with a smile on his face, and cold in mien.

To those who saw him in his previous state but a moment before, that smile must have been capable of a strange interpretation.

Uncle John dressed himself and they drove off. On the way Novak repeated very much about his previous performances, about bridals and marriages, until Uncle John bade draw up at an inn that he might have a glass to encourage himself.

And he drank enough to encourage him. They then drove on. Uncle was still in a courageous mood when they alighted, and Terinka, his intended bride, presented herself on the threshold, while in the meantime her father greeted his honoured guest.

It is true that Uncle John was merry enough. It was no secret even to the Brezinoffs where this merriment came from, but they did not look too nicely at that. Only let a young man have courage, what matter whether it comes from the heart or the pewter.

And old Brezinoff took further care that it should come so long from the pewter, that it reached the heart at last.

Uncle John jested, pinched Terinka's cheek, and Novak winked slily at Brezinoff, who merely smiled in reply.

Uncle John asked Terinka, whether she wished to have him for a husband, adding that he had been sent to ask her to be his wife; and he said this without circumlocution.

Terinka blushed becomingly and then responded also becomingly.

Briefly, Uncle John made good progress. He was yet shouting on the road as they returned home long after nightfall.

In the house then at grandfather's it was now a matter of certainty that there would be a wedding; the banns were sent at once to the parson and a day fixed on which the guests were to assemble.

Grandfather strongly insisted upon there being a large gathering of guests present. And Novak went with the young folk all one day the round of the neighbourhood to invite the whole of it.

Several hogsheads of beer were ordered at once from the brewery, and from Prague were brought about four dozen of the choicest rosolek for the ladies.

The wedding then was prepared.

And when it came everything went off according to the programme. The bride wept, as did her parents, and when they brought her to grandfather's she had with her about a score of relations.

Evil tongues, and on such occasions some tongues never fail to be so, ran on in this wise:—

"All these relations are instead of furniture, you know; for the bride has not much of that, you know; and if it is a long time coming, that doubtless is because they want to get it cheap to the farm. But how odd! 'tis always such a long way off, you know; and after all 'tis possible the relations have brought it in their pockets."

But at grandfather's things went merrily enough. Grandfather was in his element. He at once made friends with all the bride's relations, and told them all about his own history. Some of these

relations were indeed rather distant relations of the Brezinoffs, but that did not signify.

Grandfather showed them everything, conducted them everywhere, and walked so easily that even his foot seemed well again. He paid them so much attention, aye, each and all of them, that the remainder of his sons and daughters were scarcely welcomed. He did not allow himself to converse with his own children, for to-day he had new, more honourable guests.

These were, indeed, convinced that they had found capital quarters for Terinka, but it a little vexed grandfather's own sons that they could not put in even a single word; and they dispersed long before evening, when grandfather led the new relationship afield. They did not shake hands with grandfather at parting, they said to-day doubtless he would not miss them—and grandfather did not miss them that day.

The festivities lasted until the third day, for grandfather was most anxious that the whole neighbourhood should talk about it. He thought that he must needs do something, for latterly such wonderful rumours were afloat concerning the sayings and doings of all of us at the farm, that now verily seemed a fitting opportunity to demolish all such rumours at a single blow.

When on the third day all drove off, grandfather began to settle the bride in the farmhouse. Uncle John, indeed, scarcely paid any attention to any one, consequently his part must be played for him by grandfather.

Grandfather had always taken so much pains to bring all this about, that it was impossible for him all at once to renounce all participation in it.

He had enough to do. Ere he had shown the young mistress everything that appertained to her household duties several days had elapsed.

And yet Terinka had excellent capacities. She remembered everything at once and adapted herself to everything with facility, so that after a short time it was soon shown who now ruled in the farm, and who obeyed.

As I have already said, grandfather had spared no pains to get the farm this mistress, and now that he had obtained her, he took still more pains to fix her there for ever, and to make every one obey her absolutely.

Grandfather was now happy—at least he thought so.

I cannot say, however, that Terinka was really a very welcome guest at the farm.

Grandmother was constrained in manner towards her, for a kind of trepidation continually affected her, though she could not hit upon a name for it. Her thoughts always lost themselves whenever she tried to conjecture whether Uncle John was now happy. When she wiped the plate with her apron, she also wiped more than one tear from her eye, and few saw her then balance herself on tiptoe, and dance according to her ancient wont.

Nor was Uncle John by any means an example of how conjugal affection may make of two people one spirit, causing them to feel with one heart and to think with one mind.

Uncle John did not change in anything to speak of after his marriage, except that he became somewhat more indifferent. He seemed as though he had determined, by the punctual fulfilment of his father's wishes, to show grandfather how those his wishes had brought misfortune not only on his son, but also on the whole household.

He obeyed grandfather most exemplarily, and since grandfather had no other wishes save those that Terinka expressed, he more particularly obeyed his wife in everything.

Grandfather, then, very diligently himself took his daughter-in-law in charge, so that his presence should make up for every deficiency in other quarters. He himself now contrived and did for her everything for which she had the least fancy. Aye, he even looked into her eyes as a star-gazer looks at the heavens in order to conjecture what would please her and what would elicit a smile from her, for that pleased him beyond measure.

The servants whispered that there was a new mistress, and this lady was imperious and proud, and in a louder voice they declared to the other servants that she was hasty and unobliging, and that there was more wanton wastefulness in the household management than had ever been before.

All day long he spoke of nothing but Terinka. He praised her every moment, her every step. Every gesture seemed to him so becoming that more than once he pronounced her to be the most perfect woman in the world.

The household secretly, and indeed openly, laughed at his eulogiums; and grandmother sometimes felt almost vexed. Uncle John assured him that he was right in everything.

Wonderful it was where grandfather found all the expressions for heaping praise after praise upon her.

But even grandfather at last grew tired of calling her the best

woman in the world, and he named Terinka his Flower of Paradise, which he had long been seeking for his house.

"Yes," he cried, "she is our happiness, and our ornament, in whom we all grow young again."

And Terinka was indeed a Flower of Paradise. She expanded in all directions, every place was full of her. Every one was made to feel her influence.

Already she had not space enough in the rooms which were originally allotted to her, and she expanded even into the living-room, which grandfather had reserved for himself and grandmother.

Grandfather did, indeed, always, and in everything, give way to her only that she might be content, and he told her that she had only to order what she pleased, and that all her orders must be carried out.

So Terinka began to give her orders in earnest. Once she declared to Uncle John, in the presence of grandfather and grandmother, that "old gran" disgusted her because she had always to be looking at his diseased foot, and she suggested that it would be better if he were banished out of the living-room.

This fell like a thunderbolt.

But grandfather laughed it off, for he supposed it was only jest, though, on second thoughts, it occurred to him that it was a curious mode of jesting.

Grandmother stood aghast, and Uncle John said nothing.

He always heard from grandfather a hundred times a day that everything which Terinka ordered must be carried out—that Flower of Paradise.

CHAPTER V

GRANDFATHER, however, learned very soon what he had praised to the skies: he experienced very soon what is the character of these Flowers of Paradise, and learned by many an unpleasant surprise what it is to carry out the commands of a daughter-in-law.

Old people are slow to adapt themselves to new ideas. What they have once got into their heads is only abandoned by a difficult process, and grandfather had so thoroughly got it into his head that he had provided his home with an excellent mistress as to recognize that he was already in very truth too grey-headed

to teach himself new views and new maxims. And so sometimes he reminded Terinka as if involuntarily of his grey hairs. But that scarcely availed him much. Terinka told him flatly that his grey hairs and the grey dog Vorjech were one as dear to her as the other.

Here grandfather no longer smiled; tears trickled down his old face, and though his foot began somewhat to pain him, yet he hobbled out of the living-room, across the threshold, to the farmyard, and there retired under the old lindens, where he sat himself down on a bench. The starlings piped in their nests, and grandfather looked towards his house and reflected on all that he had enjoyed and suffered there.

There was enough to begin to occupy his thoughts. In the meantime Terinka ruled her household like a fine lady—like a very duchess. The servants had very often to harness the horses, and prepare the carriage, and the carriage rolled off to the town, whence she and Uncle John seldom returned before evening. It was not, indeed, possible; before she had completed all her commissions the day had flown like lightning.

But after this our young mistress always appeared in new clothes; aye, sometimes in several dresses the same day, and the servants guessed that in spite of this it was not she who wore all their master bought her.

Verily, with the servants she had a perfect torment, and if Terinka could have learned all they said about her, she would never have recovered from her vexation.

Thus, for example, they said, "Mistress has all her presents and dowry stowed away at a merchant's in the town, you know; that's why she drives there so often, you know—to bring it home bit by bit." For example, she had all her dresses stowed away at his house.

But even at home our young mistress' dresses outdid all rivalry.

Visits were, indeed, very frequent, not perhaps that grandfather's own sons and daughters drove over there, but Terinka had uncles enough to fill up the calendar. These did not come all at once, but were good enough to relieve guard, not wishing to be in the way.

On these occasions there were dinners such as only occurred at festivals in grandfather's time. And every one ate and drank to repletion.

At these feasts grandfather took care still at least to appear to be the host, and gave out that Terinka did it all at his own

particular request, and he often consoled himself with the thought that he was not driven out of the house, because he helped to supply the table with drink and victuals. And how sedately Terinka always invited him to seat himself with them! It was enough to move his goodness when he scarcely knew whether he was to sit among them or not.

But he sat with them still.

And then when the relations went home, they could scarcely carry all the presents with which Terinka loaded them. Once a maid-servant allowed herself to play a very untimely joke. Her mistress dispatched her for a carpet-bag in which to pack something for the Lord knows which of her uncles, and the maid brought a regular sack, saying she could not find anything else.

But beside all this there were other things to be observed in our young mistress.

When some one or other of her female relations paid her a visit the servants soon perceived that this relation wore a dress which no long time before their mistress had on new, and that when this aunt or cousin departed she invariably forgot that she had on her hostess' gown.

Uncle John paid no attention to these littlenesses, he always acted according to grandfather's wishes, and the instant our young mistress desired it he bade put to the horses afresh, that he might drive with her to the town where she laid in a fresh stock of things to be distributed at home.

They quite understood at the farm what driving to the town meant.

And Novak?

This worthy, when he came to the farm, behaved as though he were part lord and master. To grandfather he scarce paid any attention at all, and merely said a few words to him, though grandfather would gladly have continued the conversation.

On the other hand he listened to our young mistress a full hour, while she related to him how she managed everything, what a torment the old folks were to her, and similar matters.

It would have seemed that Terinka certainly needed no one to establish her in household management, for she already gave evidence of her excellent capacities. But still the advice which Novak gave her was by no means to be despised.

Whenever Novak gave advice he took pains fully to express his meaning. He set down the old folk as dotards, who were already unsuited to the new times, and he complimented Terinka

for her kindness to them. "You are kind," says he, "indeed I must confess you seem to me too kind to them."

And then we must remember that Novak was not by any means a man to leave the farm with empty pockets, nor was Terinka either likely to let him depart with them empty. She always perfectly understood Novak when he told her he was so glad to see her comfortably settled there.

And if Novak did not always carry off all he meant to take at once, of course he came oftener, to carry away more than he could manage on a single journey.

Our young mistress had not too good health, and therefore the doctor often drove over to the farm.

But such visits cost money, and therefore Uncle John sometimes himself drove Terinka over to the doctor, to spare the cost of his coming, and to exercise the horses.

Certainly, very few people quite believed in our mistress' delicate health, but still she had to spare herself on account of it. She did not venture to undertake any heavy work; she did not venture to walk much, or to exert herself, and Uncle John sometimes did not go to look after the field, because he was obliged to take care of his wife.

Doubtless by these devices Terinka advanced to the wished-for goal.

On the strength of her delicate health she told Uncle John that she could not move about in the living-room with sufficient freedom so long as the old people were there. And as the doctor assured him that her delicate health might last some time longer during which she would require rest, Uncle John one day put the matter clearly before grandfather, and the upshot of it all was that grandfather and grandmother were to be banished to a neighbouring room for so long as Terinka continued in delicate health.

This by itself was no doubt a trifling matter, for any one who knew the spare rooms would admit that they were spacious and clean. But still it rather stung grandfather when he was so summarily banished from the living-room, in which for half a century he had experienced all the boons and ills of life.

His eyes were certainly slightly bedimmed, and he told uncle that he thought perhaps Terinka would find it more quiet in the spare room than where so many people were constantly coming and going; but Uncle John objected that opposition only made her worse, and that delicate women must be humoured.

Grandfather now recognized himself that his objections were trivial, and submitted to be banished with grandmother the more easily the more urgently the young people laboured to effect his banishment.

On the whole the poor invalid was not so badly off. Grandfather, according to his custom, went to visit Terinka, and consoled himself with the thought that there would be so soon an end of all.

But it seemed all at once to occur to Terinka that he consoled himself with the notion that he would soon be reinstated in the living-room. And so one fine evening after a warm day, she just reminded him that he had not yet gained his point. "For you know," says she, "my indisposition might easily return."

I cannot really blame Uncle John for any harshness towards grandfather; not at all. But he was indifferent to him as to everything else in general. For that man was yet to find in the world who could discover something that should console him. If grandfather had still had the stronger will, the son would have obeyed his father: as his wife had it, he obeyed her.

Perhaps he would have obeyed any one, for it was wholly indifferent to him what he did.

Briefly, to whichever side grandfather looked he found himself completely deserted. His sons and daughters now rarely visited him, for the Terincine character was not too alluring. And how could grandfather open out his heart to them when it was all his doing, that he had almost forgotten even those of them who were yet living.

My father, on one occasion, did indeed delicately suggest that grandfather should pay him a visit, and if our house pleased him, that he should establish himself there. But grandfather answered that after all he could not bear to die anywhere but at home.

And now, too, grandfather could not open his heart to grandmother, who complained of her daughter-in-law perpetually, and since grandfather had always from the beginning taken Terinka under his protection he felt that he must seem to do so still, for the sake of consistency.

And once when seated in the yard he tried to think of any one to whom he could open out his heart; then, and not till then, he recognized that he was alone, alone.

Thus involuntarily his eyes fell on the grey-haired dog, Vorjech, who stood there before him, looking up at his eyes and wagging its tail, for it was long since grandfather had noticed it.

So it occurred to him, as if by accident, how that Terinka had several times compared his head with the grey-haired dog, Vorjech, and involuntarily he looked again into Vorjech's eyes.

Vorjech seemed to understand him. He never stirred, and his eyes seemed to grow bedimmed and moist just as grandfather's eyes did.

"Dear Vorjech, we are then discrowned," said grandfather, "we are completely alike."

And Vorjech whined, sprang up, and finally laid himself down at grandfather's feet. Thenceforward Vorjech followed at grandfather's feet. Grandfather had, indeed, sunk very low: not only in mind; even in his dress this was apparent. Hitherto he had had his suit of velveteen clothing new at least at every annual festival, but now it was long past festival time, and grandfather had not yet changed his suit of clothes for a new one.

Perhaps it never once came into his mind. But during that time he pondered more frequently on his previous life. He saw that everything was not well done as he did it.

His previous hardness now melted into meekness, and then he saw that everything was not well done as he did it. He had been often in fault.

In this, his isolation, he began seriously to look out for some one who could understand him. But let him turn the pages to whichever side he would, every name was erased and everywhere only emptiness.

Nor again, were the servants such that he could converse with them. Our young mistress took the greatest pains to show them that they were not to obey grandfather. If he ever gave them any order Terinka bade them do just the very reverse, and that purposely.

The servants soon saw how the land lay. They laughed outright at grandfather, did not obey their mistress, and each one acted according to his own inclination.

And so our household was managed strangely—passing strangely.

Grandfather now at times even began to reflect that after all he had not a trustier friend than Kubista. It came to him that he had wronged, cruelly wronged his friend, and this sense of pity yet further increased his spiritual weakness.

More than once he even thought that it would be well to give the hand to Kubista. He thought that it would be a far better action than any he had hitherto performed, and that it would

be perfectly in keeping with self-respect if he were to make the first step.

It occurred to him that hitherto he had never distinguished himself by any particularly good act, though he was originally capable of everything, and to reconcile himself with Kubista would be at least a beginning, maybe also an end. He felt that it would be better to weep on Kubista's bosom than to lament alone, and to the empty air.

He was already too weak to bear all that he had brought upon himself.

Thus he more than once found himself looking in the direction Kubista used to come and meet him, and if Kubista had really approached, perhaps he would have fallen on his neck, and with lamentations have implored his forgiveness.

Kubista did not, indeed, appear in that direction but fate decreed that they should first meet one another in a different place.

It was Sunday, and grandfather decided to go to church early in the morning. It was not perhaps because he found little to console him at home that he went in better time than the rest, but because he walked slowly, for his foot had latterly been again more painful and then he said he liked to be in time. So at least he said.

And he hobbled to church, in point of fact, before the bells had ceased to chime, and then as the church was still locked, he went to look at the churchyard.

He had not been there for a long while. He could not, indeed, remember how long since.

Many changes there were. Many a new cross had been added, and of those mounds which he remembered fresh more than one was overrun with turf of many years' growth. Many again were newly dug. Which was to be for him?

On that solitary grave who knelt yonder? That face was known to him, though it aged to unrecognition.

It was old Kubista. He knelt on the grave of his daughter, Betuska, and prayed for his daughter.

Grandfather felt all his hatred suddenly collapse; all the better sides of old Kubista came to mind and he was touched with pity for his unfortunate friend when he learned to realize how unhappy he had himself become.

He did not know how it happened, but he knelt beside Kubista at the grave, and with a quavering voice pronounced the words,

"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us."

To Kubista it was the most joyous awakening out of prayer. He took grandfather by the hand, pressed it, and said, "Aye! we have committed many errors."

Kubista knew not hatred, and it so touched him to see grandfather kneeling beside himself, that he forgave his friend frankly, and from the bottom of his heart.

They sat by Betuska's grave, and Kubista asked grandfather what had led him thither.

"I came here to choose some place or other", said grandfather. "Among the living I have one no longer, and I see that I am already a burden to them."

"Things have not succeeded with us", said Kubista, but without reproachfulness, only pronouncing the whole truth. "We ourselves have taught friends by our example to desert one another, and now we find ourselves deserted. John even now but seldom comes here, and so I must tend the grave alone. But I will never desert Betuska, and when I have no more power to walk, I will lay myself down beside her."

Grandfather did in reality feel himself elevated, ennobled, and good—perhaps for the first time in his life. He wished he had still the strength of youth that he might set everything to rights just as he had reconciled himself with Kubista.

Kubista now stood his friend once more. He often visited him behind the barn under the lindens, and seated there on the grass they lightened each other's sorrows.

The starlings in the trees had much to say to one another, but still they had exhausted themselves ere these neighbours of auld lang syne turned homewards again together.

Grandfather also little by little adapted himself to his fate. He hardly ever complained the least, but learnt to look upon his present circumstances as if they had been so all his life, and were not amenable to change.

He seldom went now to the living-room to see his daughter-in-law; nor did it ever occur to him that he might yet be reinstated there. Indeed, it would even have been a source of grief to him if he had been recalled thither. It had been a hard struggle to disaccustom himself to that room, but now it seemed to him that by being established there he would also put on all his long past frailties.

Terinka was at times thoroughly out of health. She was sallow, little inclined to move about, and more like a specimen preserved under a glass case than an animated being. Uncle John did not experience much pleasure in her company; however, he did not look for much pleasure of this kind. Even the child which was born to them, and which Terinka always dressed in the finest clothes, awakened in him no special delight. 'Twas seldom he even smiled at it.

Sometimes he would follow grandfather to his pension house to talk over old times, but what they said on these occasions was of trifling value. It touched upon topics of merely general interest.

I used to go pretty often to visit grandfather at a later period, particularly during the summer time. I knew where his gardens and shrubberies were, and thus made straight for him, for grandfather in summer time was head gardener.

Grey-haired Vorjech was there his inseparable companion. He always stood in front of his kennel and growled when he observed me, for he could not remember my face. Grandfather basked in the sun, scolded Vorjech for not knowing me, and welcomed me with immense satisfaction. Sometimes I also found old Kubista with him.

When I asked him how he felt, he only smiled and said, "Ah! welladay! I am not now what I used to be." And in these words lay all his confession; his whole life—everything.

And then, when I described to him what went on in Prague, at school and elsewhere, he forgot for very pleasure everything else in the world. He would not let me leave him, and I had to give him an account of everything I had heard and seen. It seemed as though a new world unrolled itself before his eyes. He always said by way of supplement, "Ah, well, Pepik" (so he had named my father) "knows how to bring up children—he did not learn it from me."

It was once more St. Lawrence's festival, and I was already in the bloom of manhood.

It was holiday time and I had just written to my parents to say that I was going to grandfather's for the festival, where I hoped they would meet me, and then after the festival we could return together.

Just then memories of early days and our visits to grandfather and grandmother came upon me with uncommon force. I felt as though I were their own child, and with all a child's fondness

for them. I saw before my eyes grandmother as my childish fancy had pictured her on a charmed height. I felt the immeasurable delight which had always drawn me to her, and that unrest of youth which made us yearn to get the earliest possible glimpse of her wrinkled face. Grandfather had questioned me with special interest the last time I had seen him, and so I had already collected quite a medley of things of which I wished to give him an account. I thought with satisfaction how he would listen, and I felt happy in anticipation at the idea of causing him once again a few moments of simple pleasure.

As I was thus musing, a letter came from father, in which he gave me to understand that I was not to go to grandfather's for they had buried him that very day, and he explained that he could not inform me about it sooner because he himself only got the news on the very day of the funeral.

I am not sufficiently versed in medical science to say what disease he died of. But he suffered only a very short time.

I am told he was buried most sumptuously, and Uncle John when they came to the churchyard, knelt first by the grave of Betuska, and only then turned aside and threw on grandfather's coffin three handfuls of earth.

It was the last touch of poetry in uncle. From that time forth he became what people call a well-regulated man.

Later they laid Kubista next Betuska on the other side. Thus kindly mother earth lulled to equal rest those who made havoc of each other's lives.

And those who still abide on earth, still make havoc of each other's lives.

THE DOMESTIC TEACHER

ALONG the Upper Moldau wended his way among narrow streets a fair-haired youth. I only refer to the colour of his hair at present that the reader may remember him by this characteristic until more marked ones occur. I am well aware that I shall be expected to add interesting and exact details of character; but certain it is that girls know the colour of hair, eyes, and face before they manage to express themselves about a single other substantial masculine characteristic. And my chief wish is to win the ear of girlhood.

This young man always walked along at a particular hour and at a somewhat rapid pace. In these streets there is a "benediction" of children, who having but little room in their stifling homes, play about the streets in considerable groups. These children well knew the hour when the fair-haired youth passed that way. If he did not come exactly at the stroke of the clock, they at once began to cast anxious glances in the direction from which he came and they cried out, "He is not yet coming!" They did not know either his name or his occupation, but as soon as ever one of them called out, "He has just come!" the others well knew that it was our hero who had come, and perhaps they would take up the challenge with a "He hasn't come! . . ." But if a child caught sight of him before the others, it called out with all its might, "He is coming now!" and all the others exclaimed after the first, "Now he is coming! now he is coming!"

For these children he was nameless; they called him only by the words "him" or "he". To them he was only "he who has come" or "who has not come", who either is coming or will not come at all. When he came among them, they called out in a medley of voices, "Throw us a kreuzer, throw us a kreuzer!" The young man generally had a kreuzer in his hand ready to throw it among them, and then smiled and hurried on, frequently without even looking back at the animated knot of children who wrangled over their small prize with shouts and laughter. The shouts and laughter were still audible as the young man entered at the end of the street a house of better appearance than those which surrounded it.

Here he ran up the stairs to the first floor and stopped before a pair of lofty glazed doors, which led to a passage, touched the

bell, and scarcely had its first tones trembled away on the air, when the patter of little feet could be heard trotting rather than running to the door. The door opened in a twinkling and at one side stood a little boy about six years of age, at the other a little girl about eight years old. These children clapped their hands and crying, "Pan Vojtech! Pan Vojtech!" took Pan Vojtech each by one hand and led him along the passage and through the kitchen to their lesson-room.

Here the little boy sat on his knee, the little girl on one side and they repeated some popular song or favourite popular ballad, then they read aloud one of the German fairy-tales, and repeated as much of it afterwards as they could remember. The children amused rather than tasked themselves, laughed more than seriously did lessons, played more than worked. When the hour was over, they were surprised to find it was so soon over, and it was certain that they were merrier as they led Pan Vojtech to the schoolroom than when they quitted him.

When their little feet trotted off, Vojtech still remained seated and fixed his eyes on the door. After a short time light steps, but not those of a child, approached the door, and any one who had watched Vojtech's face as the first light rustling greeted him, would have noticed that he trembled slightly as he listened, that he grew pale, and that he had to put some constraint upon himself in order to appear indifferent and unperturbed. At the door entered a girl with a winning countenance. She must have been somewhat more than fourteen years of age, and was still more a child than a young lady, but in her gait, her face and figure there was more of womanly dignity than of childish playfulness.

They greeted one another almost in silence. The girl took a seat opposite Vojtech and Vojtech had to harangue her about history, geography, and so-called "belles-lettres". He lectured. But it was wonderful how he began. His words resounded like the song of a desolate bird and often he could not connect them into intelligible sentences. The pallid countenance, the strange shivering before the girl entered, seemed now to have been transferred to his language; it was colourless, halting, vague.

His throat was husky, a word had often to make several efforts before it was pronounced. His tongue and lips seemed glued together and if we may speak of winged words in this place it was just as though a bird-catcher had limed his words and smeared their wings with glue. And yet he had to hand a plentiful supply that plied their wings in full chorus: he had only to stretch out

his hands to them. He was in evident embarrassment and with difficulty controlled himself. As if to gain time he asked the girl a question; yet Vojtech continued to watch her lips after she ceased to speak. What reply she made, he did not know and as to whether the answer was right or wrong he had not the slightest notion. The girl looked fixedly at her book and was perhaps in greater embarrassment than Vojtech if that were possible.

The mother was generally present at these lectures and also entered the schoolroom to-day—after a long pause between the tutor and pupil. It was impossible to continue in silence and Vojtech began again possibly just where he had begun before the mother entered the room.

His delivery was still slow and painful; but he knew very well in her presence how exactingly she insisted, how imperiously she pointed out his duty. He suppressed the quavering of his voice; he governed his words that they might be more fluent, added a touch of boldness to them, let himself be carried on by the stream. In a short time his language flowed along as though it had been spoken by a first-rate orator. His address had warmth and fervour, he felt it. It carried him along with it, it carried along the girl and if the girl's eyes flashed, his face regained its colour and his blood coursed through his veins with the vivacity of a child's. He could have continued his discourse a long time without loosing the thread of it in his mind.

But it was wonderful what he lectured about. He soon turned aside from the history of our kings, after naming their doughty deeds which hardly deserve to be taken seriously. Now he ran off into trivial details. Now he held forth on some master, ran through his life, enumerated the creations of his mind and depicted how that master by those works of his had more glorified his era, more exulted mankind, more advanced the civilization of his contemporaries, than all the generals and Grand dukes of the period. Here he was master, here he was at home. Here passion almost inspired him, his words breathed energy, they were not merely warm, they were fiery. Then he spoke at length about this or that poet and when he had sketched the whole character of his genius, he added, "All that we must read together, some day."

After this he made a bow, took up his hat and left. It is possible that my readers have already decided that Vojtech was a poor instructor. I do not wish to correct their opinion for it is possible that it is founded on truth. Vojtech had hitherto been a master in

more houses than one but never for very long. From one family he received his dismissal because he played with their boy rather than taught him, and a boy has the whole day for playtime but study demands application. He left another house of his own accord because as he thought his pupil had no elasticity of mind and he could not impart it to her. From a third they gave him his dismissal on the understanding that their boy must cultivate practical science—from the Vojtechian fantasies good Lord deliver him! And everywhere people said the same thing in different words.

Vojtech then had plenty of self-experience and might have regulated his life accordingly: but, alas! we have just seen that from all this experience he reaped but little benefit and that it was by no means impossible that the Horskas also would give him his dismissal. Horska was the name of the family whither we have conducted him. This possibility had occurred to Vojtech himself more than once and oppressed him like a hideous dream out of which he could not arouse himself. Everywhere hitherto it had ended thus. Was he not tending to the same goal at the Horskas's? Was he teaching with any better success there than in any other houses? In Prague one family recommends its domestic teacher to other families. What family would receive him for the causes through which he had lost so many good positions? And if Vojtech counted these lost houses and the state of his finances, it must have been evident to him that it was a dreary wan reckoning which looked out of him with hungry eyes. It must have been clear to him that he had within himself an unfruitful year, which swallowed even the years of fertility.

Vojtech was, moreover, somewhat peculiar in character. He was unsuited for the so-called solid business of life, that he knew full well. And because he knew it, he did not search for such employment. He was perfectly cultivated, and was better versed in old-world lore and pagan history than his contemporaries. When he studied he did not make the sign of the cross under his reading-desk like others who ran the risk of losing all sympathy with the kingdom of mind when they left the schools and from whom one was doomed to hear, under smooth words and other appropriate forms, little save a voice which cried continually, "Bread, bread!" Vojtech felt that hitherto he had somehow only tasted life and he began to long to sate himself therewith.

Sometimes it shocked him like a blow from a mailed hand.

If he met his schoolday comrades, he shuddered to see how he was still a John-a-Dreams and how practical these friends had grown. He heard scarcely anything save in mockery of what in days gone by they had fondly dreamt, of what they agreed to recognize as holy, sublime, and the highest good. "We were fools then," said they, "now we have cooled down."

They were so prompt and peremptory in their judgments that Vojtech had no time given him to answer them. Something shivered within him, he began to reflect about it and had not gone very far ere he took to flight before the grinning fangs of importunate reality and then he made up his mind to suspend judgment for the present as to his course of life.

He knew well enough that he might have managed like his companions, to flourish a long pen at some office, to turn over the paper in large sheets, to look out of the window, to prudently conform himself to trivial details, from hour to hour to toil at a desk, and by similar exemplary actions to establish his reputation. Only one thing he could not have managed: for the sake of his official chief to give his own opinions the lie, to say "yes" when his opinion said "no" and to acquiesce in anything merely because he was a subordinate. He knew this shortcoming of his own and therefore did not yearn to obtain for it official confirmation.

Yes, in Vojtech, there was in reality something which with feverish timidity struggled to preserve itself intact. If ever he should have to dissever himself from it he thought that he should fail to feel his own identity, that he should lose his self-respect and fall like a drop into that broad stream of indifference which the breeze drives before it withersoever it will. Those maxims which he had hitherto made his own, seemed to him still to form the only substantial portion of his life and he thought that to eradicate them would be to dig up the very roots of his own individuality. His own intuitions were the objects of his love and reverence so that at times he felt determined to preserve them even in misery and never to exchange them for others. Yes it almost allured him—that idea to be great in adversity. That fierce volcano of youthful aims and aspirations—to carry it through the frost of life unchilled—oh! that inspired, that excited him. To warm his shrunken hands in the warmth of his own soul, to pasture the fevered eye of poverty on the flowers of existence—that appeared to him to be a note of greatness. And as we have just seen he was on the high road to this transcendental poverty.

But Vojtech had yet other shortcomings. He had profound feeling, and what he felt he thought was at least creditable. How he made his way in the world with these intuitions, the reader will learn later on, in the meantime one example will suffice. He was one of those foolish fellows, who, visiting the theatre, not because it is the fashion, but from the consciousness of an inward necessity, manage to pass a whole hour in the pit in akwardness and discomfort. They snatch from their mouths what they give for entrance tickets and when they return home have nothing with which to appease their craving maws, but betake themselves to a sleep of bespangled fantasies and sate themselves with the light froth of impassioned dreams. To Prague, then, came an actor who made his debut in classic characters and awoke a sensation. Vojtech at that time lectured the Horskas's eldest daughter, Lidunka, about such characters and suggested in so many words that she should go with him to the theatre to see for herself. He said it also to her mother and on the mother's objecting that really no one in the house had time to chaperon her daughter to the theatre, he offered himself as escort. The mother answered with a look of measured coldness that she must think it over. She did think it over, no doubt, for she never mentioned it again, but at the same time she was present at her daughter's lessons from the beginning to the end so that no single pause or silence might occur.

I cannot say that Vojtech could have become truly happy as a domestic teacher. He felt at times but too well the passiveness of his position and his dependance on others from hour to hour and finally he felt that after all he was regarded as little better than one of the servants of the family. This truth he had read with special clearness in Pani Horska's reply when she refused his invitation to the theatre. He repeated it to himself again and again, and even in his address and manner paraded his sense of it. He was always so measured in his discourse and so confined his movements within the merest routine that never by hint or word did he let it appear that he considered himself anything better than a servant. "I will fulfil my duty to them", he thought, "besides that: I have no need to talk to them." But, alas! the maxim was at fault and perhaps injured Vojtech more in their opinion of him than his invitation to the theatre. That measured manner of his, displayed on every occasion, indicated in him pride, self-conceit, and other similar characteristics. Vojtech was well aware, with what eyes they looked at him, but he determined,

above all things never to step out from the passiveness of his position.

But for all this there were moments when Vojtech felt happy. He felt a constant need to unburden his mind. And as teaching was the only opportunity he had of communicating his ideas he felt happy when he taught. He had a full heart, he had a full soul. This fulness is a burden if a man carries it intact within himself and rocks are rent if a strong spring arises within them and can find no outlet. And such an outlet teaching was to Vojtech. When he saw that he had the mind of youth so completely in his power, when he felt how faithfully his words imprinted themselves on youthful memory, when he saw Lidunka's eyes flash with the very fires in which his own words melted, when he saw her borne along on the same wings as those with which he himself soared aloft, then his consciousness lost the touch of bitterness which destiny had imparted to it, then he felt absolute lord, a creator, in whose hands he was only a kind of servant. And let the Horskas impute to him what faults they pleased, so much even Pani Horska was forced to confess that with him her children really loved their lessons.

I have already said once, that Vojtech at times trembled at the thought that perhaps it would end with him at the Horskas's just as it had hitherto done everywhere else. Not only because the family was now the one thread on which hung his penurious existence—ah! no: it was something infinitely nobler which filled him with dread, lest it should so turn out. There was in the family of the Horskas a kind of mysterious repose in the presence of which it seemed to Vojtech as though he had entered the depths of a green wood. These children were so caressing, they were so thoroughly children in the true sense of the word, not reduced to mere puppets, not perverted by a frivolous etiquette which subjects the spiritual fibre of a man to superficial formality. In those children uncontaminated Nature yet survived and when he instructed them in popular songs and fairy stories they seemed to him like a fresh breeze across sweetly scented meadows. Even the relation of the children to their mother and of their mother to them was free from all constraint and Vojtech saw here the sentiment of child to mother in its purest form. Their mother was a law to them, though she did not command, and the children turned themselves around her like threads around a finger. Here were no brief periods meted out when the mother had to feel herself a mother and the children might be children. Those

moments were just when they happened to occur, and the mother looked out through her children's eyes, and the fondness of the children beamed in the mother's. The mother did not approach them like some majestic being, once or twice a day, in order that she might estrange the hearts of her children rather than make them her own. Here the mother melted into her children and the children as long ago from her breast sucked the milk of devoted love. An unspeakable charm lay in all this for Vojtech, and if teaching supplied a want in his heart the momentary pauses at lesson time or before or after it was like the realization of a poet's dream.

In our life at Prague we have no truly social family life. A young man comes to us for his course of study and stands isolated like a pear-tree on a prairie. Over and above all this Vojtech had experienced all the hardships of a youth of poverty and the memory of his cottage home lingered like a sweet dream out of which he was awakened for ever. In the houses in which he had taught long ago, he had few opportunities of observing closely the family life. The children lived apart from their parents. Master after master came to them in succession, and then the governess took them in hand, and Vojtech only met these parents when they received him the first day or gave him his dismissal. His own poor home offered him but scant luxuries: going thence to the Horskas's and catching a glimpse from time to time of those gleams of domestic happiness he felt his strength renewed and was able to say, "Here is a resting-place on the toilsome road of life."

He felt himself at home with them in a moment and confessed to himself more than once that it would be a cruel blow to him, if he and his lessons were to be banished from that house. Overlooking his own home, he felt as though all or most of his life was spent at the Horskas's, and confessed to himself, without disguise, that he should feel like a banished outcast if those doors were to be closed to him. And yet he must have been well aware from previous experiences that all his steps tended in that and no other direction. At times this thought made him sick at heart, and for a moment he would fancy that on the morrow he should be alone in the world once more: particularly at the beginning of the month when Pani Horska paid his salary, he trembled each time with dread lest it should be coupled with an expression of gratitude for his past efforts and a desire that he should trouble himself no further on their behalf.

Thus it was that Vojtech's position at the Horskas's had at times something of constraint about it. Sometimes, when he went there he felt as weak and gentle as a child. It seemed to him as though that day linked itself with all that had gone before and that on the morrow some one else would come and teach his children according to some current receipt and would be preferred before himself. Then he taught the little boy and girl and even Lidunka in haste as if he wished to compensate beforehand for his future absence, as though he gave them lessons for a lifetime. Moment flew after moment, hour after hour, and Pani Horska had to suggest to him that the hour had already long run out and that other occupations awaited her daughter. Vojtech concluded and at the same time felt ashamed lest he should have seemed to wish to ingratiate himself with the family and to strengthen his position in it. The idea vexed him. Even the next day when in the evening the street-children played together, they called to one another, "To-day he is not coming. To-day he has not come." About an hour later they said to one another, "He won't come to-day."

Vojtech in fact did not go that day to the Horskas's, wishing to efface from his mind the slightest feeling of having cringed to them.

The second day he went and offered no excuse. But he expected every moment that Pani Horska would in some way give him to understand that it was intolerable to have the children overworked one day and not employed at all the next. And he understood well enough that such a reproach would be at the same time a reason for him to announce his retirement.

Thus one side of his life at the Horskas's wavered in perpetual uncertainty and it is impossible to contend that he in any way diminished that uncertainty by his manner or behaviour.

But I have not yet enumerated all the reasons why Vojtech felt himself so fondly touched at the Horskas's and I think that Vojtech himself would hardly have succeeded in analysing them completely. But it seemed to him at times as though nothing unlovable could happen at the Horskas's. It seemed inscribed on all the walls that here, at least for a moment, he might dream of happiness and that although his whole future existence were a waste, he might yet be able to testify that at least for some few hours he was blessed. A kind of sanctity, a kind of peace reigned here through all the dwelling. He did not reason about it but he felt it. It seemed to him as though life might yet be of some

value and the sense of bitterness in all his perceptions was swept away as if at the touch of an unseen hand.

In the meantime the vacations drew near during which the children also got a holiday.

If Vojtech felt apprehensive at the beginning of each month lest his salary should be accompanied with dismissal, he felt so now to a far higher degree. He imagined himself so sure to be dismissed that he even sought to arm himself beforehand by a kind of cold determination, to hear the sentence from the lips of Pani Horska.

Pani Horska shook hands with him and said: "Pan Vojtech, your instruction of Lidunka does not satisfy me."

Vojtech clutched a small table and, in spite of his determination, he felt as though the room spun round.

"I have thought about it in every way", continued Pani Horska. "I must beg you now that Lidunka is growing a big girl to give her a few more hours every week."

Vojtech's head ceased to spin round. He rejoiced in heart.

After the holidays, then, Vojtech began to be occupied more frequently with Lidunka. Pani Horska confessed she was right to speak of the unsatisfactoriness of the lessons. He took the remark seriously to heart. He thought out a complete scheme during the holidays, noting down Lidunka's weak points and where she needed pressingly to be corrected. He had hitherto taught Lidunka with pleasure, but now it seemed to him as though duty called him to apply all diligence toward the complete cultivation of the girl. It was as though in this lay a portion of the routine of his life.

Vojtech applied himself to this new duty with all the anxious care of a highly accomplished thinker. For the present this important matter filled his whole mind, so that he rested with all his thoughts intent upon it. It seemed to him as if after long rambling among wooded mountains he had reached at last a rich and beautiful region. A river bubbled, brambles stretched along its banks, birds flew out of their nests and pecked raspberries, the greensward smelt sweet, the trees stood wrapt in silent thoughts; the light filtered through a network of branches, the braes crept aloft to the heights, ferns down in the valley unfurled their broad fronds, and on the trunk of an uprooted tree sat he and felt it all. He little recked what awaited him after these pleasant scenes. Here it pleased him to abide and who knew whether

yonder in the distance there was not something better still. He felt weariness, why should he not soothe himself with rest?

In the two months' holiday during which he had not seen Lidunka, how she had changed! It was no longer a girl, it was a young lady. Her mother spoke the truth when she said that her daughter was growing up very fast.

Since they had not seen each other for so long their greeting might well be somewhat heartier than mere formality demanded, and even good breeding required that Vojtech should inquire what had been the occupations and amusements of Lidunka. And then he lingered in her presence and looked at her a long time to make acquaintance with her fuller and as it seemed to him almost metamorphosed figure. But yet even a second and a third day Vojtech came after the holidays and could not yet quite recall all the differences in her appearance. He greeted her as heretofore, questioned her and tried to reconcile his mind to her new appearance. By the time that her mother again began to be present at the lessons it seemed to him that they had greeted one another sufficiently often and yet perhaps he had not quite reconciled his memory with her new appearance.

How greatly Lidunka had developed during that short time Vojtech soon recognized from his own sensations. Whenever, before the holidays, he had addressed her directly, he called her simply Lidunka. Now he did not indeed call her anything else but he always hesitated so much before the word that he pronounced it indistinctly and thereupon looked into her eyes to see whether that simple appellation yet belonged to her.

Once lessons had ended under the following circumstances. All the tasks had been disposed of. Outside it was bad weather, it did nothing but pour from heavy clouds and they were forced to while away the time until the day improved.

A master of the French language waited in company with Vojtech, and this master the children had ironically nicknamed "godfather". This "godfather" was very fond of talking and told them all about a great event in his life which happened during a shower at which the children laughed. He told them how frightened he once felt as he went home after dark, and how the wind blew his hat off at every corner and then he told them all about a certain young lady (he meant by this Lidunka), how when she was quite little she once lost her garter and cried a long time for it. Lidunka was angry with "godfather" for telling about these things and it seemed to Vojtech as though he must

be angry with him also. "Godfather" tried to pacify "his young lady", "his dear young lady", by saying that he had known her since she was in her cradle and added that he must tell them about just one thing more—why she cried. But now Vojtech was really angry and told "godfather" that he was certain the young lady had never cried from fright like him. But he somehow said the words "young lady" so unadroitly that when the children burst out laughing, he did not know whether they laughed at the way he had said those words or at the repartee which he had made to "godfather". But one thing was clear from this little scene that Lidunka must not be called Lidunka any more but young lady. Yes, Lidunka was already a young lady, in full measure a young lady, and it was not proper to call her anything else, and Vojtech later on would even so have called her, but the recollection of his first attempt to give her that title fixed itself so unpleasantly in his memory that being always quick at discovering the most difficult turns of expression, he always avoided the word young lady and called her neither Lidunka nor young lady. But besides this there was yet matter for reflection. There had already once before been such; and in the slight respect, with which his pupils treated their French master, he saw the destiny of all domestic teachers, he saw his own destiny. Thereupon he renewed his determination always so to regulate his behaviour that he might not give the shadow of an excuse for the notion that he considered himself anything more than a man temporarily hired by the family and with whose instructions the parents could dispense whenever they chose.

He, therefore, said no more and when the shower was somewhat abated, he at once prepared to depart. Lidunka offered him an umbrella and at the same time hinted that she was sorry she had not a similar one to offer "godfather". But from this courtesy Vojtech only gathered that Lidunka wished to revenge herself on the French master for his plain-spokenness, by letting him see the slight respect she felt for him. And as Vojtech wished Lidunka fully to understand his own sentiments, he did not accept the umbrella and begged her to give it to his older companion.

It was the first offer Lidunka had made, and when she saw it refused, she looked down on the ground.

Vojtech carried out his determination very consistently. It was a part of his character for which he had gained the reputation of being proud and self-conceited. Vojtech in all this really sought by a kind of pride still to preserve himself from change and to

measure his own worth by this constancy rather than according to what his rank and position warranted. He began to carry out his system so consistently that, save at lessons, he hardly exchanged words with Lidunka and was as chary of speech as a miser of pence; and yet Lidunka seemed to be supremely well satisfied with all this. She also never spoke a single superfluous word and on entering and leaving the room scarcely so much as looked at Vojtech.

Vojtech so clung to his determination that he sought to regulate his behaviour at the Horskas's in Lidunka's presence on a ready-made system. He frequently thought about the matter a whole hour, and when he lay down to rest at night, often had not disposed of this system of his. Before going to sleep he pictured Lidunka how she would answer his greeting coldly, he after that yet more coldly, how she cast down her eyes, after that he turned away, took his hat, and so—adieu. He had not fully disposed of this system and carried it with him into the kingdom of dreams. It seemed to him as though he managed to exhibit his coldness so well that at last it sickened even Lidunka. Then she turned to him and gave him to understand that she would forgive him if only he would exchange words with her. But after that Vojtech turned away from her altogether, until Lidunka broke forth into audible weeping. When Vojtech awoke after this his face was moist and he perceived that he himself had been weeping.

What could it all mean?

When Vojtech examined himself as to this dream he began to tremble as in a fever and confessed that his reason was at the end of its tether.

When he went to the Horskas's on the following day the children in the streets cried after him in vain, "Throw us a kreuzer!" He did not hear them and did not throw anything. All the time he was engrossed with the dream. When he came to the Horskas's he scarcely dared look at Lidunka. He almost felt ashamed in her presence and dreaded lest they should read last night's dream on his face and worst of all that he had awoke from that dream in tears. All his life he had never given way to tears. Strange that a dream can so constrain our nature as to make us blush for ourselves.

Yet other things surprised and startled Vojtech. It seemed to him as though Lidunka was becoming less attentive at her lessons than she used to be.

It was something new which he had hitherto never observed in her. But searching for the cause of this phenomenon he found to his surprise that he was himself the cause of it—or to speak more precisely that he was himself less attentive. It seemed to him that he also recognized a confirmation of this truth even in Pani Horska whose face he now saw overclouded with thoughts. He read reproach in those thoughts—but of whom? Did Pani Horska blame his own want of attention or did she wish to censure her daughter who forgot where she was sitting?

"This fault needed rectification. I am not satisfied with Lidunka's education", said Pani Horska, some time since: if she had said it now it would have been a hundred times worse and he recognized the truth of her remarks. He curtailed the time belonging to Lidunka's poor little brother and his little sister, he made scarcely half an hour of it, and gave what was over to Lidunka. He compensated for his distracted attention by length of time and if that proved insufficient he determined to spare some of his own time for Lidunka's lessons. The children noticed it. Between themselves they grumbled because Pan Vojtech now never read a fairy story which had so consoled them after their lessons.

If they repeated their songs better than usual he pretended not to be listening and seldom praised them. The little boy expressed the gist of the matter when he said, "Pan Vojtech is grumpy."

Consequently when Vojtech came to the door and rang the bell, the children did not any longer hurry to meet him, but greeted him almost apprehensively, and only took him by the hand from force of habit. The little boy only sat on his knee when Vojtech expressly invited him, and repeated his songs with frequent stammering. Vojtech was oftener strict with them than heretofore; if everything did not go just as he wished, he scolded them and never played with them. He employed himself with them only to say that he had performed his task and taught them more for the name of the thing than in reality.

But with Lidunka he set to work most sedulously. He divided the time with her in such a way that he lectured for a few minutes and then read a long time with her. They read wonderful things. Poems, dramas, native and foreign, and it was a curious circumstance that the word love was repeated in them more frequently than any other word you chose to mention. What they read Vojtech explained, what they were to read was an affair which demanded Vojtech's most solicitous attention and he gave to it

both his waking and his sleeping thoughts. Yes, in sleep he had no rest. That tearful awaking out of sleep certainly did not occur again, but if he behaved stiffly at lessons, that stiffness vanished entirely in his dreams. There he took walks with her, there he ran races with her, led her by the hand and told her far more than in his lectures. Sometimes the dream was so strange, that when he awoke from it, he could not manage to say whether it really was a dream or whether it had so engrossed his thoughts, that it only appeared to him to be a dream. It sometimes happens that we are dreaming while we are awake.

Sometimes Lidunka read, sometimes Vojtech, but there were moments when no one read. They remained gazing upon one another as though one asked the other for explanation, or as though the explanation lay in the silent looks. That was when the mother was not present. Once they remained spell-bound even in the mother's presence. They had been reading a beautiful poem of Firdusi called "Sal and Rudabe". Lidunka came to the passage which runs thus:—

> "When Rudabe heard the speech, her face
> Burned with fire like the pomegranate's blossom;
> Within her love for Sal scourged her with fire,
> And peace and rest were banished from her soul;
> Reason was weak when passion triumphed."

At the third line her mother entered the lesson-room. Lidunka stopped short, grew pale, the fingers with which she followed the lines began to tremble, her throat felt as though it were parched. Lidunka remained silent. The sudden collapse even confused Vojtech so that he was unable to prevail on Lidunka to continue her reading. Only he thanked his own presence of mind for prompting him to say, "It is no matter if you cannot remember", and then he went on reading himself.

Once Lidunka came to her lesson in tears and Vojtech received no reply when he asked what ailed her. She would not answer any questions he might put to her. It was an embarrassing lesson that day. Vojtech felt his own words fall as dead as the ticking of a clock in a silent room. He felt constrained. He had to spin out a monologue for a whole hour, but a glance at Lidunka almost choked him. For that one day speaking was a burden to him and a ton load seemed to hang on every word. He laboured so that hot drops stood on his forehead. And when he came to the end he felt quite exhausted.

The second day was a repetition of the first and all Vojtech's questions were futile. Pani Horska was silent, when Vojtech looked to her for explanation.

Vojtech was uneasy, indeed almost irritated by this event. It seemed to him as though he had a right to feel affronted and then again as though he had affronted the Horskas. The third day Lidunka failed to appear at all and there was nothing for it but to ask Pani Horska the reason.

"A foolish girl!" answered Pani Horska coldly. "I meant to ask you not to prolong her hour, because a teacher of the pianoforte comes after you and is obliged to wait. I did not wish to have said it to you. Do not wait any longer to-day."

Vojtech thought that he went quietly out of the room. But at the door he remembered that he had not his hat in his hand and returned for it. His thoughts fluttered like scared and frightened birds which know not where they may alight. He felt all at once as though he had nothing to think about, nothing to occupy him, or again as though he could not unravel the tangled skein of destiny.

He awaited the morrow with unspeakable disquietude. It was plain that he must once more add to the little children's lesson the time he had hitherto robbed them of for Lidunka's benefit. That time seemed to him interminable, and though the children once again read through a whole fairy story and Vojtech must have been very much astonished at the rate they read the hour was not yet at an end and they began a second fairy story. How would Lidunka present herself that morning?

She was sorrowful when she came, and Vojtech was so disgusted with the pianoforte master who was the cause of this sorrow that he could have drowned him in a spoonful of water. He made various malicious sallies against pianoforte masters in general, and to his surprise Lidunka smiled and hastily confessed that she very much disliked learning the piano.

"What is there peculiar in that?" she asked. "They will never make of me an accomplished artist and every one learns to strum a little."

Vojtech was well pleased to find that he had an ally in his prejudice against pianoforte masters. And Lidunka yet further confessed to him that the particular master provoked her.

To-day they curtailed the hour as though they had cut it with a pair of scissors. Even the second and third day it was the same and Vojtech was again fain to hope that the storm had blown over.

But the fourth day had not elapsed before Vojtech plunged into all his old faults more recklessly than ever. He quite forgot himself. He prolonged the hour even in face of Pani Horska's hints and objections and carried himself as though no one had the right to measure out his time. He taught with vehemence, he lectured in an interesting manner, and seeing Lidunka contented, he set up her consentment as his only law.

But perhaps it was not altogether wise to act thus. Spring drew near and Pani Horska announced to Vojtech that in the summer Lidunka would abandon her lessons because they wished to spend their evenings outside the town. Lidunka did not again appear not even to thank Vojtech for his pains. Besides this Pani Horska begged Vojtech to teach the children in the forenoon. Vojtech collected all his eloquence and demonstrated to Pani Horska that Lidunka was doing excellently well and that it would be a shame to tear her from her lessons yet a while.

"She is diligent enough in the winter", answered Pani Horska briefly to all his representations.

This event threw Vojtech into a feverish condition. He wondered whether he ought to leave the Horskas altogether, for what Lidunka's mother gave as a reason was clearly only an excuse and the heart of the matter lay in this that Lidunka did not venture to take lessons with him. This was a brief summary of all his reflections: "For what have I made all these fine preparations?" he asked himself as he regarded the books which he had set in order for Lidunka's reading.

That day he went again for the first time among his acquaintances to the hostinets. He did not yet comprehend his own condition thoroughly, and that his comrades might not divine it he talked much, made malicious sallies, drank more than usual, played at cards, and sang. If it had been any one's lot to describe his state of mind, he would have said that Vojtech was in a very dissipated mood. In his language he was vehement, and feeling himself affronted he affronted every one.

He came home late at night, lighted a candle and went slowly to his room. A chill breath of night-air entered by the open window. He looked a long time out of the window, and then laid himself down to rest. When he thought over what happened all that night and whether he was asleep or awake he could not say himself for certain. If he had to point to any result of his reflections, he would not have known what name to give it. He only knew that on the following day he had to go to the Horskas's

children in the forenoon and he half repudiated the idea of going at all. Then he thought that it would be strange if he did not go and that perhaps he would go after all. As to the rest of his cogitations, they were all transformed into tinder: he only traced here and there a few wandering sparks. He was sorrowful and felt with anguish that he was alone. Then again he was glad that he was alone. It had always tended to this from the beginning, it was with him at the Horskas's as it had hitherto been in all his other situations. But why did they behave towards him just as others had done elsewhere? That was the thought which weighed on Voytech's mind when he betook himself to their home in the forenoon, and he felt humiliated because he was dismissed from his post as Lidunka's instructor. But he mastered this sentiment and began to play with the children as he used to do in the old times, so that he seemed once more to the children to be their old Pan Vojtech, whom they could trot along the landing to meet. It was impossible to detect any change in him. He was at the Horskas's house and felt himself in the circle of its enchantments. When he saw those children, his heart smote him, because he had cheated them out of their lesson-time, and he felt glad that he had a chance to make it up to them. After the hour the children let him out through the kitchen in the passage. He did not see Lidunka in the kitchen, and why did he so particularly look out for her? He might have known that he would not see her again and he determined for the future to spare himself the trouble of looking.

One thing here also annoyed him. While casting his eyes over the kitchen he noticed that the servants glanced at one another and smiled, but that was also another reason for not looking any more in their direction.

When it drew towards evening, Vojtech felt restless at home. He felt as though he could not stay in the house—and then what was there to do at home? Everything irritated him which he so much as took into his hands, or even looked at. He would have been well content to drink and play at cards, if it had been the right time of day, but it was still far too early—and how to dispose of two whole hours?

He mechanically took his hat in his hand, the doors flew open as of their own accord, streets there seemed to be none in town save those which led along the Upper Moldau, and before Vojtech had recollected himself he stood among a group of children, who cried out, "Now he is coming, now he is coming!" "Throw us a

kreuzer!" This time Voytech did not go with hasty steps. He had time and to spare. He threw them a kreuzer, he was much amused. He remained standing among them and when the kreuzer was carried off in triumph, he threw them another. He laughed yet more, and Vojtech applied his hand to his pocket, until he had no more kreuzers left.

When he had come to the end of them all, he turned away. The children shouted after him, "Where are you going?"

He asked himself the question, "Where am I going?" and he did not know.

Then he knew that he was sitting at the hostinets and that it was a gala day with him.

The mother in reality did take Lidunka out walking in the evening. Either because long walks always have this effect or because the air of spring overpowered their strength, they came home thoroughly tired out, and Lidunka at once sought her bed. Even talking wearied her, she answered shortly, asked no questions herself and lay muffled upon her bed as though that was the only place where she felt at home. She could not expect to sleep, think some of my girlish readers. But her mother observed with apprehension that she continually turned from side to side; also that her forehead was hot to the touch, and sometimes it seemed as though her daughter murmured something in her sleep.

Once they returned home rather late not from a walk but after paying a visit.

Lidunka hesitated to lie down.

She looked at her mother and by a kind of silent glance gave her to understand that she wanted to say something.

The very words seemed to beat time in her bosom. So in clocks, before they strike, we hear a stronger ticking.

When her mother turned away from her, Lidunka waited till she turned towards her again, and when her mother turned towards her she thought that she was just about to speak, when her mother turned away again. Her mother, as it were, felt the ticking and did not venture to be the first to break silence.

The mother had already laid herself down to rest. Lidunka still hesitated.

"Why don't you lie down, Lidunka?" asked her mother.

Lidunka's embarrassment increased.

She went and knelt quietly beside her mother's bed, took her mother by the hand and kissing it all over said, "I must say good night."

The mother stroked her head. Lidunka then buried her face in her mother's palm and in this way concealed her eyes. From time to time she glanced up from this palm and looked into her mother's eyes. This she did almost comically, and her mother laughed.

"Do go to sleep, Lidunka", said her mother.

"I mean to stay with you all night", said Lidunka, almost laughing, but it was plain that those were not the very words which she wanted to say.

Her mother again stroked her head.

"Do you love me, little mother?" asked Lidunka in such an insinuating tone of voice, that her mother burst out laughing.

And again concealing her forehead in the palm of her mother's hand Lidunka awaited a reply.

But it was not in the least what she wanted to say. Lidunka rose to her feet, bent over her mother, took her mother's head between her own hands and kissing it only kept saying continually, "No, I will not leave you."

Her lips were hot.

She sat on the counterpane and after a minute or two began again, "You shall not sleep, I will not let you."

Nor was that what she wanted to say to her mother. She laid herself all hot and fevered beside her mother and made her mother's head her pillow. Her mother felt warm tears trickling over her hands.

Lidunka pressed herself against her mother, nestled close to her, and kissing her face said, "No, I will not leave you."

But that was not at all what she wanted to say. The mother drew Lidunka to herself and stroking her laid her to rest beside herself. Lidunka said not a word more.

Had the mother guessed what Lidunka wanted to say?

* * *

Vojtech felt like a general who has been defeated. At the Horskas's he had lost a battle and he understood his loss only too clearly. It seemed to him as though he had lost everything and among the wreckage he saw only his own passion. He laughed at himself, at other times he was terrified at himself. Passion can sometimes be beautiful. Picture rocky ravines, overgrown with hardy shrubs, above them the flickering waterfall, soft moss and stately fir-trees—and you rest contented with the scene. Deprive

it of the shrubs, that waterfall, the moss, and those fir-trees—and you have a dwelling-place for wolves.

To Vojtech it appeared that the Horskas were the cause of all his misfortune. Why had they awakened in him a passion for life? Why had they drawn him out of the depths into the light of day, only that he might then feel he was flung to the abyss? He hated them. Vojtech gloated over that word "hatred" and when that hatred had entered into his heart he wept. He saw all the flowers of life scattered and even their roots torn from the ground. In every root gaped a wound and Vojtech was glad that there was no one left to heal them. Blood flowed, and Vojtech observed with horrid tranquillity how as it flowed it congealed.

Any one who should have felt apprehensive from his previous career that he would abandon himself to drink and gambling, would have been mistaken. Even these amusements soon palled upon him and Vojtech remained locked within himself like a dark chamber into which only through the keyhole struggle a few poor rays of light. He who is alone within himself feels oppressed and Vojtech was alone. He began to live an uninquiring life, and what is life without the zest of inquiry?

He was well aware of all this. He felt how he had fallen. He was no longer fit for teaching, and yet to communicate his ideas was still a necessity to him. He felt the humiliation of his destiny and yet took no steps to raise himself. Why should he? Again to lose his foothold and to be humiliated afresh?

In lonely hours there sometimes flits across our mind something that seems to us as though it flapped against our forehead—when we turn our eyes to follow it, lo! it beckons to us with its finger. Vojtech's eyes also seemed to follow some such finger and when he had looked upon it for a long time and saw a hand join itself to the finger, a breast to the hand, a neck, head, eyes—behold! it was Lidunka. In the midst of our dim presentiments there at times arises something like a clearly defined visage: we cannot express it in words but it seems to us as though something had breathed warm upon us, and that our life need not be a wasted one. We open and shut our eyes and the light dazzles us.

It was a maddening prelude thought Vojtech. Why should Lidunka beckon to him when he had been repudiated on her account? But the longer he looked at the vision, the softer grew his heart and when its eyes met his, he seemed to see tears falling from them. He shook the vision from his mind as we shake rime

from the foliage or snow from our cloak and said to himself that it was not true.

When he went to the Horskas's to teach his little pupils, he made it a rule never to look about him, not wishing to encounter the half-concealed smile of the servants. He completed his hour with the children, and as he came so he went away. No light step in the neighbouring rooms disturbed him. No opening of the door drove the colour from his cheeks, nothing disturbed him. The rest of the Horskas's family had no existence for him. He saw nothing beyond the children.

Once as he was leaving the Horskas's, at the door which led from their rooms to the kitchen, he turned round somewhat sharply, and there standing against the wall was Lidunka. The blood rushed through his veins as Lidunka looked at him. He saw that her eyes were really tear-stained. Vojtech lightly saluted her, Lidunka thanked him, and Vojtech was already in the passage. How pretty Lidunka was!

It all flashed around him, just as, when we travel by train, a tree flashes past us. If we wish to get another sight of it we cannot find it.

The second day Lidunka stood there again both when he came and when he left the house. His eyes found her at once and he saluted her just as he had done the day before. The following days he always saw Lidunka there somehow employed and she always looked about for him. Possibly she had been there all the time, though as he did not see her, he knew nothing of it. At the same time he noticed that her eyes did not seem so bedimmed, and when she thanked him, she showed signs of pleasure.

What did it all mean?

Was it all a mockery? When Vojtech now went to the Horskas's he occupied himself all the way in wondering how Lidunka would look that day, and he pictured her so vividly that if she had once been absent he would inwardly, ay, perhaps audibly, have exclaimed, "Here Lidunka ought to be, why is she not here?"

After the summer was over Vojtech took frequent walks. He always inquired of his little pupils, in which direction Lidunka and her mother were going to take their walk, and when he had found this out, he always went in a different direction, not wishing to meet them. But his walks were very dull ones. He was so utterly lonely that he had not a single soul to talk to. Thus it once came into his head that he might take the Horskas's little

boy with him. He thereupon asked him the following day, whether he would like to go a walk with him, and when the little boy gleefully assented, Vojtech told him to ask his mother whether she would allow it. Vojtech himself did not wish to do so. He did not augur much success nor expect that the mother would give him leave, but he said to himself, "If the little boy is ready to the minute we will go together: if not, I shall go alone."

Vojtech came at the exact hour to the Horskas's and the little boy was ready—only there was yet something amiss with his little hat. Lidunka set it right and begged Vojtech to have a little patience. When it was put straight the master and his little pupil sallied forth.

They went beyond the ramparts. The grass smelt, sweetly, the fresh corn glistened, the lark quivered in the air. Everywhere there was so much life, so much joy, that it seemed as though the whole world frolicked and was playing farces.

The boy skipped about, here he picked up a beetle, here he plucked a flower, here he ran after a butterfly, until he was tired. Then they sat on a meadow. Vojtech cut a willow, made him fifes and whistled and the little boy fifed and whistled. Then he made him a cage, limed it in a neighbouring bush, and told him that the next time they came there would be a bird in it. The little boy could not be brought to believe that Vojtech could catch even a bird. Over the meadow they saw the shrew-mice running, in the stream darted little fishes, and before them on the bank strutted the water-wagtail. Vojtech allowed the boy the most complete liberty and he availed himself of it in full measure.

When they returned home in the evening Vojtech handed over the boy to Lidunka. That day he had seen her twice. Lidunka asked how her brother had behaved: of all this Vojtech only remembered the fact that he had seen Lidunka twice more.

When the next day Vojtech came to teach, the boy was quite metamorphosed. He at once sat on Vojtech's knee and even after they had begun their lessons, asked him if the bird would soon be caught. Vojtech said that perhaps that very day it had been caught, and that they must go in the afternoon to see. The boy clapped his two hands and read as though post-haste and as if by reading quickly he would the sooner make it afternoon.

When Vojtech called for him in the afternoon he was dressed and ready. Lidunka led him by the hand and said that he could not wait a moment longer, that their mother had wished to take him a walk herself but that he had quite refused to go.

When they came to the meadow to-day, there actually was a little bird caught in the cage; it was a little golden-crested wren, a bird not easily caught. This one blinked with its little eyes as though it begged for liberty. Vojtech withdrew the gold-crest from the cage and put it into the little boy's hand. The boy all his life had never had a bird in his hand and was almost startled by the softness of its feathers, it was a wonder he did not let it go. But when the gold-crest began to peck at his own small fingers and to eye him wistfully, the little boy was quite beside himself with delight.

When he had looked his fill, Vojtech took the bird and set it at liberty. The gold-crest hopped from bough to bough, and the little boy's eyes quite glistened as he watched it grow smaller and smaller in the distance.

Lidunka again received them at the house and her little brother told her shortly that now he would never go out walking with any one but Pan Vojtech.

So Vojtech took the little boy out walking almost every day and of it all that had any value in his mind was that he had seen Lidunka two or three times oftener than his wont.

She it was who regularly handed over to him her brother and received him again. Vojtech diversified their walks. Sometimes he and the little boy sat together and Vojtech gave him a lesson in telling tales. And the little fellow had to tell him everything he could about Lidunka. When he came to a standstill, Vojtech put a fresh question to him and the little boy continued his narrative. In this way, without knowing it, the boy raised a curtain which had hitherto veiled Lidunka from Vojtech and Vojtech learned more about her in one afternoon than he had done during the whole of his engagement at the Horskas's. Vojtech praised the child for telling his tale so prettily, and the boy on his side was proud to think that he would have more to narrate next day. Vojtech knew when Lidunka went to bed, when she got up. How brother and sister dressed, how she employed her time, what she talked about, what she liked—and in general everything which a little boy could tell of his sister.

Once it rained, there was no prospect of a walk, and so for that day Vojtech put off his hour until the evening.

From the kitchen at the Horskas's you entered a room and by this you passed to a second in which Vojtech generally taught. In the first room the Horskas received their visitors; it was the very same room through which Lidunka long ago used to come

to her lessons when the rustling of her light step drove the colour from Vojtech's cheeks.

When Vojtech entered this room to-day, he saw guests there. Besides Pani Horska sat her sisters, on her other side was Lidunka's little sister and there were two young men whom Vojtech had known when they were at school, and he was aware that they had considerable means of their own. Finally there was Lidunka. She was dressed in a pink gown.

When Vojtech entered he bowed and the young men greeted him as an old acquaintance but in such a way as to make it apparent that in the greeting they had said everything they meant to say to him in that place. Immediately after this, the elder of the young men devoted himself to Lidunka and began a protracted and as it seemed lively and confidential conversation.

Lidunka's cheeks were rosier than a freshly ripened raspberry.

Pani Horska hinted mechanically that Vojtech had chosen an unlucky hour for lessons and said she feared very little would be done that day.

Vojtech thereupon replied fugitively that they must do their best and led his young charges to the next apartment.

Pani Horska was right when she said that very few lessons would be done that day. The children began to frolic at his side —so long a pause occurred before Vojtech found the place in the book from which they read. Twice, thrice he turned over all the pages of the whole book, and when the little boy accidentally bounced against him and himself pointed out the place, Vojtech signed to him to begin reading.

It was a wonderful business that reading aloud and must, indeed, have penetrated to the neighbouring apartment and have somewhat disturbed the company there assembled. This, no doubt, Vojtech had never intended and, if I mistake not, wished to drown the sound of voices from the neighbouring apartment. Vojtech said "yes" to the children as they read, but of what they read he had no definite conception.

All that his imagination was capable of realizing during that period was the fact that Lidunka wore a pink dress, that her face beamed, her eyes sparkled, and that she was in lively conversation with a young man well known to him. But what he heard droning constantly in his ear was the beating of his own heart and a voice which seemed to keep repeating, "Lidunka's afternoon walks", so said the voice and added as if in answer, "She does not go very far."

And after that his mind began to weave various groups of figures. In all of them stood Lidunka in her pink gown with her beaming face and a playful pair of eyes. She smiled, let her hand be taken, let her hand be kissed, and with those eyes of hers told a tale of love so fond that no tongue was eloquent enough to speak it. She returned the pressure of her hand, close at her ear kept buzzing some half-whispered little word, as when a fly flits past, then all was hushed in silence, as when we faint at the discovery of some fond secret token.

Their eyes gleamed more boldly: in its rays was elevation, and their heart beat and leapt into their mouths—and after all it was only Lidunka and that young man well known to him.

But what, indeed, was there unnatural in all this? Nothing: nor could anything in it give a man cause for surprise. Lidunka was young, pretty, the youths were young, powerful, and wealthy.

What was there surprising in it?

All this seemed to repeat itself in so many words in Vojtech's mind.

Then his imagination depicted them out a-walking. Lidunka led the way with those young men—her mother followed. They kept walking round a kind of flower-bed, and Lidunka said that she should like yonder flower. The young man ran off to gather it for her: Lidunka tarried for him until her mother came up, the young man gave her the flower, hung on her hand, and before her mother had joined them exchanged looks so fond, so profound, that each look linked itself with the last. Words were superfluous and only that they might make some general conversation in her mother's presence. the young man said, "What a charming day it is."

"Yes, quite charming", replied Lidunka.

"It seems so", rejoined her mother and thus the conversation lapsed. It had played its part.

Then again other groups began to take form in his imagination. First of all was Lidunka in her pink gown, then she seemed to rise from her chair—her gentle steps rustled over the carpet.

At this point Vojtech started. For, indeed, he really seemed to hear Lidunka's light steps rustle in the neighbouring room, they seemed to approach the door. He began to tremble and to grow pale, and before he expected it the door opened and there stood Lidunka in her pink gown, with beaming face and sparkling eyes.

Could it be possible? Or was it but an illusion of his own fantasy which had drawn her in such lively colours, or did she wish to share in those scenes which he had so presumptuously imagined?

Lidunka's eye rested quietly on Vojtech and beamed yet more kindly than when he had seen her in the neighbouring room. But there was something in that eye which he had not seen before. With all its brightness there was expressed a kind of anxious deprecation, and if Vojtech could believe his own eyes he read in it, "You have been forming fallacious pictures to yourself."

These words seemed so clearly traceable in her looks that Vojtech felt quite exasperated at them.

But Lidunka said, "I am come to you, Pan Vojtech, to thank you in the name of my mother for all the kindness and affectionate interest you have shown in my little brother. He cannot wait patiently for your coming and speaks of your kindness to him continually."

Thereupon Vojtech attempted to say something but did not say anything.

And Lidunka continued, "If the day after to-morrow be promising, we intend to go to the Prokop valley, and mother invites you to come with us if you will."

Lidunka said this almost constrainedly and with an effort, and awaited an answer.

Vojtech said something to the effect that the larger the company the merrier it was, and so forth.

"We shall be alone", said Lidunka warmly, and with emphasis as though she wished to exhaust all further objections which Vojtech might make.

A sort of gleam of satisfaction must have illuminated Vojtech's countenance for even Lidunka showed clear signs of pleasure. But what he said was but coldly pronounced: "I shall be delighted", but he said it as though for that matter it was not really true that he would be delighted.

"I delight in going to St. Prokopius," said Lidunka again with warmth—"darling mother goes there for my sake. Au revoir, Pan Vojtech!"

Thereupon she returned to the neighbouring room. Vojtech involuntarily heard here and there a few disconnected sentences —they talked about walks and expeditions; then he heard Lidunka say very loud that her little brother delighted to go out walking.

This put an end to the lessons. The children with one voice expressed their delight in the Prokop valley and so Vojtech said to them, "I will let you off the rest."

When Vojtech returned through the company, he no longer wore an injured look. He carried himself almost gaily, and when he reached home he laughed and could not say why.

Then these words stole into his mind: "Lidunka had visitors, she quitted them, and came to see me. It is a pity that I am no longer teaching her that I might requite her for it. Lidunka is a good child, a good child."

Then he snapped his fingers and said almost out loud, "We shall go out walking together. She is a good, worthy child."

That day it rained, the next day was beautiful, and the day after that the whole world smiled and sparkled.

Above Prague uprose the sun, lighting up its hundred towers which gleamed as fair as a maiden before her mirror. Crows and daws wheeled around the towers like her raven tresses around her head. The early life of morning babbled with a hundred voices, but not in its full might, for a good half of Prague was still in the land of dreams.

The Horska family with Pan Vojtech issued from the city at an early hour. The citizen feels the beauty of early morning in the country almost gratefully, and if I may so put it, like a greedy man, for he has to go in search for it. To-day it seemed to Vojtech as though early morning was more beautiful than ever. The grass sparkled with dew, and flashed in one's eyes. Vojtech going with the little boy in advance, looked back at Pani Horska with whom Lidunka and her little sister were walking to see whether Nature smiled also on them. No doubt it did; they frequently paused, and here Lidunka tripped into the field, here over a meadow, and soon had in her hands a posy of wild flowers. Then she grew tired of them, threw them away and gathered fresh ones.

The corn land quivered with light and the sky-larks soared away higher and higher one after the other there to disperse themselves in a shower of song.

Vojtech began to frolic with the boy. They ran races, then they chased one another, then they waited until the female detachment overtook them. Even the little sister joined them, and all three ran races. Once the little sister cried out, "Oh! Lidunka, you come too and run races with us, we shall be there the sooner." And Lidunka only smiled and did not answer. Even that smile

was a kind of challenge, at least it prompted our three young friends to yet greater activity.

Vojtech did not feel altogether a stranger, he felt half their guest and half their host.

Then Lidunka also ran among them, but only as she said to prevent her little brother from over-exerting himself. She took him by the hand and led him to their mother. But here he dodged under her wrist and ran off to the others calling back as he did so that he was happier with Pan Vojtech and that Lidunka might stay with their mother if she chose.

Then they reached the beautiful Prokop valley. The children climbed down the rocky sides like young kids until Pani Horska felt alarmed for their safety. Vojtech and Lidunka one at each side assisted her to descend.

Down below they took a light breakfast. Pani Horska ordered dinner, and then they walked about. Vojtech knew the valley well and led them to all the spots where young people invariably exclaim, "How charming it is!"

There was still plenty of time before dinner, and down in the meadow they took part in a round game. They played at "la grace", and during the amusement it happened that every circlet which Vojtech sent was driven by the wind towards Lidunka. Vojtech was transported with delight. He felt like a child in its own home roving over a meadow; only everything seemed yet more charming. Once he threw the circlet in such a wonderful way, that it ran along Lidunka's extended stick as far as her shoulder and also slipped over her head so that Lidunka was entangled like a quail in a noose.

The children burst into loud laughter and Vojtech ran to help her out of the circlet for she could not disentangle herself alone. But even both together were not very successful and as though it did it on purpose, the circlet always slid again over Lidunka's neck. Vojtech had to touch Lidunka's neck with his fingers and let them play over her face, but so gently that he stroked rather than touched it. The children skipped about laughing. Lidunka's face burnt like fire but at the same time she did not seem to be deeply disconcerted by the mishap. At last the circlet was disentangled and Vojtech smoothed down her hair which had been all dishevelled by the circlet. Then he took Lidunka's elbow in one hand and showed her how she ought to pose her shoulder in order to catch the circlet adroitly.

But somehow he held that hand rather a long time, as if what he said to her was not easy of comprehension. He pressed her hand in order that she might the better remember it, and Lidunka pressed his. Their eyes sparkled like the drops of dew on the corn land in early morning. A kind of moisture fell upon them that was mutually attractive.

When they took their places again in the round game, a certain embarrassment was perceptible in them, as though now they had both the circlet round their necks. They made frequent blunders, and once it happened that Vojtech quite forgot to look at the circlet which flew towards him and remained gazing at Lidunka—at her eyes—as though they were the real circlets. Then again it happened that his circlet flew a long way past Lidunka and alighted by the stream behind some bushes. Both ran to the spot, the children after them and now Lidunka protested that she alone must search for it since it was she who failed to catch it.

Vojtech made no objection to this but held her by the hand, while she with the other poked about for the circlet with the stick. Little by little it approached the water's edge and when it was already at the very edge Vojtech felt convinced that Lidunka would fall into the stream. He caught her quickly in his arms and held her firmly lest she should fall into the water. And as they searched for the circlet together they were immeasurably happy.

Presently the children brought word that dinner was prepared.

When they sat down Pani Horska said, "What fun you have had, my children."

The children even before Pan Vojtech glanced slily at one another and the children laughed, for none of them had had half so much fun as Pan Vojtech, and Lidunka and mamma indeed had had least of all.

Lidunka would not permit that her mother should be an exception to the general merriment and kissed both her cheeks until they were as rosy as her own.

In the afternoon our little company were minded to carry out a plan which had been devised before dinner. First of all they went out to seek some pretty shady spot. They found a little lawn among bushes and settled there like birds in a nest. A nest formed of greensward and bushes and birds twittering with human voices.

While they were so seated, the air began to grew heavy. The sun's rays fell to earth like arrows and under the spell of an un-

visible oppression no leaf on the bushes nor any blade of grass stirred. A butterfly fluttered by, it flapped its weary wings as if it would beat itself to death without advancing. Birds uttered strange sounds, they cried to one another and gave each other secret call-notes. The whole neighbourhood closed its heavy eyelid and prepared itself for sleep. This oppression also fell on our little company and when they were silent it seemed to all of them that they heard in the distance something rattling through the air like a charge of musketry. This discharge was repeated, and above the horizon emerged grey clouds like the vanguard of an army which announces by its galloping that a sharp conflict is imminent.

"A storm", cried they all as with one mouth and rose and hastened to the little hostinets where they had dined. To have taken at once the homeward road was quite out of the question for the storm was close upon them in an instant, and would have overtaken them while they were in the open country.

Scarcely had they run for shelter to the hostinets when the wind rushed along like a host of the landwehr, carrying with it leaves, dust, and branches until everything was obscured. The storm roared, the lightning paraded before the murky clouds like a general before the ranks of his army, and presently the rain descended in torrents.

Still our party was merry. Under that modest roof it seemed to Vojtech even as if they belonged more closely to one another, as if that slight mishap had united them more closely. While outside the thunder pealed, they nestled against one another as if in that way they gained strength and confidence. The lightning lit up a day that was more night than day, the thunder dispersed itself in the Prokop valley, like a long tarrying guest in his friend's abode. Every corner was full of it and no one was able to make himself heard. But our party seemed with all that discord above them as though they must explode in mirth and jollity. They laughed, indeed, more than the storm could rage. All Vojtech's absurd reserve was eradicated, all he said was brimful of mirth, and he laughed until he brought the tears into his eyes.

The room in the hostinets was anything but well-lighted, and the whole place close and confined, two or three cranky chairs, a table, and a bench along the wall were all the furniture of which the room could boast. It was not possible to pick and choose. Consequently Vojtech was seated on the bench behind

the table; next to Vojtech came the little boy and on the two chairs sat Pani Horska and her little daughter and there was nothing for it but that Lidunka should sit behind the table and next to Vojtech.

It was a long time since Vojtech had sat beside Lidunka and he had never sat beside her as he did to-day. He could touch her hand with his fingers and perhaps it was a mere accident that their hands did touch, but it was not a mere accident that they remained with fingers interlaced, that they pressed one another.

If any one had told Vojtech that he forgot his place, he would have laughed him to scorn at that moment. Surely now and then he might cease to be the family instructor. Vojtech felt that he was somewhat bound up with it and that he had to claim his right to it—for Lidunka put herself in harmony with him by a thousand trifling actions.

The mother rose from her chair and went to the window to see how the storm looked and whether there was any prospect of its abatement. Vojtech and Lidunka also looked at the storm without, however, rising from their places. But as they must watch it with one pair of eyes they pressed their foreheads together and looked at it together holding their breath. Then Vojtech whispered in Lidunka's ear, "Would to Heaven the storm would last a week."

Lidunka affected not to hear very well and pressed her ear against his lips. Vojtech did not repeat his observation, perhaps at that moment he did not know what he had said. When Pani Horska turned from the window, Vojtech and Lidunka ceased to look at the storm together. Their eyes showed traces of confusion: it was as though they had suddenly been withdrawn from a measureless abyss and did not know what to rest their gaze on and as though that abyss still filled all the chambers of the soul.

In the hostelry quiet reigned and outside you might hear how the heavy drops fell with a rush to the ground, how the water distilling from the rocky wall streamed in rivulets and how proudly the torrent flaunted beneath the window, and drank in the rich tribute of the rain.

"How ever shall we get home?" observed Pani Horska. But her words fell flat: the children did not care about the matter and the two grown-up members of the party found themselves very happy where they were.

The shower ceased, the storm receded, and the thunder died away like a distant discharge of musketry. A drizzling rain fell

next and this lasted a long time. It was five o'clock when Vojtech went out before the building to look at the road, but he soon returned with the news that the road was broken up and that it was impossible to go just yet.

After a short time Pani Horska went out and returned with piteous tidings. A dilatory discussion next ensued as to whether they could not send to Prague for a carriage. That was certainly possible, but the carriage could not drive over the rocks and could it have done so it would not have arrived until after nightfall.

Then Pani Horska went again into the hall and there held a long consultation with the landlady. She asked her whether the party could pass the night at the hostinets: the ladies in the room which they now occupied and whether Vojtech and the little boy could not be housed somewhere or other. After a long discussion it was decided that these two should sleep in the hall. The landlady kept protesting that she had plenty of counterpanes and feather-beds and that they would sleep as comfortably as in their own home. Similar mishaps had occurred more than once before she said and she had to be prepared for them.

When Pani Horska returned to the room she said determinedly: "We must stop here for the night, we will return in the morning to Prague."

It was wonderful with what delight this news was received. The children began to skip about and congratulated themselves on sleeping away from home for once in their lives. Vojtech and Lidunka smiled but did not say why they laughed.

After this ensued a lovely evening. The air was fresh as after a bath, the turf smelt sweet, the trees sparkled with the rain, the swallows frolicked in the air, the cuckoos called to one another, and the thrushes piped as when they played at hide-and-seek.

Vojtech felt as though he had been at home here all his life: though once or twice the thought came into his head, "How ever did I get here?" Something fidgeted him and he felt as though he still ought to introduce himself by some pretty speech. But these ideas did not strike very deeply and vanished of their own accord.

In the evening Pani Horska said: "Our guests of the day before yesterday expected me to invite them to the expedition. To-day I am glad that I did not do so, we are more at home as it is."

Vojtech understood that Pani Horska meant his two acquaintances whom he had seen with Lidunka when she wore a pink

gown, and this frank announcement of Pani Horska took him by surprise: but not unfavourably. He thought to himself, "They expected to be invited and were not. I am here."

He felt as though he ought to say something and at the very least express his thanks. But before he had prepared a reply, he perceived that it was already too late to make one. So he said, "What we shall dream here will be fulfilled."

Pani Horska scarcely heard his observation for continuing her previous train of thought she said: "Some people are much too presuming, others who have more right to be so, are silent; when I see those two young people, the only thing I seem to hear in all they say is, 'We have considerable means of our own!' A man can be happy even in modest circumstances."

Vojtech felt again as though he ought to thank her but he did not know what reply to make. The words were quite general and yet he felt that he could have kissed Pani Horska's hand for them. But he pressed the hand of Lidunka instead.

When the landlady announced that she wished to get the bed ready, our party went out before the door, and there sat down on a bench. The moon lighted them and if all the stars in heaven found one another as the eyes of Lidunka and Vojtech found each other, then it is not difficult to understand why they linger so long side by side. Both shared in the general conversation: but if either of them had had to tell the truth, they would have said that the words they spoke were not their own particular conversation; under cover of that audible conversation flowed another without words. Its kingdom was everlasting and words were repugnant to it.

When they said good night Vojtech kissed Pani Horska's hand as if he would have said, "This is a long standing debt." And he first kissed the hand of Lidunka's little sister—doubtless as an excuse for kissing Lidunka's also.

Lidunka slipped on the threshold and Vojtech catching her in his arms almost carried her into the hall. When he said good night his whole soul quivered with emotion.

Having closed the door behind them and returned to the hall he tucked the little boy into the bed which they were to have together and himself went out before the threshold. He felt he could not sleep and sat down on the place which had been previously occupied by Lidunka.

How lovely that evening was! Vojtech thought that all his life long he had never seen such beauty. Everything looked so

fondly on him and Vojtech understood it all. Here was that fair and beauteous kingdom which he sought. Here the streamlet babbled, the rocks sparkled, the grass was streaked with quivering moonlight as in a fairy vision—and beside him in the house slept Lidunka.

Vojtech experienced unspeakable delight in the thought that for the first time he slept under the same roof as Lidunka. This sentiment had in itself something so fond, so mysterious, that it did not let itself be analysed. But it was reflected on Vojtech's face in smiles of conscious satisfaction. His whole being was engrossed by it and the mastery of its magic filled him with innocent pride. He felt a bliss so unspeakable that his soul seemed to melt away, withal he felt himself so strong that he said to himself involuntarily, "I shall yet be a worthy member of society." How could life be indifferent to him?

Then these thoughts took shape in his mind: "Lidunka sleeps and the dreams which reach her pass over my head. I guard her threshold. I guard her dreams and only allow the most beautiful ones to pass."

How long he sat there he did not know himself. The foot of time had no sound for him. Time itself was as it were subverted.

At last he rose to seek his couch. The moon shone into Lidunka's window and Vojtech fancied that in the window he caught a glimpse of a head. Lidunka, not yet undressed, stood at the window and when Vojtech rose, she pressed her head close against a pane of glass. Vojtech approached and kissed the glass where Lidunka pressed her face. They spoke by gesture and sent one another kisses. Vojtech noticed that the window had a small pane which opened. The opening of the pane was undertaken together and accomplished in whispers. The pane was just large enough to admit a hand and they whispered so close that their lips touched.

"You must go to sleep now, Lidunka", said Vojtech fearing lest the cold night-air should enter.

They closed the window together. Vojtech returned to the hall to rest and murmured, "Thrice blessed storm."

Then he let himself down and heard how Lidunka's skirts rustled as she undressed and closing his eyes he murmured as though lost in thought, "Now go to her, happy dreams."

For Vojtech it was a day of enchantment that had just closed and his imagination having full play scattered through his dreams the fairiest pearls of Araby. His whole existence seemed to emerge

from the bath. As if he had plunged into the waves of the Ganges and stepping out on the beach had felt himself in the company of lotus eyes. The breath of life breathed warm upon him, his soul won pinions, tearful thoughts froze to crystal and when he awoke something lingered on his lips which seemed to say, "I am not a lost member of society."

When they had returned to Prague, Vojtech began once more to elaborate a system by which he might gain more frequent access to Lidunka. He chose her readings out of all sorts of books, brought them to her, and declared that he would willingly explain anything she did not understand. Perhaps Vojtech accidently picked out the readings which she understood the least or perhaps Lidunka purposely did not understand them, at any rate frequent and protracted explanations ensued.

An unfortunate event helped on the rest of Vojtech's proceedings.

One night a ruddy glare illuminated the city of Prague. A fiery pillar of flame blazed to the firmament, mills burnt along the Upper Moldau.

People thronged to it and sparks flew in all directions. Close by the mills dwelt the Horskas. And when people ran to the conflagration, Vojtech hurried to the Horskas's.

Their dwelling was in danger. In the house confusion reigned and the most needful articles were collected in case ill fate should drive the family to take flight. Vojtech helped them and stayed with them all night.

The next day passed without actual danger but it was as busy a day as the last, for everything had to be rearranged and replaced. But five days had not elapsed before the fire broke out again in neighbouring mills with as great a vehemence as before. A night of disquietude was again the lot of the Horskas. The furniture was piled together and they prepared each moment for flight. Vojtech was again on the spot the whole time and if he ran off now and then it was only that he might bring them word how the fire progressed and whether there was a greater or less danger.

Even the last fire passed without any mishap to the family which Vojtech aided. But indeed a panic now seized upon the whole neighbourhood as though in the course of a few days a third conflagration was fated to break forth. One row of mills was yet untouched and people said that threatening letters had

been found in which the ruin of these mills was further predicted. And these mills were nearest to the Horskas's house.

In the family gloom reigned. The horror of those few nights tinctured all their conversation and to this was added the uncertainty whether more was not yet to come.

Neither Vojtech nor Lidunka at this time exchanged many lovers' conversations, the common danger overmastered them.

When Vojtech went away from the Horskas's after the second fire Lidunka asked him with fear: "Are you soon coming back to us, oh Vojtech?"

"I hope I shall not be obliged to come again soon", he responded.

"It is very dull at our house now", sighed Lidunka.

"I can sympathize with you", suggested Vojtech.

"I am bored to death when you are not here. Please come again soon to us."

The children during this time did not learn lessons, but Vojtech very soon betook himself there. When he was there, Lidunka was almost without an anxious thought; it seemed to her as though nothing could happen, so long as Vojtech was with them. When he quitted them Lidunka fixed on him an imploring look begging him not to leave her for long. As if the future conflagrations all depended on Vojtech and that his presence at the Horskas's had power to ward them off—so great was the faith Lidunka placed in him.

Vojtech for many a day after these events did in fact only leave them to take his meals; and in the evening to sleep. The remainder of his time he passed with Lidunka.

A week passed—two weeks passed and the predicted conflagration never broke out: the panic passed away, and people in these quarters went about their ordinary avocations. What had happened soon began to be forgotten and at the Horskas's everything resumed its customary routine. But still it was no less true that Lidunka was wretched if Vojtech was not by her side. And Vojtech? As though there was still some danger to be averted he found his way there often, very often, and these young people met as though they had not seen each other for a whole summer.

Meantime an event occurred which caused a complete revolution in Vojtech. The city and the whole country prepared to celebrate the memory of one of its geniuses of art and in this celebration

a series of æsthetic lectures was not considered out of place. For the delivery of these lectures the lot fell on Vojtech.

Vojtech accepted the responsibility and began to prepare himself for his first appearance in public with energy and earnestness. He collected as in a bouquet all his varied knowledge.

To glorify the champions of spirituality had been even in his boyish days his favourite intellectual exercise and in all his teaching he gave it the pre-eminence.

To familiarize himself with it he had renounced all the advantages of an official position. Rather than be led away from his ideal he had preferred poverty, and because he was faithful to that ideal, he met with contempt in all the houses where he had been a teacher. A career all at once opened before him and his spirit yearned for it with enthusiastic vehemence. All that had been censured in him as unpractical in a domestic teacher now found fresh fuel and it seemed to him that at least in part were personified in him the noble aspirations of a whole nation. What seemed ridiculous to children, would not be so before an audience of men and women.

Let him present to the eye of the public the hidden warfare that surged around a great idea! Let him stand forth as the champion of the reality of spirit to which he was attached by his whole existence!

Good taste and feeling are the index of a man, and Vojtech had to be the guardian of that taste and feeling.

Vojtech felt happy in this new character. The effect which his lecture produced was great.

He succeeded completely in animating the public with his own ideas and Vojtech's name was all at once in every one's mouth.

"I shall not be a valueless factor in society", he repeated to himself in full consciousness of the truth of what he said. He had found his own soul so to speak and began the task of training himself to be of value. He still felt the need of communicating his ideas to the world at large—an irrisistible attraction was here.

One day Vojtech came to the Horskas's and found Lidunka absorbed in thought. On the road he had encountered one of Lidunka's relations and conjectured the reason why Lidunka was lost in thought. Her relations did not approve of Vojtech because he did not pay court to them and as generally happens the young lady's relations took note of the aspirant to her hand. The Liduncine relationship made it the business of its life to ferret out Vojtech's antecedents and understood them so far as reason

sufficed to explain them. What was discovered was faithfully reported to Pani Horska.

"You are sad, Lidunka", said Vojtech.

"I am vexed because people busy themselves about us in the most unworthy manner."

"She was here I know it."

"She said you were a debauchee and that you drank and played at cards. I do not like such calumnies."

Vojtech remained thoughtful a moment and then said: "It was true once, Lidunka. When I had no where to go in the evening I went where no one would drive me away."

Lidunka's eyes glistened—she knew to what he alluded.

"Our further fate belongs to no one but ourselves, Lidunka", said Vojtech. "It will be a happy one if we so wish it."

"We do wish it", said Lidunka.

When Pani Horska came into the room she found Vojtech and Lidunka in a fond embrace. They paid slight heed to the mother's entrance.

Pani Horska said: "I had to defend you just now, Pan Vojtech."

Vojtech took Lidunka by the hand and leading her to her mother said: "Let me not receive warning if I ask for the future to be Lidunka's pupil—I wish to be apprenticed to her for life."

"Love one another", said the mother. "I was constrained to separate my daughter from the teacher; from the son I cannot. Love one another now and henceforth."

"From this day begin our walks together", cried Vojtech and both kissed the mother's hand with heart-felt sincerity.

* * *

In the streets along the Upper Moldau in Prague walked once more at evening a fair-haired man. He did not hurry and his face was blithe. The children were grown older and begged and formed yet more noisy gatherings. When the young man drew near his blithe appearance seemed a happy omen.

When he was still a long way off they cried, "Throw us a kreuzer!" But there was the difference: that when they caught sight of him they called out, "Now they are coming." Vojtech in reality did not go alone, he led by the hand his wife. But in the plural number which the children made of him there was no doubt this advantage that two hands throw them kreuzers. And so they formed two parties. One party remained faithful to

Vojtech, the other ranged itself on the side where the pennies fell from the hand of the young lady.

When the pair reached their house and rang the bell at the passage, there ran to meet them in a twinkling a little boy and a little girl—the girl took her sister by the hand, the little boy took Vojtech. Then they all sat down to lessons, but so that Vojtech had to be the story-teller, and he performed his task so well that they all listened with delight.

If some small portion of my young readers are inclined to inquire whether Vojtech ever received any fine appointment, the writer must confess himself in difficulties not having yet any precise information on the subject. But in his opinion it is of trifling consequence.

POLDIK THE SCAVENGER

CHAPTER I

HEE! heesta [gee]!" shouted Poldik to his horses; he was driving with his wagon into Podskali [Undercliff], be it understood, and from there distributed throughout the city sand in summer and ice in winter.

Through summer, all through winter, and for many a long year it was the same monotonous journey to and fro. In summer he carted sand for the builders. When one house was completed, he carted for other builders perhaps in quite a different quarter of the city—that change occurred in summer. In winter when he had stocked the cellar of one brewer, he led ice to the neighbouring brewery, which was perhaps some streets distant—that change occurred in winter. Otherwise, provided the order was for the produce of the Moldau, ice and sand, he carted anywhere, his pilgrimage to the Moldau always finishing with Myslikoff Street, thence diverging to the Zitne Gasse, and finally passing the Sipkoff mills until at last it was brought to a termination at Naplavka [the Quay].

As soon as his vehicle had entered these streets, Poldik might have sat in his cart and gone to sleep; his horses would have found their way as we say "blindfold". They knew hardly any other road. They were like the bucket of a well: we let it down one way and draw it up the same without a span-breadth of difference, but always the same; and if they had awoke some morning in any of the streets, Poldik need never have opened his lips; they would have gone on of their own accord like automata through that portion of their circuit which was yet before them, be it to Naplavka or from Naplavka to the building steads. So perfectly familiar to them was this road that they knew instinctively where the ale-house was, where was the blacksmith's forge, where the fruit stall, and where Poldik bought his tobacco.

Very frequently they stopped at the ale-house without Poldik's bidding: and only again jogged on with the vehicle when their master tugged at the reins and said "gee up" or swore at them. But it also very frequently happened that their master did not tug the reins or say "gee up" or swear at them, but let the reins hang loose by the cart and with heavy steps slouched into the ale-

house. Much the same occurred at the blacksmith's shop; here they generally stopped of their own accord for certain, because whenever they lost a shoe Poldik swore at them then and there, and that was a sign that they would get a fresh shoe at the blacksmith's. As for the fruit stall Poldik only occasionally recollected this halting-place, turned aside to the little booth and shouted at the door, "Two". This had divers meanings according to the season of the year; either two kreuzer's worth of cherries or pears, of plums or apples—or when there were none of these delicacies to be found at the stall—two kreuzer's worth of brandy. Here perhaps, for the sake of completeness, I ought to detail what happened at the tobacconist's. But Poldik frequently filled his pipe at the fruit stall and struck a light, and then it appeared to him that the world was better by a whole pipe of tobacco.

I do not pretend to enter into the sentiments of horses, but even Poldik's horses saw the world in a better light after these halts, because they had a moment's rest and quiet. They knew these modest stations well, and perhaps said to themselves, "There, if all be well, we shall enjoy another rest."

I paint these horses for you, though you have seen them a hundred times; but they are indispensable for a proper understanding of my hero; although you have seen him also a hundred times. I do not know their life-history: they may have formed part of some grand turn-out: perhaps they had once served in a campaign, perhaps they were victorious with the heroes who rode them, perhaps with the same they beat an ignominious retreat. Now, they were horses because the Lord God had created them horses. Otherwise, they were mere skeletons, with just a strip of horse's hide stretched across them for the sake of appearances, and if animals, like men, were in the habit of divesting themselves of their outer garments at night, a pair of bony frameworks would have been seen taking their rest in the stables, and might have served for a sciolist to demonstrate anatomy on. Nor did the aforementioned horses' hides by any means interfere with any one who wished to compute the number of their ribs. You could do it to a hair, and see where the ribs began and where they ended, where the stomach was or rather ought to have been, where the hip-bones were and similar portions, which even a painter tries to endue with a certain amount of flesh.

They were, then, bones and leather, only that even this comparison is not quite correct. Their leather was rent in many a place, particularly in the region of the ribs and hip-bones where

the straps frayed them; in some places it was even frayed off altogether, especially about the neck where the collar sat. At times these frayed and shabby objects tempted the fancy to divers comparisons. They looked like the seedy old sofa of some aged country parson, and only wanted a little horsehair or whatever the sofa was stuffed with to peep out from their rent hides, to make the comparison perfect. Or, again, they looked like an old sleeve of a past generation, which no longer gave any warmth to the wearer, because all the nap was rubbed off.

These horses, then, were far removed from their prototype Pegasus—as far, indeed as the hodman is from the architect, or the drummer in the orchestra from the composer of the overture.

Had Apollo clapped wings on to these creatures of Poldik—had he clapped on to them the original pair of poet's wings, they would never, for all the world, have flown along Myslikoff Street—much less have taken flight above it. When they stood still and Poldik's "Cl! cl!" and his whip gave them to understand that they were to bestir themselves, you could count up a fair number of seconds before their volition imparted itself to all the harness, before the traces stretched tight, before the fore-wheel got an inkling of what was toward, before the cart creaked and incited even the hind wheels to rotate, and before the whole system was in motion: horses, cart, and Poldik.

And when they were at last on the go their pace was above measure deliberate. Perhaps not even clockwork is so completely uniform, for we see clocks gain or lose. But Poldik's horses never gained a minute in a whole year, though to their praise be it added that they never lost a minute either. A sluggish, even, deliberate pace was so strong a portion of their characters that neither Poldik's whip nor his oaths caused the least variation therefrom. Poldik's whip seemed to them a necessary concomitant to their own deliberate pace; if they had missed it in certain conjunctures, and in the same conjunctures had not heard the well-known oaths, they would certainly have cried out—had they been gifted with human speech—"Why don't you crack your whip again now? why don't you swear at us again?"

An anatomist, gazing at their even and ever sluggish pace, might have verified what muscles it was by which they extended their feet; he would have had plenty of time for this.

For their regularity of movement they were not themselves wholly to blame. They got just enough fodder to keep them in leather, and this leather held them together just enough for Poldik

still at times to boast to his companions that they pulled "like clockwork". Perhaps if they had got more fodder they would have pulled like greased clockwork, but no opportunity was given to them of converting more victuals into blood and muscle; therefore we can believe that if more fodder had been placed before them, they would not have cared about it.

Poldik's own gait much resembled the pace of these dilapidated horses. By long tramping beside his vehicle, his pace had been drilled into one just as sluggish, slow, and vacillating; even on Sunday, when he no longer walked behind his vehicle, his step was no fresher nor brisker. The "tempo" of the previous week still maintained itself in his limbs, and he went on just as regularly as the small wheel in a watch. But inasmuch as the usual pace at which people move is considerably brisker than that of scavenger's horses, Poldik's step was uniformly shaky; every time he lifted one foot and brought it forward his body made a corresponding contortion as though he wished to take half a step backward. This shaky manner of walking was his habitual manner, and so even on Sunday when he indulged in something of a strut the upper portion of his person kept shaking and swaying as if it wished to compensate for the sluggishness of his ordinary pace.

It also sometimes came to pass that Poldik had to quicken his steps, when the horses entangled the reins or traces under their feet, when a horse lost a shoe or anything of the like nature occurred. But as soon as the affair was put to rights and the cranky vehicle moved on, Poldik remained standing and waited until the vehicle had jogged on so far that he found himself once more in his usual place. Then he felt as though he had over-exerted himself, and lapsed into his usual regular pace to rest himself. And he rested long enough.

Sometimes it would happen that he wished to have some confidential and important conversation with the scavenger who was driving the cart behind him. On these occasions he allowed his vehicle to rumble on ahead while he himself paused and waited until the other carter caught him up. When their chat was over, Poldik had to overtake his own horses, and perhaps they might be thirty paces or thereabouts in advance. Such moments necessarily stirred both his blood and his stumps, and for thirty paces he had matters for reflection as to how he had lagged behind, how he had fatigued himself, and whether it was worth the while.

Such pauses and delays did not occur frequently. Poldik had no great need of them.

Not only was his step measured, vacillating, and swaying—his whole character was equally measured, vacillating, and swaying, all his thoughts and conceptions were so in their inception and concludings. It must be something of extreme importance, in fact, of absolute necessity which should cause Poldik to halt and wait for his follower and cart to catch him up and enter into conversation. In general he managed to learn what he wished to know by looks alone, and seldom had recourse to words. A whole dialogue was thus disposed of as they passed one another or trailed after one another, merely by means of glances. Thus one of his mates had a white horse that limped on Saturday. Poldik saw them again on Monday, and the white horse no longer limped. He glanced at the happy possessor of the beast, and this glance meant, "The white horse has soon recovered." The other glanced at Poldik, infused a certain smug satisfaction into his look, and this look meant, "No; he does not limp to-day." Or he saw the white horse in the forenoon with one of its shoes off, and when he met it in the afternoon the shoe was still missing. Here Poldik looked at the carter, and this look meant, "It is still with one of its shoes off!" The owner of the white horse similarly replied by a look, and in it Poldik heard or saw the words, "We have been very busy to-day, and really have not had time."

Poldik's regularity was shown moreover in the way he spoke to his horses. Just as if he had been laying out a road, he counted twenty Poldikian steps—and only after this precise measurement, pulled the rein, cracked the whip, and shouted "hee!" You might wager your head, it would not come one step before or after the twenty paces. Only I must except certain special occasions. On Monday when he put to the horses after their Sabbath rest he shouted "hee!" twenty times during the first twenty steps. That was to compensate for all that had been omitted on the Sunday. And this single circumstance proves to me that he did not usually shout out in his sleep or in moments of rest and abstraction. Moreover, this exclamation occurred more frequently early in the morning during the first few steps, and again in the afternoon after the midday meal.

In this Poldikian "hee!" rested a whole dictionary. Generally it was only a commonplace incitement to activity, pronounced clearly and pithily. But when something touched, angered, or vexed Poldik, the horses certainly became aware of the fact, for

the "hee!" was forcibly expressed and sharply pronounced. Similarly, if he congratulated himself about some trifle or if he felt a bit of self-satisfaction, the horses knew it, for then the "hee!" was scarcely audible, it was only softly murmured as if spoken in a sort of a soliloquy. At such times it would happen that the horses stopped at the ale-house of their own accord. But something much out of the common way must have staggered the soul of Poldik before he prolonged the "hee!" and made of it "heesta!" Then the horses gathered themselves together and took several steps at a quicker rate, so that it was only on these occasions that, comparing them to a watch, they could be said to gain a little. But, indeed, these irregularities were so rare that they were almost lost in the distance of ages. Only to us who are Poldik's biographers, are even these irregularities matters of importance; as we shall see in the sequel.

CHAPTER II

AND a time came when Poldik's irregularities became almost the rule.

At midday he stopped with his vehicle not far from Naplavka in the shadow of a lofty wall, where he and his horses celebrated the dinner-hour. Having hung the oat-bags to the horses' muzzles, he waited for the coming of Malka.

Malka, his little neighbour, brought his dinner to him, from the same house where Poldik dwelt or rather where he and his horses just bivouacked for the night. His neighbour herself, Malka's mother, it must be understood, used to cook and bring his dinner, but when she fell sick her daughter brought it, and not till then did Poldik become aware that his neighbour had a daughter. Then this neighbour died, and Malka was crying when she brought his dinner.

Poldik could have wept with her, for under all his apparent roughness lay a tender heart. And here he was prompted to say, "Poor thing!" By this he meant the dead mother.

But when Malka only cried the more, he looked at her and said, "Poor, poor thing, don't cry any more, it can't be helped."

When that afternoon he drove off with his sand, he felt as though all the time he had Malka's tears in his own heart, and sometimes for a score paces his throat was parched, and "hee!" remained only "in posse", or it stuck in his throat, and he felt as

though he should cry if he succeeded in saying it. He cracked his whip moodily, and the lash curled itself round the handle like a flag round its flagstaff when the fête is over. His swearing was such that the horses could make nothing of it, and stopped continually, both at the ale-house, the blacksmith's, the fruit stall, and the tobacconist's.

When Malka came with dinner on the following day, Poldik scrutinized her while she was still in the distance to see whether she was crying. She was not crying, and consequently when she approached Poldik smiled faintly. He was hungry, and when he had half finished his dinner, he said, "Malka, you are a capital cook." On this even Malka smiled faintly, and Poldik gave his horses their oats. That afternoon you might have heard Poldik's "hee!" from one end of the street to the other, and he swore more in jest than in earnest, so that the horses were puzzled to know what it all meant. Even his own pace was fresher than usual, so that he overtook his vehicle and found himself walking by the shafts, after which he halted, and with a self-conscious smirk, awaited until the cart again overtook him.

And now Malka was no longer in tears when she brought the dinner, but still Poldik always turned his eyes to meet her, and to see how she looked. Malka was sometimes already smiling in the distance, and after this it appeared to Poldik that only one person in the world could cook so well, and that his dinner tasted excellent. He did not say so, indeed, in so many words, but his looks expressed as much. When he replaced the first plate in her basket he smiled, and also smiled after the second course, and concluded with the words, "You are a capital cook, Malka." Malka smiled too, but with modest downcast eyes; when she departed Poldik gave her his hand, and was long enough in saying good-bye. For once in their lives his horses got plenty of oats.

All that afternoon this incident left traces of irregularity in his gait and action, which were apparent to every one even at a distance. His face looked as if he were still all the time munching his dinner, and praising Malka for her cooking. He kept saying "Cl! cl!" and even his "hee!" was frequently exchanged for these euphonious sounds. And when he cracked his whip it was with an air which plainly said, "How proud I am to be able to crack a whip." He swore with a face that belied the oath and seemed to say, "I really scarce know why a fellow should swear after all." And all the time his mind was occupied with Malka more than with anything else. She was for the present complete mistress of

Poldik's mental economy, and he was delighted to think what roguish eyes she had, what pretty dimples when she laughed, what a fresh healthy face, in a word, that she was a girl whom any one would turn to look at as she passed.

Afterwards it came to pass, that it was not enough to give her his hand in a long good-bye, but he also greeted her with a shake of the hand when she brought the dinner, and he laughed more frequently during the meal, and said, "Troth, troth, Malka, it is charming." After this he always gave his horses an extra feed of oats, so that now none of his comrades passed them without measuring them with a look which seemed to say, "Look at him! he means to turn his jades into horses still." It is true they still pulled like jades, but already they might any day have trotted away like horses.

Once, I know not by what accident, he was behind his time in driving to his midday halting-place. Hitherto, be it understood, he had always been first with his cart at the midday trysting-place, and it was only after he had given his horses their first feed of oats that Malka made her appearance. But owing to this delay it happened that he overtook Malka on the road, indeed in one of the several streets which he threaded before debouching on Naplavka, and when he overtook her he said, "Malka, let me give you and the dinner a lift." He said this with a touch of pride, for it was not every one who could say, "Malka, have a lift." He took the basket out of her hands, placed it in the cart, then helped Malka to scramble up, pointed out to her how she was to sit, and drove the vehicle standing.

Lord! what a drive that was! All the time that Poldik held the reins he felt as though he was holding Malka and helping her into the cart. His features were quite playful, his eyes were quite beaming, then he confused "hee" and "heesta" together, smacked his whip as if he were off to the festival, and only swore when it was absolutely necessary. After which he always looked at Malka with a broad smile which seemed to inquire, "There! what do you think of that now for a drive?" It was a delightful moment to him when Malka smilingly replied, "Quite charming, Poldik dear, quite charming." Here at last Poldik felt that he might allow himself a certain latitude; he incited his steeds and coaxed them with "Cl! cl!" in such a way that it put them in mind of their youthful years; so that they exchanged their sluggish pace for a fresher step, so that in places they even frisked, so that the cart bumped over the cobble-stones until Poldik had to skip from one

foot to the other, and Malka was in difficulties, not knowing whether she ought to clutch the dinner-basket to prevent it from being jolted out, or whether she ought to keep herself there by clutching with both hands.

It delighted Poldik beyond measure this fear of hers, which was at the same time half laughter. I do not know what the horses had to say to all that coaxing and whip-cracking, but they understood it, and for the nonce shook off several years of their lives. But, indeed, even Poldik felt himself younger and scarcely remembered when he felt so young as he did that day.

Well, and when they halted not far from Naplavka [the Quay] in the shadow of the lofty wall, he actually bounded from the cart, and when he looked at Malka and her face was covered with smiles and dimples, and she said, "What a ride we have had!"—oh! then it seemed as though they must be married to-morrow morning. Finally he helped her out of the cart. Malka took his hand with much simplicity, rested her other hand on his shoulder, and giving a spring allowed herself to be lifted off her feet and placed on the ground. Poldik felt thoroughly self-satisfied, and never in his life imagined that he could have courted a girl so well.

What came to pass fortuitously to-day, came to pass again on the morrow and the day after, and then for many a day. From some cause or other he always happened to overtake Malka about midday in some street, settled her in the cart, drove about with her, smirked at her, urged on the horses until the cart bumped over the paving-stones, and then again lifted her from the cart and took his dinner. At that time Poldik's horses fared well, so that they thought nothing of their accelerated speed. They had plainly grown rich, both in the matter of speed and their provisions for life, and displayed it in every step.

At this period, you will understand, Poldik's own feet moved brisker and were firmer planted. He was as it were on the highway to something better, and showed a touch of the dandy and of the world, though indeed any one at the first glance would have recognized his original uniformity and ponderousness latent beneath it all.

At this period it happened that once as Poldik was helping Malka from the cart, a certain chum of his passing by them grinned ironically at the couple, and inquired, "And, pray, when are you two going to pair off?" To this question Poldik ought to have replied with a smart repartee, and Malka with silence. But as it

happened Malka replied with a laugh—indeed, a very boisterous laugh, and Poldik's blood boiled and he never answered a word, but stood agape as though he had done something amiss.

It is possible that some sprightly young lady-reader has already condemned his faint-heartedness, and given it its proper appellation. I, however, have no objection to it, and have merely to add that it never occurred to me to exhibit his character in a more favourable light than that, in which it exhibited itself.

But the truth is, that though he stood agape and blushed at the question, still the question itself ran in his head. "When are you two going to pair off", continually buzzed in his mind, and every "hee," every "heesta" was the outward expression of that inquiry, every oath was a sort of a rejection of all possible obstacles, every smack of the whip was an asseveration that pair off they must. Ay, yet more. From that moment every time Poldik looked at Malka, he always saw in her that smile which had been called into existence by the original inquiry, "When are you two going to pair off." Thus things evolve themselves from one another.

At that time he used to stop less frequently at the ale-house and the fruit stall. He had indeed saved and put by sundry groschen at home, but still it appeared to him that he ought to add every penny he could to what he had already scraped together, in order to have enough capital to begin housekeeping. And he saved and added and reckoned in his mind when the marriage could come off. Malka pleased him, about that there was no longer any doubt.

One Sunday she brought his dinner into the stable where his horses were stalled, and here for the first time Poldik said, "And perhaps, Malka, on Sunday we might dine together in your lodging." He thought that in saying this he had said a great deal, and that it was a consequence of that much revolved sentence, "When are you two going to pair off." But any one at all versed in the expression of ideas will agree with me that it really said very little.

Such apparently was Malka's opinion. And she replied laughingly, "What an idea, Poldik, when we are—as we are! What would people say?"

Malka said much more that Poldik had done previously, indeed she led him a good piece of the way to the goal he had in view, perhaps even farther than was becoming in so young a girl. But Poldik being, properly speaking, slow, vacillating, and indecisive

in mind did not perveice that she beckoned him so far in order that he might say the word, and then that they might reach the end in view. Poldik only gathered from her reply that he was not to be admitted to her table or to eat in her company. "At present she thinks she couldn't yet", he said to himself, and then wondered when the happy hour would come. And though it was his Sunday dinner and Malka had taken particular pains with it, Poldik scarcely smiled, and scarcely praised her cookery.

When the meal was over, Malka said, "Dear me, Poldik, aren't you going anywhere this fine Sunday?"

Here Poldik did smile again, for he more easily understood this immediate project.

"Malka, would you like?" he said.

"I should like to have a look at Nussle or Liska [i.e. the Fox inn] well enough—wait just a moment till I have changed my things."

Once again Poldik thought the world fairer by a whole Sunday. Only to think that he should never have hit upon the device of inviting her to take a walk with him, and there was Malka inviting him herself! True she had excluded him from one thing, but then she had freely invited him to another. And it almost seemed to Poldik that the second thing had the greater value. What was dinner? It only lasted an instant. But an outing with her lasted the whole afternoon until evening.

Then Malka came, and she was dressed in her best. Poldik chuckled with delight when he saw how it became her, and thought that there was none to compare with Malka. And proud he felt as he marched through the streets with her on his arm. He felt young again at her side, and he quite forgot his sluggish unsteady pace, and stepped out as if he had never tramped behind a scavenger's cart and his horses. He never could have believed himself capable of so much animation. And he felt glad when he realized that he was; and he began to love Malka more and more for that very reason.

After a time they went into some gardens, seated themselves at a table, and Poldik treated Malka. It was beyond everything dear to him to have a being beside him who was pleased to be seated near him, and who was glad that they had gone out and were there together. Poldik looked smilingly at her as at a fair picture, and all through that afternoon he felt as if he must say continually how he loved her. But he did not say it. Indeed all he

managed to force himself to say was, "Well then, Malka, when are we two to pair off?"

"That is for you to settle Poldik, dear", responded Malka. And here Poldik thought that he knew everything, and that he had need of nothing more in the world.

CHAPTER III

FROM that day Poldik considered himself strictly and formally engaged to marry Malka. All the domestic arrangements which he made had a speedy marriage in view, now he ceased to think of himself that Malka also might not be too much in his thoughts; but, of course, you know how one feels under similar circumstances.

It came to pass once at midday, and yet more frequently later on, that Poldik was obliged to desert the shadows of the lofty wall and drive some hundred paces further to the river-side, to Naplavka. He was delighted to watch Malka with the dinner searching in vain for him in the old place, and Malka, too, was delighted when she found him at last close to the margin of the river.

Here Malka enjoyed herself vastly, and she told Poldik that he was to halt here more frequently in future for the midday meal under the shade of the tall poplar, for it was far pleasanter here than by that old wall yonder.

And it was pleasanter by the shore, boats laden with sand lay to, and smaller skiffs kept circling round them, and in these smaller boats were wherrymen punting about. The distant view upon the water, too, everything was better than yonder by that lofty deserted wall.

On the Quay Malka was considered in the light of Poldik's future bride, and thus many a joke passed between them and the folk there present when Poldik took his dinner from Malka's basket.

The next day Malka brought the dinner straight to the shore. And she was still more pleased with the scene than she had been the day before. I know not what called Poldik away for a moment, but in his absence Malka stole down close to the water's edge, and said half to herself, "How I should like a trip on the water."

I also know not whether these words were a simple soliloquy, but they caught the ear of one of the wherrymen, who gallantly replied, "Sit down in my skiff, and we will have a lark." Malka looked at him and did not answer. Perhaps she considered the whole affair a joke. But the wherryman understood it for earnest. "Only just a minute," said he, "before Poldik comes back we will be ashore again."

Before she expected it the little skiff lay close by the shore at Malka's feet. She need only take one step forward, and she would be afloat. The young wherryman stood all prepared as if he were a winged being, and as if his whole attitude was an embodiment of the words "Come and let us flutter about". He was like an embodied smile, like an embodied jest. Everything in him was playful, everything in him was so full of gaiety that it was hard to resist. His eyes alone were a comedy, his words were like snatches of merry songs—Malka never meant it, and lo! there she was sitting in his skiff.

The skiff acquired wings; a few strokes, and it was in the middle of the river. The river smiled around them, the heavens smiled above them, when Malka looked at the young waterman he smiled, too. Everything was smiling; Malka also was smiling.

And then they looked from the middle of the river, and watched Poldik as he slowly returned to the shore.

"Never mind," said the young waterman, "before he gets back we can yet take a look somewhere else." And again he plied the oar, and they seemed to fly along; like a fives ball they were at Podskali, not far from Vysehrad [High burgh], and like a fives ball they were back again. And they stopped again in the middle of the river just as Poldik was returning to his vehicle which stood by the shore.

When he reached it some of the bystanders exclaimed, "Your bride has eloped, Poldik, look! yonder. Francis has carried her off", and they laughed.

Poldik looked in the direction whither the wherrymen pointed; there from the skiff Francis and Malka looked smilingly at him, and Francis shouted, "Now she wishes me to tell you that she is faithless to you", and Malka shouted to the shore, "Wait a minute, Poldik dear, I will be there directly."

Poldik also laughed feebly, all laughed and joked, and so it may be concluded that they were all very merry at the Quay that noon.

Poldik waited for Malka a minute or two; but when she and Francis only dallied amidstream to teaze him, he shouted, "Malka, I must now be off!"

"We too", shouted Francis from the river to the bank; and he laughed, and before any one expected it he was again pulling hard against the stream. The skiff was soon concealed behind larger craft, vanished from sight and, perhaps, was already again somewhere under Vysehrad.

Poldik stood waiting for Malka, hoping that she might yet soon return. But she did not return, and the wherrymen began now to laugh at Poldik in earnest.

"She has taken a small outing", said one. "She wants to enjoy her freedom a little longer; Francis is showing her the world", said another. "What matter! Francis knows the world, and he knows how to show it, too", said others again.

Such was the tenor of the observations sarcastically interchanged among the bystanders.

Here Poldik suddenly turned his vehicle round loaded with sand, and tarried no longer. When he drove away his first word was "Heesta!" His horses got a severe belabouring until at last they flung out with their hoofs, and after this Poldik discharged a whole volley of oaths. But with this volley his store of ammunition seemed to become exhausted, and a considerable portion of the road and several streets were passed, and Poldik neither swore nor smacked his whip nor cried "gee-up" to his horses. He looked continually at the cobble-stones as if he had lost something among them, and was now searching for it.

He had been already some time at this amusement before Francis returned with the little boat on which he had given Malka a trip. "To-morrow we must take another trip", said the young waterman to Malka when she stepped out upon the beach.

"Poldik has gone off on account of you", said the wherrymen.

"He is in a precious huff on your account", added others.

And they laughed; Malka also laughed. Malka thought that she would meet Poldik and excuse herself, but she did not meet him.

The next day Poldik halted for the dinner-hour in the old place by the high wall, and there waited until Malka should bring his dinner. He had already looked eagerly on his way thither to see whether she was following him, in order that he might give her a lift. But he did not see her, and waited a pretty long time in vain expectation of her.

Otherwise no signs of vexation were visible in him, perhaps he had slept or driven off his annoyance of yesterday.

They greeted one another, and when Malka had produced the dinner from her basket—"I am just going to have a look at the water for a minute", said she, and away she went.

Here it appeared to Poldik as if he had already dined. Whether he ate or not he himself scarcely knew, but he soon got himself and his horse under weigh without waiting until they had satisfied their hunger, threw the basket with the fragments of his meal into the cart, drove off to the beach for sand, and asked half mechanically, "Where is she?"

"Ask Francis when he returns with her", said one of the wherrymen who was loading his cart with sand.

Poldik asked no more nor said another word, but as he was driving off he put Malka's basket with the plates and knives and spoons on to a boat which was loaded with sand, and said generally to those on board, "When Malka returns tell her I shall not require dinner to-morrow."

This speech seemed to the sandmen and wherrymen somewhat too serious to be considered a mere matter for jest, and as jest they had hitherto looked upon all which had been enacted at the quay-side.

"But, but!"—began some attempting to humour Poldik—"who would take matters so seriously all at once?"

But Poldik paid scanty attention to what they said, and vanished with his vehicle as quickly as Francis had done with the skiff on which he was giving Malka a trip.

And this time Francis and Malka were really long in returning. They must have put in somewhere or other beyond Vysehrad, otherwise wherever they had gone they could have already returned. Poldik was already a second time at the quay for sand, when the wherrymen shouted, "Look, there they go!"

Poldik did not look to see who was going or where they were going—he only made haste to finish the loading of his cart before the skiff had reached the shore. And he had just finished as they lay to, and Malka stepped smiling out of the skiff, on which the jolly waterman remained smiling also. Though Malka stepped out off the skiff as quickly as she could, she did not move quickly enough to stop Poldik, who was just that instant driving off and discharging upon his horses every oath in his vocabulary like a shower of hail.

When Malka took her basket and the remains of the untasted dinner, some of the men who were loading sand said, "Poldik wishes us to tell you that to-morrow he will not require dinner."

Malka at these words felt somewhat conscience-stricken, but she soon recovered herself when the waterman said to her, "Anyhow, bring the dinner, and to-morrow we will have another trip in my skiff."

This time, at all events, Malka made every effort still to overtake Poldik; perhaps she felt that she was bound to excuse herself, even though she could not wholly exonerate herself from suspicion. Poldik for once seemed not to be driving scavenger's horses, nor himself to wear the buskin of a scavenger—he had vanished, and there was not a trace of him.

When Poldik came home that evening Malka prepared to visit him at the stables, and there to have the quarrel out which, to tell the truth, was not yet well begun. But Poldik had no sooner covered up his horses for the night than he vanished from the stable and the house, so that not a single trace of him remained, and Malka did not tarry for him.

And when she brought dinner for Poldik on the following day, she neither found him by the high wall nor at the beach at Naplavka. 'Tis true the jolly waterman was waiting there with the skiff, and invited her with looks and words and nods and smiles to seat herself beside him, for he had long waited. But Malka turned aside, and went back through those streets in which she thought she might perhaps meet Poldik. She did not meet him, but seeing his vehicle at the ale-house where he frequently stopped, and in which his comrades often took their half pint, she followed him into the house and placed his dinner beside him on the table.

"Pray, what do you want here", said Poldik gruffly, just as when he meant to swear at his horses.

"I am bringing dinner for you, Poldik, dear", said Malka, and attempted to set all to rights with a smile.

"What is the good of bringing dinner to an ale-house", said Poldik in reply.

But Malka paying no attention to this objection, none the less placed the dinner on the table, and bade Poldik to eat.

"What is the good of bringing dinner to an ale-house", repeated Poldik gruffly, and so saying he tipped over everything that was on the table, so that Malka's proffered gift, knives, spoons, and broken crockery rolled in a pretty hash upon the floor.

Hereupon Malka had recourse to weeping, and through her tears declared that her fault did not deserve to be remembered, and that he had shamed her before everybody in the ale-house. What a rumpus he made about one little pleasure-trip on the water, and when she had never been anywhere all that year, and had only gone such a little distance. And more she said to the same effect. She added that she would go again on the water deliberately, and that Poldik had no business to take on so about it.

But to-day Poldik was quite inaccessible to reason; when Malka said that she was going again on the water and did not go, he got up and thundered out, "Well, go then at once if thou dost not wish to be made a hash of like thine own dinner."

And he spoke each word as if it was a stone. We know that Poldik seldom spoke, and that he never spoke a word more, but rather several words less than he meant. Consequently, when he pronounced these words with so much precision, there was nothing for it but to consider them meant seriously. Malka had recourse to a yet more violent flood of tears, but wasted no more words on him, and soon marched off. Those bystanders who were present in the ale-house with mine host at their head, posted themselves round Poldik, whom they generally reputed to be a man of thoroughly temperate thoughts and habits, and endeavoured by peaceful words to persuade him to reconcile himself with his mistress. "Let him sleep upon it." "Everything will soon come straight." "Things like this will occur at times." "But a man ought not to take on so." "What would matters come to, if—?" and so forth.

Poldik sat by his table, covered his features with both his horny hands and never stirred. Whether he listened to what the bystanders, sympathizing more or less with his hard fate, said to him, I know not: but when they ceased speaking, Poldik made no response. So that at the conclusion of those well-intended words a silence occurred, such as we are accustomed to call "a torturing pause". And after that pause, the bystanders began to talk among themselves about indifferent matters, relating to their several trades or occupations; but during their indifferent remarks all kept their eyes fixed on Poldik, so that any one at all versed in the customs of the people, who had entered the house at that moment, must have guessed the conversation of those present was so commonplace and insipid, because they wished to spare him whose face was buried in his palms.

Their conversation went to say on tiptoe, for fear of outraging that which not long before had been raging very tempestuously.

Poldik suddenly burst in upon these placable remarks with the following monologue:—"Dotards, liars! And they tell us that God looks at the heart! He looks not at all at the heart. He allows the heart of him who hath one to be wrung from him—to be torn in pieces, and then the people flock around to laugh at those pieces as at the crucified Jesus. Yes! look at my heart! See how they pierce it—but let them torture it. All your talking is not worthy that I should write it down on paper and then light my pipe with the paper."

At these words all present looked at one another, and pointed to their foreheads as if they would say, "His reason has given way."

CHAPTER IV

AFTER this scene Malka took her way to the water-side, even when Poldik so pitilessly drove her away from him. She went with a faint notion that perhaps Poldik would soon follow her there himself, and that it would be easier to come to an understanding by the water-side than in the ale-house. But Poldik and cart never appeared, at least they did not appear so quickly as Malka thought they would. And when they did appear nothing more was to be seen of Malka, she was already with Francis in the skiff, and the skiff was—the Lord knows where.

For they had not by any means done with one another.

And we must say that Malka on the water recovered her spirits surprisingly soon. On the whole she liked life on the water far better than life in the street. Also, hitherto life with Francis had been far more agreeable to her than life with Poldik.

In the streets went on a monotonous, unexciting, sluggish, clattering carting of sand. Here on the water life actually acquired wings, and was swift, bird-like, and diversified. And such as the street was Poldik, and such as the water was Francis. With Poldik, before a thought got clothed in words, no brief interval of time was needed. With Francis a word was like a look. He could speak without let or stay, and never was in want of a topic. What a perfect convulsion of nature took place before Poldik managed to say that he loved her. Francis had said it to her at once with-

out any embarrassment; he said it every moment, and repeated it continually. Compliments, which almost gave Poldik the cramp to pronounce, Francis turned off as easily as a tennis-ball. What a piece of work there was before Poldik had said, "He hoped they would make a pair." And lo! here the jolly waterman had said it the first time she sat in his boat, "What a pity Poldik anticipated me, else we might have made a pair."

And Francis repeated it to-day when Malka stepped into the skiff.

"But, of course, now we shall not make a pair", Malka answered, meaning, however, by this that she and Poldik would not make a pair.

"Is it possible?" looked Francis.

And thereupon Malka recounted what had taken place in the ale-house.

Francis, however, in place of one consolation had ten at least, and each one was such that it would have been sufficient by its unaided self. When Francis and Malka parted to-day they clasped hands, and Malka must consent to be on the beach early next Sunday morning. Malka gave her consent, looked forward to Sunday morning with intense longing, and when Sunday came, was standing on the beach at the trysting-place, long before the appointed hour.

And then Francis came, light-hearted and versatile—like his own skiff, full of smiles and bedizened in the style of our Prague dandies which every one recognizes at the first glance. And to-day his skiff was much the same as he. Light and pliant and bedizened —with pennons and ribbons streaming—dressed out in silken kerchiefs and divers garlands—the skiff was a dandy like his owner. Malka must have been without eyes and with little good taste, if she had not been at once captivated by the whole affair. For, for whose sake was all this ornamentation? Malka was not one of those who would be unaffected by these considerations.

Fair dames and gentlemen! If any of you have already passed judgment upon Francis as a dangerous and fickle fellow, perhaps even a Don Juan, and in like manner upon Malka as perhaps little better than his victim, I pray you be not too hasty in your decision.

Surely it was past all conception natural that Malka should at once prefer the lively eddying Moldau to the long monotonous streets of Prague. And Poldik was an embodiment of those streets of Prague, and Francis was an embodiment of the water

of the Moldau. So then, two almost radically different forms of life were here opposed to one another: the regular, measured, settled streets along which with loutish steps tramped Poldik beside his cart with raw-boned horses. Poldik, heavy like his sand, from which the water fell drip, drip: and here light-heartedness and elasticity, just like the smooth and marbled surface of the Moldau over which like thought itself skimmed Francis, light-hearted, transparently gay, gentle, and blithsome like that water which here plashed over the yellow sand.

So that Malka's sudden desertion of Poldik and her subsequent predilection for Francis was so natural an occurrence, that I know not how many young ladies would have given proof to their constancy by not following in Malka's footsteps. The female heart, according to popular ideas, flies on wings to meet a sailor lover; if the lover be not a sailor, it goes to meet him indeed, but at a perfectly Platonic pace. And we may consider Francis more or less a sailor, at least, in so far as our Moldau justifies the comparison. No doubt a facility to captivate the female heart has also its weak side; for a heart soon won, is also soon lost. But even that awkward land-lubber Rectitude has also his weak side, for being ill-adapted to charm the mind of women, he is too frequently left in the lurch without a wife, in spite of all his constancy of character and his devotion to business.

Malka enjoyed herself on the water beyond measure. Wherever the light craft sped its way, people on the bank paused to gaze upon the bespangled shallop, and asked each other whoever that couple could be. It was clear in the sky above them and in the water below them, the banks were carpeted with brilliant green, and by the river-side lads and lasses promenaded in their Sunday attire, and in all the innocent delights of the Sabbath. Where Malka wished, the skiff stopped; where she wished, it flew forward.

They dined together in a garden, under the broad blue sky; and here Malka already confessed to herself that there was more life in one afternoon with Francis then in all the time she had spent with Poldik.

And this afternoon delighted her more and more. They urged the boat forward against the stream, and the smiles of the whole world seemed concentrated upon them. In the villages by the river-side bands of music were playing, and the tones were wafted to them lightly over the water. The boys who trooped along the banks of the river recognized Francis who was indeed a general favourite among them, shouted to him their salutations from a

distance, and waved their caps and handkerchiefs in sign of recognition.

At one river-side village they finally moored the skiff. The villagers came in a body to invite him to their village, and threatened to bar his further progress unless he stepped out among them and allowed them to dance at least one round with "that bonny lass of his".

Francis and Malka were agreeable, stepped out on to the beach and proceeded to where the band was playing, accompanied by the young men of the village. As soon as Francis made his appearance, the musicians greeted him with a flourish of trumpets, the rest of the company turned and bowed to him and danced with Malka, and unusual tokens of respect were bestowed on both. Then the music accompanied them to their shallop, and the boys sang a merry roundelay. And as they floated along, Francis lighted various coloured lanterns in the boat so that it looked like a bed of roses, flashing out into the blue mysterious depths of evening. And amid the roses dallied Francis and Malka, crowned with smiles. Above them bent the boundless star-wrought heaven, and before them in smiling eddies flowed the clear and marbled surface of the Moldau. Francis who rowed, because they floated with the stream, had no need to stir an oar; the water itself carried them along, he and Malka might hold each other's hands, and might look at one another and at one another's smiles.

Malka thought that never in all her life had she experienced anything so delightful as that lovely evening on the water; and in whispers she declared what she could not venture to express aloud—that she would like to linger on the water as long as the moon was shining in the heavens. And the moon shone so to speak in duplicate; it was visible high above them, and it was reflected in the Moldau, and on the water its lustre lay like molten silver. And where Francis dipped his oar, the lustre was splintered into a thousand silvery flakes and fell in sparks and silvery drops, and all the while the ripples pattered on the shore in half murmured music that yet was touchingly distinct.

If the river-banks had many a charm for Malka by daylight, they had many more on such an evening as this. The margin of the river was half lost in twilight, from which emerged houses, hillocks, and in general all objects bathed in glittering whiteness. The gaze could not penetrate that mysterious twilight, and yet the eye was loath to wander from it, as though within its depths lay all that ever drew the soul and spirit to itself.

This day and this evening had such an effect upon Malka that they easily and completely expelled from her soul the image of her previous lover which, as we have observed, hung there more from habit than from any deep spiritual necessity which would have held it there so long as life lasted. Aye, there needed but a few such days and evenings and Malka turned away from Poldik as from an uncouth scarecrow, and as though she were flying from a ruined vault whose ceiling was overhung with spider-webs; and she turned to Francis as to some sunny spot of earth which would free her from the dismal gloom of the other.

I cannot disguise the fact that the relation of Malka to Francis was a very dangerous one, and that I might here fall into the temptation to weave a romantic story. For threads which entwine so lightly as the inclination towards one another entertained by Malka and Francis, generally are just as lightly blown asunder; only that on one side follows merely a sentiment of vexation, on the other complete disenchantment, if not an utter dissipation of all the hopes which make a girl cling to life.

But, indeed, we have no need of any such a romance, and in the present instance it would not be true. Francis had already repeated to Malka a hundred times that they should live together as a happy couple, man and wife, and Malka, when he said it, had a hundred times pressed his hand, as if in token of her consent. And then they had said it to each other in looks and kisses, and then a time came when neither looks nor kisses were needed to express it, for it was so firmly fixed and settled between them that they saw it as clearly as they saw the path along which they paced together.

Thus then it came to pass that in Podskali the sandsmen and the boatmen prepared for the nuptial day of Francis and Malka. They discussed it a whole week beforehand on the Quay, and were planning for a whole week how to celebrate the happy event. For Francis had always been to them like their own soul; in summer on the skiffs and on the boats, in the winter on the ice where he selected and set in order and superintended the skating-rinks over which he himself sped along like the fickle wind over field and fish-pond. For this reason people had prophesied but last summer that all his life long he would never marry, for that he was too free and joyous-hearted, too like the wind and too inconstant, and that any woman who was his wife would doom herself to a truly thorny path. And now Francis was to marry.

Thus, then, all the sandsmen and boatmen clubbed together and

agreed as to the manner in which they were to spend the festive evening. The preparations for that evening might be heard discussed on the river-bank, on the water, and wherever people were engaged at their work. Only when Francis came to the Quay these discussions about the preparations for the day tacitly dropped.

But still Poldik heard all that was being prepared. However, he already treated the matter, or affected to treat it, as something wholly alien from himself, but none the less it stung him to the heart, and in his heart he felt as though a red-hot iron was piercing his very bosom. According to his own maxim, however, he would not have given a pipe of tobacco for Francis; but yet none but Francis was with her; somehow or other he managed to hold his own with Malka and to retain her always by his side. And the superior ability displayed by Francis in these respects was perhaps the most galling thing of all.

Thus the day drew near when Francis and Malka were to be plighted, and the evening drew near when in their honour was prepared on the Upper Moldau a festival of unusual splendour and seldom seen thereon.

Just as on that eventful Sunday morning when Malka and Francis first sailed out together, his boat was tricked out like a dandy, and in the evening glittered with divers lanterns that looked like roses, so, to-day, all the skiffs which were in Podskali were gaily bedizened and awaited in thick array until evening brought the happy pair among them. Scarcely had the first shadows descended upon the water, when all the skiffs glowed as it were with one single fire, distributed in a thousand different fragments. The glow broadened far over the river-banks, spanned the whole smooth surface of the Moldau, and shot its varied streams of light far into the star-bespangled skies.

And in the midst of it all sat Francis and Malka, a newly married couple.

The skiffs—as though they had been a single large vessel—crept slowly against the stream until they reached Vysehrad, until even those ancient walls and that ancient crag were tinged by the glow from the water, and looked like a stern face with a young smile on it. Immediately after this the compact body of boats fell to pieces, each skiff rode over the water by itself, and all circled round the exquisitely adorned skiff of the young married couple. On some of the skiffs music burst forth, on others singing and music succeeded one another, on all reigned mirth and jollity,

on all the crews shouted with delight, kindled torches and waved them in the air. The Moldau was so animated and bedizened that it was no longer like itself. And it was all because Francis had married Malka.

The banks were wellnigh trodden down by the crowds of townsfolk who had come to feast their eyes on the agreeable spectacle. Even Poldik was amongst them, lost in the throng and unobserved. And at times it seemed to him that it would be best if he were to stab himself to the heart with something, then again if he were to stab to the heart all those yonder who made merry, and then finally it appeared to him that he deserved that taunting laughter in which accorded the people, the Moldau, and the heavens that bent above them, and then finally it seemed to him that he had deserved yet worse things than that taunting laughter in which the festival found tongue: and that all together ought to lift him above their heads and point the finger at him, and shout, "Pelt him! because he does not know what life is! Pelt him! for he does not deserve to live." And then again he seemed to see the cause of it all in that jostling mob, and home he reeled like one half crazed.

CHAPTER V

POLDIK'S horses found themselves best off while the passion of their master for Malka was on the increase until it reached its climacteric.

In those days Poldik was glad to draw rein from time to time, and took care of his horses both in the streets and at home, in order that he might be able to boast of them as his property, and mainly in order that he might jog along with them when Malka sat beside him in his cart. At that time Poldik's horses were on the high road to transfiguration. Their ribs began to be cased in a light coating of flesh, their ears sometimes pricked, and their shoes made a deeper dint upon the ground. And Poldik's comrades, when they met him, looked at him with a pair of eyes in which were legible the words, "Poldik is becoming quite a skilful groom."

Here we must note in passing that Poldik occasionally took to horse-doctoring, and that when he took pains with the horses, he generally succeeded.

Thus, for example, if some scavenger's jade broke down, and its master half determined to take it to the knacker's yard, it still

occurred to him, "Suppose I let Poldik try his hand with her." From Poldik's then two paths led, either the jade was converted into a passable mare, in which case the owner reclaimed his property; or she failed to mend, and the knacker came for her. Poldik generally "mended" his horses at daybreak or evening, when his day's work was over; and on Sunday, when he had the whole day to himself, he let out his troop into the court-yard in order to make up his mind what further he should do with them.

That troop of horses was a wonderful spectacle, and would have suited Falstaff's ragged battalion to a nicety, if, that is to say, it had been required to turn his ragged infantry into cavalry of the same kidney. One horse would, perhaps, be altogether swaddled in blankets, another would have all one side encrusted with a kind of tetter or scab, another only the shoulders thus encrusted, a third only its fore-feet, another only one foot. It was just as if a sculptor had formed model horses of clay and these horses had been transformed into living samples: it was hard to decide whether there was more clay or more horseflesh as yet in their composition.

This Sunday parade in the court-yard attracted plenty of spectators. First came the owners of the animals whose lives and, perhaps, sufferings Poldik prolonged: after them came plenty of a second public—the true spectators. Poldik paraded his invalids in the court-yard, just as a circus master parades his trained stud in the arena. It must not be supposed that these convalescents performed, at Poldik's bidding, wonders comparable with the wondrous feats of strength performed in the arena by their fellows of the circus. But still, relatively, they performed wonders, and perhaps in this respect even much greater ones. For, if in the previous week a horse had scarcely limped hither, and if, the week after, that is on the second Sunday's parade, it could go a certain pace, sometimes at a brisk pace, although you could still see on which it limped, it had in that week relatively done a great deal; so much so that even then it found a public who were disposed to admire its agility.

But this occupation of Poldik's was quite a secondary one. Like a true artist, he only devoted himself to it when the fit was on him. And thus also it came to pass that the owner of some jade might lead her to Poldik, but afterwards drive her off again straight to the knacker's yard, and for this reason—because Poldik would not receive the horse. "I don't take in horses", he would say. "Pray, who would think of taking in horses to cure?" And

sometimes, on the other hand, he received every horse that came, paraded them about the court-yard to see what progress they were making, and when they were cured dispatched them to their respective masters.

There were golden times in store for Poldik's horses after Malka had broken faith with him. That spurt of briskness which they had found so tiresome was soon expended—and from horses they quickly sank again into jades. Poldik had no longer any one to whom he could boast of them, and he was angry with himself for ever having been so possessed and for having given himself so much trouble with them. They fell once more into their old measured pacing along the streets of Prague, and nothing again aroused them from their ordinary shambling walk. But after Malka and Francis were espoused with so much pomp and ceremony, Poldik could not any longer bear to see his horses and cart. He had sufficiently clear insight to perceive what an unequal contest he had waged as a scavenger with Francis the wherryman. Nor was it the fault of his intellect that he had lost, but of the commonplace loutishness with which he was saturated through and through. It appeared to him that there was nothing more despicable than his own employment; at all events he himself despised it utterly; and at that time, if he could have driven off his cart and the horses along with it on to some red-hot rock, so that no vestige of them might remain, he would have done it without a moment's reflection.

At that time he lost all hold on realities and certainty. His horses must have been in a maze of difficulties. He began according to entirely different methods, and any one who had known his previous methods must have admitted that the new methods were none at all. What cared he now for twenty paces? What cared he now at what point he said "he!" "heesta!" at what point he said "cl! cl!", at what point he shouted "whoa up!" when he was to belabour them with the whip and when he was to swear? He mixed and tangled all his vocabulary in careless confusion, swore where he ought to have said "heesta!", flogged where he ought to have sworn, and said "cl!" where the horses expected the lash. Now they never dared halt of their own accord, for then he let fly at them all at once a volley of all the abusive epithets which he had in his pate, just as when wind, thunder, and raindrops come down pell-mell together. The horses now walked past the alehouse and the tobacconist and the fruit stall and the other noteworthy snuggeries in those quarters as though they were de-

mented—they had unlearned the habit of halting and were only thankful when they had got through the day with a whole skin.

Hence, once more the connoisseur and the tyro in horse-flesh might count their ribs and could say from their coat of hair how far the straps were to blame and how far the collar was at fault. Perhaps Poldik did not in the least perceive whither his horses were fast hastening, and that he might have driven them off any day to the knacker's yard.

Once, however, an acquaintance gave him a hint about the matter. Going past Poldik he halted and said with slow precision, "They are no longer what they were!"

Poldik himself looked at them and almost started aghast. "They are no longer what they were", said he to himself and here he began to pity the horses from his heart.

If Poldik had not been Poldik he would have led them home to his own stable, but now he began to consider whether he might not as well take them to the knacker's. And yet to do so seemed to him like smiting his own self and his own existence.

In the end, he led them to his own stable, ceased to be a scavenger and began business as a stableman. As soon as the news spread that Poldik had again taken to converting unsound horses into sound ones he had visitors from morning to evening, bringing him patients from all quarters, and Poldik received them so long as he had any stall-room left. At that time, if he had thrown himself energetically into his business, he might have made quite a fortune, and yet Poldik did not feel himself a happy man. It was a business which so completely ran counter to all his previous habits and so changed his step, his gait, and all his modes of life that he was long in doubt whether he would not again quit it and once more throw in his lot with the scavengers.

But after all he remained constant to his new profession; for having after no long time converted his own screws into decent horses he happened to sell them speedily and well and it was just as if he had bartered his own soul. Rather than accustom himself to a new pair of horses and teach them to learn his habits, he would have quitted this tedious life below; and to think, too, that he would have to drive down to the Quay and among the wherrymen, and that Francis with Malka perhaps by his side would be there, and that he would see the sneer upon their faces. When he thought of all this he was glad that he need go no longer to the

Quay, and hereupon, like a doctor, he went his rounds, visited all his patients, felt himself a new man, and was at peace.

We have already said that Poldik only practised his horse-doctoring when he felt inclined. But now this inclination continued unchecked, and, consequently, he had almost become a real professional. By the end of the year, or at most two summers, he had amassed a considerable sum of money, so that no scavenger in the town could compare with him. Poldik, had he been a scavenger all his life, would never have attained so independent a position.

Then when his affairs began to succeed beyond his fondest expectation, they began also to be a burden to him; wherever he looked he saw the divine benediction; but with it all to be alone in the world was a grievous trial to him.

Here, no doubt, the inexperienced reader will be inclined to exclaim, "Ah, ha! the writer is trying to find a new bride for him." He is not doing so, my dear reader—all thoughts of wedlock Poldik had now banished from his mind for ever. He would rather have stabbed himself with the first knife which came to his hand than have said again to any female, "When shall we two pair off?" From that side he was as completely cured as those horses of his which he possessed no longer; and if a new saint had been required for the calendar, whose sole qualification was to be that he now never even looked at a woman's form—Poldik might have applied for the place and have been canonized forthwith.

But a new and somewhat curious idea took possession of him, in consequence of which he ceased to feel lonely and deserted. This same idea was to beg from their parents the boys and children of scavengers. When he knew that a scavenger had a son who already began to trot along beside the horses, Poldik went to the father and said, "What do you mean your son to be?"

If the scavenger said, "What should I mean him to be? He will be a scavenger." "Good," said Poldik, "but you might entrust him to me for a time in order that he may learn to understand horses."

And he got the boy, for what scavenger would have refused to have his son taught such an excellent science as was Poldik's science. And as soon as Poldik got him, he said to himself, "Won!"

And to be sure, he sedulously developed in every boy a knowledge of horses and the proper treatment of them. But none the less, and perhaps mainly, he developed a disgust of scavenging and

in place of it instilled into these boys a passion for the business of wherrying sand. That was his evangelium. When they were seated in the stable he would say to the boy, "Do you still want to be a scavenger?"

"I do not want, but I must be one", said the boy. "I must! there is no such thing as must. Must take to the worst trade in the world! To drive continually along the same road among all the slatterns and be the laughing-stock of everybody. They look at your horses—and laugh; they look at yourself—and laugh. The horse is a sorry jade—you are the same—all the spavined cattle belonging to a scavenger's cart are sorry jades. And whenever you want to marry you will find that no one will care to give you his daughter. They had rather yoke her to your cart: that's what they'll say. But a wherryman! faith! that is something quite different. You spin along over the water and the whole world smiles upon you. Be a wherryman!" And the following day he again inquired, "Do you still want to be a scavenger?" "What's the good of asking me," said the boy, "I had much rather be a wherryman, but I have no boat, and my parents are not likely to give me one." "Oh! ho! the boat is the difficulty, is it? Well, I will buy thee a boat and all else that thou requirest."

Then he asked again the third day, "Do you still want to be a scavenger?" "No; if I can get a boat I will not be anything but a wherryman."

"So you shall get one; but if you should ever cease to be a wherryman the boat is mine." "And who would cease to be a wherryman while he had a boat?"

After this, Poldik told the parents that their boy had learnt to understand horses wonderfully soon. The boy then added that he was going on the water to wherry sand, and when Poldik explained the why and the wherefore he generally also obtained the consent of the parents.

And so then on the following day, Poldik led his young charge among the wherrymen, and he felt as though he was leading him to a wedding. He walked with quite a youthful step, his eyes sparkled, his face sparkled, his words sparkled. He chose his words as easily as though he were selecting twenty-kreuzer pieces from ordinary kreuzers, and it was evident that he was contented with those which he had chosen. And when the boy got his boat and punted about in it, and Poldik saw his face beam with pleasure, the tears came into his own eyes and he could have sung

for joy. His heart beat fast, his feet made a few small skips, and he said as if he shared the boy's joyous sense of freedom, "The world will smile upon thee wherever thou lookest upon it. And thou wilt easily find some Malka and no one will look down upon thee. I have rescued a soul from thy clutches, thou foul trade of the scavenger!"

Immediately after this Poldik sought another soul to rescue from the foul trade of scavenging, and did with him to a hair as he had done with his predecessor. He had already so many of these lads on the water that go which way he would for a walk, young wherrymen sprang to meet him and introduced themselves to him as to a father so that sometimes he was heard to mutter to himself, "I think I must be a wherryman myself when I have so many children at the trade."

CHAPTER VI

THIS Poldik wore a harsh and rude exterior, but if the heart is the real core and marrow of a man, within his harsh exterior there was an excellent core and marrow.

Many a year passed away. Poldik still stuck to his horse-doctoring, and was cited as an authority in his department and summoned to a horse's sick-bed like a physician. He had plenty of practice, and scarcely time to get through it all. His wealth grew very prettily, and already he might have spent any day he chose as a holiday. He could drive his own carriage, too, and he did drive one; for he got horses of a higher grade to be put to rights, such as had been knocked to pieces by drunken coachmen. And Poldik drove these horses in a carriage which he had expressly procured for the purpose, in order to test how far they had progressed towards convalescence. And he also drove them that people might see how his horses improved after so many Sundays or so many days, and to maintain his credit with the world.

He drove out like a gentleman who has his own coachman. The coachman was always one of those boys who had been adopted to be cured of scavenging and trained to wherrying.

As to what pertains to these boys, Poldik acquired by his generosity towards them the reputation of being a good-hearted fellow: it was a fine and honourable thing to take the children of the poor into his house and to look after everything which they

might have need of. But we must not blind ourselves to the fact that he also laid himself open to the charge of eccentricity, and in sooth, just for these his good doings. He only took scavenger's lads into his house, and he only turned out young wherrymen. This fact now hung about his neck like a characteristic label, and people, though applauding his doings, also added, "Tut! tut! Poldik, if a German mouse [i.e. a rat] were to come to him from a scavenger and begged for help because it wanted to set up among sand wherrymen, Poldik would give it shelter." "And," pursued others, "any one could swindle him who chose. Let the first idle vagabond come and say, 'I don't want to be a scavenger, I want to be a wherryman', and Poldik would open his house and heart to the fellow." But then, on the other hand, they all concluded their conversation with, "But, pray, who would swindle him, where will you find the heartless rascal to do it?"

In one of these summers it came to pass that Francis died. His boat was capsized by a paddle-wheel, he himself was drawn under the wheel, swam to shore indeed, but took such a chill that he never again rose from his bed. Malka was left with a little chap about six years old. It was a cruel blow to Malka. There on the water which she loved best of all things, where, too, she had found the man of her choice, she must see him perish. And when she took stock of her means she found that the unexpected blow had left her without money for the funeral.

It was, too, an uncommonly hard trial to Poldik, but in a different way. His instinct prompted him to go to her, and then again it whispered to him, "Never mind her, she has ruined thee with her cold-heartedness, let her have her trials also. Pray, why have a heart?" But he mastered himself, went to her, and said, "Oh! Malka, you have much sorrow and anxiety, I will look after the funeral for you. People would cheat you who are a woman, a man is not so easily defrauded."

It was a heavy stone which fell from his heart at these words. And he looked after the funeral very decently, and took care that all who wherried sand on the Moldau and all who carted it away from the shore should take a part in the last sad rites.

When Poldik came home after the funeral he said to himself, "Poor Malka! nowhere any one to turn to! and her boy on her hands! Where is she to work? What wages can she earn?" And he wished to set off at once and say to Malka that she had better give her boy to him, that he would take him like any other boy, and that he would relieve her of all anxiety. He would have gone:

but then again he said to himself, "What should I do with the little scamp? He will be like his father, he will never have heard of scavenging and care for nothing but the water. What is the profit of purifying his will from the taint of scavenging, when he has no will to be a scavenger?" And only because he had neither skill nor power to fit the thing into his own mental economy, he hesitated and did not go for the boy.

But once it was made known to him that Malka was ill, and that she did not know how her illness might end. Hereupon Poldik went directly to Malka and said, "Ah! Malka, give me this boy of yours: he will be very useful to me, and then you will be freed from all anxiety about him. The boy will be as though he was my own!"

On this Malka said, "I thank you, Poldik, for your kindly offer: but I will not give the boy to you."

These words made on Poldik the impression as though he had fallen from the sky. So then, she still even now so despised him that she would not even trust her child to him, although she was sick and in distress.

It is possible that any one else would have snatched his hat and quitted her at once. Even Poldik thought of leaving her, but his heart took a considerable step higher, he mastered himself and said, "And what if I should still wish for the boy?" He thought to himself, is it possible that she does not trust him to my charge. On this, Malka said, "I, still, shall not give him to you."

Then at last Poldik stretched out his hand for his hat, and was departing: only instead of good-bye, he said, "I did not think it of you."

And here Malka looked at him almost with anguish and said, "Do not take it amiss, Poldik, dear. But you wish to make all your boys wherrymen."

"Well, and what is the harm of that?" said Poldik, with a certain stubbornness which carried with it a touch of reproach to Malka.

"I do not wish to make a wherryman of him", said Malka.

"Your boy has not to be a wherryman?" asked Poldik, and he felt as though he had come to the end of all his latinity. "What then is he to be?" he added.

"His father perished on the water: I cannot look any longer at the water without crying, I should be miserable every day if my child had to be on the water for the whole day."

That was a reason with which Poldik could hardly quarrel—it carried conviction with it. He laid his hat down again and said, "Well, well, doubtless you are in the right. And what then has he to be?"

"A scavenger, Poldik, dear, a scavenger," responded Malka, almost enthusiastically. "There! now you know why I cannot give him to you."

"A scavenger!" Poldik was again taken aback, perhaps this time more violently than before. "Perhaps you know of some one," continued Malka, "who would adopt him and, of course, I will work for both of us in order to pay for his apprenticeship."

She would work for both and could not even work for one, said Poldik to himself with a sigh.

And here a gigantic conception emerged in him. Ay, it is possible that even a giant would have felt himself weak beneath its weight.

Poldik's head went round at the notion, and he felt as though some tremendous weight had exhausted his feet and hands, and even his tongue and words. He knew what he wished to say, but at that moment it seemed an impossible thing to say it. To-day, at least, it was too much for him; step by step he had gone higher, but now at the same time he felt that if he attempted another round of the ladder, he would stagger and perhaps fall.

He took the final step, staggered, but did not fall. "I know of such a one," said he. "I will make a scavenger of him for you."

When Poldik expressed himself in these words he felt as though he had expressed his consent to a crime, and yet, on the other hand, he felt that something stirred within him which gave him wings, just as if he sped in flashing skiff along the Moldau, and just as if he felt a joyous sense of boundless freedom. Malka looked at him as at a man completely new—just as if it was not Poldik, and said: "They do you cruel wrong, Poldik: they say of you that you are an eccentricity, and that you don't want any one to scavenge. Oh! what a cruel wrong they do you!"

These words confirmed in Poldik the sensation of having acquired wings, although they told him that he was about to undertake something wholly repugnant to his habits of thought.

Well, and so Poldik became once more a scavenger, and I think that in thus doing he reached the highest summit to which his capacities could aspire. For the sake of a fair and noble deed—

to take care of a deserted child, the son of a detested father, and of a mother equally detested— for the sake of the same fair and noble deed to tear to pieces and fling to the winds all theories, personal crotchets, hatred, and distaste—name to me anything more sublime and more honourable—I know of none, and let your heroes rant and declaim from the boards I know not how far to your satisfaction—Poldik the scavenger can boldly place himself beside any of them, and stand on a level even with the most favoured.

He hated the scavenger's business from the very bottom of his soul, and now he walked once more beside his cart with sand and led by the hand the son of Francis, called Francis like his father; he instilled into him a love for a calling for which he himself felt no love; he pointed out to him its advantages, though he himself knew of none; he was silent about its disadvantages of which he could count so large a number.

But he adapted himself to it once again. He still continued to exercise his trade in horses, not, however, to the same extent as formerly, but only like an artist, when he felt an inclination to do so.

But now, as day by day with little Francis he rolled out his "hee! hee!" and "heesta!" alongside his vehicle he felt delighted when the boy first caught up the cry, and then he taught the little fellow to say "cl! cl!" and to shout at the horses, and he felt enormous delight when Francis's first oath tripped off his tongue in the true Poldikian style. He already began to settle down to scavenging and it began to please him.

And now his horses again halted at the ale-house, at the blacksmith's, the fruiterer's and the tobacconist's, only they were different horses and rather brisker than the old ones. And then there was a different landlord at the ale-house, at the blacksmith's forge a different blacksmith, at Naplavka also an almost completely different set of sandsmen and wherrymen—most of them the result of his own careful training. And what immeasurable astonishment was exhibited at the stations when Poldik appeared with his vehicle once more, although if he chose he might have driven his own coach—we can imagine for ourselves.

The people were completely puzzled to know whether he was an eccentricity or whether he was not, and in the ale-house several times in the week we might have heard the following conversation:—

"People always said that Poldik turned scavengers into wherrymen, and now look you, he scavenges, and that with a wherrymen's little chap!"

"'Tis true he goes about with a wherryman's little chap. It is Malka's boy, and don't you know that Poldik wanted to have her for his wife? Tra-la-la! Stranger's boys he teaches to be wherrymen, and he keeps scavenging only for—the Lord be with him. Tra-la-la!"

But even bygone times, more or less, renewed themselves. Malka, when her health was restored, once more brought dinner for them; at first, however, only for her son, but soon for Poldik also, because Poldik said as we drive together we must also dine together. Sometimes they waited for Malka, and when she was coming with the dinner, settled her in the cart and then drove on with her. On these occasions little Francis must needs take the horses in hand, that his mother might see with her own eyes how far he had progressed. Here Poldik laughed heartily at his "whoa-ups" and whip-cracking and looked the picture of contentment. There was only one fault to find in Francis, and that was that he was still diffident of swearing before his mother. This slight shortcoming which marred the perfect whole, Poldik could not pass over in silence, and therefore said, "Ah! Malka, he is learning very fast, but he still wants the least little bit of courage." And that meant more particularly, "If only he would swear all would be well."

At last Francis was wellnigh grown to man's estate, and then Poldik entirely confided to him the charge of the horses and vehicle. He himself carted sand no longer, but devoted himself solely to the management of horses. He was already old, he could not any longer walk so well as he was wont, beside the cart, "hee" and "heesta" no longer issued bravely from his lips, and the horses obeyed them better when they heard them from the lips of Francis. "Come, then, Francis, manage everything for me", said Poldik, and thus he quitted for ever his previous occupation.

When Poldik grew enfeebled by age Malka shifted to his lodging and tended him as though he had been her father, and when he expired no son and daughter could have grieved more heartily for a father than did Malka and Francis. And it would be hard to name any other funeral in which so many people took part, and amongst whom so large a number could say and said with tears the words, "He was our father."

And in the evening after the funeral—if you had seen the Moldau! The whole Moldau was covered with boats of all descriptions, on all of which were lanterns of every colour of the rainbow and torches, and from all of them issued plaintive music and plaintive dirges—it was a grand "pannuchis" in which all joined with the frankest and heartiest goodwill.

So lived and died Poldik, the scavenger.

PENSIONED OFF

CHAPTER I

AT three o'clock in the afternoon, across the village green of Frishets went the sexton; he had in his hand a large key and directed his steps to the chapel.

Any of the villagers who were standing by the window and saw the sexton, at first only said to themselves, "Where, I wonder, is old Vanek going?" Afterwards they called to their wives, to the servants, or to any one who happened to be near at hand, "Look! look! Vanek is going to the chapel! Can there be a fire anywhere, or can any one be dead?"

"And where can there be a fire, and who can have died?" was the answer to these questions; but to every one it was apparent that one or other of these events must have taken place.

After this those who stood by the windows ran out in front of the gate, and cast a curious glance after Vanek to see whether he was not going into the chapel. At this moment his key rattled in the door, the door opened, and Vanek vanished within the chapel.

"What, I wonder, can Vanek want in the chapel?" thereupon inquired the neighbours one of another, on the village green; each took a few steps toward the middle of the green, and then replied to one another that no one could tell, because there was no fire in sight, and no one in the village had been seriously ill.

At that instant the funeral bell rang out. "The Lord God grant him heaven", said the neighbours' wives, crossed themselves and began to pray.

The men removed their pipes from their mouths, lifted their caps and crossed themselves from brow to breast. Every one was like a statue, only that his lips moved somewhat; in the village nothing stirred, the funeral bell swung to and fro and spoke to all, and yet no one knew for whom it was ringing.

All at once the funeral bell was silent and the neighbours and neighbours' wives, just as they had at first trailed off from the windows on to the village green, so now they trailed over the village green toward the chapel, each one only saying, "The Lord God be with us! Who is it, I wonder?" Their impatience increased

because old Vanek still lingered long in the chapel, doubtless, in order to tie again to the bell the rope, which owing to its rottenness so frequently snapped asunder.

And when Vanek issued from the chapel, and his huge rusty key again scraped in the door a cry arose as if from a single mouth, "Who is it for, prithee, who is it for?"

"The Lord grant him heaven—old Loyka", answered the sexton, and drew the key out of the door. "Oh Lord! Lord! and is it really he?" repeated the neighbours in great astonishment.

At this moment approached the spot, with a basket in his hand, Vena, who acted as messenger in the parish, dwelt at Loyka's house and, moreover, had the reputation of being a rascally impudent fellow. He also inquired, "Who is that for?"

"For your good old master, the pensioner", answered the neighbours, sympathetically.

"For our—ho! ho! for our master, the pensioner—ho! ho!" sneered Vena, and burst out laughing. Although all held him for a fool, still it outraged their feelings when he laughed at such an occurrence.

"This is no laughing matter, Vena", said they, reproachfully.

But something seemed to have tickled Vena's fancy. "How, pray, isn't it a laughing matter when it is? Sure enough, he sent me into the town early this morning, look you, with a basket, look you here; that I might bring punch and rosolek, look you here; they keep it at the brewer's. He set me on the road as far as the gate, put some small change into my hands and said, 'Buy there something for your own maw also, my Vena, that my flasks may not suffer by the way!' and I am just coming from the town, I am bringing him punch and rosolek, look at it! And then he goes and dies, you say! Who is to drink it, pray? And then you say this is no laughing matter." And again he laughed, until little by little his laughter infected the bystanders listening to it, who at last were fairly puzzled to know what it all meant, and turned inquiringly to the sexton.

The sexton, considering that Vena had dared to turn his official reputation into ridicule, strode up to the culprit as though he meant to take him by the collar. It was evident from the expression of his own eyes that he would most willingly have pulled Vena's ears or his hair. When he stood about half a pace distant from the other, so that his nose touched Vena's nose, and his two eyes glared into Vena's two eyes, he exclaimed pretty sharply, "This is no time for drinking, I tell you. He for whom I have once

tolled the bell is dead and done for, and when I toll the bell for thee thou wilt be dead and done for."

This speech and the manner in which it was spoken, not only convinced the neighbours, but it convinced Vena himself. He stopped, almost let fall his basket on the ground, and burst into tears. So that again in a little time he infected all the neighbours' wives at all events with sorrow; until they were fain to wipe their eyes, and the neighbours said to one another, "'Tis a poor fool, but he hath a good heart!"

After a few moments, Vena lifted the basket, took out a flask of rosolek and gulping down his sorrow, said to the neighbours and neighbours' wives, "What's to be done with the rosolek now that he is dead, now that he is nothing at all? Ah, neighbours! Help and drink it to his health!" He himself took the first pull and then offered it to the bystanders.

"What are you to do with him when he is a fool?" said they again to one another, half laughing, and in the meantime began to call upon the sexton to explain how it came to pass that old Loyka had died so unexpectedly.

"He dropped off! He dropped off!" said the sexton. "It came upon him just like a yawn—like a hiccup."

"The Lord God be with us!" cried some of the neighbours' wives, for it appeared to them that the sexton spoke as learnedly as a doctor.

"Frank, his younger grandson, was with him," continued the sexton, "you know they loved each other truly and dearly. 'Frank,' he said, 'when I die my watch will be thine. Besides this, what is in yonder drawers and chests is also thine, it is that same silver which I have collected for thee.' Frank said, 'Oh! grandfather, who, pray, would talk about death, and you so hale and hearty?' and he wept. 'Do you mean it?' said old Loyka, 'but I am old, within a little of a hundred years.' "

"A hundred years!" reiterated the neighbours, "that is a great age."

The sexton proceeded: " 'Ah! Frank,' says Loyka again, after a pause, 'I feel constantly as though I had a clod of earth upon me. Boy! clear off this clod of earth!' 'You have not, grandfather', said Frank to this, and again wept. 'You think not? Well, then lead me out on the balcony', and although in the morning he still walked like a stag, and was as fresh as a fish, now he leant upon Frank as though he could scarcely take a step forward.

"Frank collected his strength—you know he is thirteen years of age—led him out on to the balcony, and Loyka looked all over the court-yard and as though he bid farewell to everything, and after he had cast his eyes in this manner upon one thing after another—buildings, court-yard, granaries, implements—, he said, 'Welladay, what is the use of crying about it!' Then he made a sign to Frank to lead him back into the living-room. And when Frank had led him almost into the middle of the floor, Loyka hung yet heavier upon him, and said. 'Come off! come off!' just as if he wanted to tear something off with his hand, and at that moment he fell down dead on the ground beside his grandchild."

"He dropped off! he dropped off!" reiterated the neighbours, and in their eyes trembled a tear of compassion, and at the same time a sort of astonishment and excitement at the thought that he had died so suddenly.

Hereupon all that stream of neighbours and neighbours' wives just as they were by the chapel-gate, trailed off towards Loyka's farmstead at the other end of the village.

"At such an age people do not die, they drop off to sleep", said one of the neighbours, and at once cited a case where something similar had occurred; there was, also, some one somewhere almost a hundred years of age, and he had died at dinner. Then again, others knew that at such an age people knew the hour of their death beforehand, and confirmed the fact by instances. These instances, however, did not suit well old Loyka's case, because he had sent, while it was yet early morning, into the town for punch and rosolek.

And now before his farmstead they began to recount to one another his life's history.

"It is something to say, such a great age," observed one—it was the mayor of Frishets—"and yet last summer at harvest, he cut his own pensioner's share of the crop, and it was thus wise: he cut along the line of reapers a portion equal to his own height; when he had cut so much, he said, 'What availeth it, I cannot ply my sickle nowadays?' and he laid him down at full length in the space which he had cut."

The neighbours smiled slightly, and said, "Ah! welladay! How could he ply his sickle at all at such an age, I wonder? A hundred years!"

"One time while he lay thus," proceeded the Mayor, once more, "I go close by him with my sickle, and I say, 'Oh! grandfather

help us in God's name.' Loyka perceived that I was smiling and said, 'Lazy body! lie no longer, up! up! and work thou also!' Then he rose and set himself to cut the corn, I meanwhile sat beside him near the boundary-stone, and waited till he had once more finished cutting his own small portion. When he had finished it, he again lay down."

"And why could not his son, the present proprietor, cut it for him?" inquired some, though, indeed, they knew why this was not done, because they had already asked the same question several times at least, both in the present and the past.

"He could and he could not," answered the mayor again, "of course you understand—he was a pensioner of the son's bounty. 'Tis seldom a son gives the father anything who is once pensioned off."

As soon as this sentence was pronounced it was again evident that Vena was present. He stood by the farmstead, considering what to do with the rosolek, now that no one was willing to drink it. But as soon as he heard about the son and the pensioner on his bounty, he seemed all at once to be beside himself. "A murrain upon you every morning, ye peasant proprietors, who do not know what to do with your father when he is pensioned off. Only let me have power in my hands for half a day, I would drive you round the circle, I can tell you! Every one of you should be pensioned off at once for two years at least. A son cannot have a korets of land reaped for his father, because the father is pensioned off; blast all such sons, say I."

" 'Tis a poor fool, and yet he hath right on his side," said some of his neighbours, "but he is touched here." Others again said, "How, then, dare you say this, Vena, are you not a dependent on Loyka's farm?" To this Vena replied very indignantly, "If I am on Loyka's farm, I work for myself, I have no need of any one to work for me. Also I speak for myself, I have no need that any one should speak for me."

Here the mayor again interposed: "Well! well! old people are sometimes rather laughable; in their time everything was quite different, you know. While Loyka lay on the rye which he had cut, he said: 'Nowadays, my good gossip, there are not such winters as they used to be. In my young day, the sparrows fell from the eaves and partridges and hares were frozen like clods of earth. More than once we thought it was the cat scrattling at the door, and lo! it was a hare. Did you ever hear the like of that?' On this I say to him, 'Oh! grandfather, one summer you

had your well frozen hard.' At this he sat upright in astonishment just where he had been lying, and said, 'Lord ha' mercy! the well hard frozen in summer-time! No! I cannot remember it ever to have been hard-frozen in summer-time in my young day. The Lord God be with us!' "

At this all the neighbours laughed simple-hartedly, and each one confirmed by some instance the statement that old people like to discriminate between their times and ours. And now the mayor beckoned to the bystanders that they should step quite close to him. And then he said not very loud, "On this, I said to old Loyka, 'Oh! grandfather, I am surprised to find that you do not know that you had your well hard-frozen in summer-time.' 'My dear good little gossip,' says he, 'for many a long year now I have not ventured to draw water from my son's well; his peasant wife does not allow it.' " At these words a thrill of consternation ran through the group of listeners.

Vena, it is true, had not wound himself into the selecter circle, but, none the less, he exclaimed as though he had heard all that was said: "Not allow him to draw water! The frog retires that the dog may lap, and a son shuts his well against his own father."

"You see he knows how to give names to things, and yet 'tis but a poor fool", said the neighbours, and they thought wonderingly about the peasant proprietor, Loyka, although they had already heard about this affair of the well, and in fact from Vena himself.

"While I sat that day by the boundary-stone," the mayor began again, "I inquired of Loyka, 'Oh! grandfather, you can call to mind many a Kaiser this day, I take it.' 'I can call to mind Kaiser and gentry', replied Loyka. 'I call to mind the time when Kaiser Joseph ploughed, and then I call to mind the time when all the gentry did it after him, only that the Kaiser ploughed with horses and the gentry with us.' "

Here the neighbours again laughed, and said, "What of that! he knew how to muster his parts of speech, and to give a slap in the face to high and low, only that he preferred to give it to the high and mighty."

"I call to mind yet more", said Vena, insinuating himself into the conversation. "I call to mind how that we plough one with another, and how that each hospodar laments that he cannot plough the field with his own father who is pensioned off. Oh! ye sons, what wouldn't you give to have your wretched 'tatas' tugging at the plough."

This remark appeared extremely personal, and they began to gesticulate against Vena; but some recognized that what he had said was at least true as regarded the Loykas.

Here one man said, "Only what surprised me is that old Loyka was so contented when he fared so ill as a pensioner."

"Ah! well! well!" said the mayor, in elucidation of the mystery. "It is easy to be content when one has the wherewithal. He had good reason to be content. He had money enough for himself alone, about which he was wont to say, 'While that exists, I need never beg anything of any one.' And well that he had it, and not well that he had it. Well, because his son, the hospodar, frequently kept back his pensioner's share of the crop, and the old man might have been reduced to real distress if he had been kept waiting for it; not well, because, on the other hand, old Loyka, when the law bore him out, forced his son to pay every quarter of grain due. From this money sprang their differences. And then all that he could spare was laid by, and now old Loyka's Frank gets it all."

"That boy will cut a figure in the world", said some one. "He quite hung on his grandfather, and was at his house all day and all night long, until even his mother was angry with him for it. I maintain that he loved his grandfather more dearly than he loved either his father or his mother."

"And where, pray, will you find children who do not love their grandfather and grandmother more dearly than they love their parents", suggested others again. "You have at once his elder brother Joseph", responded the former speaker.

"Faugh! he, indeed, why he never loved any one in his life." The opinion thus pronounced apparently expressed the general sentiment, for no one contradicted it.

At this moment a heart-rending wail resounded from the farmyard, and attracted the attention of all the neighbours present. They peered through the half-opened gate and said to one another, "'Tis Frank; we might have known it."

Frank ran out on to the village green, his hair dishevelled, his face wet with tears, his eyes still filled with tears, and sobbed forth amid sighs and gulpings, "We have lost grandfather, our people drive me from him—oh! unhappy that I am!" And he cried until he choked.

During this outburst of sorrow the neighbours were silent. Only Vena took upon himself the task of continuing the conversation. "Ah! we know why they have driven thee out. They want to grab! They are grab, grabbing!" and he began to represent

in dumb show how they were scraping everything into their pockets. But all at once, while thus engaged, Vena paused, clapped his hand to his forehead and said, "Pantata, the mayor! how forgetful I have been! When I went to the town this morning old Loyka gave me this paper, and says he, 'When you come back from the town give it to my good gossip, the mayor.' And here am I forgetting all about the paper from sheer surprise!" He put his hand to his pocket, where he had an official document, drew out a roll of paper and handed it to the mayor.

The mayor broke the seal, ran his eyes over the contents, and said, "This is Loyka's last will. He leaves everything to you, Frank, and everything is here mentioned down to the smallest details."

Very likely Frank did not hear what the mayor said. He sat by the gate on the ground, leant his hand on the abutment of the wall, his head on his hand, and wept without cessation.

But extreme surprise and astonishment had got the better of the rest of the bystanders, as was evident from the following conversation.

"Show it us, good gossip, the mayor, show it us!"

"On my faith it is all true."

"And as soon as Vena returned from the town, he was to hand it over to you."

"Well, and he has handed it over, to be sure."

"And then, they say that old Loyka did not know when he was to die."

"To a hair he knew that he was to die to-day."

"You see, I told you that old people knew to a hair when they are to die. Every one who is a hundred years old knows it. And he bade bring that rosolek here, that they might have it ready against the funeral."

The circumstances of the case so cohered together, that they only the more confirmed the general astonishment.

Then the mayor said, "The defunct has appointed me trustee, to look through his personal property in the presence of witnesses, and to take everything under my protection. Come, then, neighbours; if two of you are willing to offer yourselves to be witnesses we can go to the house of the defunct at once, and look over his personal effects."

"Prithee, why not? prithee, why not?" answered the neighbours, and hurried into the court-yard of the Loykas, but instead of two, all pressed forward, just as they were. Each man thought

to himself, "Who knows whether the mayor will not select me to be a witness, and if not, what matters it? I shall be a witness all the same."

Even the neighbours' wives hurried after the neighbours into the court-yard. Only that here in the court-yard the male element detached itself from the female; the neighbours following the mayor up the staircase into the pension house, the neighbours' wives remaining below in the court-yard.

In the meantime, that is to say, while Frank ran out on to the village green and the neighbours betook themselves to the pension house, Loyka's son and Loyka's son's wife laid out the corpse of the defunct on the bed, and the following conversation passed between them.

"Thirty years have we carried hither his pensioner's share of the crop, and at last we ourselves are free to enjoy the pensioner's portion", said Loyka's wife.

"We have wronged him grievously", said Loyka, the hospodar, and clasped his hands.

"We him! he us much more! It is pretty late in the day to call black white now that he is dead, when it was allowed to be black during all his lifetime."

"He hath his dismissal; who knows what awaits us?"

"A pleasing spectacle, truly! to see you begin now to condemn what you approved for thirty years. We lay down a burden with him in the tomb; do not prevaricate, you know it as well as I do."

"I would far sooner that I did not know it."

"Oh! you men, you men! ye fear not the living, and as soon as their eyes are closed in death you grow timorous. Why should not I feel light-hearted to-day? I never feared him while he was alive. I tell him even now that he is dead—I feel the lighter for his loss. I should like to know the farm where they would not breathe free again when the pensioner on their bounty was taken from them, and such a one, too."

"He was my father."

"And went to law with you about every measure of his pensioner's share of the harvest. He never wanted for anything, he had already laid by so much for himself, and he kept back from us enough for ten people to have lived upon, and then he went to law with his son."

"But I lived with him before in peace and happiness, even now I feel sorry for it all."

"Don't speak such words, peasant. Where do people ever treat their pensioners differently? What is given to the pensioner [vyminkar] is a lost thing to the farm, particularly if he has no need of anything, just as, in fact, your father had not."

"You always deafen my conscience, wife."

"Yes, when conscience tells thee to reckon five for nine. And when it dubs me an ambitious worldling—is that conscience?"

Such and similar remarks were made by this woman beside the corpse of the venerable centenarian, her father-in-law. The grave which generally closes the lips of slander had no such effect upon her.

Then her eyes fell on a small table which contained, as she was aware, a considerable amount of her late father-in-law's property. She reconnoitred the small table, found a key in the drawer, pointed it out to her husband, and said well delighted, "You see we have the key in our hands; it will be ours; ours, too, will be all these savings and not that nasty Frank's. And you would have let the boy stay and take it all."

Her husband understood this hint, and stepped close to the table in order to assist his wife in her investigation, and also to see with his own eyes how much his father's savings might amount to.

They had just not opened the drawer when they heard steps—many steps—on the staircase. They listened, the little key remained in their hands just tapping against the table. At that moment entered the living-room of the pension house—the mayor, and after him almost all the neighbours.

Frank also had taken this opportunity to insinuate himself into his grandfather's apartment, knelt again beside the corpse, and only called out, "Oh! grandfather! oh! grandfather!"

The mayor saluted, "Neighbour Loyka, may God console you. Look here; just read through what is written on this paper and then give that key in my hands."

At these words the peasant woman grew pale, and almost trembled. "You see here, neighbours, a key in my hand. I should like to know who dares to say, 'That key is mine.' "

"Certainly you dare not say so, my good gossip", said the mayor sleekly. "Just wait until your husband has read through what I have given him."

When hospodar Loyka had read his father's last will and testament to the end, he went to his wife, tore the key out of her hand, and said, "Take it, my good gossip, the mayor!"

"Well, then, you may see about the funeral as well, good gossip, the mayor", said the peasant woman, and burst into tears. They were tears of anger, of impotence, and of little-mindedness.

"I will see about it, my good gossip, I will see about it", said the mayor; went to the corpse, took its measure, then took Frank by the hand, gave him his measure, and said, "Go, little son of mine, to the grave-digger, that he may delve a grave for thy grandfather according to this measure."

Frank took the measure, and sped like the foam, and the mayor and his witnesses discharged their duties with respect to Loyka's personalty.

CHAPTER II

IN Frishets they had a chapel, near which lay the old burial-ground, but they had long ceased to bury the dead in it. The burial-ground for the present defunct was distant about a quarter of an hour's journey from the village, and almost in a deserted spot.

From Frishets to the west trended a low hill for a distance of two miles; it was tillage-land on both its slopes and divided into fields, while along the ridge of the hill itself ran a carriage road. Half-way along the hill and near the carriage-road was the burial-ground of the union—that is to say, Frishets and several other villages.

Four lofty walls, built in a quadrangle and whitewashed, proclaimed from a distance that they were the walls of a cemetery. High aloft and stretching to heaven in the centre of these four walls a ruddy-painted cross on which hung a white-metal figure of the Christus confirmed it, while several lesser crosses which only just managed to peer into the neighbouring district with their summits ranged along the wall, equally bore witness to the fact. If a dead man could have risen from the grave, he would only have needed to sit astride the cemetery wall and he would have seen his native village and the very house in which he was born, from whatever parish he had been brought hither. Contrariwise, the villagers of any parish could see at a glance the dwelling-place of their dead, and visit them in memory.

Moreover, in the cemetery were two modest buildings placed side by side. One with three grated windows; and in that dwelt the grave-digger. One with a single small window without any

grating, and there dwelt the bones. It was quite proper that, on account of the lonesomeness of his dwelling the grave-digger should have his windows grated, in order that no ill-disposed person should break into his house; it would have been quite superfluous to put a grating to the charnel-house; for who would ever think of entering that single window? At one side were a few skulls piled in order and a few unburied shin-bones—that was a treasure about which a thief pays scanty heed.

By day mirth and gaiety reigned around the burial-ground. People worked afield, conversed, sang, whistled, shouted to one another from field to field, and answered one another from field to field—and sound and speech are the source of all gaiety.

From field to field scudded the partridges, sometimes a hare ran along the road as far as the cemetery and browsed on the graves of human ancestors, to requite these for having dined off his own ancestors. Or a lark fluttered from the field into the blue air of heaven, and there poured forth melody for its own delight, and also for our enjoyment. The field grew green with varied tints of emerald, grew pink and white with clover, grew yellow with beet-root, grew crimson with hosts of poppies—and in the midst of it all glistened the burial-ground, in the midst of the burial-ground stretched to heaven the ruddy cross with the white-iron figure of the Christus.

Here at eventide and at nightfall it was not so gay. No one was working in the field, no one spoke, the lark was asleep, and the green tint of the field was bathed in the sombre colours of evening and of night. And then these crosses which peered forth over the cemetery wall were just like heads and those heads looked just as if they were leaning on their hands, and it all peered forth over the wall at the carriage-road, and at any one who might be passing along it. The tall ruddy cross in the centre raised on high its desolate arms, on which, in windy weather, thumped the white-iron figure of the Christus. From the burial-ground a bat flitted forth—after this there was nothing for it but that the wayfarer should cast a timid glance at the bone-house, to see whether something was not there also glowering from the window, and then lastly he must fain cast a glance at the dwelling of the grave-digger to see whether there was a light in the window or whether those windows also were lost in ghostly fantasies.

At eventide and at nightfall few of the villagers cared to take a walk hither, and any one whose road led along the ridge of the hill or on either side of it, preferred to diverge I know not how

many miles through lanes and by-ways rather than allow himself to be surprised at night in the neighbourhood of the burial-ground. As to dwelling here day after day and night after night, for a whole year, for all one's life—you might have built a golden palace on the spot and I know not whether you would have found in the whole country-side a man to inhabit it.

Logic sometimes makes strange skips. All will perceive that a place which every one shuns after dark is one of perfect security. A child might stand a siege there, and the puniest could put to flight the staunchest-hearted. And yet every grown-up person would have considered himself a poor creature if he had settled there as grave-digger. And yet, on the other hand, he thought to himself that the grave-digger ought to be a perfect Hercules to bear calmly all the horrors of the place—the glowering of the crosses over the wall, the thumping of the tinned figure of the Christus, the flittering of the bats, the desolateness of the bone-house, and similar things.

By a strange coincidence it happened that the grave-digger was the Hercules of the neighbourhood, Bartos, about whom whole books might be written. If Bartos had ever said, "I will give battle to a ghost", every one would have wagered that Bartos would get the best of the encounter—such a man and no other was cut out to be a grave-digger in a lonely cemetery. So then, perhaps, it came to pass that the popular logic argued backwards, as thus: because the present grave-digger, Bartos, was the Hercules of the neighbourhood, it followed that only a Hercules was fit to be a grave-digger in that spot.

How many a story of his strength was recounted by credible eye-witnesses. Once on Sunday, when Bartos was on the spree, there drove into Frishets a drag full of soldiers on leave, and in their insolence they chevied the people hither and thither and struck at every one who approached their vehicle. Hereupon arose a panic in the village, people ran out of the ale-house and among them Bartos. Bartos seized hold of the horses, held them back, and held back even the vehicle. But, thereby, he effected but little, because he could not approach the carriage seeing that the soldiers struck out at every one. "Come and hold the horses! come and hold the horses!" shouted Bartos to his neighbours. And when the neighbours held the horses Bartos crept under the carriage, arched his back against it, lifted it off the ground and upset it, so that the soldiers fell out of it and then the citizens were quit of them. Never in their lives had the

soldiers suffered such a reverse, even from an enemy, as on this occasion.

In these parishes it was a custom to test the strength by charging at one another face to face. Folks only tried it once with Bartos—never a second time; at the second fling, he sent every one spinning, his opponent staggered backward and it was a wonder if he did not fall.

Also, "the hook" was a frequent mode of exercise. Two men clasped the bight of a large hook with the fingers and thumb and then pulled against one another across a table. Come and try "the hook"; no one tried against Bartos more than once. He always gave way the first time, but at the second bout he dragged along his adversary together with the table, then his adversary for a couple of days had to nurse his thumb in cold water.

As he was strong so he had artifice. Once he went homewards by night in winter wrapt in his cloak. There fell upon him four footpads, and in order that he should not escape they muffled him in his own cloak. But Bartos tore away from beneath the chain which served for a clasp at the neck—glided out of the cloak like an eel, and soon put all his enemies to rout.

In order that no one should be surprised that highwaymen should fall on a grave-digger, I must say at once that he was well-known to carry money about his person. In those days strong boxes and savings banks were not yet invented. People, therefore, who were possessed of wealth lodged their money with Bartos, because he dwelt in a cemetery, and because he was strong. It became the custom of the neighbourhood to have their money buried in the ground by Bartos at his abode. Thus Bartos seldom or never went to or from a village without carrying silver in his pockets, sometimes a hundred pieces or more. Just as any one wanted money or was flush of it, Bartos brought it or carried it away. Hence we may see also that people built on his tried honesty as on a rock.

If he went to more distant villages at nightfall, and had to go by a wood, and he was apprehensive of danger, he laid himself somewhere behind the bushes, teamed the money into his boots, and so slept till morning. Or if it was cold he laid himself somewhere beside a dunghill, thrust his feet into it, and slept thus.

Once they almost had him. Hereupon he turned round, and cried out, "If you do not decamp, I will plunge this knife into your

bodies." The chaps took fright and fled, but Bartos had merely a splinter of wood in his hand in place of a knife.

Of his youthful experiences especially, many stories were told. He was once in an ale-house where music was playing, and the lads were disputing who should have the honour of dancing a solo.

When they could in no wise determine among themselves, Bartos stepped up to the table, behind which sat the musicians, clapped his fist down upon it, and shouted out, "Play me a solo." The musicians tuned up, and Bartos had already begun to spin round in the waltz with some damsel or other. But his comrades would not leave him in peace. Like one man they clubbed together against him, and tried to hinder him from dancing. Bartos let go his partner, caught the foremost of the lads with one hand by the neck, with the other hand by the girdle, lifted him off his feet high in the air, began to chevy the others with him, to strike them blindly with him, and to press them towards the doorway until he pressed them through it; then he flung the one whom he had held by the neck and the girdle among them, and said, "Take him, it was he who worsted you." Then he looked around for his partner, she was cowering under a bench in a corner of the room and trembled all over. Says Bartos, "Just come out of that", and then to the musicians, "You have not finished playing us the solo." Never in her life had the damsel danced as she did that day. The servants peeped in at the window to see how she and Bartos danced together, and he danced until he was out of breath. When he could not make another step, he called to those who stood outside, "Now you may come in, now I will let you have your turn."

But Bartos was by no means a gross tyrannical sort of giant. Never in his life had he ever challenged any one, never in his life had he ever given the first blow, after that, if he gave one, it was scored in the popular memory. Nor was he the least at feud with the gentry in public offices, only that there again he had a tongue in its proper place and lammed into them with words. He had no fear of persons, be they gentle or humble; of the gentry still less than of the humble.

He carried money for his neighbours to the public offices and into the city; who, pray, could take it into the town more securely, who, pray, could do their business for them better than Bartos? But God preserve the official who dared to touch him even with a harsh look! Or just fancy if they had threatened him with the

clerks in the office. Four clerks might have come, and neither singly nor altogether would they have dared to forge upon him —perhaps they would have been afraid to receive him even in the lock-up house.

Once the neighbours drove into Prague with wheat, and took Bartos with them as cashier. Bartos stopped at the tolbooth to pay the duty. How could the collector know that it was Bartos, the grave-digger! He paid no attention to him, and made as though he counted. "How much will it be?" cried Bartos with such vehemence that the paper fell out of the toll-collector's hand. "Come, come, we will have no bullies here", said the toll-collector. "A thousand curses! you are the bully", said Bartos, and nothing more. The toll-collector also said nothing more, but his hand trembled with rage as he gave Bartos the change, and thus it happened that one "desetnik" fell on to the pavement outside his office. "There is a 'desetnik' missing", says Bartos. "You have it on the ground", says the tax-collector, and nudged himself into a certain amount of valiancy. "I pick up nothing from the ground", says Bartos. The toll-collector must even shuffle out of his office, pick up the "desetnik", and give it into Bartos's hands. "There now I have all", said Bartos, and as he quitted the tolbooth muttered loud enough for the toll-collector to hear, "I will teach people to throw money on the ground."

Another time he went to an office for the purpose of drawing a sum of money and the cashier happened to be a new-comer, and thus did not know Bartos. This official said that he had the money at home in his house, that Bartos might go on in advance, and that he himself would follow him directly; Bartos went into the house. But the official did not come for a long time and Bartos began to grow impatient, and when the cashier did come he began to talk to his wife and did not notice Bartos. Bartos rose from his seat and began to open the windows in the room, he opened them all. The official begged to know what he was about. "If I have to wait," said Bartos, "I must have fresh air; stinks are not for me." Then the cashier's wife began to interfere, and shrieked out, "Look at the red-hair'd ruffian!" "Yes, look at him," retorted Bartos quickly, "and then look at Madame's sweet double chin."

This silenced the official's chatter, and indeed his good lady's, who hastily threw a handkerchief about her neck; after a few minutes Bartos had the money counted out to the last kreuzer.

Once he came to a lawyer's office, and there they wished to put him off with a paper scrawled over with pot-hooks, telling him to come another day. "And, pray, why should I come another day when I am here to-day", answered Bartos testily. "What is that?" said the official. "That I will not stir hence until my business is transacted." The official shouted to a clerk. Just as he had uttered the words Bartos stepped up to the table behind which sat the official, and said tartly, "A clerk on me! Here I am if you want me." Then he struck the official's table such a blow with his stick that it set all the pens and pencils skipping, and shouted, "Am I then come to look for justice at some booby's office!" Hereupon all the official staff rushed in pell-mell, but as soon as they saw Bartos they whispered something to their chief, whom the affair had compromised, and in five minutes Bartos's business was transacted. It is to be understood that now none of the clerks were forthcoming, and if they had come it would have been just the same.

If some of my readers think these answers and sayings of Bartos somewhat rough and boorish, I cannot help it. But still I say that he only paid folks in their own coin, and that he only paid them out in this manner when they as good as braved him to do so. But if the brutalities and all the insulting expressions were noted down, which in previous times (every one knows how long ago I mean) the officials permitted themselves to use towards the people, a pretty large column might be compiled. Also it came to pass sometimes that the neighbours grumbled in the presence of Bartos about the brutal behaviour of the officials. "It is a curious thing," said Bartos, "I have had no fault to find with them now for a long time."

Once he came to an office and the official was smoking. Bartos also drew out a well-filled pipe and lighted it. "Do you think you are in the servants' hall?" objected the official. "Yes," answered Bartos, "here is smoke as if from a lot of stable-boys", and they passed it over.

In other respects Bartos was, as we have said, intrinsically good-hearted, and even not without humour. About a hundred paces from the burial-ground stood several pear-trees which belonged to the neighbours of Frishets, but they allowed Bartos to take the fruit in requital for his various services, so that Bartos might say the pears were his. Once, on a Sunday afternoon, thinking that Bartos was not at home, two lads climbed into the pear-tree and shook off the fruit into bags. But, as it fell out,

Bartos approached. The lad who saw him first jumped down and cried out to the other to make haste for Bartos was coming. But the other one dawdled. Just as he was about to spring down Bartos ran under him, caught him by the collar, so that the lad found himself treading the air with both feet. While continually threatening him with the whip, his captor only said, "I'll teach thee to dawdle another time", and then he let the lad go scot-free.

Just as people told stories about Bartos as the country Hercules so also they had to tell about him in his character of sexton. More than once they had seen him weep while he dug a grave, and more than once they heard him hold mysterious communication above an open grave. More than once they had seen him sitting on a grave as though he were holding intercourse with the dead. But not perhaps with this or that dead man, but with all whom he had known.

He used to visit them in succession or according as he missed them, and felt sorry for them. "I must go to Klimoff," he would say, "just now I feel so sorry for him." And then he reminded Klimoff of all sorts of things—where he had walked with him, where they used to ramble together, when they had gone to hear the band play, and so forth. When this recapitulation was quite at an end, he would say, "And now it is your turn, Klimoff, to tell me how you get on down there." After this he listened for a moment, and when no reply came, he made as though he had heard an answer, and said, "Ah! yes, that is just what I thought. How curious! Ah! ha! so it is like that down there. Ah! well! how different it must be when it is like that", and so forth.

He had a very special set of reflections when after seven summers some one's turn came to be exhumed. When he had delved down to the coffin, he rapped on the lid, and shouted, "Are you there, Vaclav!" After this he answered himself for the dead man, "I am." "Come then, creep out", he said again for himself; then with the greatest care he raised the lid of the coffin and, beholding the corpse which looked as if swathed in spider's webs, he said, "And pretty dainties thou dost get down there! What a figure thou art! Thy own children would not recognize thee if ever they were to meet thee! And not to have a rag on! Shocking! Pray, when did you comb yourself? And what is the fashion your head-gear follows? Nowadays we never wear it thus. To think of combing it thus." And so on. Then again he ran through the dead man's past life with him, and

here it pretty often came to pass that Bartos wept; just as if he had only then laid the corpse in the grave. Generally this exhumation concluded thus, "It is not well with thee down there; they have patched thee together but poorly. Alas! I fear thou wilt not hold together much longer." After this he touched the corpse, which thereupon fell to pieces into bones and a few clods of earth.

This man, just as he was compassionate towards the dead, was yet a hundred times more so towards the living. There was no grief for which he did not feel compassion, there was no misfortune which ever failed to touch his heart. But it was not perhaps the spurious compassion which is assumed to win general admiration; rather was it the compassion which, if possible without parade and bustle, is succeeded by compassionate deeds.

Once they brought a coffin to the burial-ground slovenly nailed together. No one followed it to the grave save one little girl three years of age. In the coffin lay a kind of a servant-girl—they called her Katchka. She was an illegitimate child, and the little girl who followed her to the grave was also illegitimate. How could any honest soul come to such a funeral?

For the nonce, Bartos had to play the priest. He repeated a few prayers over the grave, and when the little one wept over the coffin, he said, "Sprinkle it, little one, sprinkle it: maminka will sleep the lighter; for the tears of a child are the fairest waters of purification." When he wished to lower the coffin into the grave he saw that there was to help him only one servant who had driven the dead Katchka in an open-ribbed wagon. "Is there no one here but thee?" inquired Bartos angrily.

"And who, then, would come to the funeral of such a——", said the servant, and leered in a very saucy manner.

After this Bartos was silent, and filled in the grave over the corpse. When the grave was filled in, the little girl plaintively lamented that she had no one to go to, and that no one wanted her in the village.

"And why does no one want her", asked Bartos of the servant.

"And who, then, would trouble his head about her, about such a——", said the servant again, and once more leered in the same saucy way.

"What dost thou mean by 'such a one', thou boor!" retorted Bartos on the servant. "Did any other than He who created thee, create her? Wilt thou make thyself her judge, because she came

into the world thus and not otherwise? Thou knowest, forsooth, who is such a one, and who is not such a one."

And then he gave the servant a trifle to salve his wounded pride.

"Well, they all say it", observed the servant apologetically.

"All such boors as thou", retorted Bartos. And then he turned toward the little girl, and inquired what they called her.

"Staza", said the little damsel.

"You shall never go with him again, little Staza", said Bartos, and took her by the hand. "You shall stay here with me and maminka. Would you like?"

"I should like."

And from that day forth Bartos adopted little Staza as his own.

She had been with him six years and called him "tatinka", and so she was nine years old when Loyka's Frank brought the measure to Bartos, in order that by it Bartos might delve the grandfather's grave.

CHAPTER III

IT was a dreary mission for Frank to carry to the cemetery the measure for his grandfather's grave. Hitherto he had not in the least realized that it was a burial-ground. He had been there when somebody was being interred, when they sang hymns to him, prayed above his coffin, and wept for him. But what effect have all such ceremonies upon a mere child? Issuing from the burial-ground he sees the laughing green fields, the flowery hedgerows, he sees the weasels run along the hedgerows, and forthwith yon grim cemetery is forgotten, and is no longer the truth.

But now he was carrying thither the measure for his grandfather's grave. So, then, after all it was the truth. And then he saw how the crosses glowered above the wall into the surrounding district, how in the centre rose the red cross into the air, and on it the white-iron figure of the Christus; he saw, too, where dwelt the grave-digger and where was the bone-house—so, then, all that world of greenery around him was no longer true, only the cemetery spoke to him. Its speech was like the speech of some direful ogre; Frank scarcely understood the words, and was filled with a kind of vague horror at which the heart within him died away and his throat was half-choked with sobs.

The gate by which one entered the burial-ground was a wicket-gate, and painted the same colour as the great cross in the centre of the cemetery. When Frank had reached the gate he stopped outside it, and looked through the wicket into the cemetery. He looked upon it as upon that horrible Unknown, with which he must now make himself acquainted. He looked first at one grave and then at another, and then thought to himself, "Perhaps grandfather's will look pretty much like that one." Then he looked to see what state the graves were in. Some had half collapsed into the ground, some were covered with a fair green mound, on some were flowers, others were railed off, at the head of some stood a cross, at the head of others only a staff with a lath nailed across it to form a cross, at the head of a third was only a stave without any lath across it. In one corner of the burial-ground lay a few unburied bones.

Although it was a warm day at the beginning of June, and the air was clear and full of pleasant sounds, winter seemed to have entangled Frank in its icy folds. That icy winter breathed from the cemetery and from each and every grave within it. It seemed to Frank as though with the measure for his grandfather's grave he had taken upon himself an unpropitious task, and as though he had undertaken a mission to an accursed place which it was impossible to carry out without contamination. He stood by the gate as if frozen to the spot, not knowing how to fulfil the task entrusted to him.

At that moment came out of the grave-digger's dwelling the little Staza with a watering-pot in her hand. She came out into the cemetery and watered the graves, and all the while sang with a tiny treble, sweet, and tuneful, the words, "Odpocinte v pokoji verne dusicky" [1] ["Rest in peace ye faithful spirits"]. The grass and the flowers were half withered on the graves: where she sprinkled them they began to smell sweet, and their odour was wafted to the gate where Frank was standing.

It was a very tender sentiment which now filled the mind of Frank. That little girl fluttered like a butterfly over the graves, watering with the dew of life, like a spring shower, Nature's exhausted and withered offspring—and singing all the while "odpocinte v pokoji verne dusicky" ["Rest in peace ye faithful spirits"]. From the cemetery the blast of winter ceased to blow, a sportive presence seemed to linger there, something breathed

[1] Odpotchinte vpokoji vejrne dusitsky.

warm along the sward, perhaps even the dead felt it. Then once more Staza tripped away and vanished through the door of the grave-digger's abode, and the place was again untenanted. No song nor dance was there, only the jointed grasses raised aloft their jaded limbs. And now it seemed to Frank that after all the place was cold and gloomy.

But lo! there was Staza once again with fresh water and once again was like a butterfly and once again was buzzing like a bee and once again was watering the flowers everywhere, approaching even almost to the gate. Frank was apprehensive lest she should catch sight of him; if she caught sight of him all must be at an end; he stepped aside a little towards the wall and only just bent his head towards the gate and peeped. Staza was again singing "odpocinte v pokoji", and now she mingled with it divers other tunes. She drew them forth from her inmost soul one after the other, just as we draw out from a wardrobe dress after dress in order that we may look through them and give them an airing. Even those melodies needed an airing from time to time lest they should be jumbled together in her bosom.

Frank, standing by the gate, felt himself every moment growing more at ease; as though some one had given him in that accursed place a silver clue, and he had caught hold of it. Again he emerged from his hiding-place and boldly posted himself in front of the gate, indifferent now as to whether Staza saw him there or no.

Staza saw him, she stopped, she ceased to sing, and looked towards the gate only just a moment to see whether the young visitor wished to enter or whether he wished to give some message.

When Frank did not speak she advanced several steps towards the gate, and then said, "And so it is at your house, Frank, is it? Wait and I will go and call tatinka." And she ran into the grave-digger's abode. Frank was lost in amazement to know how the girl could read in his face what was passing in his inmost soul. We, however, need no explanation of the mystery. They had heard the funeral bell, and Bartos had said to Staza, "Where is it, I wonder?" And he waited expecting some one to give orders about a grave. Staza now saw Frank and said, as if repeating her father's question, "And so it is at your house!"

When Bartos sallied forth with Staza he had already a pick on his shoulder and Staza had in her hands a shovel, wherewith,

apparently, to throw out of the grave the loosened clods of earth, Bartos went directly to the gate, and said in a peaceful manner, "My dear Frank, perhaps it is grandfather, eh?" "It is grandfather", responded Frank in a voice still half drowned in tears. "Grandfather, grandfather", repeated Bartos to himself while opening the gate. "Ah! welladay, none escape the bed I make them here. Some of us fight longer than others against being sleepy, but each sleeps once."

Frank stepped into the burial-ground and handed over the measure. "The measure!" said Bartos, "your grandfather could just get under my chin, he was amongst the tallest men in the village, I know his measure. And where, pray, would you like the grave to be?" he inquired of Frank. "Take a look round, I will be with you almost immediately and set myself to delve the grave."

Bartos departed into his house in quest of sundry other implements, and now Frank cast his eyes here and there in search of a suitable spot. But he saw none, because even a grown-up person when overtaken by some real and sudden sorrow, is as one entranced so soon as anything is given him on which to come to a decision.

Here Staza led him by the hand, and said, "Do you know what, Frank, the people from Frishets lie by yonder wall, which faces Frishets; take a peep, yonder in that corner is the highest spot of ground, you can see it from the gate, and if you were to stand upon the grave in that corner you could catch a glimpse of Frishets."

It is hard to make out what internal connection these words had with one another; but they appeared to Frank to be so consecutive and reasonable that he agreed at once. "Well, then, there in the corner let the grave be", he said.

"And if you put a cross there it will be visible as far as your house; and if you plant a sapling there it will soon grow big enough to be visible also as far as your house", observed Staza, almost enthusiastically. And now, all at once, Frank discovered so many good reasons why the grave should be in that corner that nothing in the world would have induced him to permit of its being dug in any other spot.

"Yonder", said Staza, when Bartos returned, and there they began to delve.

These few and briefly spoken words had already deprived the cemetery in Frank's imagination of much of its horror. Bartos

dug, Staza shovelled out the loose earth, and Frank was a silent spectator. Bartos from time to time sang over some popular song which was in keeping with his trade, Staza's little voice accompanied him like a fiddle-string, and Frank formed the audience.

Bartos also occasionally muttered a few sentences which apparently had reference to the defunct, but which neither of the children at all understood; perhaps Bartos purposely spoke in such a way that Frank should not understand him, and should not have his sorrow awakened.

All at once Staza said, "Franky, when the grave is delved, we will lie in it together."

At these words Frank recoiled several steps. Staza laughed, and Bartos remained pensive. Frank recoiled like a machine without volition; Staza laughed at this, and Bartos, after a moment's pause, said, "We are digging close to your mother's grave, we must take care not to come upon her coffin, it has only been in the ground six years."

"Delve so that I may come quite close to maminka, then I shall sleep with her", said Staza, as if she consoled herself with the idea, for any one who had looked for melancholy from this poor child, would have proven himself completely ignorant of the heart of childhood. Staza was but three years of age when her mother died; in such a little heart sorrow cannot obtain a foothold, and after six years a child does not know what it means to have lost a mother.

After these words Frank drew near the grave on the pretence that he wanted to see whether Bartos and Staza would delve so cleverly as not to disturb the neighbouring grave.

"Thou hast never yet slept in a grave, Franky", said Staza not at all interrogatively, but just as though she were stating a certainty.

"In a grave?" inquired Frank in astonishment. Staza grew on graves as the grass and the floweret grew upon them. This cemetery was her playing-ground, her village green where she frolicked, where she delved and watered the plants and tended them; it was her school where with Bartos and on those graves she learnt little of literary lore, 'tis true, but more than all the patter of the class-room.

When she was yet quite young she had once asked Bartos, "What is my mamma doing in the grave?"

"She sleeps", said Bartos.

After this, the very next time Bartos delved a new grave, she laid herelf in it and slept there, as she said, "like maminka". From that time she slept in every grave as soon as it was delved, if it was not winter-time and if it did not rain. When any one died she consoled herself with the idea that she and Bartos would dig a new grave, and then that she could once more sleep in one. On the whole a funeral was a considerable source of pleasure to her. She saw plenty of people, she saw the priests, then she heard them sing and weep and pray. These funeral prayers became her own morning and evening prayers, these hymns were her hymns, and from the people whom she saw there she formed her notions about human beings, and about the great world. And so she always looked forward to a new funeral, because it was something novel.

She looked forward to it also because she heard new hymn tunes, and when the burial-service was over she sang what she had heard until the next funeral, which perhaps brought her a fresh supply of hymns. However, as she heard at every funeral "Odpocinte v pokoji verne dusicky" [Rest in peace ye faithful spirits], this hymn became her favourite. She did not know what these "verne dusicky" [faithful spirits] were, but putting two and two together in her head she had a notion that they were those who slept in the graves. Whenever she laid herself down to sleep, she said to herself in her inmost heart that she would be a "verna dusicka". And sometimes when she had slept there a long time she said to herself on awakening, "To-day I have been a long time a faithful spirit."

So then when Frank received her question whether he had ever slept in a grave with so much astonishment, she said, "You have never yet slept like a faithful spirit." And after a time she added, "Stop, and we will be faithful spirits together."

Frank, however, of course, did not comprehend the connection between these expressions; however, they pleased him somehow. When he looked at Staza, he felt as though he had to say, "What thou sayest pleaseth me. Why should I not wish to be with thee a faithful spirit?"

After digging some time longer, Bartos inquired of Frank how his grandfather had died, whereupon Frank narrated about the clod of earth, about the balcony, and how after this his grandfather fell dead at his feet. This narrative was listened to by Staza with great interest so that for a while she even ceased to shovel out the loose earth, and looked upon Frank as a man

of mature wisdom, for had he not had a grandfather who was very, very old, and did he not lead about this grandfather even unto his death?

"Good," said Bartos after a while, "we have now come close beside thy mamma." Thus was Frank's grandfather's grave all but delved, and because Frank saw that it now already fatigued Staza to shovel out the earth from such a depth, he took her shovel and said, "Give it me. I also wish to do something for grandfather." He stepped into Staza's place, and shovelled out the earth. Staza sat beside the grave, and looked to see whether he was an adept.

And now it seemed to Frank as though the grave was deprived of its horror with every shovelful of earth which he flung out. So when Bartos said, "Done!" Frank had already no wish to depart; he leant on his spade and said to Staza, "So, then, come to me, faithful spirit!"

Bartos shouldered his implements and paying no further heed to the children, betook himself home.

"Do you know what?" said Staza, "I will sow clover on your grandfather's grave."

"Why?" inquired Frank.

"But dost thou not know? And yet I know that thy grandfather loved bees—he had so many hives. Bees fly to clover, they will speed hither to grandfather's grave, and grandfather will tell them the message he wishes them to give to thee."

"Sow it!" said Frank; and now he longed for the clover to overgrow the grave, and that the bees might fly hither.

Then Staza sprang into the grave, seated herself in one corner, and Frank seated himself in the other.

"Thy mamma has also clover on her grave", suggested Frank. On this Staza grubbed with her fingers in the direction where her mother lay, until she came to the coffin, then she tapped upon it with her finger and the mouldy wood gave out a droning sound.

"To-day I shall sleep beside mamma", said Staza, and her eyes sparkled with delight. She had no very clear idea of what a mother meant, but she believed, that it was a fine thing to sleep beside mamma. And she had advised Frank to have the grave dug in this spot for no other reason than that she might get near her mother.

"Shall you sleep here all night?" asked Frank.

"Why should I not? All night I shall sleep here and to-morrow also I shall sleep beside mamma."

"Who was thy mama?" asked Frank.

"Who was she?" said Staza. "Why, who could she be, when she was my mamma?"

This reply satisfied Frank, at all events if he had tried all his life he himself could not have invented a wiser one.

The sun set and the shadows lay upon the cemetery. In the grave it was already dusk.

"Aren't you frightened, Franky?" inquired Staza.

"Since it is in the grave in which my grandfather will have to be I am not frightened", answered Frank, but he was frightened all the same.

"If you are frightened seat yourself beside me, we will sleep together or we can talk", said Staza; and she at once made a place beside her where Frank esconced himself without further invitation.

And they sat beside each other like two birdies in a nest.

"If thou art frightened, I will lead thee home", said Staza. "I am not frightened."

And now when Frank saw this little girl so completely without any fear, he said that he would not be frightened either, and that he would not go home. At that moment he felt so fond of his new companion that he could not bring himself to go home. He was happier seated by Staza's side, and was with her in the grave.

After a while the moon rose, and the whole cemetery shone white like molten silver. The moonbeams penetrated even into the grave, all the interior of the grave looked as though it had been whitewashed, and when Frank looked at Staza she was white also. Frank involuntarily nestled closer to her, and Staza laid her sleepy head on his bosom.

Staza slept with "maminka" beside Frank, they were together "verne dusicky".

Later in the night if they had not been asleep they would have heard the tramp of feet approach the cemetery, they would have heard a rapping at the grave-digger's window, they would have heard the voice of the grave-digger, and afterwards all these feet and different voices approach the grave. But because they slept they heard nothing of it.

Loyka, the peasant, it must be understood, when the evening was already far advanced and no Frank appeared at home, fear-

ing some mishap, went with Vena and a domestic in the direction of the cemetery to see if he could not meet with Frank somewhere or other. And when they failed to find him, they went as far as the grave-digger's to make inquiries about him. "He was here until quite late this evening," said Bartos, "whether he has departed I know not, but it is possible that he is lying in the grave."

"In the grave?" inquired Loyka with surprise.

"In the grave", replied Bartos with a peaceful face, and he led them to the grave. "Look how prettily they have fallen asleep together. If you choose awaken him, but I would not awaken him if I were you."

They slept like two birdies, and knew nothing of what was going on around them.

"When he cannot sleep any longer with his grandfather, he spends the night in his grave," said Vena, "do not awaken him, pantata."

Loyka, however, was of a different opinion, and awoke Frank, and this caused Staza also to awake. The boy was drowsy, leapt to his feet, and looked about him. Over the burial-ground streamed the white light of the moon, the crosses stretched forth their giant arms, by the grave stood his father and bade him come home with him. Frank did not at once collect his ideas; only he knew that he was with Staza and that he was not at home.

"Let him be; children are children", said Bartos.

"But I order him", shouted Loyka vehemently, and wanted to jump into the grave.

"Softly, softly", said Bartos quietly; and held Loyka with his hand so that the peasant could not stir a muscle.

"Here I am master—everything only by my consent", and he did not allow Loyka to take a step forward.

"I am master of the boy", said Loyka.

"So you are", said Bartos. "These children consecrated with their breath the grave of your father, and did you wish to desecrate it? Are the wrongs that you have already done him during life, then, not enough?"

These words smote Loyka's conscience. He ceased from insisting further and in order, perhaps, to escape from hearing the recital of his own past deeds over the open grave, departed from the spot without more words.

Now the children heard the steps and voices receding; but being still frightened they once more cuddled close to one another, and

before very long were again asleep, Staza on the bosom of Frank and Frank having his hand entwined around her neck.

When they awoke in the morning, Staza said, "If only I had thee for a brother."

Frank still held her head in his hands, and said, "Well, thou hast me for a brother, if thou wishest."

Above the grave folks say that truth is spoken, these children were speaking in the grave itself, so what they said was certainly the truth.

After this Staza shared with Frank her bread at breakfast, shared her dinner and everything else, led him all over the cemetery, taught him the airs which she had learnt, and by evening they had more than once sung together in a duet. And because on the morrow his grandfather's funeral was to be, Frank said that he would not go home at all that day, but would wait until they brought thither his grandfather, and for that once they would still be faithful spirits.

Staza told him to pay attention and notice what tunes were sung at his grandfather's funeral, and she would learn them all by heart, then they would sing them over again by the grave-side until the earth had been raked over his grandfather's coffin.

And when the funeral took place, that came to pass which no one the least expected. For while people thought that Frank would follow the corpse with tears and miserable lamentations, Frank never wept at all. And while they thought that Loyka's wife, the peasant woman, would not shed a tear, she sobbed and wept as though she were broken-hearted, and looked as if she wished to tear her hair.

The peasant woman thus conducted herself, because she wished to efface the impression left by her previous behaviour. She deceived none, but she fancied that she deceived them.

Frank and Staza listened what sort of hymns were sung above the grave that they might learn them afterwards.

When the funeral was over, Frank said, "Now that we are like brother and sister, thou must come to us at Frishets that I may entertain thee at our house."

Staza went with him; he led her by the hand and the neighbours pointed at Frank and said, "Just look at that boy: he went to dig his grandfather's grave and out of that grave he is leading—— Staza."

The neighbours' wives said, "Look! look! he is going about with Staza, with that——she will be just like her mother."

Frank said to Staza, "Staza, guess whom I love better than anybody else."

"Whom?"

"Thee."

Staza said, "I am so glad for thee to lead me about that I could walk by thy side for ever. I have never gone about with any one before."

And they went about together before everybody.

CHAPTER IV

THE Loykas, man and wife, by the bedside of their defunct parent, perhaps, left the impression of being an avaricious couple. And cruelly should we wrong them if we held them up to scorn as avaricious. Avaricious they were only towards the pensioner on their bounty, and in this they had the common vice of perhaps a thousand of our families. To be pensioned off—that was to be the enemy of the property. That the pensioner and father were one and the same person, did not diminish the grave crime of being pensioned off by a tax upon the farm produce. The pensioner effaced the father, and the Loykas saw in their father only a pensioner on their bounty. And granted that the pensioner did them a good turn now and then—that was his duty as a father; but the Loykas did not dare ever to do him a good turn—he was pensioned off, and one's pensioner must be thwarted everyway.

And yet the Loykas were not in this matter by a single hair worse than many others; I say it with a sigh, but you find Loykas certainly in every second or third village.

It was not, then, avariciousness; it was the relation between the peasant and the father who had pensioned himself off. For in other respects the Loykas had all the good qualities of the Czech peasant. They were honest, affectionate, and hospitable. From their farmstead no needy person ever departed without aid. If a beggar had gone through the village and departed empty-handed from every house, he went to the Loykas's certain of being relieved. If strolling fiddlers or harpers came to the village they stopped at the Loykas's as at their own home, there they got their victuals, passed several nights, and no one ever inquired when they meant to be off. Ay! the Loykas had two chambers specially set apart in the court-yard next to the coach-house, and these

chambers were open all the year round; any one who had no roof of his own might take up his quarters in them. And they were occupied all the year round, strolling musicians roosted like birds of passage.

Tinklers tarried there till they had mended all the Loykas's pots and pans and those of the whole of Frishets.

The kalounkar [tape-pedlar] who walked from Domazlik, and only occasionally went home for goods, dwelt in the Loykas's chambers as though he were at home with all his family. Sometimes he was there several Sundays, got his victuals from Loyka's kitchen, and had not even to say thank you for them. So it had been all his life long. The kalounkar's grandfather and great-grandfather had received hospitality there from the Loykas—then, how could they refuse him a home there? Surely they would call down the wrath of heaven upon themselves should they venture to dismiss him. The kalounkar [tape-pedlar] was himself born there, his present young family was born there, the old Loykas were sponsors in baptism to the old kalounkar, the younger Loykas were sponsors to the wee kalounkars, so now there was a family connection. The Loykas would have felt ill at ease if at certain particular seasons they had been without kalounkar and without tinkers. Perhaps if their humble friends had not been at their house, the Loykas would have sent to search the district for them. At pilgrimage times, at festival times, or about the season of the village gala—they must needs be at the Loykas's several Sundays before the great event, and several Sundays after it. So that, indeed, there were but few occasions in the year when they were absent.

Besides the kalounkar who sold ribbons, the cloth-pedlar walked the district, and he had even his stores at the Loykas's. On Monday he drew forth from his chest various samples, beside cloth, all kinds of kerchiefs and stuffs for dresses, then he waited several days until Sunday drew nigh, or until the vigil of the village gala, and then he shouldered his pack and went. If it rained or if the weather was threatening, he did not sally forth, and all that time was an extra hand at table in common with the other servants.

And many an occasion occurred, moreover, when Loyka's hospitality was reckoned upon or missed. People came to have their sieves mended or their knives ground, and also people drove or walked round by the Loykas's with their implements from the field.

Thither also came people from the village, and inquired, "Is not the sieve-maker here at your house? Is not the knife-grinder here? We wanted sieves; we wanted to have our knives sharpened." Without fail the sieve-maker appeared regularly before harvest, and the knife-grinder as regularly before the village festival.

In those chambers beside the coach-house reigned life and jollity. There the conversation never flagged, and in the evening even Loyka, the peasant, and sometimes, finally, his wife would pay them a visit. Here all that occurred in the district of general interest was recapitulated. So that you might refer to the Loykas's as to a well-informed gazette. The kalounkar [tape-pedlar] and the cloth-pedlar tramped the whole district and had free access into every family—who then could know more than the cloth-pedlar and the kalounkar?

And then when a fiddler and harper came, there was nothing for it but that he should play and sing over every song he knew of modern and of ancient date, every event consigned to verse, songs of comic character and sprightly pieces of music—then the evenings were gay indeed. Hither, too, from the village a few stray folk would come and form an audience. Hither also Frank led his young companion, with whom he ensconced himself somewhere in a corner and listened.

The narratives which specially pleased Frank and his parents, mostly dated from long winter evenings which include the whole circle of the marvellous, from fierce banditi to black dogs and white women, so that the young people were half dazed with fright if they had to find their way home across the court-yard or across the village green.

Such was the hospitality of the Loykas that they became proverbial. And these same Loykas treated their own father who was pensioned off upon a reserved share of the field produce, so badly that he did not even dare draw water from their well!

In these chambers was also a constant guest—Vena, the general messenger, the half crazed man. If the Loykas had told him that they did not wish to have him any longer about the place, he would not have believed that they spoke in earnest, so thoroughly was he domesticated at their house.

Those chambers by the coach-house would no longer have been themselves if Vena had not been there. With him every one who entered them must sharpen his wit, and from him every one must submit to receive some rebuff either spoken in jest or earnest.

With his so-called folly Vena provoked much merriment, and by what he said in earnest he raised the merriment a degree higher; it is often the fate of truth that we receive it with laughter.

And thus so many mouths were fed on and off the estate that if Loyka, the peasant proprietor, had shewn all these guests the door, he might have given three shares of the produce as a pension to his father and still have had enough for himself. But, of course, such an idea had never even occurred to any one; thus it had ever been on Loyka's farm so long as he could remember; it had been thus all through the life-time of his grandfather and even earlier. And yet we have heard that Loyka, the peasant, went to law about every quarter of wheat with his own father. What congruity was there in all this?

All whom we have mentioned: the tinkers, the family of the kalounkar, the cloth-pedlar, the sieve-maker, the knife-grinder, the fiddlers, and the harpers, assembled at the Loykas's when Frank's grandfather died, and they were there when Frank led Staza to the farmstead. They assembled at his grandfather's death as if they had been summoned.

The fiddlers and the harpers considered it their duty to present themselves to see whether their services would be required. It was the custom in our districts to go by easy stages from the burial to music, from music to lively music, from lively music to a downright banquet, and from a banquet to a debauch. Just as if at the funeral they had been sad against their will, and required a lively banquet quickly to counterpoise their weight of woe. They took good care to keep sorrow at arm's length, and must need have something to divert them from it. Or perhaps genuine sorrow is so rare and portentous a thing that it is necessary to give it a fillip with a flourish of light music whensoever it reveals itself. Or perhaps true sorrow is a superfluous thing, if we needs must lay our dead in the grave with sighs and tears through which all the time we catch the sound of instruments which are tuning for a dance. Or perhaps our sorrow is but as a game of play from which we shake ourselves free in a moment, and which with a dance is ended. But at any rate such is the fact: after a funeral there must be music, and music of a light and cheerful sort.

So then the musicians came confident of employment, and the Loykas conscientiously and sedulously completed all their preparations.

Before the funeral procession issued forth from the door, Loyka's wife had already arranged her kitchen; fat beasts slaughtered the day before were already in chops and quarters on the truncheons or were frying on the hobs. Then Loyka's wife followed the corpse, in order to cry her prescribed modicum of tears—to cry a good bottleful, and it was just as necessary and just as much belonged to her sphere as the sauces and the Sauerkraut.

After the funeral, then Loyka's house wore all the appearance of a festival. The guests who were staying in the house and those who were invited for the day sat down to a richly furnished table, which in the form of a horseshoe occupied the whole of the principal apartment; the musicians seated themselves in the hall by the pantry, and after a few moments everything was as merry as at a wedding.

It was a custom in the Loykas's family for the males to marry late in life. Thus our defunct centenarian had not married until wellnigh his fortieth year: Loyka, the peasant proprietor, not until after his thirtieth year, consequently he was now sixty and his wife fifty. Joseph, his eldest son, was now about four-and-twenty—we know the age of Frank. Loyka, the peasant, in contradistinction to the vejminkar [pensioner] was called young Loyka. But after the death of the hundred-year-old grandfather, Loyka, the peasant, became all at once old Loyka, and his son Joseph was promoted to the dignity of young Loyka.

Joseph seemed fully alive to the importance of the day. He did not seat himself at the table, but with watchful eyes superintended and arranged the dishes and liquors as they issued from the kitchen and the cellar, and in the dining-room he attended to the wants of all.

This did not escape the observation of those present, and as soon as conversation became general some of the neighbours turned to Loyka, and remarked, "Your son makes an excellent hospodar."

"Ay, ay, and doubtless his kind father will not leave him long to wait—and why should you grudge yourself repose when you have so stout and goodly a successor."

Loyka, the peasant proprietor, smiled self-consciously to himself at these words, as though he meant to say by that smile:—"Just wait a little, and you will soon hear what I have determined in my mind."

Then when Joseph came into the apartment looking like a bouquet, and threw a glance around him like a recognized commander, the neighbours again said:—

"So Joseph, my lad, you have but to look out for a sweetheart somewhere, your father yonder says he should like to have a daughter in his house, the sooner the better, and his wife agrees with him."

"You are rather late with your counsels," suggested another, "he hath pretty well selected already." And at this the speaker winked at Barushka, who sat near the middle of the table and who, when these words were uttered, bowed her head over her plate that people might not see her face.

"Prithee, who'll have me", inquired Joseph airily, and at these words Barushka again raised her head from her plate; Joseph went out of the room.

After this some of the neighbours said almost in a breath, "Oh! Barushka, pray, what makes you so hot?"

"I am not hot", said Barushka, and looked about her with determination into which she had partially nudged herself in order that, if possible, she might still conceal what had now no further need of concealment.

After this a burst of music was heard from the hall, and in the dining-room all laughed at what they had said, and continued to say more like it.

When the music was over in the hall, Loyka, the peasant proprietor, rose and posted himself with some solemnity by the table. He wished to address the assemblage. Just before he spoke he looked at his wife, and when she nodded assent, he cleared his throat and thus began:—

"Dear neighbours and neighbours' wives! As to us old folk," and here he pointed to himself, his wife, and his neighbour Kmoch, the father of Barushka, "we have quite come to an agreement. And so if Barushka has nothing to say against it, we will settle the day of the wedding, and you are all invited to it."

Here Loyka lapsed into silence: he looked all over the assemblage to see what sort of effect his words had produced. They had produced an effect.

"I could have told you so just this minute."

"Yes, God grant them happiness, they will make a nice couple."

"Barushka is at ease now, she is not hot any longer."

"And where is Joseph?"

"Oh! not far off, I warrant. Perhaps he is listening somewhere."

One of the neighbours rose in order that he might fetch Joseph; the others made a place beside Barushka, and when Joseph entered the apartment, he was greeted with a hearty volley of congratulations, and the neighbours who led him in pointed to the vacant place beside Barushka, and said, "There, that is your place."

"We were surprised", said the neighbours' wives. "Hitherto we never had the least suspicion", but they had had a pretty shrewd suspicion all the same, because they had already several times talked the whole matter over at home, on the way to and from chapel, on the road to and from market, on the village green and behind the barn.

Joseph seated himself beside Barushka, and when silence again prevailed, he said, "Oh! Barushka, prithee, why not? Since our parents wish us to wed why should we not be man and wife", and after this he imprinted a smacking kiss on her lips, so audible, indeed, was it that every one yielded to an equally audible fit of laughter.

"And people say there was no understanding between them."

"The deuce! they understood one another perfectly well. Such a smacking kiss is not given for the first time."

Glasses were now raised and were emptied to the health of the young couple.

When after this they again sat down, Loyka, the peasant, still remained standing; not having yet said everything he wished to say, he prepared himself for a further continuation of his speech in a solemn manner. As if at a secret signal a flourish of music resounded from the inner hall, and then there was complete silence throughout the apartment.

And Loyka, the peasant proprietor, began again. "And, verily, on the following terms: The farmstead will be adjudged to you young people, and I with my wife, look you here, will still be hospodar for six years in it. But again, if that is to say we grow tired of managing the estate as hospodari, we shall leave you the entire management, and you will give us for the term of those six years a quarter of all the produce of the farm. Only after the six years, shall we reserve to ourselves the pensioner's [vejminkar's] portion, but there is time enough to think about that."

Now a pause occurred, and Loyka waited for a reply. But no reply came; Joseph did not stir, Barushka looked at her father, then at Joseph, and the rest of the company looked at one another. Loyka again took up the thread of his discourse. "If you are not contented with the conditions I have proposed, good. I and my wife, look you here, have the right to manage the estate for six more years, and only when those years are over need we discuss the question of your marriage. If, then, we are willing to grant the farm and house to you young people now at once, reserving to ourselves the management for the six years, we do this for the sake of you young people, because we know how you love one another, and that you are already all in all to one another."

Now Joseph rose to reply, and the answer was at the tip of his tongue. "What you settle, dear parent, must be held binding. How, then, could we venture to prescribe to you how long you are to be hospodar? Be hospodar as long as you like. Grant that the farm be adjudged to us, permit us to espouse one another, and all the rest will arrange itself in the fear of God."

Then Barushka rose, went to Loyka's wife, embraced her round the neck, kissed her hand, and said, "Pani mamma, if you should wish to manage the household until the day of your death, I will bear you on my arm, and will love you above everything. Only let me be Joseph's wife and your daughter. I desire nothing more."

These words tripped quite glibly from Barushka's tongue, and no doubt came from her heart, and yet she spoke them with a kind of forced energy as though she was anxious that they should not miss their mark. Loyka's aged wife pressed her to her own bosom and embraced her. Loyka wiped away his tears, and at the same instant the neighbours wiped both their eyes and noses, because in all public assemblages tears take this direct route to the ground.

"Oh! what a daughter that is," said the neighbours' wives to her father Kmoch, "how well she expresses herself, too; you must love her, indeed, you must. And how proud you must be to have such a daughter."

"How could I fail to feel delight in her", said Kmoch. "She takes after me: that is just as I should have spoken."

Then Barushka also stepped up to Loyka, kissed his hand, and repeated in somewhat different words all that she had said a moment before to her future mother-in-law. Here again during

these reciprocal endearments you might hear tears falling, only that this time they were still more audible, because just then a braying of instruments resounded from the inner hall whereby the solemnity of the moment gained a sort of official confirmation.

"Dear children," said Loyka, "so long as we manage the estate, we shall also dwell here in the principal house, and you will be banished for the time to the pensioner's [vejminkar's] house, where dwelt your grandfather. When we cease to manage the estate we shall ourselves go into the pensioner's house, and you will shift hither into the principal building."

Barushka said, "Dear parent, say no more about it at present; what you settle, that same must be; and were you to settle that we should take up our abode for the six years even in the two chambers where lodge your humbler guests, I would still bear you on my arms."

At these Barushkine periods Joseph only smiled and nodded as if to testify that he agreed with every thing that Barushka had said.

There are people who give way to genuine weeping as soon as they hear anything repeated in a solemn manner, even though the words repeated be wholly destitute of meaning to them. We hear parents weep to whom their children repeat the polite platitudes their instructor has taught them, and which are quite unintelligible both to the parents and to the children. We hear strangers and members of a family weep at a wedding as soon as a withered old parson begins to patter from a book divers reflections and pious admonitions; we hear strangers, too, weep at a funeral as soon as the priest begins to recite Latin words which nowadays certainly no one comprehends. And so how could all these good folk who were present have failed now to give way to audible weeping at the announcement of Loyka so solemnly pronounced, sanctioned by strains of music, further affirmed by the protestations of Barushka, reiterated with energy intelligently and eloquently expressed.

So infectious was the sobbing and gulping which occurred in the apartment, that there was not a single eye which remained undimmed with tears. Both Loyka and Loyka's wife wept, only two people remained proof against this infection, and these were Joseph and Barushka herself.

When what we have here described was all over, Loyka, the peasant proprietor, sat himself down by himself, and then looked greatly exhausted. Just as though he had toiled much and must

rest himself awhile. He held the table with both his hands; his head sunk on his breast; his eyes stared vacantly at his hands; his breast heaved stertorously. In this posture he remained for a considerable space of time without change and, save his stertorous breathing, was like a statue.

From his strange reverie he was rudely disturbed by Joseph, who bade clear away the table, because the guests wished to have a dance. And so they were to disengage the table from Loyka's hands as best they might, and after this Loyka rose from his seat and roused himself from these his thoughts.

In the inner hall resounded from harps and violins the merry music of the dance, and in a brief space of time, all who had any pretensions to youthfulness were spinning in the waltz. Even old Loyka took a turn, because Barushka came especially to him and requested the honour of a dance. And then all the rest of the company stepped out from the circle and allowed Loyka and Barushka to perform a solo, clapped with their hands, snapped their fingers, and laughed when they saw how frisky and active old Loyka was, and how he in no respect fell short of any of the young men there present.

And here old Loyka himself wistled like a young man, as if he were celebrating his own wedding, until all who were present were struck with astonishment, who although they laughed with pleasure at the sight of his youthfulness, still thought in their heart of hearts that it was not quite in keeping with Loyka's age and character.

After a while the rest of the company were again in the circle, this time Joseph also who had received Barushka from the hands of his father, and now all tootled and whistled, young and old.

Who would have said, if he had entered at this moment, that these people were at a funeral in the forenoon, and were now continuing the funeral solemnities?

And yet there were two small souls who kept it still in mind—Frank and Staza, who, from the inner hall among the musicians, looked at all that was passing in the dining-room.

And so, during an interval, while there was a pause in the dance and only the sound of whistling was to be heard in the dining-room, a kind of consultation here took place between Frank and the musicians, and before any one expected what was toward, Frank and Staza struck up with the hymn "Odpocinte v pokoji verne dusicky" ["Rest in peace ye faithful spirits"].

The musicians, fiddlers and harpers, accompanied them. Staza's little voice penetrated like silver, Frank's voice faithfully seconded hers, and then the music accompanied it all—it was as though tears were falling.

If you are well-versed in tales of magic you will recollect how all at once everything in a castle was turned to stone. And thus at this song everything was turned to stone in the dining-room. Here some one stretched out his hand to his neighbour and the hand remained stretched out, here another had raised his hand to tootle with it and the hand remained raised above his head, and the tootling died away in his throat. Here another wanted to turn to his neighbour, he had not quite turned towards him, neither was he altogether turned away from him. And when Joseph wanted to drink with Barushka he proffered her his glass indeed, but the glass remained in his hand, and the polite speech remained unspoken.

Into the midst of all that whistling, tootling, and babbling of tongues a knife had worked its way, and smitten all with a sudden blow. Two childish little voices had taken upon themselves to hew down an ogre, and the ogre shivered and reeled to the ground. A morsel of genuine feeling claimed a hearing, and what was untrue and unnatural tumbled to pieces like a house of cards.

The grandfather still had the last word to-day. He spoke by the mouths of those children who constrained even the harpers and fiddlers to their cause, and all that gay company in the dining-room again knew that it was the day of his funeral. Not gladly certainly, but no one could say, I do not know it.

CHAPTER V

AFTER a brief space of time the Loykas celebrated a wedding. The festivities passed off at Kmoch's house—at the father's of the bride; after the feasting Joseph conducted his wife to his homestead. And here the harpers and fiddlers who had still remained there since the day of the grandfather's funeral played before the hall-doors as soon as the bride had entered the house, thus welcoming her with a burst of triumphant music. How could they do otherwise?

But they soon found out their mistake. "Just clear off the

threshold, will you?" said the young mistress with such precision, that he whom it touched did not venture to reply.

Still, all the same, one of the musicians ventured to plead an excuse. "But our good old master ordered us to play here", said he in exculpation of himself and his companions.

"You lie!" said Barushka. "Your good old master never orders anything which I do not like. Just be gone from here in double quick time."

The musicians did not finish their performance nor did they finish what they had further wished to say; old Loyka stood as though a stream of hot water was running down his back, and Loyka's aged wife, had it not been the very day of the wedding, would, perhaps have stoutly seconded her lord and master.

The musicians did not finish their performance, and trailed like draggled chickens across the court-yard toward the coach-house, and entered their two chambers.

"And that is a pretty welcome", said they to one another.

"Truly, she begins wondrous well", they murmured.

"This is something new on the estate", they added.

Loyka's aged wife still could not bring herself to believe that the new bride wished so ruthlessly to abolish on the very threshold of her new life what had been for so long a series of years a speciality of the family. "When you danced here at your grandfather's funeral I did not think, Barushka, that you were an enemy to music", said she with a certain asperity.

"I cannot stand things where they are out of place", replied Barushka with yet greater asperity. "Music is in its place at an ale-house, not at such a farm as this. I could not endure to live under the same roof with a pack of strolling scamps, with whom one loses caste, because that class of menials deems itself our equal. And a dubious light is thrown on the management of an estate which fosters vagabonds."

Here Loyka's aged wife recognized to her surprise that a crisis had come [lit., the sickle had come to the grindstone] and that she must not easily yield.

"We hand over the estate to you in excellent order, and it would be well if there were never any worse things to complain of", said she.

"Still, for my part, I could not bear to live in a building where everybody thought that he had the right of entrance, just as though it was an ale-house. Joseph will see to it that this rabble

of vagabonds does not take up its quarters here a night longer", added the young bride with the same asperity.

"Joseph?" said Loyka's aged wife, and it was half an interrogation and half an asservation that Joseph would do no such thing. She pronounced it with a taunting smile as if she had said to Barushka, "You are quite mistaken in Joseph, I assure you."

"Yes, Joseph", said Barushka.

"Joseph see to it that the musicians be warned off the farm who have been here all their lives?" inquired the elder peasant woman in the same manner.

"What has been need not be always. There are things which after a time go out of fashion."

On this Joseph rose, and said, "Pray, why should I not tell them? I will go and tell them at once."

Barushka looked at her mother-in-law as though she would say, "Now, what have you got to say?"—and she smiled tauntingly.

"And this is the girl who was willing to take me on her arms", thought the peasant woman to herself, and all at once she seemed to stand on the edge of an abyss.

And Joseph, exactly as though he and Barushka had just finished a game of cards, quitted the apartment and betook himself to the musicians.

"Will you be so good as to clear off at once from here", said he. "My wife does not wish to have people hanging about the place, and I do not wish it either."

Here the musicians felt as if they had received a severe shock. "Well, the Lord God reward you", said they, collecting their instruments in order that they might clear out, and they looked at Joseph as though they did not yet know whether it was jest or earnest. But it was earnest, for when they had gone out across the threshold he did not call them back nor when they crossed the court-yard, only the dogs whined a sad farewell to their old friends who went out by the gate on to the village green.

Joseph still remained by the gate until the musicians were fairly out of sight. And here the family of the kalounkar [tape-pedlar], the cloth-pedlar, and all who were still present, looked at him in a kind of uncertainty to see whether it affected them also.

But Joseph did not leave them long in suspense. He leered at their things, he leered at them, and said, "You must take it all away this evening."

And here the cloth-pedlar and the kalounkar looked at Joseph as though they would have said, "Art thou that Joseph who sat here beside us, and listened to our story-telling."

And out loud the kalounkar said, "I must entreat you, dear Mister Joseph, to ask our good old master and mistress to come hither that we may thank them for all their kindness. We do not venture to present ourselves in their apartments, and yet how can we go away without bidding them adieu?"

"There is no need, I assure you, I will give them any message you may choose to leave."

Here the old kalounkar said almost crying, "Then tell them that the old kalounkar salutes them a hundred times, and that he thanks them for this roof which they have condescended to lend him for so many years, and that he never supposed that he would have to leave on the very day when he thought that a feast would be toward."

"I will tell him, I will not forget", said Joseph, cutting short further explanations, turned, and went into the principal apartment.

And thus in a brief space of time were banished from the estate, after the musicians, the kalounkar, the cloth-pedlar, and the rest. At a moment which is the sweetest in human life, at a moment which every family scores in letters of gold on the page of its domestic history—at that moment in sorrow left this house several people who by right of dear custom considered that it was in part their home.

"Pray, where are the pedlar and the kalounkar being banished", said old Loyka, seeing from the window how they were trailing across the court-yard with their wares.

"I have purged the chambers of them also", said Joseph in elucidation. "They were no better than the musicians, they had no right to hang about the place. If we young people have to take up our abode in the pensioner's house we shall want these chambers for ourselves, and not for all sorts of underlings. It would be quite a sin if we were to tolerate them any longer."

There cannot be a severer blow for an old man than to hear his past life and actions condemned in a single word; and this happened when Joseph declared Loyka's previous system of hospitality to be a sin. And if there was anything praiseworthy at the Loykas's it was, perhaps, this, that their court-yard opened freely to shelter any who wished to enter.

Here Loyka, as he sat, so he got up, burning with ill-repressed emotions, and said, "How, pray, dare you act thus when these chambers are mine."

"If you are so sorry for your poor lodgers, call them back again", said Joseph with a mocking smile.

"And so I will call them back! Let one of the servants go and call them back."

"The servants will go when I send them, dear father", said Joseph with the same mocking smile. "The estate is once for all adjudged to me, and I think that the servants belong to me also."

"What is that!" shrieked old Loyka.

"Come, come, there is no need to explain what you know quite as well as I do; the servants belong to the estate, and the estate belongs to me."

"How so? And can I not venture to dismiss a servant if I choose?" inquired old Loyka in just the same sharp tones as at first.

"You can, just as I can take him on again if I choose. If you send him away, perhaps I shall take him on again, if he suits me."

"And how, pray, dare you act thus when I am to be hospodar here six years longer?" And for this question he mustered all his self-importance.

"On my estate?" inquired Joseph drily.

"On thy estate!" screamed old Loyka, and here already his voice quivered with the welling tears. "And so, perhaps, you will tell me after a while that I may drag myself off after yon musicians and kalounkari."

"Prithee, father, reflect, I have never said any such thing, although I cannot conceive how it is that these harpers have managed to grow so dear to your heart."

"May your tongue be turned to stone!" yelled old Loyka in wrath and anguish. At that moment he was scarcely to be recognized. He seated himself, and his tongue seemed turned to stone. He wished to speak and revolved in his mind this or that sentence, but all failed him, like a broken bough. His speech was thick as though he had been drinking, and as though he had to babble instead of speaking. Then he slouched, as we say, "a peasant's ell" upon the table, leant his chin upon his hand, opened wide his eyes, half laughed and half wept at the same time, and said several times to himself, "So it has come to this! so it has come to this!"

This altercation was sufficient for the first time. Motes seemed to flicker before Loyka's old eyes, and after a considerable pause, he said, "Wife, lead me to bed." He did not even trust himself to go alone.

And the young folks took up their abode in the dwelling which had been previously occupied by their grandfather, which was called on the farm "the pension house" [na vejminku: i. e. on condition], and to which we will give the same name; the old people dwelt in the house they had hitherto occupied, which was called the farmhouse [na statku], and which we also will so name.

In the farmhouse the Loykas were to be hospodar for six years.

When harvest time drew near the farmstead filled with harvesters and harvestwomen. It was gay in the court-yard below. Scythes and sickles clashed, rakes were being mended, everywhere there was a sound of hammering—just as if a clock was striking in the court-yard. Old Loyka, who had scarcely spoken five words since his son's wedding-day, grew young again at the season of harvest. He was so accustomed to those two chambers by the coach-house, he used always to find there some wayfarer with whom he gladly conversed, and since his son's wedding-day these chambers had been empty. And it oppressed him to have no one to converse with. But at harvest time the farmstead filled with people, moreover, harvestmen and harvestwomen filled the two chambers, and so Loyka felt as though he had come to himself again. Now once more people went to and fro, the court-yard was full of voices and the noise of preparations—so old Loyka was once again contented. Often at early morning he might be seen pacing to and fro the court-yard, pleased with the flavour of his pipe, and with a settled smile upon his face.

During the few Sundays which had elapsed since his son's wedding-day several years seemed to have settled upon his head; to-day he felt as though in the flight of time those few years had been recalled. The harvesters and harvestwomen saluted him, smiled upon him, conversed with him, inquired of this and that, and old Loyka loved to converse. To-day he had been talking since early morning, he wished to compensate for the silence of several past weeks.

The harvesters were glad to go and seek employment at the Loykas's; here they halted first when they came to the village—Loyka might choose the stoutest of them all. Also to-day he

made this selection. Every harvester called him "pantata", and that pleased him; it was evident, he thought within himself, that they still accounted him somebody on the estate, and that they maintained the same behaviour to him as in times gone by.

In times gone by the harvesters were proud to boast of their respect and reverence for the Loykas. Where in all the neighbourhood was the harvest home held so merrily as at the Loykas's? The harvesters were proud of it, and used to pride themselves on account of it in comparison with other harvesters.

"Well, pantata, this summer we shall have a merry harvest", said one harvester. "A new bride in the house—she will help it out."

"Ay, ay, just so", said old Loyka, and perhaps he did not exactly catch what the harvester had said, for the smile did not vanish from his face nor did he remove the pipe from his mouth.

"Since at harvest home we have to dance with the mistress of the house, this year we shall dance the summer out, having to tread a measure both with your good lady and the young gentleman's also", suggested another of the harvesters.

"Ay, ay, just so", said Loyka, and went on smiling; for it flattered him to think that the harvester had not forgotten his old mistress in the dance. "But this summer we have no musicians here", he added.

"And what of the musicians? They trail off like sparrows after grain", suggested the former harvester again.

And again old Loyka felt flattered to think that the harvester was not aware of the mode in which the musicians had been banished from the farm. "Just so, just so", continued old Loyka with a touch of self-satisfaction.

After this he gave his orders where and to what fields they were to go, and where they were to begin to reap. When he had delivered all his orders, lo! Joseph was at his side, and said, "You will go to-day and cut beyond the meadow." And it was totally different from what his father wished them to do.

"How, pray, should they go beyond the meadows? The corn beyond the meadows can stand two days longer, but where I am sending them it cannot stand a day longer", objected his father.

"And when, they have to go beyond the meadows", said Joseph, as if he had not the least heard what his father had said.

Here the harvesters stood uncertain in which direction they had to quit the court-yard.

"Well, then, go beyond the meadow", said Joseph's father with forced humility, not wishing that they should observe how impotent his commands had already become in presence of his son.

And so the harvesters went away to work in accordance with the young hospodar's orders. After this old Loyka said to the servants, "You will stay at home and make straw-bands."

"There is time enough for making straw-bands", said Joseph. "Just go after the harvesters and help them in the field."

Here again the servants did not know whether they had to stop in the court-yard or go off to the field. They looked from Joseph to old Loyka. And Joseph, perceiving their indecision, said, "Why do you hesitate? He that does not go to the field, let him look out for his place."

After this the servants departed.

"And who will make straw-bands?" asked old Loyka.

"Seeing that there is no great hurry," said Joseph, "I think that you alone might manage to make them."

"Be it so, be it so", said old Loyka with a laugh. "And I have to make straw-bands? I have to be like a day-labourer?"

"Like a day-labourer? Surely you know that we all buckle to at harvest time?" said Joseph.

"Just so. But how, pray? Am not I then still hospodar? Don't you know, my dear son, that I never did such menial offices?"

"If you are not willing to work, good. It is easy to see that you are but a half-hearted hospodar when you shirk in this manner."

"It is the duty of a hospodar to act as overseer; others can do manual work", explained old Loyka.

"As for being overseer, that am I", said Joseph.

"And I am like the fifth wheel on a carriage", exclaimed Loyka angrily. But Joseph, just as if no words had passed between them, had already departed and left his father with a swarm of thoughts, so that he seemed to have his head full of drones and wasps. After this the father looked to heaven, and cried aloud in an explosion of bitterness, "Lord God! grant me some inspiration that I may make this cruel son aware that I am his father."

"Drop a little ratsbane into his well", murmured the voice of the irrepressible Vena. "Unless you do so, he will soon close it against you as you closed it against your father, and then you will never have another chance of poisoning it for him, pantata."

Loyka scrutinized Vena, and seemed half as though he had heard, half as though he had not heard him. "Oh! Vena," he said, "prithee, tell me how gall diffuses itself through the body." And he took him and looked into his eyes as though he expected from him a serious answer.

"Let me fool you only just once", sneered Vena.

"Prithee, boy, fool on," entreated Loyka in a voice of humiliation that was almost pitiable.

"And why, pray, should I mix myself up in the concern?" sneered Vena. "Of course, your son will do the business for you. How, pray, could he fail to do it for you when you are, after all, but a pensioner on his bounty? You managed to fool your own father, why then should your son not manage to do the same by you? But what surprises me is—that in your son it begins so precious soon. You put the foolscap on your father later. But who can change the course of Nature? Nowadays youth develops faster. Joseph, methinks, will have done with you sooner than you had done with your defunct father."

"Don't you know anything more to tell me than that?" inquired old Loyka.

"I do know", said Vena. "But there is nothing in all that. You to talk about happiness, indeed! You, verily! You will be hospodar six years longer, you will dwell in the farmhouse, you are still master there. Oh! oh! things will grow worse and worse until they crack, and until you are mast-headed on yonder balcony whence your father looked at the farmhouse, because he did not dare to cross the court-yard."

As Vena said these words Barushka came out bearing a message, "from Joseph, you know, papa dear", to the effect that during harvest time the old people could take up their abode with her mother in the pension house, and that the young folk would shift into the farmhouse. "We have so much to do, and it is so tiring to run to the pension house and then back again to the farm", she remarked. After this she marched off as though she had already gained her father-in-law's consent to this arrangement.

"Look, look, yonder, pantata, the maids are already heaving you out of the nest", said Vena. And forth from the farmhouse the maid-servants were already carrying Loyka's furniture.

"So! you are to be shelved instanter", said Vena. "See! see! I did think that they would have waited a little longer. You did

bear with your father in the house a certain time. But youth develops faster nowadays. See! see!"

Old Loyka turned his eyes to the entrance-hall. "Dear Vena", he said, and took him by the hand. "Come and help me, and let us make mincemeat of it all."

"That will be of small avail now; once you are fairly out of the house, it will be hard to get back again. You will have to go to law with your son. Before judgment is given in your case, the six years are out, and meantime you can be thankful for the pension house. But, of course, you know how long a lawsuit takes, for you were still at law with your father while he was being buried. The one thing you must pray for is that your son may have a son again, and that this son may one day pay his father out for your wrongs. But you understand all about it."

"But come and help me!" He took Vena by the hand as though nothing would move him from his determination.

"Come along! come along! pantata", said Vena, holding himself in readiness. "I will catch hold of your chests and cupboards lest they take flight, and you shall lam into them."

And old Loyka went into the entrance-hall and began to turn everything upside down, then he took a chair in his hands and shouted into the inner rooms, "I will break his head who takes anything of mine out of the house."

At these words they ceased to carry his things out of the house. Perhaps the sight of old Loyka somewhat softened them, and perhaps they deemed it prudent to desist when old Loyka so passionately set himself in opposition.

Here Vena also took a chair, seated himself upon it, and invited Loyka to sit down on the one which he held in his hand, and said, "Let us seat ourselves at your house, pantata."

His master needed no second invitation, he seated himself on the chair which he held in his hands, and was once more silent.

"You see, pantata, you would not even have known that you could sit down in your own house if I had not told you so. When you do not know where to dwell come to me and I will tell you", said Vena. After a pause he added, as though well-pleased with the thought to which he gave utterance, "Indeed, I am glad that we can sit at your house. But do you know what? You would not the least dare to go with me into the inner apartments."

"What is that you say?" and Loyka rose from his chair.

"That you dare not go with me into the inner room."

"We'll see about that", answered Loyka with great vehemence. And he had already taken Vena by the hand and said, "Come, Vena, with me into the farmhouse, thou art my guest there."

And they entered the farmhouse.

"Look, mamma, I am bringing you a visitor", said Loyka to his wife, without noticing Barushka, who was present. "He is helping us to ballast the furniture which the sweet Barushka finds so much in her way, that she allowed it to float out of the house."

Barushka paid not the slightest heed to her father-in-law, and let fly straight at Vena, "Clear out of the house, thou impudent rogue! It were indeed a disgrace, if fellows like thee should be admitted even into our best drawing-room."

Loyka laughed. "Meseems, Vena, she doth not appreciate thee. But seat thyself, boy, here by me. You shall see, I will not let them bundle thee out just as they are bundling out yonder packing-cases. Just seat thyself, thou art at my house. The dear young folk have already made a clean sweep of a good many things both from the farmhouse and from the two chambers, but none shall dare to brush thee off, no one, you understand, no one."

At this Barushka, turning to her father-in-law, remarked, "For my part I thought that we had enough to do with one fool in the house; but you, pantata, must e'en bring in another one."

"So! I am a fool! possibly, young lady, possibly", said old Loyka with a curse, took the chair on which he was sitting in his hands and would, perhaps, have hurried after Barushka and, perhaps, have struck her a heavy blow. But at that moment he stopped short, and said, "No, just because we are at home and she is our guest, I do not dare forget myself."

For that time, at any rate, the old Loykas were left in peace in their farmhouse.

CHAPTER VI

NOW occurred in the farmhouse a trying period which is a painful task to have to chronicle. And it is the more painful, because in the Loykas's farm may be seen a picture of a hundred other farms in which similar scenes are enacted, only slightly differing in their details.

It is, perhaps, the most painful thing for a writer when in his pursuit of truth he has to delineate nauseous realities.

Among all social questions there is, perhaps, no single one which can elicit in men so profound a sentiment of indignation as the question of the vejminkar [pensioner].

We need not go beyond the confines of Europe if we wish to discover slaves and slavemasters. We have them at home, each of us in his own village, and what is more disgusting is that the son is the slavemaster, the father is the slave; and what is still more disgusting, the law sanctions this relation, approves it, ay, inscribes it on the public rolls like a commercial treaty. The greatest popular immorality is carried on before our very eyes; Nature, debauched and trampled under foot, is distorted into what is unnatural and monstrous. The law allows that sons should take upon themselves the part of criminals, and the sons wittingly, ay, hanging their heads in shame the while, hasten to adapt themselves to the criminal's vocation: custom and habit consecrate the deed, and baffled Nature loses here even her power of speech.

But to our tale. The harvest home at the Loykas's passed as gloomily as Ash-Wednesday. In the farmhouse there was not a cheerful face, the old folks shunned the young, the young couple avoided the old ones. They never looked at one another if they could help it, nor, if they could avoid it did they speak to one another. And if they did look at one another or spoke to one another they neither returned the look nor listened with the least satisfaction.

Just as in years gone by the harvesters used to gather eagerly to the Loykas's, so this summer every moment they spent here was a torment to them. And they heartily thanked the Lord God when it was all over, and they might go thence. "I do not come here again", they said to one another. "Not if I have to look for work I know not in what village."

It is true, puncheons of ale were rolled into the court-yard for their behoof, and they were given a glass or two of rosolek, but not a single face displayed any affability either in looks or words. They had said to their good old master, out of politeness, that this summer they would have two mistresses to dance with, and lo! they had not one. The harvesters and harvestwomen were glad when they could disperse to their different homes.

And then when the harvest was over the relation between the young and old people became further strained, until it could be strained no further, and the only question was when it would be altogether sundered.

When after harvest the fields had to be put in furrow, and old Loyka ordered the servants to go to such and such a field, Joseph came, cancelled his orders, and told them not to go where his father bade them, but to go somewhere else.

When old Loyka bade them sow rye in this or that field, Joseph bade them take the rye into a different field, and sow wheat in the other.

If old Loyka told them to reap beyond the meadow, Joseph vowed there was time enough for the crops beyond the meadow, and so they were to work in the field.

Thus things went on until at last the servants paid no heed at all to old Loyka's bidding, but at once questioned their young hospodar to see whether he approved of their old master's orders or whether he would wish to cancel them. Only what the young hospodar ordered was a valid order. And thus it came to pass in the course of a very short time that, although according to contract and the letter of the law, old Loyka had reserved the right of still managing the estate for six years, already at the beginning of the first year his right of management was snatched out of his hands, and Joseph virtually became sole lord and master of the estate.

And what took place between the male portion of the family, had its counterpart also in the relations subsisting between Loyka's aged wife and Barushka. No maid-servant whom Barushka did not wish to have in the house was permitted to stay there, nor would she have been had Loyka's aged wife moved heaven and earth to retain her. And there was not a maid-servant on the place who did not consider Barushka as her mistress.

And so, then, the hospodarship was completely monopolized by the young folk. Some points old Loyka yielded for the sake of "divine peace", some because yield he must, others because they were taken from him—until, at last, no one troubled themselves about his whims and wishes. And so not six months of the reserved six years had elapsed and old Loyka was deprived of all his rights of hospodarship save the right to dwell in the farmhouse; and how secure his tenure of the farmhouse had become we already know.

Old Loyka must have gone to law with his son at every step if he had wished to maintain his position. When he wished to sell rye to the corn-factor, he became aware that Joseph had already sold it underhand; when he thought that some samples might be

left over the winter the merchant's agents came and began to fill their carts with it, because Joseph had sold it also. And so now i' faith I know not what still remained to old Loyka to testify that he was still master.

Such were the conditions amid which Frank grew up, and thus he began to feel ill at ease at home. Everything there was altered and in confusion. After his grandfather's funeral he had led Staza about the court-yard and showed her where his grandfather had once dwelt, and which was the abode of the kalounkar [tape-pedlar] and strolling fiddlers—but now all must be re-christened.

Into those chambers he had conducted Staza when he had invited her to the farm, and they had still remained almost untouched since the banishment of their previous occupants, here he and Staza could still feel at home, just as when they seated themselves in a grave at the cemetery. Here they could tell over to one another all the stories they knew, and thus story-telling was still not wholly banished from the farm. It had dwindled to the youngest member of the family; and to a most modest audience.

Sometimes Staza was the teller of the story and Frank formed the audience, at other times Frank was the narrator und Staza the listener.

The growing difference between father and son had one advantage for Frank, if we can call it an advantage, viz., that Frank was pretty well overlooked by both of them, and being left to himself might draw profit from this freedom. That is to say he might so far profit himself, that he need not be a witness of all that took place in the farm, might wander at will through the fields, might go to the cemetery for Staza, and lead her wherever he choose.

We are not among those who think that home is always the best place for children. On the contrary, it is frequently the greatest blessing for a child if he be freed from the fetters of home and be left to mother Nature and her relation-chance, that they may develop what home cannot impart, and what, indeed, it often thoroughly perverts.

These children, at all events, found together away from home what at home they had lacked. Nature and chance lovingly made good to them the deficiencies of home life. We mean by Nature the apparition of the heavens, and we mean by chance Heaven's

divine providence, and we have two instructors with which few homes can be compared.

Staza took him with her to the cemetery, and there they beheld face to face the serious side of life. Frank took Staza into the fields and to the open wold, and they recognized the smiles of the green turf on the earth, the azure blue of the firmament of heaven, the laverock which fluttered like a singing messenger from one to the other.

Staza led Frank to the cemetery whenever a new grave was delved. There they heard from the lips of Bartos the life-history of the defunct, there they squatted together, slept side by side, and were "faithful little spirits". Frank again reconducted Staza to the field when he found a new bird's-nest, when he had discovered any young quails, or when he wished to show her how the partridges sit. Here again he narrated to her the whole life-history of these creatures, so far as he knew it, and when they sat by the hedgerow during the narration, it seemed to them like fairy-land.

Staza came for Frank whenever the bees winged their way to the clover which bloomed on his grandfather's grave, in order, as she said, that Frank might see whether they were the bees from his grandfather's hives. And then Frank sat beside his grandfather's grave and Staza beside the grave of her mother, and they were at home.

Then again Frank led Staza to the farmstead, to those hives which were now his own, and they observed in which direction the bees flew away and whether they went to his grandfather's grave. Then the two children settled themselves in the chambers by the coach-house, and burst into story-telling just as musicians bust forth into song and melody.

And to tell the truth, these two chambers at the Loykas's farm seemed steeped in fairy-lore and ballad-history. He who stepped into them involuntarily remembered things which he had here heard from the musicians and from the kalounkar, and scarcely had he seated himself before it all seemed to come upon him so that he was compelled to relate it all again. Something of this kind Frank and Staza experienced when they went into the burial-ground and when they seated themselves in a fresh-dug grave. Even there on that little hillock into which the grave was heaped some one seemed to sit with a harp and to softly sweep the strings.

And somehow Staza so aptly interpreted it all, that it seemed to Frank that never in his life had he heard such sweet and reasonable discourse.

After that they consecrated with their visits every hedgerow in the fields. And that spot where either of them had narrated some particularly pretty story was, in a manner, the source of that story. The circumstance that had been related was dear to them, and so also was the spot on which it had been related. Whenever they came to that spot a tender feeling was awakened in their minds, so often as this feeling was awakened within them, the place became still dearer, until it was to them like a consecrated shrine, without masonry, however, and without pictures. Many such shrines had they, carefully chosen resting-places and trysting-places, fringed with green turf, and above each bent a heaven aglow with the sun's rays and saturated with its smiles.

Sometimes they sat upon the graves like two living monuments —cheerful monuments, however, and in their young memory and on their young souls were inscribed even solemn matters. And Frank was flattered when Bartos, the grave-digger, made him the auditor of his narrations; it seemed to the boy just though the dead grandfather continued to play his part in Bartos, it was, too, a certain mark of distinction to be made the confidant of a man so sedate and, moreover, the greatest athlete of the country.

Sometimes again the two children sat by the hedgerow among the rye like two quails, only that they broke in upon the clicking music of the cricket with human voices, and upon the buzzing of flies and bees. And this specially delighted Staza, who felt just as though she were at a concert, and as though she must laugh and whistle and press Frank's hand. It was dull, though only at times, for a mind so very young to be always yonder among the graves, and Staza's feet grew tired of wandering about the prim and sombre walks of the cemetery. But here where everything made holiday, look withersoever she would, she likewise made holiday, just as when the lenten season has passed the young sleeper awakens with a glad hurrah.

At first Frank did not at all comprehend why as soon as ever Staza entered the fields she grew so full of mirth and rapture. Her little eyes flashed playfully, she tripped along and skipped about as though she were on wires, her face joy itself, her words like songs. But it could not be otherwise—man was not created to be exclusively sad and serious—gaiety is just as necessary as

the sunlight; the young heart of little Staza was a proof of this: unconsciously she wished to compensate herself for all from which, equally unconsciously, she had been hitherto excluded.

But later Frank ceased to wonder at her gaiety; he also was himself saturated with it. When he went to the cemetery for Staza all the way thither he rejoiced beforehand at the thought of her enjoyment, and looked forward to her skips of delight and cries of pleasure, sometimes he half skipped about himself when he thought how she would skip about, sometimes he half began to carol when he thought how she would sing and carol.

And so Frank began to acquire in the parish the reputation of a vagabond who could scarcely be tethered to his home, and we cannot gainsay the correctness of this opinion, he was a vagabond, and became more and more of one every day, so that already he found very little pleasure in his home, and was glad if only he could sneak away out of sight somewhere behind the barn. Sometimes when he went with Staza and they could not ensconce themselves in the two chambers by the coach-house he turned away with her at his side, and they explored some choice nook outside the village. If any one had inquired of Frank what his home looked like, he would only have described those two chambers in the court-yard—nothing else belonged to his conception of home, and no one was associated with these chambers —neither father nor mother nor brother. All that appertained to them was that they were empty, and that he was in them and that Staza was in them with him.

Later his parents wished to attach him to his home, but it was already too late. They set him work to do afield, and there he went willingly enough. But if he had to work in the court-yard, he soon sought the easiest means of escape into the country; and when once he was out of doors and in the country outside, any one might be sure of finding him on the road to the burial-ground, unless he were hiding by the hedgerow or in some newly delved grave.

And now even Joseph began to chaff him for his vagabond ways, and his parents could not deny that their elder son had some foundation for his sarcasms. But we know very well that Joseph was always the spoilt child of the house, and that Frank was the fifth wheel of the coach; and therefore Joseph's oracular sentences carried no great weight with them. And when Joseph told his father and mother quite seriously that they were teach-

ing Frank to be a tramp, Loyka strictly enjoined upon his younger son to stay at home and not to leave it any more.

But even these injunctions soon ceased to be taken seriously. Frank obeyed for a day or two, and after a day or two was already far away from home without his parents paying any heed to him.

Old Loyka, indeed, already began to grow rather blind to everything novel that originated around him, and Frank's vagabond habits were something novel. Moreover he himself was too much afflicted by the relation subsisting between himself and Joseph, and was too full of it, with the best intentions in the world, to have much room left in his heart for Frank.

And here we must say, once for all, that old Loyka's power of resistance which had in some respects so stoutly confronted Joseph's encroachment upon its rights, now began in everything to slacken at all points. He felt himself crushed and broken, he already found but few sources of support within himself, and thus he willed and acted only by halves. Each new motive entered into him only as it were by one ear, to vanish again immediately by the other. And so it was that he ordered Frank not to quit the house, as to whether his son obeyed his orders or not, the father had already ceased to trouble himself.

And then one day in the presence of Frank was enacted between the old folks and the young one of those scenes which were already of as frequent occurrence at the farm as the Lord's prayer in the church service. For, one day, the kalounkar came to the Loykas's, not to be received there as a guest, but only that he might look once more for old acquaintance's sake upon his old friend. And on this occasion Frank saw that old Loyka wept and that the kalounkar also wept. Then old Loyka invited the kalounkar to stay with him in the two chambers at least for the night. The kalounkar excused himself, till at last Loyka drew him almost by force across the court-yard. But when he wished to open the door there was no key, and when he asked for the key he was told that the young hospodar had it and, so they said, had locked the two chambers in order that Frank should not introduce into them any of the servants who had once been dismissed from the house.

On this old Loyka commanded that the key should be brought, but no one could find it. And after he had thus waited a long time and had joked freely in order that the kalounkar might not perceive that he was no longer master on his estate, and when

still no one brought the key, Loyka turned, caught up a cleaver from somewhere in the yard, and battered in the doors of the two chambers. When they cracked, it seemed as if the whole building would tumble down, and when at last the doors gave way and the two chambers were free of access and Loyka stood like a conqueror at the threshold leaning upon his cleaver, and shouted that he was still master in his own house and so let his friends make themselves at home—then, to his astonishment, he became aware that he was addressing people who were no longer there. For the kalounkar was already far away from the court-yard, and Frank had vanished with him. After this a discordant din of voices reached his ears from the balcony above—the voices of the young folks, to whom Loyka replied throughout the whole dialogue from the court-yard, frequently threatening them with the cleaver which he held in his hand.

And this time Frank vanished from the farm for good. When several days elapsed and he did not reappear, the Loykas thought that it was one of his usual rambles, and that they need only send to Bartos at the cemetery to inquire for him, and they would get Frank home again. And when he still did not come after several days they sent a message to Bartos just to say that Frank had still not returned. After this old Loyka went himself to the cemetery, but when he saw the grandfather's grave, he knelt beside it and prayed a thousand times for forgiveness. He almost forgot exactly why he had gone there. And it was Bartos who first reminded him. "You are looking for Frank, I dare say? Certainly he is not at his home, for it is now a week since he has been at our house."

It was exactly a week since Frank had quitted his home.

"But I heard say that he had gone with the kalounkar [tape-pedlar], and that he was walking the world with him", said Bartos to the astonished parent.

"With the kalounkar? Going all over the world with him?" said Loyka, repeating the words of the grave-digger.

When he returned home he told his wife what he had heard, and they dispatched Vena to look for the kalounkar and bring Frank home from him.

Vena departed and came back after several weeks with the news that Frank had tramped it with the kalounkar, but then, so it was said, he had met with a harper, had quitted the kalounkar, and gone with the harper.

"Dolt! idiot!" said Loyka, "then you ought to have discovered the harper and brought back Frank. And so begin the search again—the sooner, the better—and without Frank do not venture near my house."

Vena departed and found the harper, but Frank, so it was said, had gone with a fiddler and now, doubtless, was once more with the kalounkar. "Pantata," exclaimed Vena, "I should never have ventured home again as long as I lived, for no one will find Frank again till the Day of Judgment. He goes off with the people he meets, and we should have to run the circuit for ever of all the wayfarers who ever passed the night here, for it is with these he roves the world."

Although it might have seemed that such news would have not a little ruffled Loyka, such was not the case. Hearing with whom Frank roved the world, he in a sort of way reconciled himself to the young renegade: "They dare not come to us, so he has gone to them", reasoned Loyka; this appeared to be so certainly true that this truth even, in some sort, gave him satisfaction; at all events Frank published to the world the fact that these humble dependants were no longer domesticated at the Loykas's, at all events he, in some sort, incriminated Joseph of having so ruthlessly stripped their home of its previous mirth and jollity.

"He is not in bad hands", thought Loyka to himself, and out loud he said, "The roving young scamp, but I suppose he knows what a flogging he will get when he comes home again."

But Frank knew nothing about a flogging and returned home no more. Then more messengers besides Vena were dispatched from the farm, and all returned with the news that where he last was heard of, he was no longer to be found, and that they could not track him further.

CHAPTER VII

IT drew nigh to Easter Day when old Loyka said to his wife, "For my part I no longer wish to be hospodar, but would fain retire altogether to the pension house."

On this Loyka's wife said, "And are almost five years of our hospodarship to be so completely cancelled. That would be just as though we were to take flight from the farmhouse."

"And what are we in the farmhouse? Dost think that we are still hospodar here?" inquired Loyka with a kind of angry fervour.

And on this he began to explain how Joseph began to take everything upon himself. "And pray what value is set upon you as mistress, I wish to know," he added. And when he had said all he meant to say, he spat. After this he added, "Thou hast taught thy son these manners, that spoilt pet of thine."

Loyka's wife felt the bitterness of his reproach; she was silent and furtively wiped away a tear, and for a long time sought in vain for a reply. "At all events it was not I who taught the young bride, and she has corrupted Joseph", said Loyka's wife at last.

"That is as much as to say, 'It was I who chose the young bride, and therefore I am to blame for it all' ", said Loyka in an access of fury.

On this Loyka's wife was again silent, and secretly wiped away a second salt tear.

Then Loyka paced twice up and down the apartment. His head was bowed, his two eyes measured his steps, his hands were lodged behind his back, and the fingers of one hand tapped on the fingers of the other. Then he halted in front of his wife, drew himself up, and said, "And do you know what is the best of this pretty business? That we both richly deserve to be treated thus. But thou more than I, because I only obeyed thee when thou didst hound me on against my father. But now things are reversed, fate has singled me out for punishment, you are not worthy its attention."

Here Loyka's wife no longer stretched out her hand to wipe away a tear, but said to Loyka, flinging her words into his very face, "If thou thinkest that it has come upon us in consequence of our ill-dealing toward thy father—good, let us bear it; for my part I will not say thee nay, and I do not wish to shirk my share of the blame, nor would I ever shuffle it off myself on to thee."

"Well said, wife", responded Loyka, paced once to and fro the apartment, and as he did so, muttered, "Let us bear it, let us bear it, if thou so wishest, let us bear it, and let us begin from this very day. I, in sooth, have already borne it for a long time, but since thou so wishest, let us begin from this very day in earnest. But this I say to thee: whatsoever comes to pass, pity me thou must not, neither will I pity thee, that I think thou desirest not at my hands."

On this he looked out of the window, and seeing Joseph going across the court-yard, summoned him, and forthwith again re-

turned to the apartment. "And so it is beginning already", said he, just as if it was the eve of a kind of battle.

After a brief moment Joseph came, and here old Loyka was already seated by the table with some solemnity, because such an act could not be completed without a certain amount of ceremony.

"I have summoned thee," began Loyka, "or more properly speaking I have begged thee to come, since I have already no more power to command, and I know not whether thou wouldst obey. But I and thy mother, look you, desire to place the hospodarship in thy hands and Barushka's. And thou art aware that in the agreement we have reserved to ourselves in case of such a contingency, to wit, that we should quit the hospodarship within the course of six years: to be rendered to us by thee a quarter of all the produce of the farm. So, then, I ask thee in the presence of the Lord God, wilt thou conscientiously fulfil thy part of the contract?"

Joseph, at these words, merely smiled like a man whose object is accomplished—an object which he had long had in view. For I think the reader will agree with us so far as this—that all the wrongs which Joseph heaped upon his father only aimed at making the hospodarship a burden to him, so that he might voluntarily surrender it of himself. And now his father surrendered it, voluntarily surrendered it, be it understood, because surrender it he must.

"Why should I not fulfil my portion of the contract, and give you what belongs to you", said Joseph. "It is understood, of course, that you will also contribute a fourth part of all the outlay on the farm. And if the produce is scanty, your share will be scanty, too, and if the outlay be greater, then you will have to contribute more. All just as the Lord God blesses our undertakings." Joseph said all this smilingly, and as he pronounced the last sentence his lip almost curled, as though he said only in different words, "I have you in a trap, dear father; I shall give you just as much as I choose."

Old Loyka certainly perfectly well understood that his son led him thus to a kind of chasm, and now said to him, "Leap!" He felt it but too well, even some motes danced before his eyes, even his head went round a little. But sometimes a man, in presence of very important events stands as it were blindfold, if not actually blind: he knows that he is standing above an abyss, but still he says, "I leap!" and he leaps.

"Why should we discuss the matter further," said old Loyka, "it is all made out and signed in the lawyer's books, and that is the agreement. What is there written is valid."

"Undoubtedly", said Joseph, and again his lip curled.

"I had further reserved the right to us old folk", continued Loyka, "of dwelling in the farmhouse during the remainder of the six years and during that time Frank was to mess with you young people."

"That is hard lines for the estate", said Joseph again, just as if he wished to show that he was but trifling with his father, and that he had long ago preconcerted everything in his own mind. "No, no, that will not do at all. To manage the estate from the pension house in which we can scarce turn round will not do at all, and I am sure that as hospodar you will recognize as much yourself. As to Frank it will be time enough to settle who is to feed and lodge him when we have him at home again. For I certainly am not going to carry his victuals after him when I have no notion where he is."

And thus old Loyka was practically chuzzled out of both his conditions, and felt little inclination to impose others. "And so you think we must be banished to the pension house", he said, but only in order to make a remark. "Well, if you think so we will be banished to the pension house", he added. "Dost hear, aged wife of my bosom, we are banished—ousted." And he said it in a tone of voice which implied, "Misfortune begins from this moment."

Loyka's wife had turned away, and did not answer.

On this Loyka stepped close to his son's side and began to speak again somewhat ceremoniously, as if to mark the importance of the present step of which, however, he was no longer master. "Thou seest, Joseph, thy mother: look at her. Her hair is already streaked with grey, just as my hair is streaked with grey. Thou wilt be hospodar here now, and if thou thinkest that thou canst safely wrong me, thy father, the Lord God forgive thee. But look that thou dost not wrong thy mother. She has suffered much for thy sake, she has loved thee all too dearly, and therefore wrong her not."

At these words Loyka's wife wiped her eyes (if it is possible to say so) out loud; that is to say she sobbed all the while as if she wished to demonstrate that her son had already frequently done her wrong, Loyka was meek and mild, and Joseph did not answer.

Only after a pause Joseph inquired: "Then, when would you like to shift your things?"

"Well, what thinkest thou, aged wife of my bosom, when are we to be banished?" inquired old Loyka.

"Well, if it has to be, perhaps the sooner it is done the better", said Joseph's mother, thinking at the same time that her son would say that there was no need of shifting just yet.

"As you will", said Joseph. "I will send the servants at once to help you to remove your things." He turned the matter in this way, so that he might still appear in the light of a dutiful son.

"Send them, Joseph, send them", said old Loyka, and on this Joseph departed.

But old Loyka did not tarry for the servants. He at once began to drag from the wall chests and drawers, and to remove the chairs from their places by the table, and all in as much haste as though an enemy was approaching and everything had to be cleared out of the way within an hour.

Then came the servants into the apartment to assist; but old Loyka thanked them with a kind of mock reverence for their zeal, and requested them to send Vena to him who would help him best, and would also season his work with some wise saws and maxims.

So, then, Vena came, and scarcely had he appeared in the doorway before he exclaimed: "See, see, pantata, might you not just as well have let yourself be ousted that day when your son had got you half turned out of doors? What work we had to set all straight again—and all in vain. But if it must be so, then the Lord God help you."

Old Loyka paused beside a chest, and said, "Prithee, how sayest thou? It seems to me that thou dost completely pity me?"

"Pantata," answered Vena, "I do pity you. I pity every one as soon a he is pensioned off. I ever jeered at you when you evilly entreated the pensioner on your bounty, and I pitied him, your own father, while it went on. If I could have remembered how your father played the hospodar, I should have pitied the pensioner on his bounty, and if I live to see Joseph pensioned off, I shall begin to pity him, and I shall give it his successor—perhaps his son. Oh! ye peasant proprietors! how ill you regulate your affairs. Come, move out of the way, old tea-chest", he said, turning abruptly towards Loyka, as though he meant him by this expression.

"Pray, what do you mean by that", said Loyka, and nudged himself into a certain amount of good humour and tried to smile.

"I mean by that, that you are the principal piece of furniture which hampers Joseph here, and that if you would walk off to the lumber-room all the rest might be permitted to remain", sneered Vena.

"Listen, aged wife of my bosom, listen to this sapient Solomon. So long we have had him in the house and never knew his worth. We have to be banished the farm in order to duly appreciate his wisdom. Without our banishment this well of wisdom would have been for ever sealed. Ha! ha! and so I am the principal piece of furniture", laughed old Loyka. "And, pray, what have you got to say of my aged wife yonder?"

"She requites you for your young days of courtship. Then you were always following after her, now she follows after you. But do you know what is a sad thing?"

"Well, what?" inquired old Loyka.

"That it is only grey-headed eld which tramps it to that dog-kennel which you call a pension house. It were better to begin more timely when a man is yet stout enough to bear his ills. But for an old man to take up his wallet and go a-begging—fie!"

"How am I going a-begging?" retorted Loyka, and here he felt as though he were dying of impatience to hear a little more.

"You? God protect you! In your family begging and being pensioned off are one and the same thing. And in order that I may prove to you that even without begging you can steal a march upon your son, intercede with him in my behoof that I may not be expelled from those two chambers by the coach-house. For, if not, you will not have a single living soul in whom to confide your sorrows."

"So, then, you think, Vena, I shall want some one in whom to confide my sorrows?"

"That you will, pantata, that you will. I know it from your own poor father. When he suffered most at your hands, and got a sight of me it was just as though he had bitten honey. Oh! you have no idea at all how I sweetened his life for him. I was more than sauce and seasoning", said Vena proudly.

"Listen, aged wife of my bosom, this affects your credit in the kitchen", laughed old Loyka.

"It affects you both, pantata", said Vena, quickly correcting him. "But, of course, you will soon understand it all yourselves. When your dinner is brought to you up aloft yonder without salt

or sauce or seasoning, neither your son nor your son's wife will salt or sauce it for you; then you just call down the backstairs, 'Oh, Vena, come and be our sauce and seasoning!' And I shall understand all that you have need of. Only, prithee, guarantee me those two chambers, or verily it will go hard with you."

"The two chambers? If I had to take thee with me aloft into the pension house, thou should'st never quit the estate, Vena", answered Loyka sententiously.

"I have your word, at all events", said Vena, thanking him. "So now we may proceed with your banishment. I thought it important to insist upon the matter of my two chambers, because it is possible that to-day you will march across yon court-yard for the last time in your life."

"And, prithee, how may that be I should like to know, thou sapient Solomon?" asked Loyka.

"As thus. If you have not in your written agreement reserved to yourself the right of walking across your son's court-yard, who knows whether he will permit it. You will have to creep along the roof like grimalkin when she goes to the witches frolic", and Vena laughed.

"It is not necessary to put such things into a written agreement", said Loyka, with a kind of angry fervour.

"Oh! of course not, of course not, seeing that what stands in the written agreement is never carried out, the less there the better. Your own father never dared draw water from your well, and I think his right to do so was reserved in the written agreement."

"It wasn't", cut in Loyka.

"Oh! it wasn't; then see here. No doubt of it you have it in your agreement that you may draw water, but have forgot in the same agreement to reserve to yourself the right of walking across the court-yard to fetch the water. But do you know what, pantata, if it comes to that, I will carry you across the court-yard on my back, for then no one will be able to prove that you walked across the court-yard, and as for me I have still the right to carry on my back what I please."

"Thou art all salt and sauce, boy, sauciness and seasoning", said Loyka to cut short the conversation, and for a moment his breast heaved as though he was on the point of weeping. But after all nothing came of it except laughter, only that behind this laughter that weeping was quite apparent: tears and weeping

looked through a curtain of laughter, and whoever saw it felt little disposed to laugh.

And so they were banished from the farmhouse. Loyka and Loyka's wife cast a last lingering look over that apartment where from their youth until now they had tasted all the sweets and sorrows of life, and which they were perhaps leaving for ever. On some estates a beggar has easier access to the farmhouse than the vejminkar [pensioner]. And if he goes there once in a way, even his step, even his look seems to sicken every one—without careful fostering, his inclination to repeat the visit soon languishes.

"There is only one thing I am sorry for", said Vena, when the greater part of the furniture had been already carried out before the threshold. "And that is that there are no longer any musicians at the farm—how they would have beguiled our transit to the pension house! Those were the times! When at a touch of those strings everything was tootling and jigging on the farm, and even sorrow put on a smart frock!"

"Dost think those musicians remember me?" inquired Loyka, who to-day, as he had been for some time, was as it were held a prey to a sort of childish meekness.

"Do I think they remember you? They put you into popular songs. The song of the vejminkar [pensioner] will be given at every market in the district, and then they will point to Frank as a living witness of the truth of the ballad. And the kalounkar and the rest of them will equally testify to its truth. And so, then, the Lord help us on our way without music, since there is none to be gotten. Welladay, I should have been glad to have seen one thing. That is I should have liked to see you either laugh or cry, for in heaven, 'tis said, tears and laughter are worth just as much as music. But there is no laughter in you, and crying is not worth while."

Thus the Loykas were banished from the farmhouse in sorrow, which they sought to screen with laughter, but did not much succeed.

In the meantime, the young folks were shifting their quarters in a very different frame of mind. Yonder from the pension house the servants were dragging down furniture of all sorts, and laughter—genuine laughter—accompanied every step. Joseph looked as though he had been polished for the occasion. Barushka was just as if it were her wedding-day. Their every step, their every word betrayed that they were the victors, that the old

people were vanquished and subjugated. Learn it ye aged! ye are vanquished and subjugated! Here every shadow of tenderer feeling was out of place, Barushka and Joseph had won a preconcerted game, and the player who has won is always the only one who laughs.

Even Kmoch, Barushka's father, had already received intelligence that they were shifting into the farmhouse, and already betook himself thither and helped the young folks to laugh. He went to old Loyka and with a sleek smile expatiated on the wisdom his friend had shown in this step. "You know," says Kmoch, "the hospodarship should always belong to the young folk who have energy and versatility; but old people, you know, ought to rest, they deserve a brief breathing-space before they go hence——" and more to the same effect.

Old Loyka at this speech collected a few words as we collect out of our pockets a few spare kreuzers wherewith to rid ourselves of a beggar. "I had already firmly decided upon this," said he, "and, what is more, I never alter my mind."

"I trust not, indeed," said Kmoch, "for what end will it serve to change your mind yet again?"

"He thinks, I beg his pardon, pantata Kmoch thinks that only from to-day you have grown wise enough to know from its beak where the chaffinch is sitting and how to sprinkle salt on the hare's tail", put in Vena. "It is dearly bought praise, pantata, when you must deprive yourself of a farmhouse to get the reputation of being a wise man. As soon as the sacrifice is made, then all goes well, then all men praise you who haven't a notion after all why all the fine estates are in the market."

"What do you mean?" said Kmoch, turning angrily to Vena; "a pretty notion: a fine estate in the market. I must say, pantata, you have harboured a very impudent gang of servants here, and glad I am that the young folk have made a clean sweep of them." "As for thee," said he, turning again to Vena, "thou art not hammered on to the house with a nail nor glued there with mortar so as to be irremovable! A pretty notion! His fine estates in the market!"

"For all that you will not oust me just yet", said Vena proudly. "I and your good gossip Loyka have made a compact, and I am not to venture to leave the house, and if it comes to that he goes and I stay here. Isn't that true?" said he, appealing to Loyka.

Nothing was left for Kmoch but to disdain to carry on the conversation further, which, indeed, he did: only he still hinted

almost involuntarily that Loyka ought not to lower himself with such a man.

This provoked Vena. "Not lower himself! If no one had picked you out of the mire, you would never have passed for so much. Only do not imagine that I do not see through you. I know you by heart, carry it off how you will. Look you! you have got your daughter on to a farm just as if a servant had made his daughter a queen, and now to-day my lord has a hundred tastes to sit on the throne himself also. Not lower oneself, indeed!" and similar things said Vena, though now Kmoch no longer heard them. He again departed to the young folk where they looked on the world with a different pair of eyes.

It seemed as though only to-day the new mistress celebrated her entry into the farmhouse. As it fell out, so it fell out. Hogsheads of beer were rolled into the court-yard; rosolek was produced, the servants were invited to it, drank, whistled, laughed, and sang, so that even people from the village collected about the court-yard, placed themselves in the gateway, and some even posted themselves in the court-yard, just as on the day when the news of the death of Frank's grandfather lured them hither, and they had talked to one another about the life of the deceased.

They came just as if to-day there was another corpse at the farmstead, and it was old Loyka who was being buried in the pension house; perhaps he was not much unlike, not much better off than a corpse.

To-day it seemed as though the farmstead of the Loykas had regained its old appearance. For a good year or more the neighbours had disaccustomed themselves to come to the farm as they used to come in times gone by. To-day, just as though the word had been passed round, they were all here, in order to be witnesses of Loyka's banishment from the farmhouse. Did they come to soothe or to pity him?

And by something more than accident the musicians had also gathered here in order to celebrate the memory of the day. But you may be sure that they did not place themselves on the side of the noisy, laughing youth, but beside the two silent old folk, and endeavoured to open their hearts by strains of melody and cheerful songs. They posted themselves beside that time-worn furniture, beside which sat the time-worn Loyka and his time-worn wife. Here they played and sang, as if conscious that they did so for the last time, as if to-day they would fain pay off a debt long due, and would show their gratitude once more.

And thus the personality of old Loyka was, as it were, completed. On one side stood Vena, in whom, as it were, were embodied his bitter moods. On the other side stood the musicians in whom, as it were, were embodied all the gentleness and gaiety of his mind. Each formed, as it were, a single wing, and on these wings Loyka felt himself for the moment resigned to rest.

"It comforts me, lads, to think that you do not quite forget old Loyka, it does indeed comfort me", said Loyka to express to them his gratitude. "Truly, it does indeed comfort me. Only that now I have no place for you as formerly, and my heart is but poor accommodation. But come, lads, let us be merry, let us celebrate this one little day, that it may never drop out of our recollection."

And old Loyka showed his old self once more. All his old hospitality emerged in him in its full vigour and in full self-consciousness, and thus his old friends could still recognize face to face the image of his former self, pure and uncorrupted.

And when people standing by the gate and in the court saw him thus, their old courage came back to them, the young lads insinuated themselves thither where the music sounded, where the cheery songs were hummed and chanted, and thus old Loyka for this one day had still the consolation of seeing that every one was on his side, and that the young folk had not a single living soul except the servants to take their part.

This aspect of affairs pleased him; just as if the blood of his young days circulated through his veins, just as if it all depended on him how long the merriment should last, just as if he was not the least aware that Joseph by a single nod could make an end of all.

But we must add that Joseph did not by any such nod make an end of all. He pretended to see nothing of it at all, and was for all the world like a gamester who, having won, also throws a few kreuzers under the table for luck's sake.

Moreover, with all his faults, Joseph was not so foolish as not to perceive that he would give general offence if he was to-day to thwart old Loyka. On the contrary, it was his cue to make the whole village believe that after all the new vejminkar [pensioner] was really not so badly off, and that evil was the tongue which asserted anything else. It was his cue to let the whole village see what peace and comfort were reserved even for a drivelling father, to let them see how true was the announcement of that father's dotage which had been made publicly and privately, and to make them feel how much he had suffered from it.

And so, then, to-day on the farm were two sorts of gaiety: one like the fire flickering in the embers, and that was the gaiety of the old folk; the other like a fire just emerging from the faggots, and that was the gaiety of the young folk, and the one sort of gaiety—the gaiety of the old folks was extinguished that very day. When evening spread itself above the patriarchal acres and above the farmstead, and the musicians were departed thence and the old folk crept into their isolated hall, to their pension house, it seemed to them as though around them and within their heart yawned a mighty void which could not be filled by any sounds of earth. No expansiveness of heart was possible, and every hearty expression died away upon their lips. And when they glanced fearfully around, it seemed to them as though the spirit of the aged grandfather entered into them, and said, "I am freed at last from these torture-chambers, ye have entered into them."

The other gaiety, the gaiety of the young folk, lasted long into the night, and when they stepped into the hall of their farmhouse they seemed to hear even the walls re-echoing with mirth and jollity, and they had but to lightly hint their will and all was full of merriment. And they did hint their will: and it was as though the tutelary deity of the place threw wide the doors, and said, "Ye enter here omnipotent; so, then, tarry not, but enter."

CHAPTER VIII

WHEN Frank learnt that his parents dwelt in the pension house, he began to yearn for home. To his shame, be it said, not for the sake of his parents, to whom he had already become disaccustomed owing to his fondness for his grandfather, but for his own sake, because he longed to see once more a spot where he had fashioned for himself in company with his grandfather so special a mode of existence that he fancied on the whole estate there was nothing to be compared with it.

As we know, Frank at present tramped the world, and, indeed, in the true sense of tramping. But it is much stranger that his parents should have permitted him to tramp abroad, aye, that later they wholly ceased to search for him in order to forbid it. From the beginning old Loyka had learnt that he walked about with the kalounkar, the fiddler, or the sieve-maker—let him walk with them, thought Loyka to himself, to be sure, even at home

he was constantly with them when he was not with his grandfather, and it did him no harm. He was rather pleased to think that the kalounkar, the musicians, and the others still preserved a kind of predilection for the farm, paying back to the son the hospitality they had enjoyed from the father. Then again he heard about his son that he was with a certain gamekeeper, and that he was happy in the woods and ravines, and when the gamekeeper sent word that Frank behaved well with him, Frank was suffered to remain. Then a forester saw Frank at the gamekeeper's house, and hearing that he was a son from Loyka's estate, said, "So you must come and stay with me as well", and then Frank advanced just like a vagabond, having been a vagabond at the gamekeeper's, in course of time he became a vagabond at the forester's.

And here in these woods it seemed as though he had found once more all that he missed at home. When he found himself in some rocky haunt overshadowed by pine-trees, all the fairy stories stood before him, just as if he were seated at home in one of those chambers by the coach-house, until he even felt himself involved in horror, until even a panic seized him in that chilly dusk of the woodland, just as at home when at even they narrated about white women, about black hounds, and about accursed personages.

When a panic seized him, he laid foot to shoulder, sped out of the wood across the fields and to the cemetery, shouted to Staza, and then led her away that she might hear with him what he had heard before alone. On the way he had already prepared her for what she was to expect, that, as he said, she might not be too much startled. And on the way through the fields they visited various hedgerows and their trysting-places, and here they had already lost half their fear and on their way through the wood there was no need to penetrate to its rocky haunts, not at all, they took the path by the outskirts of the wood, or perhaps amused themselves at the keeper's house, and so lost the other half of their fears.

And this expedition into the wood was for Staza something unutterably charming and wonderful. From Bartos, the gravedigger, she heard how robbers fell upon him in the woods and how he defended himself. From Frank she heard how a panic seized a man when he retired to its rocky wilderness. And when she came thither with Frank, she saw trees like giants, she heard the murmur as of a mighty river, she felt the breath of flowers,

she felt the chill of the woodland, her little soul opened and something of the great Unknown entered into it. It was not so smiling nor clear as the white light of day which she saw from the cemetery, but it was just as majestic and inaccessible, so that she sat beside Frank silent and, as it were, full of reverent awe.

Neither the one nor the other knew how to express it all, but they knew so much as this—that in their inmost soul was a sort of language which explained it all. Once Staza said that they would sing; and they began to sing, "Odpocinte v pokoji verne dusicky" ["Rest in peace ye faithful spirits"], but scarcely had they pronounced the words before Staza burst into tears, and when she was quieted it seemed to her as though she heard organ-tones above her; then she said that never in her life, nor for the whole world would she dare to sing in this place again. And it seemed to the two as though she had expressed herself as follows: In the fields there is a presence which inviteth to the dance and singing, but here in the woodland there is a presence which inviteth to silence and attentiveness, because it would fain tell its own story.

That no doubt was the difference for Staza expressed in the most general terms. But otherwise she here entered into a new world, and still it appeared to her as though it was a world akin to the one she knew before. True, when she and Frank came out of the graves or from the graves themselves into the fields gaiety, potent even to excess, and delight seized upon her spirits, her soul soared aloft with the very sky-larks, and fluttered into the blue of heaven and the clear transparent ether. But when she came hither into the wood she partially felt as though she were in the cemetery among the tombs and at home. Just as though she was actually seated in a spot which might be called a cemetery, a grave. But with all its closeness, it was so magnificent and so beautiful, with all its dusky twilight it was so open and so free, that her soul, although it had them not, yet felt on itself a kind of pinions, so that it fluttered and was carried aloft and even took Frank's spirit with it, so that both fluttered together.

Again it was otherwise, when they ceased to listen to the murmur of the woodlands, when they ceased to look at all that grandeur, when before their soul the ha-haing of that organ was mute, and trivial things emerged—things easily comprehensible. Here was the call-note of the cuckoo, here a butterfly, a beetle, a fly. Here Staza again found speech, here words came to her

at sight of these trivial things she again found herself, and here she would in a little time have again given way to dancing and singing.

So then this world was to Staza strange, new, and yet extremely welcome. Although Frank used to go for her, and so ought to have been her guide, she took upon herself the role of cicerone and played her part famously. She led Frank from tree to tree, and every tree was like the resting-place of some pretty conceit. What she and Frank failed to find when roving through the fields, seemed to find a voice among these gnarled trees, as though it called aloud, "Then it is just so."

Each of our two vagabonds went into the wood with a different object, and only when the mind of one went halves with the other in all that they found in the wood, could the mental picture of the woodland within them be said to be complete. Frank heard every bird, saw every bird, heard every murmur, saw the squirrel and the hare, heard the foot of the wild goat crunching the gravel, and confided to Staza all he perceived. He was like the visible ear of the wood, and in his head the wood was, as it were, depicted down to the very song of the birds and the sound of the wind among the boughs. His eye was constantly in the crowns of the trees, constantly on the watch, constantly following something. All this time Staza was continually exclaiming, "Look at that primrose! Look what a beautiful sweetbrier! Here I still smell close at hand the last violet of the spring! Look what a grey coat of lichen that pine-tree wears, and how silvery is yonder birch! And see here are wild strawberries. Here the whortleberry is in bloom. This place we must remember. And here is a plant which I have planted on maminka's tomb; it is the tearlets of the Virgin Mary [the wild red pink]. Look how the wild nut-trees are covered with catkins", and similar things she said.

It is evident that Staza's mind was attracted to colour, to flowers, to variety. And if the birds skipped and hopped in Frank's mind, in Staza's blossomed a whole parterre, the loveliest colours mingled together, rivulets streamed off from blue forget-me-nots, and fringed themselves with blackberries.

And if the soul of Frank was full of sweet sounds, the soul of Staza was garlanded with flowers. And when they paced the woodland, one gave to the other; Staza gave to Frank flowers and colours, and Frank gave to Staza singing and melodious sounds.

But they also penetrated the rocky wilderness and ravines of the woodland, and lingered there a while. Only that Staza

especially thought that it would be too much to sit there every day, that it would oppress her too heavily. Because in that ravine there was not any sound to be heard, everything was, as it were, embedded in silence, and if a step rustled it startled you. The rocky walls stood narrowly opposed to one another: if they had had hands they could have stretched them out and shaken them. And these rocky walls rose high into the air: high aloft the merest vestige of blue sky bent above them in a tiny narrow strip; all the rest of the sky was banished from the view. Moreover sometimes a large bird appeared high above it all with a strange whistling note which startled you as much as when a footstep rustled.

What was it at home in the cemetery, compared with this huge grave! If she had ever felt oppressed in a grave (but she never did feel oppressed) she had only to sit upright or stand and she saw in a moment all the surrounding world: all the other graves, the ruddy-painted cross with the white-iron figure of the Christus, the whole sky, and her cheerfulness was at once restored. But here, if you felt oppressed, standing upright was of slight service to you. You must go quite away, and yourself cause a kind of rustling with your own footsteps, a kind of crunching of the gravel, which here was the source of so much trepidation.

And then a little pebble sometimes rolled over the rocky wall, and you could hear above measure distinctly its every tap against the rocky angles of the stone. Or sometimes a lizard, sunning itself, let fall a morsel of earth, and this, crumbling and rolling down, rustled in a quite mysterious manner. Sometimes a puff of wind carried a leaflet hither from the beech-trees which grew yonder above the ravine, and this leaflet quivered and fluttered in the air as if it trembled and dreaded to take the final plunge. Here every feeble whisper became a voice.

Sometimes when they were seated here they had not the least wish to utter a word. A word here was re-echoed from the walls of the ravine, the walls themselves spoke their own language, and it was in a manner cheery enough—but you could not bear it long. Here they generally uttered their thoughts to one another only in whispers, seated side by side, in order that they might not infuriate those walls. But more than once it happened that even those walls themselves began to whisper. For the pellet of earth falling over them and fraying to pieces was also a whispering, and the leaflet falling from above and trembling was also a whispering, and such unexpected whisperings made the children

pause abashed, and so many a time they broke off in the middle of their conversation, only listening, looking at one another, and holding one another by the hand.

They oftest trusted themselves to converse aloud when the woodland above them yonder also carried on its own conversation, when the wind unloosed its mouth, and when those organ-pipes which Staza had first heard in the woodland had their bellows full distended. Then a word was easily spoken, even the walls no longer seemed to spy upon them, having too much to occupy them in the hurly-burly of the woods above them, even the pebble ceased to whisper, nor could you hear the rustling of the lizard or the dropping of the morsels of soil. Then only articulate sounds uttered out loud could withstand the din, and thus also Frank and Staza conversed aloud.

Here and there the brambles trailed over the rocky walls in every kind of amicable embrace. In places the mullein's tall stem shot upwards as if with some definite aim. "I have got so far at all events", it seemed to say. At one of the corners of the rocky wall clung a single unlucky brier bush—clung in such a way that it could neither ascend or descend, but hung clinging in mid-air above a perpetual abyss. More fortunately fared a single birch above it which grew symmetrically upwards, and striking its roots into several crevices of the rocky wall maintained itself on its giddy platform.

But one sound was here, which never languished but continually sated the ear with its gentle music. From one end of the rocky glen bubbled to the surface a spring of water pure as silver, and our ravine offered to it its own lowest parts, in which the spring might arrange its watercourses, and here it arranged them most tranquilly, like a good housewife. Where it suited best it had fishes eyes [a plant], where you least at all expected it, it had strawberries stowed away, and where only that was possible it had some bush, in order that it might be a mirror to the bush.

And this streamlet greatly tranquillized the savage wildness of the ravine. This streamlet seemed to make a charming chamber of that rock-bound tomb, a chamber which especially entertained and welcomed Staza. And so when Frank said, "Let us go to the ravine", Staza at first remembered only its blank walls of rock with their scanty blackberry bushes, the wild sweetbrier, and the long lank birch-tree, and then she felt as though she must try very hard to be brave enough to go. But soon after this she remembered the water sporting with itself and babbling in its

channel far below, and how here it lingered by a stone, here frolicked with a bush, and here streamed off from a whole colony of forget-me-nots—and then she needed not to be invited a second time, and after this Frank heard at once the words, "Well, then, let us go to the ravine."

And this ravine was like another church to these children. As we know, they had their own little chapels first in the fields, by the hedgerows, not far from the nest of the quail. Here in this ravine they had a new church, substantially different from yon other, and yet in many respects not at all dissimilar. The difference was perhaps this—that yonder by the hedgerows and in the fields the mind expanded and soared aloft, but here gathered itself into its own depths. The similarity then lay in this, that both there and here the soul gained strength and courage and other qualities of the like nature.

So now the life of these two young souls began to bestir itself. It began in the grave, it leapt forth among the fields, and here in the woodland it paused and listened. There were life ends their life began, there were life unfolds in germinating ears of corn beneath warm summer rays of light their life carolled gaily, and here in the ravine and woodland where life has a couch of quiet dreams their pilgrimage was reminded that it must return again to the graves.

Once Staza said to Frank, "Now that you lead me into the fields and woodlands, I sing but seldom among the graves at home. Do you know why?"

"Why?"

"Because I am thinking how I may be with thee. Often and often I have begun to sing, but then it has occurred to me that I would far sooner be with thee, and that it would be better than singing. Once I wished to sing at maminka's grave, and just then I heard thy call at the wicket-gate, and I went just as though thou hadst been maminka." Then said Frank, "And do you know why I so continually run from place to place?"

"I do not know."

"I am seeking at all times where thou wouldst like to be, and when I have found a place I show it thee, and then I cease to rove abroad. But I know that thou wouldst not be happy at our house, and therefore I do not lead thee thither."

"And where hitherto hast thou been happiest?" inquired Staza.

"With you in the cemetery."

"Then I shall be happy there also", said Staza.

"And also I like to be at our house, but in the pension house where grandfather lived", said Frank. "And so my parents stay there now."

"I should like to be there also," said Staza. "only that thy brother ought not to live there."

"My brother is there no longer," said Frank, "he is at the farmhouse, and my parents are at the pension house; they are there just as my grandfather used to be, and I should like to see the place again."

It was true that Frank began to yearn for home, nevermore to quit it, for he thought that nothing could compare with the delight of dwelling where his grandfather had once been, that is to say, in the pension house or at the cemetery.

And so they went home, and the sun had already set when they came to Frishets. When they set foot upon the village green a large number of people stood there, and all were talking and pointing in the direction of the Loykas's house. Here Frank involuntarily called to mind the people who came to the farmstead on the day when the funeral bell was tolled for his grandfather, and they were almost all the same people, and Vena was among them.

Frank and Staza halted, concealed themselves behind the trunk of a large linden, and listened. Something said the mayor, something said the sexton Vanek, something said Vena, and the rest of the people filled up the gaps with questions.

"They have driven him out, they have worried him out of the pension house", said Vena. "Truly they did well: was he not old? Had he not given everything to the young folks? Had he not stinted himself for them? Had he not passed sleepless nights for them? and for them toiled at his estate—and this is his reward!"

"And how could they drive him out of the pension house?" inquired a neighbour.

"How could they drive him out? Thus, look you, they could drive him out. They said to him, 'Leave the pension house', and it was so. When do you peasant proprietors say anything else to your vejminkar [pensioner]", sneered Vena.

And now the mayor began to elucidate matters. Sundry relations came to the young Loykas's to spend the day, then for two days, but after that they did not wish to leave the farm at all. And in order that the young folk need not have them constantly on their hands, Joseph Loyka's young wife went herself to the old

folk and asked them whether they would object to being removed into the two chambers by the coach-house, and allow her relations to occupy the pension house. On this old Loyka asked if she had anything more at heart? and whether she knew what it was to be banished to those two chambers—and by what sort of people they had previously been occupied. On this Barushka said that she did know, and that since the musicians whom he was so fond of had previously dwelt there well enough, perhaps he also would do there well enough, and that if he felt lonely and out of spirits he might invite the musicians to share the rooms with him. On this old Loyka went to his son and asked him whether he knew what the young mistress of the house had just been saying. "I do know", replied his son, and repeated to his father everything which the father had heard from Barushka, because the young people had agreed between themselves what Barushka should say to the old man.

"Well, and what dost thou think of it all, my son?" inquired old Loyka.

"I think the rooms would suit you admirably", said the young hospodar. "You see, of course, that I could not put my wife's relations there."

"And so I am to dwell there with Vena", laughed old Loyka.

"As you please. But for my part I think that it would be an excellent opportunity of ridding the house of Vena altogether."

Just as the neighbours had reached this point, they heard a banging of doors at the Loykas's house, and from the gate ran old Loyka with dishevelled hair. The moon shone over the village green with its first rays; Loyka ran direct to the neighbours there assembled.

"Neighbours, for the love of Heaven, I implore you, lend me a match", he shouted. "In all the house I cannot find one little match wherewith to kindle the roof above the head of this son of mine!" shouted old Loyka, and kept constantly feeling in his pockets to see if there was anything like a match in them.

It was quite an awful spectacle to look upon the poor old man, and yet more awful to listen to him.

None of the neighbours answered him.

"What, then, will none of you lend me one little match?" shouted Loyka. "Oh! fie! the shame of it. I lent to each one of you whoever came to me at any time; whithout usury I lent to all. Who of you can say I ever refused to lend him what he wanted? If any one needed stock I lent him live stock. If any one needed

a team I lent him a team; if any wanted harvesters I lent him harvesters; and now I want a match from you and ye will not lend it me." And on this he cursed all his previous neighbourliness.

It was evident to every one without further demonstration that old Loyka's mind was unstrung. Some in their compassion took one another by the hand, some began to show their pity by shedding tears. The mayor stepped up to him, and said, "Pantata, perhaps if you were to lie down you would get over it in sleep."

But old Loyka replied instantly, "I thank you for your good counsel, excellent man. Do you think that I could lay me down in the chambers by the coach-house? I might. Why should I not? When the musicians and the tinkers and the kalounkar lay there, why should not I lie there also? But I know why I cannot lie there—because it would break my heart." And at these words he struck his old breast with his fists as though he would break it in pieces.

Again the mayor seized his opportunity, and said, "You need not sleep there, pantata. Give me your hand; I will lead you to our house, and you can choose for yourself the bed which you like best."

"True, that might be", said Loyka, as if he came to himself a little. But immediately after this he added with a bitter laugh, "But think you sleep would visit me, there, either? If Loyka passed a night in the village outside his own estate, could he also sleep? He could not sleep? I thank you respectfully, kind neighbour. But hence I will not stir. If no one is willing to lend me a match, the devil is in it if I do not tarry here until the Lord God sends a fiery brand from heaven upon the farmstead of my son!"

And he raised his hands to heaven and cried, "O Lord God! a little of Thy fiery brimstone and Thy name shall be exalted for ever and ever." He cried aloud like one of the prophets of the Old Testament, until horror encompassed every one who listened to him.

Then again he spoke, turning his face to his neighbours, "The Lord God heareth not, and that because I equally inflicted wrong upon my own father—only that I never drove him to the dog-kennel. Only when my own father has forgiven me and prayed for me, will the Lord God send down brimstone." And he sobbed aloud.

Again said the mayor, "Take it not so to heart, pantata; perhaps your son will grow wiser, and all will yet be well."

"Not take it to heart! Already it is late, dear neighbour, already it is quite pitch-dark in those chambers, ay, it is dark there in broad daylight." And here it seemed again as though he once more came to himself a little.

And not long after this he said, "I know what would do me good for this one day, and where I could sleep. If some one would lead me to the burial-ground to the grave of my father. But where is there any to be found to lead me thither? There is not one."

"If you wish it, pantata, we will go at once", said Vena. "I will conduct you thither; I will stay with you there as long as you please."

"So be it, so be it", said Loyka, and laughed, and looked from one to another, and in fact allowed himself to be conducted by Vena in the direction of the cemetery. Almost all that group of neighbours followed him at a few paces distance, and accompanied him to the outskirts of the village.

And Loyka went with Vena to the burial-ground.

But close behind them, even to the burial-ground itself, went two small souls in great sorrow and tribulation: they were Frank and Staza.

CHAPTER IX

AGAIN the moon shone out, when they came to the cemetery, just as long ago when Frank and Staza first passed the night in his grandfather's grave. And because the cemetery stood on an eminence there at times stole over it a warm breeze in whose breath the white-iron figure of the Christus rattled upon the ruddy cross, several of the lesser crosses clattered with their arms, and sometimes creaked on its hinges a rusty little door, behind which lay concealed the inscription above some dead man's bones.

This clattering of the arms of the crosses, the rattling of the Christus, and the creaking of the rusty doorlets was the only unrest which the dead gave to view—how little was it all compared with that with which they had so tormented one another in life!

Besides this, however, a breeze also ran above the graves and stirred the tall grasses and here and there a flower; but this unrest

was scarce strong enough to be perceived, ay, rather it resembled the faint breathing of a child or the mere echo of a sigh.

As we know from the beginning of our story that tinsel music in which the Christus indulged was not over-attractive towards nightfall, and people took to flight before it as if an enemy were in full pursuit behind them. But of those who came hither this evening none paid any attention to it; perhaps they did not even hear it, because in their inmost hearts resounded an unrest far more fierce, more discordant, harsh, so that they fled from it into this strange harbour of refuge.

And hereupon old Loyka, as soon as they had set foot in the cemetery, embraced with one hand that ruddy wood of the cross, and raising the other on high and fixing his eyes upon the white-iron figure of the Christus, began to lament his fate, to call aloud, to curse, to pray, and to prostrate himself at the same time. "Thou martyred Head," he cried, "Thou hast suffered much, but Thou hadst not a son to cut out Thy heart piece by piece—I suffer more. Thou hadst no home, but because Thou never hadst a home, Thou knowest not what it is to be forced to leave a home, a home which I proffered to every one who needed it, and now I have not even so much as I proffered once to others—I suffer more. Thou wert young and vigorous when Thou didst suffer, but Thou hadst not hair streaked with grey and wrinkles on Thy face, Thou hast not suffered when the feet long to faint and flag, and must tramp on —I suffer more! But Thou didst voluntarily undergo Thy torments, mine are the punishment of my sins—yonder in that grave sleeps the witness of my words and of my evil deeds—I suffer more! And I but now entreated Thy Father about some fire that He would send it as He sent it upon Gomorrah, and He heard me not—what is there still left for me to suffer?"

After these words, pronounced with immeasurable anguish, a silence fell on everything in the cemetery, as though it would accentuate Loyka's bitterness—the white-iron figure of the Christus clanged upon the cross from time to time—perhaps it did not wish without reserve to adapt itself to this train, of thoughts.

On this Vena said, "If you would have allowed yourself, pantata, to be nailed to a cross like the Lord Christ, look you there, you never need have been banished from your home, and for my part I believe that Joseph would have helped you up if you had requested him."

Loyka having bewailed and lamented his fate, now felt relieved, at least those thick clouds broke and dispersed in which till now his thoughts had been enveloped. But it was only for a moment. And in that moment he sank down by the cross, embraced the foot of it, and perhaps he wept. But this did not last long. He looked up to the heavens, ran his eyes through the myriad stars, and seeing the moon in the full splendour of its rays, suddenly laughed aloud, laughed without words, and so continued to laugh.

Vena, gazing in the same direction as Loyka, said, "Pantata, that tiresome little moon tickles me, too, under the nose with its rays; for my part, I can hold out no longer, but laugh I must." And he laughed, too.

"Nay, 'tis not that, lad", said Loyka. "But I am so glad that I have found a comrade. Look at him, he hath no home either, and never in all my life had I observed it until to-day. To-day a holy spirit has quite illumined me; to-day I know it, just as if I had walked the sky with him. Look! look! every night he must hie up yonder through agues and nipping blights, and that pleases me. Only I should like to know whether he also had an estate, whether he gave it to some Joseph, and so now is pensioned off! Look at him! look at him! It pleases me to think that we are two, I here on earth, and he yonder in the sky—and as it seems to me they are no better off yonder in the sky than we here on earth."

And he laughed on. Then he stood up, and looking towards the pilgrim moon, said, "Stop and let us take note how fast he gets over the ground, to see if he is good on his feet." And here he looked up at the moon, just as though he were reckoning its footsteps, and laughed aloud. From this laughter went forth a greater horror than from the clanging Christus or from the clattering branches of those crosses which spread around.

As we know, Frank and Staza followed Loyka at a distance hither to the cemetery. Even now in the cemetery they kept several paces apart, so that Loyka had no notion of their presence. When Frank first heard his father on the village green, he was half bewildered, and knew not what was happening, and understood nothing of it all. When he here heard him pray that strange prayer by the cross his flesh crept and he shivered, for so much he understood of it all as to perceive that his brother Joseph was the cause. But when he heard his father laugh so wildly, he could bear it no longer, but gave way to an uncon-

trollable flood of tears. He had never so wept since the death of his grandfather.

This time Staza was beside him, and, feeling ill at ease, might also have given way to tears, because crying is infectious among children. But Staza had hitherto never associated with children, Frank was her single companion, and so what would have equally constrained another child in her place to cry, had on her a different effect. She saw and heard weeping in plenty at the cemetery, but at the same time she saw and heard how the rest of the people mingled singing with the weeping. And thus this sequence of ideas formed itself in her little soul. Old Loyka beside the cross appeared to her like the corpse which Vena had brought to its burial. Frank appeared to her like those who wept over the corpse—consequently she must be one of those who song above it. And, indeed, no sooner had Frank begun to cry than she began to sing,

"Odpocinte v pokoji verne dusicky
Kralovstvi nebeskeho dedicky."
["Rest in peace ye faithful spirits of the dead;
Ye are inheritors of the heavenly kingdom."]

Both Staza's singing and Frank's weeping were one and the other, as it were, in tears. But in both was interwoven something which it is impossible to express in words. Any one who had seen and heard it would have shuddered, and been cut to the heart. In the cemetery waved the warm night wind, in the heavens hung the moon, by the clattering cross stood a despairing father, and at a little distance by another trembling cross knelt Frank who wept aloud, and Staza who wept in singing the words of which exhorted all to peace.

Old Loyka, somewhat roused by this from his own sombre fancies, turned and listened. He seemed as though he were on the watch, as though he sought out for himself some new pathway, and now was deliberating whether he should take it.

"Dost hear, Vena? Dost hear?" said he to Vena. "I once heard that melody in the hall of our house; but there were harps with it."

The reader will recollect that it was during the dance after the funeral of Frank's grandfather that Frank and Staza suddenly sang the song from the hall to the sound of harps and violins.

"Dost hear, dost hear it?" he again repeated after a pause. "For my part, I had no notion the song was so merry a one when there

were harps with it. And it would seem that to-night there are no harps with it."

There were no harps with it, to be sure, but all the same it was accompanied by the audible weeping of his own son.

"And it pleases me to find that they know it here in the cemetery. Prithee, lead me to those musicians, and let them play on. And if they do not wish to play, tell them that you are from Loyka's farm and then, of course, they will play, for they will remember Loyka although he rules his home no more."

And he went with Vena several steps in the direction of the singing and crying, where Frank knelt sobbing and Staza knelt singing. When he came to them, Frank embraced his knees, and cried "Papa! Papa!" Staza was silent.

"Papa!" said Loyka. "I might have known that they would recognize me here. Where they are skilled in singing and playing, there they know old Loyka. So hallo! and play something lively that I may have a dance here." And this poor old man here in the grave-yard struck an attitude as though he would caper about, and as though he were ready for a fling.

And here Frank, falling upon his knees, continually embraced his father's feet, and, sobbing piteously, exclaimed, "Papa! Papa!"

"Why dost thou clog my feet like a moist clod of earth when I wish to dance a measure?" said Loyka to Frank, whom he did not recognize. "It is a disgusting habit, and looks as though thou hadst come to me for alms."

"Papa! Papa!" cried Frank.

"Ah! I know thee now. I recognize thee now. Thou art the ghost of my son Frank, and walkest here in the cemetery. But thou art not Frank. He tramps it with the musicians, whom they chevied from my house—and that pleases me."

"Papa, it is I", cried Frank.

"Thou art not he, because thou hast no harp with thee. Look you, there is no harp here, so you will not persuade me. But if thou wert a worthy ghost thou wouldst lead me to my Frank; I would gladly see him and those musicians with whom he tramps the world, and I would tramp it, too."

"I will lead you home, papa", cried Frank.

"Thou shalt not lead me thither; for me, I want no home. But I want to leave home far behind, like my son Frank. I want to tramp it with the musicians, that they may compose a song about it, and may point to me on the market-places and say that I am he, I am that old Loyka, who dares no more have music in his

house, because his son has banished it hence, and so I must follow the musicians even to the market-place, because I have not where to entertain them at my house. Will you lead me to them?"

"I will lead you to them", said Frank at random, without knowing what he said or why he said it.

"That pleases me," said Loyka, "and inasmuch as the way will be a long one, we must rest ourselves here yet a little space."

And they seated themselves on the graves, as if by accident old Loyka and Frank on the grandfather's grave, Staza on her mother's grave; Vena stood.

But at this point another character appeared on the scene, and when he had posted himself near them said, "Pray, who at this late hour here disturbs my lodgers? I have guaranteed them rest, and will not have them molested." He said it heartily, and with a certain humour. It was the grave-digger, Bartos.

"Good man," said Loyka, "we seek a lodging for the night, and if you will let us be here, you can seat yourself beside us."

Before Bartos had stepped up to the group he had heard who they were, he recognized Loyka and the children by their voices, and by listening a few moments had soon understood what brought them thither. He therefore wanted no explanation, and at once adapted himself to the situation.

"If that is all your trouble," said he in the same voice, "you can remain here as long as you please; but it will not please you very long, I fancy." And he seated himself beside them.

"So, so, so, so", muttered Loyka, as was his custom when some process in his ideas had to be emphasized.

"What thinkest thou, old friend, who has suffered most, I or Jesus of Nazareth?"

"You, pantata, and because none of us know what you have yet to suffer, although you have already suffered much."

At these words Loyka started, because it was just as though they had been chosen out of his own soul, and he had rather expected contradiction.

"But I do not want to suffer any more, lad, and, if you know, pray, tell me what I am to do."

"I know one thing you might do", said Bartos. "If you were to lie down to rest in these chambers," and here he pointed to the graves, "all would be over; but you have no right to them yet, nor dare I enclose you in them. However, I will tell you what you should do. You want nothing but to divert yourself a little."

"Exactly what I thought myself", said Loyka. "You speak like a true doctor, and if I should listen to you yet a while, I know not whether good might not come of it."

"And we will manage it thus. To-morrow I lead you into a neighbouring village to the house where Frank is living. There are the fiddlers and the harpers, and we can fling up our heels in a hornpipe."

Even this idea was one which seemed to have been borrowed from Loyka's own mind, and Bartos did indeed borrow it from Loyka; because, as we know, a moment before Loyka had expressed his desire to have a dance before this unseen witness.

"The further I listen to thee, the more convinced I am that thou art a mighty sage", said Loyka with evident satisfaction. And it was plain that the grave-digger had struck exactly the right chord.

"But inasmuch as we shall have a debauch there, we must rest ourselves before we set out on our journey. We must sleep, for we have not slept at all for several nights", continued the grave-digger.

"Thou mightest stand and preach in the pulpit, good man", said Loyka, highly delighted at what the grave-digger had said.

By this vague discourse the grave-digger had in reality probed Loyka to the quick. And Loyka hearing that repeated from another's mouth which a moment before he had been the only one to long for, and thus having the object of his own wishes freshly paraded before his mind, felt relieved. His words and expression were deprived of that sickeningly painful cast which a short time before had driven Frank to weeping and Staza to song.

The two children now nestled close together, and looked on like birdies from a nest at what was passing before them. They did not understand, but it had not any longer so much horror for them.

"If thou thinkest that we ought to sleep," said Loyka, as though he were still replying to the recommendation of the grave-digger, "it will be best to lay us down and sleep", and hereupon he immediately made as though he would lie down.

"When you were married, pantata, I was at your wedding", said the grave-digger. "And when the deceased, your father, quitted you for the pension house, he said, 'If at any time you are too much harassed to sleep at home, come to me, you will sleep beside your father.' And to-day, you have come to him, pantata, and will sheep soundly."

His father had in reality said this on that long-passed wedding-day, and now the son came for the first time to sleep beside him. A son already grey-headed, to sleep beside a father who was no more among the living.

"Only go on, go on, and tell me about it", entreated old Loyka, and fitful dreams were already weighing down his eyelids. Yet a few words he pronounced as if in assent, for Bartos began to narrate to him the story of his own young days, and how he had performed such and such feats, but after a while the grave-digger observed that he was speaking to Loyka, who already had fallen asleep.

Vena remained beside the sleeping Loyka. Bartos took Frank with him into his house, and told him to speed early next morning to the village about which he had spoken correctly enough, then he himself, like a night-watcher, went out from time to time into the cemetery to see how Loyka fared.

The next day they followed Frank to the abode of the musicians. We must here say without concealment that Bartos had devised a kind of popular remedy for Loyka's sick spirit. Whether it was destined to succeed or not we cannot, however, state at present.

In the village they found Frank already arrived. There also they found the musicians whose loss Loyka had so much deplored. The whole party collected at the ale-house, and the musicians played and sang, Bartos taking special care that everything should be gay and lively. A rumour of what had occurred at the farmstead had already outrun them, and consequently every one knew it was the afflicted Loyka who in this manner compensated himself for the loss of his home.

It was a piteous spectacle to look on the old man, and to see how his mind, restless enough without this soothing medicine, gloated over the well-known strains of the harps and violins. He sat and listened. The expression of his face was serious as if he were lost in thought, and not a word escaped his lips. The whole time he did not move a muscle, his eyelids never winked, his lips appeared as though they could not open. One would have thought that the music of his old friends would have stimulated him to mirth or tumultuous grief. But it was not so. Excitement seemed to hold the spiritual part of him in equipoise—and he was completely tranquil through it all.

Frank stood the whole time by the side of his father, who was seated. Old Loyka held him round the waist with one hand, and

with the other stroked his face and head. And this he did the whole time without speaking or making any other movement. Only Bartos had straitly charged the musicians in no way to recall his thoughts to his home.

When it seemed to Loyka that they had played long enough, he rose and said to the musicians very gravely, "I thank you, comrades, and as far as in me lies, I will requite you. But go not to our son's farmstead, there I will never dwell again. I have determined to make a home just as the whim seizes me. Here I can invite you to me at any time. Here the people are good and honest, and no one says, 'No! act differently.' I have been too long at home, you know—on the farm, 'tis seldom I have quitted it, and so this has come to me that I must quit it; I must look about me and go a little into the world to learn how the world wags elsewhere."

And more he said to the same effect. On this he departed from the village with Frank, the musicians following after him and playing through the village and even when the village was left behind. And then they went into other villages, and there much the same occurred. Only that Loyka marched into those other villages at the head of a band of musicians, so that the village was immediately in an uproar, topsy-turvy, and with its feet in the air. People ran out of their houses on to the village green, gathered round him in a group, and said to one another, "It is Loyka from Frishets: he is pensioned off, and so, see! he has gone mad."

Soon a rumour spread all through the countryside about Loyka, how that he walked from village to village with an escort of musicians, and scarcely had they finished saying so, when lo! Loyka announced himself by well-known strains of music. And when the people ran together on the village green and collected round him, he paused, and said, "Hearken to what I will preach unto you."

On this he delivered a kind of sermon, showing forth how he had passed the night in sufferings, how he wandered with the moon, how that the moon wandered in the sky and he wandered in the world, and how he arose with the first dawn, and how the foxes had holes and he had not where to lay his head like the Son of Man.

He even walked about the market-places and spoke to people and implored them only not to send him home, and he would repay

them for everything. Doubtless some laughed, some who knew him well pitied him. And many only pretended to pity him.

Then again he also walked with the musicians, and when he came into some village and stood on the green, he inquired whether they had any vejminkar there that he might have a look at him; or said he, "Let the vejminkar be brought to me on the green, and we will come to an understanding about everything." And more to the same effect. Soon old Loyka belonged to the roving figures of the neighbourhood about whom people talk or do not talk, whom we half-laugh at and do not laugh at, who add a peculiar feature to those districts much as the eagle adds a character to the woodland above which it wanders lonely, and above which it utters from time to time a cry which pierces to the bones.

And so Frank led his father to all the places with which he had previously become acquainted through his own vagabond's mode of life.

In some places, too, the respectable portion of the citizens came out to meet them, inviting old Loyka for friendship's sake into their houses, for, in truth, Loyka had been the best-known and most highly respected man of the neighbourhood. But Loyka never accepted such invitations, though modestly thanking his friends for all their kind intentions. "I never go on to any farmstead", he would say. "I thank you, neighbours, most respectfully. Leave me any place where there is no farmstead, and I have enough for my poor wants."

If there was a cross anywhere on the village green, Loyka posted himself beside it, and when the people began to flock around him, he pointed to the Christus, and said, "Here ye behold Him", and then he pointed to himself, and said, "and here ye behold me. He yonder bore His cross only once to Calvary, but I bear mine continually. But the hangman's servants martyred Him, me my own son martyred because I gave him my estate."

At other times again he cried, "Wherefore do ye wonder that I go from village to village? Here ye behold a man crucified upon a cross! He also wandered about in the world and no one hindered Him. Why do ye hinder me?"

Also Frank led his father away into the woodland, and once a fiddler whom they happened to meet at the outskirts of the wood accompanied them to the well-known ravines. Never in its life, perhaps, had that rocky glen entertained such a fantastic group as

it did that day, and, perhaps, never in their lives did such tones reverberate from its rocky walls as did that day.

Even old Loyka felt as though he were seated in the chambers by the coach-house at his home, and listened to the old, old stories. Only that on this occasion it was Frank who narrated his youthful experiences in that ravine, in which he pointed out where the wind-hover was wont to hang suspended in the air, where the brambles trailed, where hung the clinging sweetbrier, and where the streamlet bubbled in which those blue flowers flourished. And the fiddler played; and it was all so strange to those rocky walls that one after the other they repeated it all, as if they gloried in their ready memory, and as if they wondered what it was all about.

And then at last there fell upon the place, after the playing and the story-telling, a silence like the grave. When the birch-tree, safely anchored by its roots above them, stirred, even old Loyka heard it, and looked to see what it was. When the lizard, sunning itself by the bushes in the warm sunlight, let fall over the rock a fragment of pebble or a crumb of earth, Loyka looked to see what had happened there above his head. And when in the centre of the ravine a leaflet was whirled along tremulous and fluttered like thought itself, Loyka glanced upward, and wondered, "Whence art thou? Where, I wonder, did they treat thee like myself?"

And then it came to pass that his eyelids drooped wearily, and he fell asleep. When he awoke he would no more hear of going into the villages, he would no more hear of the musicians, and said he fain would come hither oftener. He could come here as often as he chose, because the woodman at whose house Frank had been staying for some time now welcomed Frank's father also as an old and well-known acquaintance. And Frank led him into this ravine every day, here every day he slept most comfortably, and when he awoke he seemed always as though he found a portion of himself which he had lost.

It almost seemed as though Bartos's device was destined to succeed, at all events it partially succeeded. But it still failed of its full effect, because Loyka would not hear of returning to his home. But at the same time he would not hear of strolling through the villages any more.

People had already ceased to say in telling his story that he was wandering through the villages. Now they said he wandered in the woods.

CHAPTER X

OLD LOYKA continued to be a constant figure of the district surrounding Frishets. If any one from the neighbourhood or from abroad had come there and inquired what novel or peculiar event had happened there, he would have learnt that they had there a vejminkar [pensioner] belonging to a large estate and with a large pension, but who would not dwell on his estate, and roved about even in the woods and dwelt in the cemetery with the grave-digger Bartos.

"You have here a strange and ludicrous thing", he would hear said: for people frequently regard what is strange as also ludicrous. "Perhaps he wood sooner allow himself to be nailed to a cross than to return to the farm in which his son is hospodar. Some years ago he was just a little touched in the head and walked with a band of musicians from village to village—what a peasant it is! Now he is a little more reasonable; only no one can persuade him to go home—the fool!"

"And has he been long thus?" the stranger would perhaps inquire.

"Already a good many years. His wife dwells in the farm-house, and about her Loyka says, 'Let her stop there, she merits it.' 'Tis a strange and ludicrous affair." So would run the discourse of the native of the place.

And so we see that even over his sufferings several years have flown and, before he had expected it, we are several years older, and with us Loyka and Frank and Staza and all the rest.

During this time, it is true, Joseph importuned his father to return home. He dispatched servants after him with the assurance that he never dreamed his father would make such a fuss about the two chambers by the coach-house and take the matter so seriously, and that if only he would return he might dwell in the pension house unmolested. But the servants who were sent with these messages never succeeded much, because on these occasions old Loyka behaved as though they wished to hale him to the butcher's, stuffed his fingers in his ears, and took to flight. Moreover, at times, he sent strange messages to his son, though it is hard to say whether the servants delivered them just as he gave them.

But old Loyka took so violent an aversion, even to the servants from the farm, that if he came to a village his first question was whether any one from Frishets was on the watch for him. And

if he tarried several days in a village he posted guards here and there, that he might timely take to flight if the servants ventured to approach.

And it happened on one occasion that the servants from the farm entered several villages close upon his heels, because the young hospodar had charged them with a message in which he declared that he would no longer be held up to the eyes of the world as a villain, and have his name bandied about from mouth to mouth as that of a God-forsaken reprobate.

Here old Loyka fumed furiously. "Only let him come himself and I'll show him how I hold him up to the world as a villain", said he, and from that time forth he avoided the villages and dwelt most willingly with Bartos at the cemetery.

I know not how it came about, whether Joseph took the message to mean that he was to come personally to his father, but so it was that he came to the cemetery, and all the servants with him who had ever been dispatched after his father with any message. No sooner did old Loyka become aware of their approach than he was almost beside himself, and locked himself into the charnel-house among the shin-bones and skulls, only that he might see no one and need not have to speak to any one.

Then Joseph called in a loud voice in the cemetery to his father, bidding him come forth and return home; ay, he swore that he himself would not return home without him, that he would no longer endure to become the byword for a God-forsaken reprobate among the populace, and that if his father refused he should be dragged home forcibly.

"And how do you mean to accomplish it?" inquired Bartos, who had appeared during this scene on the threshold of his dwelling.

"I shall have the doors forced", responded Joseph.

"How so?" inquired Bartos calmly.

"Oh, you know all about it", said Joseph to Bartos. "It is you who are the cause of all this, and I will suffer it no longer. It is you who purposely retain my father in your house to make capital out of him. It is you who are purposely coupling my brother with that young vagabond——"

Further Joseph did not proceed in his harangue.

"What is it you called Staza", Bartos asked Joseph, and at the same time uttered a yell so menacing that the servants who were with Joseph recoiled several paces. But scarcely had Bartos pronounced the words before he had already gripped Joseph under

the armpits, swung him into the air, and balancing him like a racket ball, continued, "I'll pound every one to a jelly who dares once say such a thing."

And from the way in which Joseph turned deadly pale in Bartos's hands and impotently shook and shivered, it was evident that he believed the grave-digger to be in earnest and about to fulfil his threats to a tittle.

But Joseph, in his own impotence, began to pluck up a bolder spirit when he contemplated his servants, and no sooner had Bartos once more dropped him on to the ground than he shouted to them to force the doors of the charnel-house without further hesitation and to drag out the aged Loyka.

"And, prithee, why not? Prithee, why not?" observed Bartos in a voice again perfectly calm, as if a moment before he had not threatened to make a jelly of a human body. And he posted himself before the doors of the charnel-house.

"Cleave the doors asunder!" commanded Joseph, seeing that his servants did not wish to have anything to do with the business. "A souterkin of beer to the man who cleaves them open."

And when the servants made a rush in right earnest to get at the doors Bartos, as though he had heard nothing of what Joseph had said, merely stretched out his two hands and said, "Cave!" and already two of the servants lay on the ground blubbering, as though they had come to order their own graves to be delved. The rest of the servants wavered in their charge, and then suddenly turned and fled at full speed by the shortest road out of the cemetery.

Joseph began to jeer and threaten them.

"Everything is not to be had for a souterkin of beer", said Bartos, and laughed, or rather smiled, tauntingly.

"But it will be had all the cheaper," said Joseph, "when I bring half the village against you, you will pipe in another strain."

"Do not bring them", said Bartos, and continued to smile tauntingly.

"When I report matters at the bureaux——"

"Report it not, report nothing, unless you would report your own precious doings", said Bartos. "But, of course, if you think it right, bring them, report it all, only, you just sleep upon it and I will sleep upon it, too."

"But I tell you it is notorious how you encourage his vagabondage, how you cause disunion in the family——"

"Ay, ay, peasant, you have it well off by heart; but let me tell you, that if half your village comes with all its bureaux they will retire hence just as your own servants retired a moment since. And so it is I who cause disunion in families? Behold yonder doors before the charnel-house, and think whom they conceal. So it is I who cause disunion between him and thee. I, forsooth, was that notable son who lowered his father beneath the meanest of his servants, who shortly after commanded him to dwell in a stable, who baited him until he had baited him out of house and home, who deprived him of head and of reason, oh! I pray you, just bring hither your village and the whole squad of officials. I will enlighten them in your presence as to what a notable peasant thou art, who, in place of a heart, hast planted in thy bosom the gross peasant's corruption and art a wicked son because thy father is a pensioner on thy bounty!"

Such and more to the like effect said Bartos, and hereupon pressed Joseph, with his body, out of the cemetery. There was little need to use pressure; Bartos was only making sport of him, but it was all the worse for Joseph, because he felt what a ridiculous figure he cut before the servants and before Bartos, and his humiliation appeared to be intolerable. But there was no escape from it. He must e'en quit the cemetery with his message undelivered and must see to it that he did not fairly take to flight, which would have been more ridiculous than this measured retreat, during which Bartos, at least, allowed him so much apparent liberty that he appeared to be retiring of his own free will, and so Joseph had nothing for it but to recoil with threats.

And being now in a towering passion be resolved to fulfil these threats. When he had returned to Frishets he collected his neighbours and others and summoned them to go with him for his father, whom Bartos was detaining in the charnel-house, and whom he refused to let out.

Certainly this announcement wore little the appearance of truthfulness, because they knew Bartos too well to believe him capable of doing anything of the kind. Nevertheless Joseph contrived to persuade them to go with him, partly out of curiosity, to see what would happen, partly because they thought that the father and son might yet be reconciled, now that the son made such a point of it; and an affair of such importance was worth the trouble of a man's being a witness to it.

And so they trailed out of Frishets, and Joseph at their head, towards the cemetery, so that they had the appearance of a pro-

cession of people carrying some one to the grave, whereas they went for a man in order to bring him from the grave and back to his own home.

When they reached the cemetery the neighbours remained in the rear. Joseph advanced to the dwelling of the grave-digger and shouted, "Bartos, now we are here, so let out my father."

Bartos issued from his house, which had also a door into the fields, halted in front of the threshold, and seeing in reality half the village at Joseph's back inquired jestingly, "Are you come to pay me a visit, neighbours? I am delighted, I am delighted, but you must only come one by one, because men do not enter these precincts all at once."

"We are come for my father", said Joseph. "I'll teach thee, thou son of a spade, that I know how to keep my word."

"For your father? You have him there", said Bartos, and pointed vaguely all over the cemetery.

"Open the charnel-house, grave-digger," said Joseph imperiously.

"It will not be necessary," answered the grave-digger. "Yonder is thy father", and he pointed to the great ruddy cross by which stood old Loyka with dishevelled hair, holding in his hand a human shin-bone which he had picked out for himself in the charnel-house, and looking from one to the other of those who had approached the cemetery, as much as to say, "If any one comes near me I will break his head for him with this shin-bone."

All started back who saw it, even Joseph started. That grey-haired sire among the tombs, holding his left hand around the great cross on which hung the old white-iron figure of the Christus, and in his right hand a human bone, seemed standing there the defender of the dead against whom the living had come in battle-array.

"What went ye out for to see?" began old Loyka in the words of Scripture. "A notable son who promised in presence of you all to bear me on his arms, and then waved me to those chambers which I had reserved for beggars, and bade me dwell there. Behold him, yonder, he is among you. Or came ye out for to see a father bereft of sense and reason who long ago invited you to the feast, danced with you and made you merry? Behold me here, I stand beneath the crucified Jesus, but I have no more to spend on feasts, nothing remains to me save this bone, and none of you have much appetite for that. Surely, you do not believe that old Loyka has ceased to be hospitable? Oh, I could

feast you freely, but you would spurn my dainties, saving such of you as are like me, pensioned off on a son's bounty, and his son and his son's wife have meted out to him for his portion two chambers which were reserved for tinkers and pedlars—but you know it all."

Among the neighbours who had come thither was also the mayor, and he said, "Pantata, you would not have to dwell in those chambers. Joseph promises you that he will not meddle with you in the pension house."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Loyka, "and so you believe him, do you? This man who went against me like an enemy until he had stripped me of everything! Of my rights of hospodarship, of my respect with the servants, of the love of my children, and of this last span of earth on which I had laid my head. If he were to stretch out his hand to this cross, and lay it here in the side of the martyred Jesus, I would say to him, 'Thou liest'."

On this no one spoke more. The neighbours saw that it would be in vain, and Joseph perhaps said nothing, because he saw that every further step he took only the more incensed his father. Only here and there among themselves the neighbours exchanged a few desultory remarks.

And after a while Loyka began to speak again almost meekly, as though he were fit to cry. "What injury have I done you, my neighbours, that ye have leagued yourselves against me with yonder fellow? I always avoid you all, I do not get in any one's way, I do not beg anything at your hands, I creep away like the field-mouse beneath the hedgerow, for many years ye have not heard my voice, I suffer and am mute; what do ye find so sickening in me that you come to the cemetery against me as against a savage beast?"

This speech excited the neighbours' compassion, they felt that they ought not to have yielded so easily to Joseph's summons, and that old Loyka deserved more consideration at their hands than that they should have allowed themselves to bustle off as to a spectacle: just as when we wish to see something which is not to be seen every day. Even Joseph felt too well that he had invited them to play an ungracious part, and therefore used his best endeavours to turn their attention from his father and himself, and to concentrate it upon the grave-digger: on whom he thought it high time to be revenged; and he began to talk as though it was Bartos alone who hindered his father from returning home, and here he began to threaten his neighbours with the

anger of the bureaux if they did not aid him in rescuing his father from the power of Bartos.

On this occasion Bartos rid himself of Joseph by a sarcasm, and this sarcasm was more properly a very serious blow. "I had not thought," he said to Joseph, "that you would offer yourself as village messenger to the bureaux so long as we had Vena for the purpose. But it is all of a piece with the rest of your hospodarship. You bow the messenger out of your house and turn messenger yourself—before I die I still expect to see you turn kalounkar [tape-pedlar]."

Bartos, as we know, had never far to go for an answer, and generally had the laugh on his side. Thus it came to pass that every one lost who measured his strength with him even before he was ready himself with a suitable retort. Having heard Bartos say his say, people did not wait to hear how his adversary would defend himself: they were convinced that every one who began a dispute with Bartos would be worsted either by fisticuffs or some smart repartee.

And so the neighbours gave way even here to quite audible laughter, looked at one another, turned right-about face, took their way to Frishets, and on the way smilingly observed that Joseph wanted to be a village messenger or a kalounkar [tape-pedlar].

Joseph then was far from being successful on this occasion, he not only became hateful to his neighbours for the want of respect which he had shown towards his father, but he became still more an object of ridicule, and that was a thing he dreaded very much indeed.

But yet he did not despair.

And now as soon as ever his pair of heels had crossed his own doorstep the children on the village green began to play at being messengers and kalounkari [tape-pedlars]; when people met each other their discourse was of messengers and kalounkari. He even heard it amongst his servants. Even when he stood up in chapel, all at once a bee seemed to buzz past his ear and he heard a whisper about the kalounkar [tape-pedlar] and messenger. He heard it even when no one was saying anything about it, but that was seldom. When he went into the ale-house he imagined people there had just ceased to speak about kalounkari, and when he desired to return home he hesitated, because he felt sure that as soon as his back was turned they would begin to talk at once (though they had ceased in his presence) about the kalounkar.

Bartos's witticism flew from Frishets all over the neighbourhood. Joseph heard it afield from the labourers, he heard it on the high road, from the road-mender, who all of a sudden exclaimed with a sigh, "Ah! heavens, when will the kalounkar [tape-pedlar] come this way again; I should like to buy of him a bit of ribbon, mine is quite worn out." And the road-mender, at these words, laid down his hammer and ceased to break stones and looked at Joseph. Perhaps, even in any case, he would have looked at him as he passed, but at any other time Joseph would have scarcely heeded him; under present circumstances the man's look galled him.

And thus he saw and heard mockery everywhere, wherever he showed himself. Moreover, his evil destiny contrived that a kalounkar should come about this time to Frishets, who, not daring to put up at the Loykas's, spread out his wares on the village green. Hereupon, when most of the people had formed a circle round him came Vena and said, "How dare you venture with your tapes and ribbons on to our village green when we have our own kalounkar in the village?"

Those who stood in the circle greeted these words with boisterous merriment, indeed, with acclamations; the children ran about the green squeaking "kalounkar" in shrill trebles, and the boldest of them went before the Loykas's farmhouse and yelled, "The kalounkar is here, we ourselves are playing at kalounkar", and every brat wanted to be a kalounkar.

This affair, apparently so trivial, reached such a head that Joseph no longer cared to leave his house, and, in fact, never left it. Vena, standing on the village green, cried to all new-comers who went past Loyka's farmstead, "None are allowed to enter there, and the peasant proprietor daren't venture out—just come here—here are nice ribbons for you."

This affair, apparently so trivial, infuriated Joseph to such a degree that he never spoke with any one in the village. He felt that he could not speak with them. Loyka's farm became the butt of every saucy ribald witling, even a kind of comic song circulated under the name of the "Kalounkarska", or "Lay of the Kalounkar", and when any of the musicians straggled into Frishets and began to show off his skill on the village green, all the full-grown lads flocked round him and wanted him to play the "Kalounkarska". A little later every melody became the "Kalounkarska" if Joseph were within earshot. And they all

began to play the "Kalounkarska", one after the other, although they had been singing quite different songs till then.

And so it came to pass that one day Joseph went to his wife and said, "Barushka, it is impossible for us to hold out any longer in Frishets, I shall sell the farm and we will emigrate elsewhere." There was no sign of hesitation, he meant it in earnest, nor did Barushka by any means endeavour to divert him from his purpose. So, then, let him find a purchaser and Joseph Loyka would decamp from Frishets.

Not long after this the good folk of Frishets whispered to one another that the kalounkar wanted to decamp. Vena one day delivered on the village green a complete disquisition: How, even this kalounkar, who showed the door to every real kalounkar, was now every day peeping out of that very door, how he had already all his wares in his pack, and how they would soon have to drum him out of the village to his own tune.

At that time, it so fell out, that Bartos, the grave-digger, came into Frishets to pay a visit, and went direct to the house of the mayor.

"I have friends with us just now. Do you come to take their measure—eh?" said the mayor.

"Not exactly that," said Bartos, "but I could wish to take my spade in hand to clear a certain something out of the way."

"Well, seat yourself", said the mayor.

And Bartos began:—

"You are Frank's guardian, my dear mayor?"

"I am, I am", admitted the mayor.

"And the money which Frank inherited through his grandfather you gave to me to stow away?"

"I did, I did. You do not, perhaps, want me to take charge of it again? That would be a pretty business. What could I do with it, pray, at my time of life? And, pray, where could it be better stowed away than at your house?"

"I do, indeed, wish you to take charge of it again. It is well stowed away at my house; but it is dead, like everything else that lies there; and this money must not lie dead."

"And how do you mean to bring it to life, my dear Bartos?"

"Well, thus. I have heard that Joseph desires to sell the farm."

"And you are the cause of that, my dear Bartos."

"I am, and I am not. Only tell me this: Does Joseph wish to sell?"

"And did you wish to buy?"

"Not I, but you, mayor, are to be the purchaser."

"Oh! so I am to buy Loyka's farm?"

"Yes, as Frank's guardian, with Frank's money, and for Frank. If there is not sufficient, you can advance the money, or a debt might remain on the estate. Frank is young and can economize. Besides this, he has his younger-son's portion on the estate. That would accrue."

The mayor began to reflect. "Hum! It would accrue: perhaps it might be done."

"If only he wishes to sell?"

"That I could find out from him. I could, indeed, invite him to our house; but now, no one can entice him out of his own at any price—of which you are the cause. I could go to him myself."

„No, no, mayor! No, no! He must send for you. We must so contrive, not that we should seem bent on buying the farm, but that Joseph should seem bent on selling it."

"Not in vain do they call you a 'sapient grave-digger'", said the mayor flatteringly. "But, frankly, my dear Bartos, I do not as yet see your drift."

Bartos was glad that he had hit upon something which no one else had hit upon before, and that the mayor had said in so many words that his [Bartos's] more elaborate design eluded his penetration.

"It is as follows", explained Bartos. "Old Loyka will not return to his estate. Of that you are convinced?"

"Of that I am convinced", repeated the mayor.

"That is to say, so long as Joseph is on the farm", continued Bartos.

"So long as Joseph is there?" said the mayor, interrogatively, as though he again failed to grasp the scheme of the grave-digger.

"Then my idea is this. Might not old Loyka return to his farmstead if Joseph was there no more?"

"If he was not there? That pleases me. That might be."

"And if everything else there was rearranged just as it was wont to be in times gone by—Loyka to command the servants; in the chambers by the coach-house mirth to reign as in the days of old; Loyka to dwell in the farmhouse and be hospodar, both in name and reality; Frank, voluntarily, to be subservient to his wishes, whereby we should make a good hospodar of Frank. Do you not think that in this manner old Loyka might yet recover his health?"

This proposal pleased the mayor.

"If he did not recover, what help? We should have done what we could. At all events, Frank would gain a constant occupation and all pretexts would be removed from old Loyka for tormenting himself further."

"Grave-digger, the more I reflect about it, the more I like it. And for my part, I am almost convinced that Loyka will recover."

And the mayor rubbed his hands and said to Bartos, "You would be the cause of this also." They so contrived it that Joseph Loyka sent that same day for the mayor, and came to terms with him about the price of the farm, which the mayor bought in his own name. A few days after the terms of the agreement were made out in writing, and soon after the grave-digger brought Frank's money, which in great part defrayed the cost of the farm.

And here the mayor desired that Bartos should also sign his name as a witness to the agreement. But Bartos absolutely refused his signature, fearing lest Joseph might hear that he was the cause of it all and might yet revoke the agreement at the last moment—a notion which was not altogether devoid of foundation.

And so it came to pass that Joseph decamped from Frishets, not being able to support the ridicule which assailed him on an estate where he could support no one near himself—not even his own father. He sneaked off without giving his neighbours one farewell embrace, as though he had never in his life been on intimate terms with them. He sneaked off in the early hours of the morning, when he thought that every one was still asleep, and he could consequently most easily elude the mockery and taunts of the village—the last taunts and mockery.

He eluded them for that day. He migrated to a distant quarter of the country where people knew him not. But taunts and mockery were raised like dust behind him, when it was learnt how he had eluded them. The "Kalounkarska", which they had intended to sing at his departure was now sung by the irritated youths of Frishets through the long hours of the evening, and before the farmstead long into the night.

CHAPTER XI

IN the cemetery at Bartos's house, consequently with Staza and the grave-digger, were Frank and old Loyka. They conducted together their modest household, Frank busying himself about the management of all outside the house, and Staza devoting herself to domestic duties.

Frank and Staza had reached an age when life wishes to burst forth in the song of the sky-lark. Where such an eye directs its gaze, the bud unfolds, the rose blossoms. The sky is draped in a garment of transparent blue, every star has its own language, every ray of moonlight brings a message down to earth. The earth is draped in a garment of green, and this green is full of hope, the birds sing songs about it, the leaves of the wood murmur about it. The garish light of day trenches far upon the depths of night, and night, with its own golden speech of dawn, trenches far upon the day itself. The young heart reels between waking and dreaming; presentiment and uncertainty contend about it, the presentiment of joy above which there is none; uncertainty which is half a certainty because the world is so fair.

Once Staza sat upon the grave of her mother: she did not sing "Oh, rest in peace", either to her mother or to the other dead. But she felt weary and oppressed, she knew not why, and then she interpreted the oppression to be sorrow for never having known her mother. And she would most gladly have delved a fresh grave beside her mother's grave and laid herself in it, not by any means as a corpse, but that she might again tap at her mother's coffin and tell her something which she had not yet breathed even to herself.

At this moment came Frank to her, and when he stood beside her, he was for the first time at a loss for a word. Everything that he had said to her hitherto seemed insufficient. He wished to say much more, and therefore said nothing.

The dawn of life shot its crimson streamers before him, he had his soul full of spring, full of sap and beauty, and when he wished to express it all he cast his eyes down to the ground and his tongue seemed parched with a long drought. He had his soul full of sunlight, and when he wished to reveal it in its full brightness he had tears in his eyes.

And when he had stood thus a long time and could not find anything to say, and yet wished to say something—he found

nothing else but the inquiry, "Oh! Staza, and thou dost not sing any more."

Staza quivered at these words, glanced up at him, and then looked on the ground: glanced up at him with a gleam in her eyes which he had never seen there before, with fervour so that her bosom was expanded and was penetrated by it. And when she glanced down to the ground she did not raise her eyes any more, but from the heaving of her own bosom it was evident that this gleam of light and fervour had elevated her whole existence.

Frank was melancholy; what he had said did not satisfy him, and he could not think of anything else. Even Staza was melancholy, because she could not find anything to say at all: but after a brief pause she threw herself at full length on the grass, a deep sigh escaped from her bosom, and then she quickly rose to her feet and, without casting one glance at Frank, ran lightly away.

Perhaps she at last told her mother what she wanted to say.

Frank scarcely ventured to glance at her as she ran away, and still less ventured to ask himself the question why she ran away. And he sat down exactly on the place where she had been seated a moment before, only that he looked toward the wicket-gate and then called to mind how he had come to the cemetery the first time with the measure for his grandfather's grave. And then he called to mind how he had slept in his grandfather's grave, and how he and Staza had nestled together. And all at once he started as though something had stung him in his heart.

And now Staza and Frank avoided one another, or, more properly, they sought one another, but when they ought to have found one another they did not find one another, and when they found one another they were melancholy and sought one another once more. They who had grown side by side like two flower-stems, only now became conscious that they were side by side, and began to separate from one another in order that they might yearn for one another's presence.

When at even Staza worked in the living-room, certainly Frank was not there, and wandered somewhere under the window or outside the burial-ground, in the fields, perhaps even in the woods, God knows where. And if Frank was in the living-room, Staza would rather have laid her down beside the charnel-house than have been at the same time in the same room with him; and again she glanced into his eyes, which were so clear and fervent.

And yet again, sometimes, when by accident they met one another, it seemed to them as though there could not be in the

world a greater happiness than such meetings, so that they measured time by them, although they dwelt under the same roof.

When Bartos, the grave-digger, observed what I here relate, he said to Frank, "You will not sleep another night at our house, Frank, you will go to the farm; the farm is your own, and requires a hospodar without delay."

And now it seemed to Frank as though Bartos had announced to him some dire misfortune. Frank begged not to be dismissed to the farm until the morrow. But Bartos said, "You go there at once, just as you are, without saying a word to any one."

"Not even to Staza?" asked Frank.

"Not even to Staza", said Bartos.

And so Frank departed that same day without saying a word to any one.

When several days had elapsed, old Loyka said, "I wonder where Frank is roving; 'tis several days since he has been at home."

"I have not seen him now for several days", said Bartos. "I know not where he is roving."

I know not whether this answer contented Loyka, but certainly it did not content Staza, who was now constantly on the watch to see whether Loyka or Bartos would begin to mention Frank.

She would gladly have inquired a hundred times in the hour what had become of him, and yet she never summoned courage to ask even once.

"I wonder why Frank doesn't come", said old Loyka after several days.

"I wonder he does not come", said Bartos.

And it was the only thing she heard of him for several days, and yet she always watched with immeasurable anxiety for the occasion when Loyka should inquire for his son. Once Loyka asked Staza herself whether she knew where Frank was. "I do not know", said Staza; and after this she once more seated herself on her mother's grave, buried her hot face in the clover, and doubtless told her mother to the very end what that other time she had only begun to speak about.

In the meantime Bartos went to the mayor, and both together went to the Loykas's farm and advised Frank how to manage his estate; instructed him, worked with him, and were always ready with friendly counsel.

Once Bartos came home and said to Loyka, "I know at last where Frank is."

At these words Staza grew red and white several times in the same minute, just as though some one had announced to her that she must from that minute suffer some dire adversity.

"Frank is at home with his mother, who is sick unto death and longs for you to come and visit her", exclaimed Bartos.

"I go to the farm!" began Loyka vehemently. "To your wife, who is sick unto death", put in Bartos. And here old Loyka was, for that day, completely metamorphosed. He did not speak a word, leant his head on his hands, turned over in his mind various plans, and looked another man.

"So you think, Bartos, that I have to go to the farm?" he asked, as if on the brink of some final determination which he specially dreaded.

"I think that you ought to go. If you wish it, I will conduct you", said Bartos. And here the matter was half decided.

What a wholly different effect it had upon Staza! How gladly, without any hesitation, would she have run to the bedside of the invalid, how gladly would she have watched there, how gladly would she have tended her. How instantly would she have left everything that she might be present where there was most need of her. No one invited her, and she would have sped like the wind. The grave-digger invited Loyka, and Loyka prepared himself to go, as though he was preparing himself for his own death.

"How many years is it since I have been on the estate?" asked old Loyka, still undecided.

"Oh, many a long year", said Bartos. "In the meantime your son has grown up and is like a nosegay—'tis a pleasure to look at him."

At these words Staza let fall everything which she held in her hands, and for a long time was at cross purposes in all she did. She poured water from the ewer into the basin until it overflowed. When she observed this, she wished to wipe it up with something, and emptied the salt-cellar into the water imagining it was something she had forgotten to salt.

That evening, Loyka and Bartos wended their way to the farm, at Frishets, which Loyka still supposed to be in the possession of Joseph. It must have been a very crushing pilgrimage for him, for let Bartos begin any topic of conversation, Loyka did not listen to him, but remained shut up in his own sombre reflections,

and at intervals he heaved a heavy sigh and said in a constrained voice, "Well, then, this is my last journey." Bartos did not tease him to converse. Moreover, they had to rest at every boundary-stone, and the walk, which, under ordinary circumstances, was easily accomplished in half an hour, was prolonged to a full hour. And then each time they sat down Loyka said, "My Lord and Master, I go to the Mount of Calvary."

But with this great oppression which overpowered Loyka, all traces of that tempestuous spirit which had oftentimes shaken his whole inner man seemed to have disappeared. He went as though the road was one which it was impossible to avoid—he went exhausted and oppressed, but still he did not turn aside.

When they reached the Loykas's farm it was almost dark. Loyka seated himself exhausted by the abutment, beside which long ago Frank had wept for the death of his grandfather. And as he sat by this abutment, he spoke in a voice of forced meekness, "Bend, proud knees, and entreat my son to permit me to cross his court-yard. Hands, clasp yourselves in prayer and entreat my son to open that gate for so many years barred against me. Enter his doors, ye words, and entreat and implore. For surely it is not possible that I must stifle even my words. Then forth, oh! stubborn thoughts, and learn humbleness! My son Joseph!" said he, raising his voice, "lo! Thy father stands at thy threshold, only, prithee, promise me one thing, by word of mouth and before witnesses, that thou wilt not set that dog upon me which long ago fawned upon me and which I fed with my bounty." And more to the same effect.

At times it was like praying, at times like weeping, at times like affected humility, at times like reproach.

While he sat thus and Bartos stood beside him, the sound of harps and violins issued from the court-yard and several vocal melodies were wafted to their ears. Old Loyka was silent, raised his head and looked round about him. He listened. He looked round about him to see where he was sitting, and he listened to find out whence the music came. He saw that he was seated by the gates of Joseph's farm, and that the music resounded therefrom.

"Whither have you led me, Bartos?" inquired Loyka, and rose to his feet, for he could not trust what he had heard and seen.

"And you said that my wife was sick unto death?" he further inquired.

"So I said."

"Why are they playing music where some one is sick unto death?" inquired Loyka.

"If music can play after a funeral, why should it not be played before the funeral? Did not the music play the whole day when they brought out your father for me to bury?"

Loyka mused a while and was silent. After this, Loyka said of his own accord, "Let us enter."

He opened the gate, remained standing in the gateway and listened. The music played on.

Here Loyka said, "They have not yet loosed the dog upon me and I cannot hear one barking." The music played on.

Then they stepped into the court-yard, and old Loyka said in a much milder tone than before at the abutment, "Look in wonder on me all you who here in days gone by craved a hospitable shelter. Did any of you come here so humbly as I come this day? Had any of you to stoop to such servile entreaties as I have stooped to? Oh, how could I come more humbly than I come this day?" And the music played on. Loyka listened and said, "I have not yet heard the baying of the hound."

And when he had said this he perceived that the music and the singing were in the chambers beside the coach-house, and now there was the chattering of many voices. He saw and heard feet approaching, and, not looking up to see who it was, he bowed his body to the ground and cried, "If thou art my son Joseph, oh! I pray thee only do not drive me away for this one day. For the sake of my aged wife, I implore thee, for the sake of thy mother who bore thee, and whose only fault was that she loved thee all too well, and now is sick unto death. I promise that I will depart again as soon as she is dead if I survive her death."

And more to the same effect. It was Vena who approached him and said, "I welcome you, pantata, to your own farmstead."

Old Loyka drew himself up, looked round about him and listened. Afterwards his eyes rested on Vena. "Thou art Vena," he said, "I know thee. What has brought thee here? Thou went wandering from here."

"Now I am here again, pantata, and we are expecting you", said Vena.

"Expecting me? And who are those yonder playing?"

"The harpers, fiddlers, and singers. Of course, you know them all", said Vena.

"And what do they want here?"

"They are expecting you."

"Expecting me! Well, well, well, well."

Then he took Vena by the hand and said, "Thou wise man, do not trot me out to make a fool of me, and tell me, is it safe to cross the court-yard?"

"I am sent for you, pantata, and I have to conduct you wherever you please—to the pension house or the farmhouse; but our good old mistress is in the farmhouse, and, therefore, I might perhaps have conducted you to the farmhouse."

"Ha! then, lead me to the farmhouse", said Loyka, and he said it just as though he had by this confirmed his own death-warrant, which it was impossible now to avoid. And, even as the wretch condemned to die, just before his death, dares to implore some favour for himself, so old Loyka implored, "You hear, Vena, I am going into the farmhouse; but first, lead me yonder, to the chambers by the coach-house, that I may gaze upon those spirits who there await my spirit."

And he hung on Vena's arm, and Vena led him to the spot. When they caught sight of him a flourish of trumpets rang forth. Then the family of the kalounkar came out upon the door-step, the cloth-pedlar, several tinkers, and, in a word, all whoever just then were lodging under that roof, and all said, "We welcome you, pantata; we have already been expecting you." And when old Loyka hardly recognized those figures by the scanty light of a candle, his head went round, so that he scarcely attended to what they were saying.

"Vena, let me not stay here any longer. Good lad, now I have seen it, now lead me to the farmhouse."

When he departed, a flourish of music again rang forth, and Loyka, staggering, and leaning upon Vena, reeled towards his house. And when he was already not far from the threshold, he said, "Only bend thyself, proud tongue, and pray. Harsh words, swaddle yourselves in silk, be soft and meek, be very meek and soft, ay, as soft as the droppings of birds!" And here already some one stood on the door-step and said, "I welcome you, tatinka; we have been expecting you."

He who pronounced these words was not Joseph; it was Frank.

And here motes seemed to flicker before Loyka's eyes, and after a minute or two, Bartos, Vena, and Frank carried him into the farmhouse.

They laid him on his bed, for the strain upon his nerves had been too great, and he had fainted. He breathed. He opened

his eyes for a moment and closed them again immediately. He fell asleep.

After so many years he again slept under his own roof, and slept in the farmhouse.

It was already pretty late on the following day when he awoke; and when he awoke, he looked fixedly at the ceiling as if he was trying to call to mind how it used to look. Very much that had occurred seemed to him like a dream. As yet, he could hardly manage to assure himself that he was not still asleep.

And when his eyes ranged from the ceiling and sought the objects that were nearest to him, here stood, here sat in the apartment, his wife, Frank, and Bartos. Loyka greeted them with a prolonged stare, but did not utter a word. He only gazed at them.

And when his eyes wandered to the door he saw several of the servants standing there, one of whom said, "We await your order, pantata, where we are to go and plough."

Old Loyka again turned his eyes towards his wife, his son, and Bartos, and said, "Tell me nothing: if it is a dream, let me dream on." And to the servants he said, "Go and plough beyond the meadow; I will come and see how much you have worked."

When the servants had gone, he again looked towards his son and said, "And Joseph allows you to be here? Does he allow me to be here also?"

"You are at home, papa," said Frank, "and we will never leave it again."

"At home? Prithee, tell me nothing whatever until afterwards", and he rubbed his forehead. After a while he said to his wife, "They told me you were sick unto death."

"Now she is well again", said Bartos.

When Loyka got upon his feet he inquired, "May I venture to walk about the room?"

"About the room, the court-yard, in the fields, where you please", answered Frank.

Loyka smiled and walked about the room, and said as he did so, "It is all a very well concocted plan, but I am already old. Why should I not allow myself to take a few steps in a room which was once my own?"

"It is yours, so long as you are pleased to stay in it", said Bartos.

"Good lad, I must trust you, although I do not know yet

whether you speak the truth." And Loyka looked out of the window at the court-yard.

"I wonder who that is standing in the court-yard?" he said. "If I am not mistaken, it is the old harvester."

"He has been already waiting two days to see you and to have a talk with you", they said.

"Well, let him come and say his say", responded Loyka. "I always gladly talk with him."

They called to the harvester and he came. "I am come to you, pantata, to inquire whether you will require the services of the old harvester this summer? Because they are ready to engage us in Časlavsko, and I said that we would go if our old pantata Loyka did not require our services."

"Have you spoken to the young folk?" inquired Loyka.

"They told me that everything depended on you", answered the harvester.

"Well, if they said that to you, come all of you to our harvesting. To be sure, where else would you go, when we need your services here?"

"We will be here on call early to prepare ourselves", said the reaper and took his leave.

Old Loyka turned to his friends and said, "I know very well that Joseph will not be pleased, but why should I not exasperate him a little? Just let them come. Of course, I shall still employ them."

After this he said, "Still, Joseph does not come hither to drive me away?"

"He is not coming", said Frank.

"Then if he is not coming, let me go into the court-yard", and they led him into toe court-yard.

In the court-yard the servants of old Loyka saluted him, called him "pantata" and, in general, behaved towards him very respectfully. Old Loyka inspected the field implements, inspected the house, and was evidently well pleased.

He went to the chambers by the coach-house, there all was just as it had been in his time. The family of the kalounkar, only a few inches taller and perhaps with one or two additions to its numbers; the cloth-pedlar, a little shrunken, and the harpers and fiddlers with the same instruments, only that, perhaps, they too were already a little shrunken. All welcomed old Loyka with smiles and pretty speeches, and one of them said that now all was once more just as it used to be in the old days.

Then they begged old Loyka to come and sit down with them. After this they began to relate about things past and present, and what changes there had been, and old Loyka felt as though some one was planting a new heart in his breast, and in his head the song of the laverock once more resounded.

Then the old kalounkar said, "I think, pantata, if you would be so good as to suffer us to stay here some time under this roof, that the Lord God would reward you for it on the other side."

Old Loyka said, "When I see you here I can believe that I am here—just as if you had been my roots and I could again anchor myself here by you."

They were in very truth his roots, and old Loyka anchored himself here by them.

After this his neighbours from the village came and welcomed old Loyka. They declared that they were interested about the construction of some public gardens, and that they only waited for his advice before beginning to lay them out.

In a word, every one treated old Loyka just as though there had never been a period when he was a fugitive from his home, just as though this day was a continuation of the brighter, happier days of old. Not, perhaps, that Loyka should no more remember what had been. By no means. He very well remembered that but yesterday he was a wanderer in the world, but at the same time there emerged in him to-day a fresh consciousness that, perhaps, there might be an end of this wandering.

And so Bartos's plan succeeded. Those spiders' webs which had obscured old Loyka's mind, dissipated themselves of their own accord, and he every day visibly convalesced. Once more he took his walk every evening to the chambers by the coach-house, and himself invited the inmates to converse and sing. "Be merry, lads, be merry", he used to say.

And the old life began again at the Loykas's. That farm was now once more just as people had known it all their lives. Old Loyka so far convalesced that he threw off several years as though they had been a few heavy sheaves of corn; so that at last his friends ventured to tell him the whole truth, both about what had happened to Joseph, how he had sold out of the farm, and how the farm was bought for Frank, and how being still young, Frank begged that he, Loyka, should manage it for him. Ay, he so far convalesced that sometimes he would say, when he paid a visit to the chambers, "So, my lads, tell me the story of old Loyka when he was a wanderer in the world."

"Ah! well, he was always very merry through it all", so they began the story, and that was the only part where they did not tell him the whole truth, because they knew how greatly pleased he was that people should think he had been merry in the height of his misfortune.

They even told him that the illness of his wife was a mere pretext in order to coax him home again, and that it had succeeded.

"Ah! well," said old Loyka about his wife, "she suffered quite enough, poor thing, when she was here by herself."

And thus old Loyka got himself home once more.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT more have I to relate?

Frank again began to rove away from the farm and, of course, they knew to a hair whither he went. But it was not true exactly as they thought it: that is to say, when he went to the cemetery he went with a heavy heart as in the old days when he carried hither the measure for his grandfather's grave. And now he carried thither a kind of measure, the measure of his own heart—was it that he would order a grave for it? By no means. In order that he might lay it in a heart softer than any dust and sweeter than any flower.

And yet, indeed, the path was as toilsome as if he were going to bury his heart in the grave. Enchantment seemed to murmur around him and shot about his path in the mist and the clear weather: his heart beat with a presentiment of rapture, and his hand vacillated—so it will be to the end of the world.

When he came to the cemetery he posted himself by the wicket-gate, as on that day long past, and gazed eagerly. And he saw the great ruddy cross and on it the white-iron figure of the Christus, then lesser crosses, then graves without crosses, some green, some flowery, some half sunk in the ground.

And there was in that cemetery something vast and incomprehensible, something that we can never analyse, something vast as a sea, chilling as winter's ice and snow. But to-day the breath of winter did not issue from its gates, rather a portion of the spring seemed to hover over that dwelling-place of the dead.

When he stood by the wicket-gate, he waited and everything for which he waited could emerge from the grave-digger's humble abode in the person of Staza.

Staza tripped forth just as on that day long past, but how different. It was not a child who hopped even over the graves like a small bird, or a butterfly. It was a pensive, blooming maiden, a rose, which blossoms on a single bush, there to glisten and then fade. She walked with her head bowed and seemed as though she would fain water those graves with her tears. And she was infinitely charming.

Frank had opened the wicket-gate a hundred times, and to-day it seemed as though he knew not how he could ever enter by it. When he thought that Staza might observe him, he retreated and only peeped furtively through the bars. And he saw Staza, who was the selfsame Staza whom he had led about the whole neighbourhood, and who yet was not the same. At least it seemed to him as though he saw her to-day for the first time, and as though he had to speak to her for the first time.

Staza seated herself on her mother's grave, and her eyes rested on the white-iron figure of the Christus on the ruddy cross. After a moment or two she whispered rather than sang, "Odpocinte v pokoji verne dusicky" ["Rest in peace ye faithful spirits"].

But she did not finish her song. Something seemed to snap it asunder half-way, the second half remained unuttered.

And here Frank felt constrained: just as if he ought to finish in tears what Staza had left incomplete in her song, just as if he wronged her by his silence.

He posted himself before the wicket-gate in order that she might see him.

"Oh! Staza," he said.

Staza rose from the ground, and half joyously, half pensively approached the wicket-gate.

"I welcome thee, Frank", said she.

"Oh! Staza, will you open it for me", said Frank.

Here Staza said archly, "Have you so soon forgotten how to open it?"

"I have not forgotten," responded Frank, "but I have no longer the right unless you allow me."

"You have it open!" said Staza.

"Oh! Staza, I am come to ask your hand in marriage", said Frank, after a short silence.

"You have it here!" said Staza, and gave her hand to him.

What need of more? What need of elaborate circumlocutions in order that the heart should speak truth?

The heart of those children knew of no such circumlocutions, it spoke thus, and therefore spoke sublimely, nobly, and solemnly, because it spoke the truth.

"I wished to have thee for my wife, and I did not know whether thou wert willing to be my wife, and that fretted me", said Frank.

"If you had not come for me, I should have had to think where Bartos should delve a grave. And I had already chosen a spot. Where else than yonder", and she pointed towards her mother's grave.

And both their hearts heaved with feelings different than a moment before: the sentiment of unexpected bliss exhausted them, and bliss is burdensome before we are accustomed to it.

They took one another by the hand and went into the little house to tell Bartos what they had just told one another.

"I wish to have Staza for my wife and am come to speak about it", said Frank by way of salutation when they entered.

Bartos measured Frank from head to heal and said, "Good, Staza, go away."

When Staza was gone, Bartos said, "You know, I suppose, Frank, that Staza is a child not born in wedlock."

"But all the same, a child", responded Frank.

"That she does not know, neither do I know, nor perhaps does anybody know, who was her father."

"Is there any need to know it?" inquired Frank.

"That people will talk about this and will say, 'Look! there goes Frank Loyka arm in arm with his wife', and they will laugh at her origin."

"Why should a man trouble himself about an origin?"

"Every one thinks his or her origin the important thing and acts accordingly."

"And do they mend matters thereby?"

"They do not. But it goes against them when it comes about as in her case."

"And was she created against the will of the Creator?"

"That I do not know; but if you wish to have her for your wife you ought to be told about it."

"I see no difference between her and others, and what I see is that she is dearer to me than all the world, let her origin be what it may."

"Good! call her!"

And Bartos himself called Staza. "You have led one another by the hand", he said; "lead one another by the hand for all your life." And this strong man who had not his equal, at these words wellnigh gave way.

After this he said, "I found thee, dear Staza, long have I had thee with me, and now Frank has claimed thee. What have we to do? He has a greater right to thee than I have. He is young and loves thee."

At these words Staza threw herself on Bartos's breast, and there sobbed out her great happiness, wept there also her thanks to him for being a father to her and her sorrow at leaving him.

"One thing more, oh! Bartos", said Frank.

"What, pray?"

"You know that my parents dwell in the farmhouse and will dwell there with me for many a long year, let us hope; the pension house is therefore empty; will you not settle there and be our neighbour—mine and Stazas?"

At these words Bartos again measured Frank from head to heels and said: "I pensioned off! No, dear boy. Here I am lord and master, and am little skilled in accepting pensions or returning thanks for them. It is possible that you would like to have me there. But we cannot tell, and I should never manage to pry into your eyes every day to see whether you still liked to have me there. Do you think I shall be low-spirited here alone? I have a large family, as yet I have never felt oppressed or low-spirited among them. Who knows? Perhaps, I shall be needed here. The next time some father flies from his son's harsh bounty and knoweth not whither to turn, he will come to Bartos. And what would he do if he did not find me here?"

Frank was silent. It was evident he deemed that Bartos judged him harshly.

"Do not be angry, boy", said Bartos. "Possibly I shall come and visit you from time to time, to see how you treat your father. Do your best to show yourself at once a good hospodar and a good son—of that I must be first assured. Promise nothing. Even your brother promised and would have deprived your father of reason. I do not trust you little sons, because your fathers make themselves dependent upon you. But promise me one thing, invite me to your wedding."

All was so unanswerably true which Bartos had said, that Frank did not utter a word in reply.

"Do not be anxious about me," he added, "now, Staza must be the dearest object of your care." On this he kissed Staza and kissed Frank, and so the betrothal ended.

What they wished to say to one another, and what they had said to one another, how simple it was! How entirely the outcome of souls already united, and yet, before they had reached the goal of speech they had to undergo all the pleasing lapses, doubts, and problems of lovers—true passion follows no other course.

And now they both enjoyed the most charming rambles together. They led one another by the hand and went to visit those hedgerows, those bushes, all the haunts where their childish hearts had beat beside the quails. They visited their little chapels, in which as children they worshipped their Creator with the laverock. Everything was the same, and yet it was all different. On every hedge was more green and more glitter; the air seemed more alive with singing; every laverock piped a more fervid lay; every whisper of Nature was more touching.

And so everything was different, but it seemed as though only now all Nature manifested itself in its true essence, which none understand who have not looked upon the world with an eye enlightened by true love. Even Staza was different; even Frank was different. When they looked at one another they seemed to catch a glimpse of each other's souls, of something inexhaustible and eternal. They seemed to catch a glimpse of each other's soul and in their eyes gleamed the light of eternal blessedness, beautiful as the glory of a Saint; in their eyes gleamed the truth of eternal rapture made more beautiful by tears. Each of them was different, each seemed endued with angels' wings, to flutter round the other; each of them was more exalted, and their thoughts were like prayers.

Staza's love was not the least appreciably less fervent, less genuine, less holy because she was a child not born in wedlock. The divine breath hath not such narrow instincts as we poor humans. Only let the heart be right and the divine breath does not inquire what was its origin. The Son of God was a child not born in wedlock, and the divine love did not grow cold on that account, the divine love accepted him for its own Son. It is only we poor humans who, in out littleness, grow cold and shamefaced at the thought of a base origin, and yet the origin of us all is from no other source than from that eternal love from which every grain of wheat germinates, who threw that grain of wheat, for

whose delight it germinates into maturity—wherefore should we trouble ourselves about that?

What more have I to relate?

About three o'clock one afternoon, the sexton, Vanek, strode across the village green of Frishets with the great key in his hand in the direction of the chapel.

Those who stood at the window and saw him did not ask one another whether there was a fire or whether some one was dead. They knew why he went to the chapel just at that hour, and only said to one another, "So it will be at once."

And here they walked out in front of their farmhouses, and seeing neighbours lounging about the other farms, took a few steps towards the centre of the green, and saluted each other just as they had spoken at home, "So it will be at once."

All were dressed in holiday attire, even their faces were in holiday attire, the whole village was in holiday attire. Down the middle of the village green were posted branches of May with pennons streaming, the whole forming an arcade which stretched from the Loykas's farm to the chapel. Even the Loykas's house itself was smothered in pine-branches and looked as spick-and-span as on a high festival.

On this occasion Vena again marched with a basket in his hand; he had rosolek in the basket, and poured out and gave to drink to any one who desired. On this occasion he was in good humour as though he was going to be wedded himself. He poured out the liquor very briskly and continually invited the good folk to drink, "Now to their health, neighbours!"

"How, then, do you greet your new mistress, Vena?" they inquired.

"I greet her well," said Vena, "and verily I say as thus, look you, 'The Lord God grant you as many little dears for me to carry across the green as there are flasks here!' That's how I greet her!"

"And how many may that be?" said the neighbours, laughing.

"How can I tell until you have drunk out the lot", said Vena, and constantly invited them to imbibe.

To look at him you would have said it was Vena's own bridal day that was being celebrated. And nothing would have embittered his gay humour, only one question from neighbour Kmoch, Barushka's father, vexed him. "How many wagons are required to bring home Staza's marriage portion?" he inquired with a very saucy leer.

On this Vena vented his brimming choler in these words, "You have not wagons enough to carry home a single one of her good qualities. So you want to be sarcastic, do you? What do you know, ye peasant proprietors, of the essentials of a happy marriage? You barter your daughters on the market-place to the man who makes the highest bid. 'A crown! two crowns! ten crowns! twelve crowns!'—those are your daughters. And so you would sneer, would you? He who throws down most of the dross is the heaven-sent husband. And then you shrink into your pension house when you have accomplished this feat of wondrous wisdom, and how many wagons are wanted to carry your pensioner's portion? I would undertake to wheel you away, portion and all, on a handbarrow."

Here Vena had worked himself into a frenzy, so that he did not know when he ought to conclude his declamation, although we must add in conclusion that all the neighbours condemned Kmoch's ill-timed question.

"She will not be such a one," continued Vena, "that her father must wander through the market-places like a beggar, because they tormented him under his own roof. There will be no need that the vejminkar should make his last will before she sets foot in his house, because afterwards he will be worried out of his five senses. And with such good qualities as she possesses Staza will need many wagons to carry all easily."

Perhaps Vena would have declaimed at yet greater length had not the march of events deadened the effect of Kmoch's insolent remark.

From the cemetery, whither Frank had driven to claim his bride, his best man rode at a gallop, and said that the happy pair would be at the village in a trice, that old Bartos had joined their hands by the graves of Staza's mother and Frank's grandfather and said, "Your love grew out of the grave; may it last beyond all graves."

At this moment Vanek began to ring the bell in the chapel, and outside the village resounded the fiddles of well-known fiddlers, who were assisted by musicians from the whole surrounding district.

The neighbours on the village green flocked into the green arcade which formed an alley as far as the chapel, and awaited the young bride and bridegroom, only Kmoch turned away in another direction.

Here I must touch off a good side in the neighbours of Frishets, namely that they awaited the young couple in perfect good faith. Frank, by his behaviour towards his father, had so firmly installed himself in their esteem that nothing could shake him in it. We cannot indeed disguise the fact that with all of them it somewhat ran counter to their ideas of what should be when he chose for his wife an illegitimate orphan, for in these matters no one was better or worse than his neighbours, and every one said secretly to himself, "For my part, I could not have done it." But as it was Frank who did it they made their peace with him, and as it was Staza who was the object of his choice they made their peace with her as well.

And so the happy pair were escorted by such a goodly company as never was seen before in Frishets, and a festival was celebrated the like of which few a short time before ever expected to see again originate from Loyka's farm. People collected on foot and in carriages from all parts of the neighbourhood—not only in honour of Frank's bridal day, but also in honour of old Loyka's recovery, who had for so many years wandered among them without health and without mind.

What more have I to relate?

Beside the coach-house in the two chambers the legends and ballads of old times, which had been banished for so many years, took root once more. And Loyka's court-yard beamed like the face of a happy listener.

If we wish to take a peep for a moment, we can do so. The farm is again free of access to every one: the cloth-pedlar and the tinkers come for a night's lodging, musicians often turn aside thither, and listeners, male and female, come from the village to hear them play.

Again Frank listened to the song or the story in these chambers, and led Staza thither—how well-known and beloved wherever they are seen!

And, if we wish, we can take a peep at Loyka sometimes in the morning when the servants are preparing themselves for their work afield.

Old Loyka with his pipe in his mouth promenades about the court, inspects the implements, and the servants salute him with, "The Lord God give you good morrow, pantata."

Old Loyka thanks them. "As God wills, my children", says he.

"Are we to go to-day to work in the meadow, pantata?"

"Have you asked your young master? Go where he tells you."

"He said we were to ask you."

"Well, well, then go to the meadow. But always ask your young master."

"Look, here he comes."

And here Frank comes forward. "What do you think? Must they go to the meadow?"

And Frank knows so many reasons why they must go to the meadow and nowhere else, that old Loyka is all smiles, to think that he is still competent to manage the estate.

"Well, well," he adds, "then go to the meadows to be sure."

Then Stazicka [little Staza], as all on the farm call her, comes and says that they must go to breakfast. Old Loyka chucks her under the chin, and looks into her sparkling eyes. "Good child, good child", says he. Then he lets go her chin, and takes her by the hand. "This very day come a year you will not come for me alone, little Staza."

"Why should I not come for you, papa."

"Tut: come, of course, you will, but with my grandchild in your arms."

On this little Staza blushes, and thinks to herself, full of fond anticipation, "This very day come a year."

Or suppose we pay them a visit, come a year, at harvest. The harvesters once more make the farm their first halting-place when they go a-harvesting, and old Loyka promenades among them with pipe in mouth.

"I come from the young pantata," says the spokesman of the harvesters, "in order that you should select us yourself, pantata, because you know us now as he says; and I also think it is best."

"Well, well," says old Loyka, "how could we fail to know one another after so many years."

And after this he chooses according to his taste, and as seems best.

"This summer we shall have a merry harvest", says the harvester.

"This summer! so I believe you. And when Staza leads off the dance for you! Such a mistress has not been seen on the farm as Stazicka."

"She is a worthy mistress, pantata. Once Annette came here with us—you know, pantata, mnuh! her only fault is she does not know how she came into the world. And women being but women, they would not endure her among them. 'How, then, is

it her fault?' said your little Staza. 'We do not drive away an animal when it nestles against us; in what is Annette worse than an animal?' And as you know, pantata, she took her as nurse to your pretty grandchild."

"Just so, just so", smiled old Loyka.

But the whole farm was quite on foot when there for a time came on a visit the grave-digger Bartos. "I begin to be aweary among the dead," said he, "and since the living like me, I gladly come a while among them. Well, and you like to have me with you?"

And it was a wonder they did not carry him on their shoulders, that is to say, if they could have born his weight. And as they could not do this, they hung upon him. Frank and Staza and the little fellow which Staza took from Annette that she might proudly exhibit it.

"Why am I made so strong, I wonder," Bartos would say, "if I may not fling you off." And he prepared jestingly to drive them before him that he might free himself from them. But it was worst of all when he prepared to depart. Here even old Loyka fastened on him, and all held him, that he should still remain with them. And here Bartos, the grave-digger, for a time feigned to chevy them away, just as though he would shake them off. And we must say what then happened seldom happened—it being the only occasion when the Herculean Bartos succumbed. Frank, Staza, Loyka, and the little boy overpowered him, and sometimes the little boy alone prevailed.

"Well, well", laughed old Loyka, and then when at even the musicians came there was in the farm a most charming idyll.

Long had they sought this idyll, long had they wandered in search of it, but they found it at last. And this idyll ends as it began:—

Odpocinte v pokoji . . . . . .

W. W. STRICKLAND

Vishnu

or

The Planet Of The Sevenfold Unity

An autobiographical, scientific, and mystical Romance

As the title indicates, Vishnu is a biographical, scientific, and mystical romance. Poe, Jules Verne, and W. G. Wells have before and since set the fashion of sending their characters on a visit to some sublunary sphere. It may perhaps be boasted that in Vishnu the method is subtler and somewhat less improbable than in the works of these distinguished writers. Although discursive in form, the unity of the piece has been preserved and to give a bare summary of the story would mar far more than benefit such vitality as it may possess. The judicious reader will trace the influence of the late George Eliot, though the author did not know her personally, more particularly perhaps of her last novel, "Daniel Deronda". To those for whom the insoluble riddles of existence have their attractions, but who find insufficient the solutions of bygone superstitions, not to speak of the atmosphere of mysticism which surrounds the whole conceit, Vishnu will likely enough appeal.

B. Westermann Co., Inc. / New York

W. W. STRICKLAND

Three Trilogies

or

Nine Dramas in Prose and Verse

Each trilogy consists of a tragedy, comedy, and satyric drama. Most of the ideas occurred to the author during his travels in Italy and at Taormina in Sicily when that island was in full brigandage and the pastoral and forest beauties of Taormina had not been destroyed by the axe and the modern villa nor its charms by the modern tourists.

The plays, however, were composed during a period of roving life as conchologist in Australia, New Zealand and in Sicily itself. The "Shrieking Sisterhood" was written at Richmond in England and the first half of "Hinemoa" during a violent squall in a small steamer about 25 years ago between Nelson and Wellington, New Zealand.

The nine dramas are:

Orpheus and Eurydice — The Glorified Thief — The Shrieking Sisterhood

Hinemoa — Dido and Æneas — Aphrodite — A Slight Misunderstanding

Gosling Gold — St. Romauld's Cell

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Sacrifice

or

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A Prehistoric Arctic Tragi-Comedy
for Stage and Cinematograph

Panslavonic Folk-Lore

This volume comprises a translation of Karel Erben's collection of popular Slavonic Fairy Stories. Mr. Strickland has added illustrative diagrams, tables, and supplementary notes, essays, and introductions, in which he explains and develops the theory that these fairy stories have been derived from an Arctic annual myth.

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Walter William Strickland, formerly English Baronet, was born in London in the year 1851. He left England about thirty years ago and had made since then extensive travels in Europe, the Dutch Indies, the Malay Archipelago, New Zealand, Australia, Mexico, Japan, and other countries, studying the language, the literature, traditions, habits, and customs of the people he lived among. As a result of a laborious study of over ten years of the Slav languages he has translated and published four of Viteslav Halek's best stories, Svatopluk Čech's now classical mock-epic Hanuman, also the whole of Karel Erben's one hundred original folk-lore stories with elaborate comments and diagrams and other translations still in manuscript. It is not possible here to give a complete list of Mr. Strickland's numerous works. Besides being a poet and writer, his collections in conchology and still more most extensive observations on phyllotaxis resulting in a workable explanation have been recognized by eminent scientists.

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