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ROTHSCHILD'S FIDDLE  
AND OTHER STORIES



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## ANTON PAVLOVICH CHEKHOV

Chekhov began writing in 1879. In January, 1904, when Russia celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of this event, he sketched the following brief biography of himself for Tikhonov, a Russian journalist:

"I was born at Taganrog in the year 1860. In 1878 I completed my studies at the Taganrog gymnasium. In 1884 I completed my studies at the University of Moscow in the faculty of medicine. In 1888 I gained the Pushkin prize. In 1890 I made a journey to Saghalin and back by sea. In 1891 I made a tour in Europe, where I drank excellent wine and ate oysters.

"I began to write in 1879 in *The Dragon-Fly*. My most important work is as follows: *Motley Tales*, *Gloomy People*, and the story, *The Duel*. I have transgressed also in the dramatic line. I have been translated into all languages with the exception of foreign ones. However, I have long since been translated by the Germans. The Czechs and Serbs also approve of me. Even the French do not hold aloof from a mutual relationship.

". . . With my colleagues, both physicians and authors, I maintain excellent relations. I am unmarried. I should like to get a pension. Medicine is my occupation, and to such a degree, in fact, that some time during the year I perform more forensic medical dissections than I once completed in two or three years. Of authors I prefer Tolstoy and of physicians Zakharin.

"However, all this is rubbish. You write what suits you.

If it is not facts, then replace it with lyrical matter. . . .”\*

Chekhov did not live long after the celebration of this anniversary. He died of consumption in the autumn of the same year, at Badenweiler, Germany.

The first tales of Chekhov were written under the pen-name of *Chekhonte*. They were farcical little bits, sometimes satirical in tone, but mostly uproarious jokes, aiming at nothing in particular but just to produce laughter. Later his stories became more serious, deeply tinged with pessimism, and his fun turned into sad, meaningful humor.

Although Chekhov's fame rests chiefly upon his short stories, he has written several important plays, which achieved great success on the Russian stage. His most important contribution to the drama is *The Cherry Garden*.

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\* The above translation is from the introduction by P. Selver to *The Chameleon and Four Other Tales* [in Russian], by Anton Chekhov, London, 1916. Kegan Paul, French, Trubner & Co., Ltd.



## ROTHSCHILD'S FIDDLE

THE town was small—no better than a village—and it was inhabited almost entirely by old people who died so seldom that it was positively painful. In the hospital, and even in the prison, coffins were required very seldom. In one word, business was bad. If Yakov Ivanov had been coffin-maker in the government town, he would probably have owned his own house, and called himself Yakov Matveyich; but, as it was, he was known only by the name of Yakov, with the street nickname of “Bronza” given for some obscure reason; and he lived as poorly as a simple muzhik in a little, ancient cabin with only one room; and in this room lived he, Marfa, the stove, a double bed, the coffins, a joiner’s bench, and all the domestic utensils.

Yet Yakov made admirable coffins, durable and good. For muzhiks and petty tradespeople he made them all of one size, taking himself as model; and this method never failed him, for though he was seventy years of age, there was not a taller or stouter man in the town, not even in the prison. For women and for men of good birth he made his coffins to measure, using for this purpose an iron yardwand. Orders for children’s coffins he accepted very unwillingly, made them without measurement, as if in contempt, and every time when paid for his work exclaimed:

“Thanks. But I confess I don’t care much for wasting time on trifles.”

In addition to coffin-making Yakov drew a small income from his skill with the fiddle. (At weddings in the town there usually played a Jewish orchestra, the conductor of which was the tinsmith Moses Ilyich Shakhkes, who kept more than half the takings for himself.) As Yakov played

very well upon the fiddle, being particularly skillful with Russian songs, Shakhkes sometimes employed him in the orchestra, paying him fifty kopecks a day, exclusive of gifts from the guests. When Bronza sat in the orchestra he perspired and his face grew purple; it was always hot, the smell of garlic was suffocating; the fiddle whined, at his right ear snored the double-bass, at his left wept the flute, played by a lanky, red-haired Jew with a whole network of red and blue veins upon his face, who bore the same surname as the famous millionaire Rothschild. And even the merriest tunes this accursed Jew managed to play sadly. Without any tangible cause Yakov had become slowly penetrated with hatred and contempt for Jews, and especially for Rothschild; he began with irritation, then swore at him, and once even was about to hit him; but Rothschild flared up, and, looking at him furiously, said:

“If it were not that I respect you for your talents, I should send you flying out of the window.”

Then he began to cry. So Bronza was employed in the orchestra very seldom, and only in cases of extreme need when one of the Jews was absent.

Yakov had never been in a good humour. He was always overwhelmed by the sense of the losses which he suffered. For instance, on Sundays and saints' days it was a sin to work, Monday was a tiresome day—and so on; so that in one way or another, there were about two hundred days in the year when he was compelled to sit with his hands idle. That was one loss. If anyone in town got married without music, or if (Shakhkes did not employ Yakov,) that was another loss. The Inspector of Police was ill for two years, and Yakov waited with impatience for his death, yet in the end the Inspector transferred himself to the government town for the purpose of treatment, where he got worse and died. There was another loss, a loss at the very least of ten rubles, as the Inspector's coffin would have been an expensive one lined with brocade. Regrets for his losses generally overtook Yakov at night; he lay in bed

with the fiddle beside him, and, with his head full of such speculations, would take the bow, the fiddle giving out through the darkness a melancholy sound which made Yakov feel better.

On the sixth of May last year Marfa was suddenly taken ill. She breathed heavily, drank much water and staggered. Yet next morning she lighted the stove, and even went for water. Towards evening she lay down. All day Yakov had played on the fiddle, and when it grew dark he took the book in which every day he inscribed his losses, and from want of something better to do, began to add them up. The total amounted to more than a thousand rubles. The thought of such losses so horrified him that he threw the book on the floor and stamped his feet. (Then he took up the book, snapped his fingers, and sighed heavily.) His face was purple, and wet with perspiration. He reflected that if this thousand rubles had been lodged in the bank the interest per annum would have amounted to at least forty rubles. That meant that the forty rubles were also a loss. In one word, wherever you turn, everywhere you meet with loss, and profits none.

"Yakov," cried Marfa unexpectedly, "I am dying."

He glanced at his wife. Her face was red from fever and unusually clear and joyful; and Bronza, who was accustomed to see her pale, timid, and unhappy-looking, felt confused. It seemed as if she were indeed dying, and were happy in the knowledge that she was leaving for ever the cabin, the coffins, and Yakov. And now she looked at the ceiling and twitched her lips, as if she had seen Death her deliverer, and were whispering with him.

Morning came; through the window might be seen the rising of the sun. Looking at his old wife, Yakov somehow remembered that all his life he had never treated her kindly, never caressed her, never pitied her, never thought of buying her a kerchief for her head, never carried away from the weddings a piece of tasty food, but only roared at her, abused her for his losses, and rushed at her with shut fists. True,

he had never beaten her, but he had often frightened her out of her life and left her rooted to the ground with terror. Yes, and he had forbidden her to drink tea, as the losses without that were great enough; so she drank always hot water. And now, beginning to understand why she had such a strange, enraptured face, he felt uncomfortable.

When the sun had risen high he borrowed a cart from a neighbour, and brought Marfa to the hospital. There were not many patients there, and he had to wait only three hours. To his joy he was received not by the doctor but by the feldscher, Maksim Nikolaïch, an old man of whom it was said that, although he was drunken and quarrelsome, he knew more than the doctor.

"May your health be good!" said Yakov, leading the old woman into the dispensary. "Forgive me, Maksim Nikolaïch, for troubling you with my empty affairs. But there, you can see for yourself my object is ill. The companion of my life, as they say, excuse the expression . . ."

Contracting his grey brows and smoothing his whiskers, the feldscher began to examine the old woman, who sat on the tabouret, bent, skinny, sharp-nosed, and with open mouth so that she resembled a bird that is about to drink.

"So . . ." said the feldscher slowly, and then sighed. "Influenza and may be a bit of a fever. There is typhus now in the town . . . What can I do? She is an old woman, glory be to God. . . . How old?"

"Sixty-nine years, Maksim Nikolaïch."

"An old woman. It's high time for her."

"Of course! Your remark is very just," said Yakov, smiling out of politeness. "And I am sincerely grateful for your kindness; but allow me to make one remark; every insect is fond of life."

The feldscher replied in a tone which implied that upon him alone depended her life or death. "I will tell you what you'll do, friend; put on her head a cold compress, and give her these powders twice a day. And good-bye to you."

By the expression of the feldscher's face, Yakov saw that it was a bad business, and that no powders would make it any better; it was quite plain to him that Marfa was beyond repair, and would assuredly die, if not to-day then to-morrow. (He touched the feldscher on the arm, blinked his eyes, and said in a whisper:

"Yes, Maksim Nikolaïch, but you will let her blood."

"I have no time, no time, friend. Take your old woman, and God be with you!"

"Do me this one kindness!" implored Yakov. "You yourself know that if she merely had her stomach out or order, or some internal organ wrong, then powders and mixtures would cure; but she has caught cold. In cases of cold the first thing is to bleed the patient."

But the feldscher had already called for the next patient, and into the dispensary came a peasant woman with a little boy.

"Be off!" he said to Yakov, with a frown.

"At least try the effect of leeches. I will pray God eternally for you."

The feldscher lost his temper, and roared:

"Not another word."

Yakov also lost his temper, and grew purple in the face; but he said nothing more and took Marfa under his arm and led her out of the room. As soon as he had got her into the cart, he looked angrily and contemptuously at the hospital and said:

"What an artist! He will let the blood of a rich man, but for a poor man grudges even a leech. Herod!"

When they arrived home, and entered the cabin, Marfa stood for a moment holding on to the stove. She was afraid that if she were to lie down Yakov would begin to complain about his losses, and abuse her for lying in bed and doing no-work. And Yakov looked at her with tedium in his soul and remembered that to-morrow was John the Baptist, and the day after Nikolay the Miracle-worker, and then came Sunday, and after that Monday—

another idle day. For four days no work could be done, and Marfa would be sure to die on one of these days. Her coffin must be made to-day. He took the iron yardwand, went up to the old woman and took her measure. After that she lay down, and Yakov crossed himself, and began to make a coffin.

When the work was finished, Bronza put on his spectacles and wrote in his book of losses:

“Marfa Ivanovna’s coffin—2 rubles, 40 kopecks.”

And he sighed. All the time Marfa had lain silently with her eyes closed. Towards evening, when it was growing dark, she called her husband:

“Rememberest, Yakov?” she said, looking at him joyfully. “Rememberest, fifty years ago God gave us a baby with yellow hair. Thou and I then sat every day by the river . . . under the willow . . . and sang songs.” And laughing bitterly she added: “The child died.”

“That is all inagination,” said Yakov.

Later on came the priest, administered to Marfa the Sacrament and extreme unction. Marfa began to mutter something incomprehensible, and towards morning, died.

The old-women neighbours washed her, wrapped her in her winding sheet, and laid her out. To avoid having to pay the deacon’s fee, Yakov himself read the psalms; and escaped a fee also at the graveyard, as the watchman there was his godfather. Four peasants carried the coffin free, out of respect for the deceased. After the coffin walked a procession of old women, beggars, and two cripples. The peasants on the road crossed themselves piously. And Yakov was very satisfied that everything passed off in honour, order, and cheapness, without offence to anyone. When saying good-bye for the last time to Marfa, he tapped the coffin with his fingers, and thought “An excellent piece of work.”

But while he was returning from the graveyard he was overcome with extreme weariness. He felt unwell, he breathed feverishly and heavily, he could hardly stand on

his feet. His brain was full of unaccustomed thoughts. He remembered again that he had never taken pity on Marfa and never caressed her. The fifty-two years during which they had lived in the same cabin stretched back to eternity, yet in the whole of that eternity he had never thought of her, never paid any attention to her, but treated her as if she were a cat or a dog. Yet every day she had lighted the stove, boiled and baked, fetched water, chopped wood, slept with him on the same bed; and when he returned drunk from weddings, she had taken his fiddle respectfully, and hung it on the wall, and put him to bed—all this silently with a timid, worried expression on her face. And now he felt that he could take pity on her, and would like to buy her a present, but it was too late. . . .

Towards Yakov, smiling and bowing came Rothschild.

"I was looking for you, uncle," he said. "Moses Ilyich sends his compliments, and asks you to come across to him at once."

Yakov felt inclined to cry.

"Begone!" he shouted, and continued his path.

"You can't mean that," cried Rothschild in alarm, running after him. "Moses Ilyich will take offence! He wants you at once."

The way in which the Jew puffed and blinked, and the multitude of his red freckles awoke in Yakov disgust. He felt disgust, too, for his green frock-coat, with its black patches, and his whole fragile, delicate figure.)

"What do you mean by coming after me, garlic?" he shouted. "Keep off!"

The Jew also grew angry, and cried:

"If you don't take care to be a little politer I will send you flying over the fence."

"Out of my sight!" roared Yakov, rushing on him with clenched fists. "Out of my sight, abortion, or I will beat the soul out of your cursed body! I have no peace with Jews."

Rothschild was frozen with terror; he squatted down and waved his arms above his head, as if warding off blows, and then jumped up and ran for his life. While running he hopped, and flourished his hands; and the twitching of his long, fleshless spine could plainly be seen. The boys in the street were delighted with the incident, and rushed after him, crying, "Jew! Jew!" The dogs pursued him with loud barks. Someone laughed, then someone whistled, and the dogs barked louder and louder. Then, it must have been, a dog bit Rothschild, for there rang out a sickly, despairing cry.)

Yakov walked past the common, and then along the outskirts of the town; and the street boys cried, "Bronza! Bronza!" With a piping note snipe flew around him, and ducks quacked. The sun baked everything, and from the water came scintillations so bright that it was painful to look at.) Yakov walked along the path by the side of the river, and watched a stout, red-cheeked lady come out of the bathing-place. Not far from the bathing-place sat a group of boys catching crabs with meat; and seeing him they cried maliciously, "Bronza! Bronza!") And at this moment before him rose a thick old willow with an immense hollow in it, and on it a raven's nest. . . . And suddenly in Yakov's mind awoke the memory of the child with the yellow hair of whom Marfa had spoken. . . . Yes, it was the same willow, green, silent, sad. . . . How it had aged, poor thing!

He sat underneath it, and began to remember. On the other bank, where was now a flooded meadow, there then stood a great birch forest, and farther away, where the now bare hill glimmered on the horizon, was an old pine wood. Up and down the river went barges. But now everything was flat and smooth; on the opposite bank stood only a single birch, young and shapely, like a girl; and on the river were only ducks and geese where once had floated barges. It seemed that since those days even the geese had become smaller. Yakov closed his eyes, and in imagi-



nation saw flying toward him an immense flock of white geese.

He began to wonder how it was that in the last forty or fifty years of his life he had never been near the river, or if he had, had never noticed it. (Yet it was a respectable river, and by no means contemptible) it would have been possible to fish in it, and the fish might have been sold to tradesmen, officials, and the attendant at the railway station buffet, and the money could have been lodged in the bank; he might have used it for rowing from country-house to country-house and playing on the fiddle, and everyone would have paid him money; he might even have tried to act as bargee—it would have been better than making coffins; he might have kept geese, killed them and sent them to Moscow in the winter-time—from the feathers alone he would have made as much as ten rubles a year. But he had yawned away his life, and done nothing. What losses! (Akh, what losses! and if he had done all together—caught fish, played on the fiddle, acted as bargee, and kept geese—what a sum he would have amassed! But he had never even dreamed of this) life had passed, without profits, without any satisfaction; everything had passed away unnoticed; before him nothing remained. But look backward—nothing but losses, such losses that to think of them it makes the blood run cold. And why cannot a man live without these losses? Why had the birch wood and the pine forest both been cut down? Why is the common pasture unused? Why do people do exactly what they ought not to do? Why did he all his life scream, roar, clench his fists, insult his wife? For what imaginable purpose did he frighten and insult the Jew? Why, indeed, do people prevent one another living in peace? All these are also losses! Terrible losses! If it were not for hatred and malice people would draw from one another incalculable profits.

Evening and night, twinkled in Yakov's brain the willow, the fish, the dead geese, Marfa with her profile like that of a bird about to drink, the pale, pitiable face of Rothschild

and an army of snouts thrusting themselves out of the darkness and muttering about losses. He shifted from side to side, and five times in the night rose from his bed and played on the fiddle.)

In the morning he rose with an effort and went to the hospital. The same Maksim Nikolaïch ordered him to bind his head with a cold compress, and gave him powders; and by the expression of his face, and by his tone Yakov saw that it was a bad business, and that no powders would make it any better. But upon his way home he reflected that from death at least there would be one profit; it would no longer be necessary to eat, to drink, to pay taxes, or to injure others; and as a man lies in his grave not one year, but hundreds and thousands of years, the profit was enormous. The life of man was, in short, a loss, and only his death a profit. Yet this consideration, though entirely just, was offensive and bitter; for why in this world is it so ordered that life, which is given to a man only once, passes by without profit?

He did not regret dying, but as soon as he arrived home and saw his fiddle, his heart fell, and he felt sorry. The fiddle could not be taken to the grave; it must remain an orphan, and the same thing would happen with it as had happened with the birchwood and the pine forest. (Everything in this world decayed, and would decay! Yakov went to the door of the hut and sat upon the threshold-stone, pressing his fiddle to his shoulder.) Still thinking of life, full of decay and full of losses, he began to play, and as the tune poured out plaintively and touchingly, the tears flowed down his cheeks. And the harder he thought, the sadder was the song of the fiddle.

(The latch creaked twice, and in the wicket door appeared Rothschild. The first half of the yard he crossed boldly, but seeing Yakov, he stopped short, shrivelled up, and apparently from fright began to make signs as if he wished to tell the time with his fingers.)

"Come on, don't be afraid," said Yakov kindly, beckoning him. "Come!"

With a look of distrust and terror Rothschild drew near and stopped about two yards away. *from Yakov*

"Don't beat me, Yakov, it is not my fault!" he said, with a bow. "Moses Ilyich has sent me again. 'Don't be afraid!' he said, 'go to Yakov again and tell him that without him we cannot possibly get on.' The wedding is on Wednesday. Shapovalov's daughter is marrying a wealthy man. . . . It will be a first-class wedding," added the Jew, blinking one eye.

"I cannot go," answered Yakov, breathing heavily. "I am ill, brother."

And again he took his bow, and the tears burst from his eyes and fell upon the fiddle. Rothschild listened attentively, standing by his side with arms folded upon his chest. The distrustful, terrified expression upon his face little by little changed into a look of suffering and grief, he rolled his eyes as if in an ecstasy of torment, and ejaculated "Wachchch!" And the tears slowly rolled down his cheeks and made little black patches on his green frock-coat.)

All day long Yakov lay in bed and worried. With evening came the priest, and, confessing him, asked whether he had any particular sin which he would like to confess; and Yakov exerted his fading memory, and remembering Marfa's unhappy face, and the Jew's despairing cry when he was bitten by the dog, said in a hardly audible voice:

"Give the fiddle to Rothschild."

And now in the town everyone asks: Where did Rothschild get such an excellent fiddle? Did he buy it or steal it . . . or did he get it in pledge? Long ago he abandoned his flute, and now plays on the fiddle only. From beneath his bow issue the same mournful sounds as formerly came from the flute; but when he tries to repeat the tune that Yakov played when he sat on the threshold

stone, the fiddle emits sounds so passionately sad and full of grief that the listeners weep; and he himself rolls his eyes and ejaculates "Wachchch!" . . . But this new song so pleases everyone in the town that wealthy traders and officials never fail to engage Rothschild for their social gatherings, and even force him to play it as many as ten times.

*16. 1871*  
*3 to 4*

## ✓ LA CIGALE

### I

**T**O Olga Ivanovna's wedding came all her friends and acquaintances.

"Look at him! Isn't it true there is something in him?" she said to them, nodding towards her husband, as if to justify her marriage to this simple, commonplace, in no way remarkable man.

The bridegroom, Osip Stepanych Dymov, was a doctor, with the rank of Titular Councillor. He worked at two hospitals; in one as supernumerary ordinator; as dissector in the other. At one, from nine in the morning till midday, he received out-patients and worked in the wards; and, finished with this, he took a tram to the second hospital, and dissected bodies. His private practice was small, worth some five hundred rubles a year. That was all. What more could be said of him? On the other hand, Olga Ivanovna, her friends and acquaintances, were by no means ordinary. All were noted for something, and fairly well known; they had names; they were celebrated, or if not celebrated yet, they inspired great hope for the future. A talented actor, clever, modest, a fine gentleman, a master of declamation, who taught Olga Ivanovna to recite; a good-humoured opera-singer who told Olga Ivanovna with a sigh that she was throwing herself away—if she gave up idling and took herself in hand, she would make a famous singer; a few artists, chief of them the genre-ist, animal-, and landscape-painter Riabovsky, handsome, fair-haired, twenty-five, successful at exhibitions who sold his last pic-

ture for five hundred rubles—he touched up Olga Ivanovna's *études*, and predicted a future for her; a violoncellist, whose instrument wept, who frankly said that of all the women he knew Olga Ivanovna alone could accompany; a man of letters, young, but already known for his short stories, sketches, and plays. Who else? Yes, Vasily Vasilych, country gentleman, dilettante illustrator and vignettist, with his love of the national epos and his passion for old Russian art—on paper, china, and smoked plates he turned out veritable masterpieces. In such society—artistic, free, and spoiled by fate; and (though delicate and modest) oblivious of doctors save when ill; to whom "Dymov" sounded as impersonal as "Tarasov" or "Sidorov"—in such society, the bridegroom seemed out-of-place, needless, and even insignificant, although he was really a very tall and very broad-shouldered man. His evening dress seemed made for some one else. His beard was like a shopman's. Though it is true that had he been a writer or artist, this beard would have reminded them of Zola.

The artist told Olga Ivanovna that with her flaxen hair and wedding dress she was a graceful cherry-tree covered with tender, white blossoms in spring.

"No, but listen!" replied Olga Ivanovna, seizing his hand. "How suddenly all this happened! Listen, listen! . . . I should tell you that Dymov and my father were at the same hospital. While my poor father was ill, Dymov watched day and night at his bedside. Such self-sacrifice! Listen, Riabovsky! . . . And you, writer, listen—this is very interesting! Come nearer! Such sacrifice of self, such sincere concern! I myself could not sleep at night, and sat at my father's bedside, and suddenly! . . . I captivated the poor young man! My Dymov was up to his neck in love! In truth, things happen strangely. Well, after my father's death we sometimes met in the street; he paid me occasional visits, and one fine evening suddenly—he proposed to me! . . . I cried all night, and myself fell in love with him. And now, you see, I am married. Don't you think there is

something in him? Something strong, mighty, leonine! Just now his face is turned three-quarters from us and the light is bad, but when he turns round just look at his forehead! Riabovsky, what do you think of his forehead? Dymov, we are speaking of you." She turned to her husband. "Come here! Give your honest hand to Riabovsky. . . . That's right. Be friends!"

With a simple, kindly smile, Dymov gave his hand to the artist, and said—

"I'm delighted! There was a Riabovsky at college with me. Was he a relation of yours?"

## II

Olga Ivanovna was twenty-two years old, Dymov thirty-one. After the marriage they lived well. Olga Ivanovna hung the drawing-room with drawings, her own and her friends', framed and unframed; and about the piano and furniture, arranged in pretty confusion Chinese parasols, easels, many-coloured draperies, poniards, busts, photographs. The dining-room she decked with the bright-coloured oleographs beloved by peasants, bast-shoes and sickles, and these, with the scythe and hay-rake in the corner, made a room in national style. To make her bedroom like a cave, she draped the ceiling and walls with dark cloth, hung a Venetian lantern over the bed, and set near the door a figure with a halberd. And every one agreed that the young couple had a charming flat.

Rising every day at eleven, Olga Ivanovna sat at the piano, or, if the sun shone, painted in oils. At one o'clock she drove to her dressmaker's. As neither she nor Dymov was rich, many ingenious shifts were resorted to to keep her in the new-looking dresses which made such an impression on all. Pieces of old dyed cloth; worthless patches of tulle, lace, plush, and silk, came back from the dressmaker miracles, not dresses but ravishing dreams. Done with the dressmaker, Olga Ivanovna drove to some actress friend to learn

theatrical news and get tickets for first-nights or benefits; thence to an artist's studio or picture gallery, ending up with some other celebrity whom she invited to visit her, or simply gossiped to. And those whom she counted celebrities and great men received her as an equal, and told her in one voice that if she did not throw away her opportunities, her talents, taste, and intellect would yield something really great. She sang, played, painted, modelled, acted in amateur theatricals; and did everything well: if she merely made lanterns for illuminations, or dressed herself up, or tied some one's necktie, the result was invariably graceful, artistic, charming. But none of her talents outshone her skill in meeting and getting on terms of intimacy with men of note. Let a man get the least reputation, or even be talked about, and in a single day she had met him, established friendly relations, and invited him to her home. And each new acquaintance was a festival in himself. She worshipped the well-known, was proud of them, and dreamed of them all night. Her thirst was insatiable. The old celebrities departed and were forgotten, and new celebrities replaced them; and to these last she grew accustomed in time; they lost their charm, so that she sought for more.

She dined at home with her husband at five o'clock. She was in ecstasies over his simplicity, common sense, and good humour. She jumped up from her chair, embraced his head, and covered it with kisses.

"You are a clever, a noble man, Dymov!" she exclaimed. "You have only one drawback. You take no interest in art. You deny music and painting."

"I don't understand them," he answered kindly. "All my life I have studied only science and medicine. I have no time for art."

"But that is awful, Dymov!"

"Why awful? Your friends know nothing of science or medicine, yet you don't blame them for that. To each man his own! I don't understand landscapes or operas, but I look at the matter thus: if talented men devote their lives



to such things, and clever men pay vast sums for them, that means they are useful. I don't understand them, but not to understand does not mean to deny."

"Give me your hand! Let me press your honest hand!"

After dinner Olga Ivanovna drove away to her friends; after that followed theatres or concerts. She returned after midnight. And so every day.

On Wednesdays she gave evening parties. There were no cards and no dancing. Hostess and guests devoted themselves to art. The actor recited, the singer sang, artists sketched in Olga Ivanovna's numberless albums; the hostess painted, modelled, accompanied, and sang. In the pauses between these recreations, they talked of books, the theatre, and art. No women were present, because Olga Ivanovna considered all women, except actresses and dressmakers, tiresome and contemptible. When the hall bell rang the hostess started, and exclaimed triumphantly, "It's he!" meaning thereby some newly met celebrity. Dymov kept out of sight, and few remembered his existence. But at half-past eleven the dining-room door flew open, and Dymov appeared with a kindly smile, rubbing his hands, and said—

"Come, gentlemen, to supper!"

Whereupon all thronged to the dining-room, and each time found awaiting them the same things: a dish of oysters, a joint of ham or veal, sardines, cheese, caviare, mushrooms, vodka, and two decanters of wine.

"My dear *maitre d'hôtel!*" cried Olga Ivanovna, waving her hands ecstatically. "You are simply adorable! Gentlemen, look at his forehead! Dymov, show us your profile. Look at him, gentlemen: it is the face of a Bengal tiger with an expression as kind and good as a deer's. My sweetheart!"

And the guests ate steadily and looked at Dymov. But soon they forgot his presence, and returned to theatre, music, and art.

The young couple were happy. Their life, it seemed, flowed as smoothly as oil. But the third week of the honey-

moon was crossed by a cloud. Dymov got erysipelas at the hospital, and his fine black hair was cut off. Olga Ivanovna sat with him and cried bitterly, but when he got better she bound a white handkerchief around his head and sketched him as a Bedouin. And both were happy. Three days after he had returned to hospital a second misfortune occurred.

"I am in bad luck, mama!" he said at dinner. "To-day I had four dissections, and I cut two fingers. I noticed it only just now."

Olga Ivanovna was frightened. But Dymov smiled, dismissed the accident as a trifle, and said that he cut himself often.

"I am carried away by my work, mama, and forget what I'm about."

Olga Ivanovna dreaded blood-poisoning, and at night prayed to God. But no consequences followed, and life, serene and happy, flowed without trouble or alarm. The present was all delight, and behind it came spring—spring already near, beaming and beckoning, with a thousand joys. Pleasures it promised without end. In April, May, and June a villa far from town, with walks, fishing, studies, nightingales. From June till autumn the artists' tour on the Volga, and in this tour, as member of the Artists' Association, Olga Ivanovna would take part. She had already ordered two expensive dresses of gingham, and laid in a stock of colours, brushes, canvas, and a new palette. Almost every day came Riabovsky to watch her progress in painting. When she showed him her work he thrust his hands deep in his pockets, compressed tightly his lips, grunted, and said—

"So! . . . This cloud of yours glares; the light is not right for evening. The foreground is somehow chewed up, and there is something, you understand. . . . And the cabin is somehow crushed . . . you should make that corner a little darker. But on the whole it's not bad. . . . I can praise it."

And the less intelligibly he spoke the better Olga Ivanovna understood.

## III

After dinner, on the second day of Trinity week, Dymov bought some *hors d'œuvres* and sweets and took train for his villa in the country. Two whole weeks he had not seen his wife, and he longed to be with her again. During the journey and afterwards, as he searched for the villa in a big wood, he felt hungry and fatigued, and rejoiced at the thought of supping in freedom with his wife and having a sound sleep. So, looking at his parcel of caviare, cheese, and white-fish, he felt happy.

Before he found the villa the sun had begun to set. The old servant said that her mistress was not at home, but that she would soon return. The villa, a very ugly villa, with low ceilings, papered with writing-paper, and uneven, chinky floors, contained only three rooms. In one was a bed, in another canvas, brushes, dirty paper, and men's clothes and hats scattered on chairs and window-sills; and in the third Dymov found three strangers, two dark and bearded, the third—evidently an actor—clean-shaven and stout.

“What do you want?” asked the actor in a bass voice, looking at Dymov shyly. “You want Olga Ivanovna? Wait; she'll be back shortly.”

Dymov sat down and waited. One of the dark men, looking at him drowsily and lazily, poured tea into his glass and asked—

“Would you like some tea?”

Dymov wanted both to eat and drink, but, fearing to spoil his appetite, he refused the tea. Soon afterwards came footsteps and a familiar laugh; the door flew open, and in came Olga Ivanovna wearing a big hat. On her arm hung a basket, and behind her, with a big parasol and a deck-chair, came merry, rosy-cheeked Riabovsky.

“Dymov!” cried Olga Ivanovna, radiant with joy. “Dymov!” she repeated, laying her head and both hands on his

shoulder. "It is you? Why did you not come sooner? Why? Why?"

"I couldn't, mama! I am always busy, and when I end my work there's generally no train."

"How glad I am you've come! I dreamed of you all, all last night. *Akh*, if you knew how I love you—and how opportunely you've come! You are my saviour! To-morrow we have a most original wedding." She laughed and re-tied her husband's tie. "A young telegraphist at the station, a certain Chikeldeyev, is going to be married. A handsome boy, not at all stupid; in his face, you know, there's something strong, bearish. . . . He'd sit admirably as model for a Varangian. We are all interested in him, and promised to come to the wedding. . . . He is a poor man, solitary and shy, and it would be a sin to refuse. Imagine! . . . after church there'll be the wedding, then all go to the bride's house . . . you understand . . . the woods, the birds' songs, sun-spots on the grass, and we ourselves—variegated spots on a bright green background. . . . Most original, quite in the style of the French impressionists! But what am I to wear, Dymov? I have nothing here, literally nothing. . . . No dress, no flowers, no gloves! . . . You must save me. Your arrival means that fate is on my side. Here are the keys, sweetheart! take the train home and bring my rose-coloured dress from the wardrobe. You know it; it's the first you'll see. Then in the chest of drawers—the bottom right-hand drawer—you'll find two boxes. At the top there's only tulle and other rags, but underneath you'll find flowers. Bring all the flowers—carefully! I don't know . . . then I'll choose. . . . And buy me some gloves."

"All right," said Dymov. "I'll get them to-morrow!"

"How to-morrow?" asked Olga Ivanovna, looking at him with surprise. "You can't do it to-morrow. The first train leaves at nine, and the wedding is at eleven. No, dear; go to-night! If you can't get back yourself to-morrow send a messenger. The train is nearly due. Don't miss it, my soul!"

"All right!"

"*Akh*, how sorry I am to have to send you!" she said, and tears came into her eyes. "Why did I promise the telegraph clerk, like a fool!"

Dymov hastily gulped down a glass of tea, and, still smiling kindly, returned to the station. And the caviare, the cheese, and the white-fish were eaten by the actor and the two dark men.

#### IV

It was a still moonlight night of July. Olga Ivanovna stood on the deck of a Volga steamer and looked now at the river, now at its beautiful banks. Beside her stood Riabovskiy, and affirmed that the black shadows on the water were not shadows but a dream; that this magic stream with its fantastic shimmer, this unfathomable sky, these mournful banks—which expressed but the vanity of life, and the existence of something higher, something eternal, something blessed—called to us to forget ourselves, to die, to fade into memories. The past was trivial and tedious, the future insignificant; and this magic night, this one night of life, would soon be past, would have hurried into eternity. Why, then, live?

And Olga Ivanovna listened, first to Riabovskiy's voice, then to the midnight silence, and thought that she was immortal, and would never die. The river's turquoise hue, a hue she had never seen before, the sky, the banks, the black shadows, and the irresponsible joy which filled her heart, all whispered to her that she would become a great artist, that somewhere far away, beyond these distances, beyond the moonlight night, somewhere in infinite space there awaited success and glory, and the love of the world. When she looked earnestly into the distance, she saw crowds, lights; she heard solemn music and cries of rapture; she saw herself in a white dress surrounded by flowers cast at her from all sides. And she believed that here beside her,

leaning on the bulwark, stood a really great man, a genius, the elected of God. He had already accomplished things beautiful, new, uncommon; what he would do when time had ripened his great talents would be greater immeasurably—that was written legibly in his face, his expressions, his relations to the world around. Of the shadows, the hues of nights, the moonlight, he spoke in language all his own, and unconsciously betrayed the power of his magic mastery over Nature. He was handsome and original; and his life, unhindered, free, alien to the trifles of the world, seemed the life of a bird.

“It is getting cold!” said Olga Ivanovna, shuddering.

Riabovsky wrapped her in his cloak and said mournfully—

“I feel myself in your power. I am a slave. Why are you so ravishing to-night?”

He looked at her steadily, and his eyes were so terrible that she feared to look at him.

“I love you madly . . .” he whispered, breathing against her cheek. “Say to me but one word, and I will not live . . . I will abandon my art. . . .” He stammered in his extreme agitation. “Love me, love. . . .”

“Don’t speak in that way!” said Olga Ivanovna, closing her eyes. “It is terrible. And Dymov?”

“What is Dymov? Why Dymov? What have I to do with Dymov? The Volga, the moon, beauty, my love, my raptures . . . and no Dymov at all! . . . *Akh*, I know nothing. . . . I do not want the past; give me but one moment . . . one second!”

Olga Ivanovna’s heart beat quickly. She tried to think of her husband; but her whole past, her marriage, Dymov, even the evening parties seemed to her trivial, contemptible, dull, needless, and remote. . . . And, indeed, who was Dymov? Why Dymov? What had she to do with Dymov? Did he exist really in Nature; was he only a dream?

“He has had more happiness than he could expect, a simple and ordinary man,” she thought, closing her eyes. “L

them condemn me, let them curse me; but I will take all and perish, take all and perish. . . . We must experience everything in life. . . . Lord, how painful and how good!"

"Well, what? What?" stammered the artist, embracing her. He kissed her hands greedily, while she strove to withdraw them. "You love me? Yes? Yes? O what a night! O night divine!"

"Yes, what a night!" she whispered, looking into his eyes which glittered with tears. Then she looked around her, clasped her arms about him, and kissed him firmly on the lips.

"We are near Kineshma," said a voice somewhere across the deck.

Heavy footfalls echoed behind them. A waiter passed from the buffet.

"Waiter!" cried Olga Ivanovna, laughing and crying in her joy. "Bring us some wine."

Pale with excitement, the artist sat on a bench, and stared at Olga Ivanovna with grateful, adoring eyes. But in a moment he shut these eyes, and said with a weary smile—

"I am tired."

And he leaned his head against the bulwark.

## V

The second of September was warm and windless but dull. Since early morning a light mist had wandered across the Volga, and at nine o'clock it began to rain. There was no hope of a clear sky. At breakfast Riabovsky told Olga Ivanovna that painting was the most thankless and tedious of arts, that he was no artist, and that only fools thought him talented. Then, for no cause whatever, he seized a knife and cut to pieces his best study. After breakfast, in bad humour, he sat at a window and looked at the river, and found it without life—dull, dead, and cold. All around spoke of frowning autumn's approach. It seemed already

that the green carpet on the banks, the diamond flashes from the water, the clear blue distances—all the vanity and parade of Nature had been taken from the Volga and packed in a box until the coming spring; and that the ravens flying over the river mocked it and cried, "Naked! Naked!" Riabovsky listened to their cry, and brooded on the exhaustion and loss of his talent: and he thought that all the world was conditional, relative, and stupid, and that he should not have tied himself up with this woman. In one word he was out of spirits, and sulked.

On her bed behind the partition, pulling at her pretty hair, sat Olga Ivanovna; and pictured herself at home, first in the drawing-room, then in her bedroom, then in her husband's study; imagination bore her to theatres, to her dress-maker, to her friends. What was Dymov doing now? Did he think of her? The season had already begun; it was time to think of the evening parties. And Dymov? Dear Dymov! How kindly, with what infantile complaints, he begged her in his letters to come home! Every month he sent her seventy-five rubles, and when she wrote that she had borrowed a hundred from the artists he sent her also that hundred. The good, the generous man! Olga Ivanovna was tired of the tour; she suffered from tedium, and wished to escape as soon as possible from the muzhiks, from the river damp, from the feeling of physical uncleanness caused by living in huts and wandering from village to village. Had Riabovsky not promised his brother artists to stay till the twentieth of September, they might have left at once. And how good it would be to leave!

"My God!" groaned Riabovsky. "Will the sun ever come out? I cannot paint a landscape without the sun!"

"But your study of a cloudy sky?" said Olga Ivanovna, coming from behind the partition. "You remember, the one with the trees in the foreground to the right, and the cows and geese at the left. You could finish that."

"What?" The artist frowned. "Finish it? Do you really think I'm so stupid that I don't know what to do?"



"What I do think is that you've changed to me!" sighed Olga Ivanovna.

"Yes; and that's all right."

Olga Ivanovna's face quivered; she went to the stove and began to cry.

"We only wanted tears to complete the picture! Do stop! I have a thousand reasons for crying, but I don't cry."

"A thousand reasons!" burst out Olga Ivanovna. "The chief reason is that you are tired of me. Yes!" She began to sob. "I will tell you the truth: you are ashamed of your love. You try to hide it, to prevent the others noticing, but that is useless, because they knew about it long ago."

"Olga, I ask only one thing," said the artist imploringly. He put his hand to his ear. "One thing only; do not torture me! I want nothing more from you!"

"Then swear to me that you love me still!"

"This is torture!" hissed Riabovsky through his teeth. He jumped up. "It will end in my throwing myself into the Volga, or going out of my mind. Leave me alone!"

"Then kill me! Kill me!" cried Olga Ivanovna. "Kill me!"

She again sobbed, and retired behind the partition. Rain-drops pattered on the cabin roof. Riabovsky with his hands to his head walked from corner to corner; then with a determined face, as if he wanted to prove something, put on his cap, took his gun, and went out of the hut.

When he left, Olga Ivanovna lay on her bed and cried. At first she thought that it would be good to take poison, so that Riabovsky on his return would find her dead. But soon her thoughts bore her back to the drawing-room and to her husband's study; and she fancied herself sitting quietly beside Dymov, enjoying physical rest and cleanliness; and spending the evening listening to *Cavalleria Rusticana*. And a yearning for civilisation, for the sound of cities, for celebrities filled her heart. A peasant woman entered the hut, and lazily prepared the stove for dinner. There was a smell of soot, and the air turned blue from smoke. Then in came

several artists in muddy top boots, their faces wet with rain; and they looked at the drawings, and consoled themselves by saying that even in bad weather the Volga had its especial charm. The cheap clock on the wall ticked away; half-frozen flies swarmed in the ikon-corner and buzzed; and cockroaches could be heard under the benches.

Riabovsky returned at sunset. He flung his cap on the table, and, pale, tired, and muddy, dropped on a bench and shut his eyes.

"I am tired," he said, and wrinkled his brows, trying to open his eyes.

To show him kindness, and prove that her anger had passed, Olga Ivanovna came up to him, kissed him silently, and drew a comb through his long, fair hair.

"What are you doing?" he asked, starting as if something cold had touched him. He opened his eyes. "What are you doing? Leave me alone, I beg of you!"

He repulsed her with both hands; and his face seemed to express repugnance and vexation. The peasant woman cautiously brought him a plate, and Olga Ivanovna noticed how she stuck her big fingers in the soup. And the dirty peasant woman with her pendent stomach, the soup which Riabovsky ate greedily, the hut, which she had loved at first for its plainness and artistic disorder, seemed to her unbearable. She felt a deep sense of offence, and said coldly—

"We must part for a time, otherwise we'll only quarrel seriously out of sheer tedium. I am tired of this. I am going to-day."

"Going, how? On the steamer?"

"To-day is Thursday—there is a steamer at half-past nine."

"Eh? Yes! . . . All right, go," said Riabovsky softly, using a towel for a table-napkin. "It's tiresome here for you, and there's nothing to do. Only a great egoist would try to keep you. Go . . . we will meet after the twentieth."

Olga Ivanovna, in good spirits, packed her clothes. Her cheeks burnt with pleasure. "Is it possible?" she asked

herself. "Is it possible I shall soon paint in the drawing-room and sleep in a bedroom and dine off a tablecloth?" Her heart grew lighter, and her anger with the artist disappeared.

"I'll leave you the colours and brushes, Riabusha," she said. "You'll bring everything. . . . And, mind, don't idle when I am gone; don't sulk, but work. You are my boy, Riabusha!"

At ten o'clock Riabovsky kissed her good-bye in the hut, to avoid—as she saw—kissing her on the landing-stage in the presence of others. Soon afterwards the steamer arrived and took her away.

Two and a half days later she reached home. Still in her hat and waterproof cloak, panting with excitement, she went through the drawing-room into the dining-room. In his shirt-sleeves, with unbuttoned waistcoat, Dymov sat at the table and sharpened a knife; on a plate before him was a grouse. As Olga Ivanovna entered the house she resolved to hide the truth from her husband, and felt that she was clever and strong enough to succeed. But when she saw his broad, kindly, happy smile and his bright, joyful eyes, she felt that to deceive such a man would be base and impossible, as impossible as to slander, steal, or kill; and she made up her mind in a second to tell him the whole story. When he had kissed and embraced her she fell upon her knees and hid her face.

"What? What is it, mama?" he asked tenderly. "You got tired of it?"

She raised her face, red with shame, and looked at him guiltily and imploringly. But fear and shame forbade her to tell the truth.

"It is nothing," she said. "I only . . ."

"Sit down here!" he said, lifting her and seating her at the table. "There we are! Eat the grouse! You are starving, of course, poor child!"

She breathed in greedily her native air and ate the grouse. And Dymov looked at her with rapture and smiled merrily.

## VI

Apparently about the middle of winter Dymov first suspected his wife's unfaithfulness. He behaved as if his own conscience reproached him. He no longer looked her straight in the face; no longer smiled radiantly when she came in sight; and, to avoid being alone with her, often brought home to dinner, his colleague, Korostelev, a little short-haired man, with a crushed face, who showed his confusion in Olga Ivanovna's society by buttoning and unbuttoning his coat and pinching his right moustache. During dinner the doctors said that when the diaphragm rises abnormally high the heart sometimes beats irregularly, that neuritis had greatly increased, and they discussed Dymov's discovery made during dissection that a case of cancer of the pancreas had been wrongly diagnosed as "malignant anæmia." And it was plain that both men spoke only of medicine in order that Olga Ivanovna might be silent and tell no lies. After dinner, Korostelev sat at the piano, and Dymov sighed and said to him—

"*Akh*, brother! Well! Play me something mournful."

Whereupon, raising his shoulders and spreading his hands, Korostelev strummed a few chords and sang in tenor, "Show me but one spot where Russia's peasants do not groan!" and Dymov sighed again, rested his head on his hands, and seemed lost in thought.

Of late Olga Ivanovna had behaved recklessly. She awoke each morning in bad spirits, tortured by the thought that Riabovsky no longer loved her, that—thanks to the Lord, all the same!—all was over. But as she drank her coffee she reasoned that Riabovsky had stolen her from her husband, and that now she belonged to neither. Then she remembered a friend's remark that Riabovsky was getting ready for the exhibition a striking picture, a mixture of landscape and *genre*, in the style of Polienov, and that this picture sent every one into raptures; this, she consoled herself, he had

done under her influence. Thanks to her influence, indeed, he had on the whole changed for the better, and deprived of it, he would probably perish. She remembered that when last he visited her he came in a splashed cloth coat and a new tie and asked her languidly, "Am I good-looking?" And, in truth, elegant Riabovsky with his blue eyes and long curls was very good-looking—or, it may be, he merely seemed so and he had treated her with affection.

Having remembered and reasoned much, Olga Ivanovna dressed, and in deep agitation drove to Riabovsky's studio. He was in good humour, delighted with what was indeed a fine picture; he hopped, played the fool, and answered every serious question with a joke. Olga Ivanovna was jealous of the picture, and hated it, but for the sake of good manners, she stood before it five minutes, and, sighing as people sigh before holy things, said softly—

"Yes, you never painted like that before. Do you know, it almost frightens me."

And she began to implore him to love her, not to forsake her, to pity her—poor and unfortunate! She kissed his hand, cried, made him swear his love, and boasted that without her influence he would go off the track and perish utterly. Thus having spoilt his good humour, and humiliated herself, she would drive away to a dressmaker, or to some actress friend to ask for free tickets.

Once when she found Riabovsky out she left a note swearing that if he did not visit her at once she would take poison. And he, frightened, came and stayed to dinner. Ignoring her husband's presence, he spoke to her impudently; and she answered in the same tone. They felt chained to one another; they were despots and foes; and their anger hid from them their own rudeness, which even close-clipped Kerostelev remarked. After dinner Riabovsky said good-bye hastily and went.

"Where are you going?" asked Olga Ivanovna. She stood in the hall, and looked at him with hatred.

Riabovsky frowned and blinked, and named a woman

she knew, and it was plain that he enjoyed her jealousy, and wished to annoy her. Olga Ivanovna went to her bedroom and lay on her bed; from jealousy, anger, and a sense of humiliation and shame, she bit her pillow, and sobbed aloud. Dymov left Korostelev alone, came into the bedroom, and, confused and abstracted, said softly—

“Don’t cry so loudly, mama! . . . What good is it? We must keep silence about this. . . . People mustn’t see. . . . You know yourself that what has happened is beyond recall.”

Unable to appease the painful jealousy which made her temples throb, thinking, nevertheless, that what had happened was not beyond recall, she washed and powdered her face, and flew off to the woman friend. Finding no Riabovsky there she drove to another, then to a third. . . . At first she felt ashamed of these visits, but she soon reconciled herself; and one evening even called on every woman she knew and sought Riabovsky; and all of them understood her.

Of her husband she said to Riabovsky—

“This man tortures me with his magnanimity.”

And this sentence so pleased her that, meeting artists who knew of her affair with Riabovsky, she repeated with an emphatic gesture—

“This man tortures me with his magnanimity.”

In general, her life remained unchanged. She resumed her Wednesday-evening parties. The actor declaimed, the painters sketched, the violoncellist played, the singers sang; and invariably half an hour before midnight the dining-room door opened, and Dymov said with a smile—

“Come, gentlemen, supper is ready.”

As before, Olga Ivanovna sought celebrities, found them, and, insatiable, sought for more. As before, she returned home late. But Dymov, no longer sleeping as of old, sat in his study and worked. He went to bed at three, and rose at eight.

Once as she stood before the pier-glass dressing for the theatre, Dymov, in evening dress and a white tie, came into

the bedroom. He smiled kindly, with his old smile, and looked his wife joyfully in the face. His face shone.

"I have just defended my dissertation," he said. He sat down and stroked his leg.

"Your dissertation?" said Olga Ivanovna.

"Yes," he laughed. He stretched forward so as to see in the mirror the face of his wife, who continued to stand with her back to him and dress her hair. "Yes," he repeated. "Do you know what? I expect to be offered a privat-docentship in general pathology. That is something."

It was plain from his radiant face that had Olga Ivanovna shared his joy and triumph he would have forgiven and forgotten everything. But "privat-docentship" and "general pathology" had no meaning for her, and, what's more, she feared to be late for the theatre. She said nothing.

Dymov sat still for a few minutes, smiled guiltily, and left the room.

## VII

This was an evil day.

Dymov's head ached badly; he ate no breakfast, and did not go to the hospital, but lay on the sofa in his study. At one o'clock Olga Ivanovna went to Riabovsky's, to show him her *Nature morte*, and ask why he had not come the day before. The *Nature morte* she herself did not take seriously; she had painted it only as an excuse to visit the artist.

She went to his apartment unannounced. As she took off her goloshes in the hall she heard hasty footsteps, and the rustle of a woman's dress; and as she hurried into the studio a brown skirt flashed for a moment before her and vanished behind a big picture, which together with its easel was hung with black calico. There was no doubt that a woman hid there. How often had Olga Ivanovna herself hidden behind that picture! Riabovsky, in confusion, stretched out both

hands as if surprised at her visit, and said with a constrained smile—

“Ah, I am glad to see you. What is the news?”

Olga Ivanovna's eyes filled with tears. She was ashamed and angered, and would have given millions to be spared speaking before the strange woman, the rival, the liar, who hid behind the picture and tittered, no doubt, maliciously.

“I have brought a study . . .” she said in a thin, frightened voice. Her lips trembled. “*Nature morte.*”

“What? What? A study?”

The artist took the sketch, looked at it, and walked mechanically into another room. Olga Ivanovna followed submissively.

“*Nature morte . . .*” he stammered, seeking rhymes. “*Kurort . . . sort . . . porte . . .*”

From the studio came hasty footfalls and the rustle of a skirt. She had gone. Olga Ivanovna felt impelled to scream and strike the artist on the head; but tears blinded her, she was crushed by her shame, and felt as if she were not Olga Ivanovna the artist, but a little beetle.

“I am tired . . .” said Riabovsky languidly. He looked at the study, and shook his head as if to drive away sleep. “This is charming, of course, but . . . it is study to-day, and study to-morrow, and study last year, and study it will be again in a month. . . . How is it you don't get tired? If I were you, I should give up painting, and take up seriously music, or something else. . . . You are not an artist but a musician. You cannot imagine how tired I am. Let me order some tea. Eh?”

He left the room, and Olga Ivanovna heard him giving an order. To avoid good-byes and explanations, still more to prevent herself sobbing, she went quickly into the hall, put on her goloshes, and went out. Once in the street she sighed faintly. She felt that she was for ever rid of Riabovsky and painting, and the heavy shame which had crushed her in the studio. All was over! She drove to her dressmaker, then to Barnay, who had arrived the day before, and from Barnay



to a music shop, thinking all the time how she would write Riabovsky a cold, hard letter, full of her own worth; and that the spring and summer she would spend with Dymov in the Crimea, free herself for ever from the past, and begin life anew.

On her return, late as usual, she sat in her street clothes in the drawing-room, and prepared to write. Riabovsky had told her she was no artist; in revenge she would write that he had painted every year one and the same tiresome thing, that he had exhausted himself, and would never again produce original work. She would write also that he owed much to her beneficent influence; and that if he made mistakes it was only because her influence was paralysed by various ambiguous personages who hid behind his pictures.

"Mama!" cried Dymov from his study, without opening the door.

"What is it?"

"Mama, don't come in, but just come to the door. It is this. The day before yesterday I took diphtheria at the hospital, and now . . . I feel bad. Send at once for Korostelev."

Olga Ivanovna called her husband and men-friends by their surnames; she disliked his name *Osip*, which reminded her of Gogol's *Osip*, and the pun "*Osip okrip, a Arkhip osip.*" But this time she cried—

"Osip, that is impossible!"

"Send! I am ill," said Dymov from behind the door; and she heard him walking to the sofa and lying down. "Send!" came his hoarse voice.

"What can it be?" thought Olga Ivanovna, chilled with fear. "Why this is dangerous!"

Without any aim she took a candle, and went into her room, and there, wondering what she should do, she saw herself unexpectedly in the glass. With her pale, terrified face, her high-sleeved jacket with the yellow gathers on the breast, her skirt with its strange stripes, she seemed to herself frightful and repulsive. And suddenly she felt sorry for

Dymov, sorry for his infinite love, his young life, the forsaken bed on which he had not slept so long. And remembering his kindly, suppliant smile, she cried bitterly, and wrote Korostelev an imploring letter. It was two o'clock in the morning.

### VIII

When at eight next morning Olga Ivanovna, heavy from sleeplessness, untidy, unattractive, and guilty-faced, came out of her bedroom, an unknown, black-bearded man, obviously a doctor, passed her in the hall. There was a smell of drugs. Outside Dymov's study stood Korostelev, twisting his left moustache with his right hand.

"Excuse me, I cannot let you in," he said, looking at her savagely. "You might catch the disease. And in any case, what's the use? He's raving."

"Is it really diphtheria?" whispered Olga Ivanovna.

"People who do foolish things ought to pay for them," muttered Korostelev, ignoring Olga Ivanovna's question. "Do you know how he got this diphtheria? On Tuesday he sucked through a tube the diphtheria laminæ from a boy's throat. And why? Stupid. . . . Like a fool!"

"Is it dangerous? Very?" asked she.

"Yes, it's a very bad form, they say. We must send for Schreck, we must. . . ."

First came a little, red-haired, long-nosed man with a Jewish accent; then a tall, stooping, untidy man like a proto-deacon; lastly a young, very stout, red-faced man with spectacles. All these doctors came to attend their sick colleague. Korostelev, having served his turn, remained in the house, wandering about like a shadow. The maid-servant was kept busy serving the doctors with tea, and running to the apothecary's, and no one tidied the rooms. All was still and sad.

Olga Ivanovna sat in her room, and reflected that God was punishing her for deceiving her husband. That silent, uncomplaining, inexplicable man—impersonified, it seemed,

by kindness and mildness, weak from excessive goodness—lay on his sofa and suffered alone, uttering no groan. And if he did complain in his delirium, the doctors would guess that the diphtheria was not the only culprit. They would question Korostelev, who knew all, and not without cause: looked viciously at his friend's wife as if she were chief and real offender, and disease only her accomplice. She no longer thought of the moonlight Volga night, the love avowal, the romance of life in the peasant's hut; she remembered only that from caprice and selfishness she had smeared herself from head to feet with something vile and sticky which no washing would wash away.

"*Akh*, how I lied to him!" she said, remembering her restless love of Riabovsky. "May it be accursed!"

At four o'clock she dined with Korostelev, who ate nothing, but drank red wine, and frowned. She too ate nothing. But she prayed silently, and vowed to God that if Dymov only recovered, she would love him again and be his faithful wife. Then, forgetting herself for a moment, she looked at Korostelev and thought: "How tiresome it is to be such a simple, undistinguished, obscure man, and to have such bad manners." It seemed to her that God would strike her dead for her cowardice in keeping away from her husband. And altogether she was oppressed by a dead melancholy, and a feeling that her life was ruined, and that nothing now would mend it.

After dinner, darkness. Olga Ivanovna went into the drawing-room, and found Korostelev asleep on a couch, his head resting on a silken cushion embroidered with gold. He snored loudly.

Alone the doctors, coming on and off duty, ignored the disorder. The strange man sleeping and snoring in the drawing-room, the studies on the walls, the wonderful decorations, the mistress's dishevelled hair and untidy dress—none of these awakened the least interest. One of the doctors laughed; and this laugh had such a timid sound that it was painful to hear.

When next Olga Ivanovna entered the drawing-room Korostelev was awake. He sat up and smoked.

"He has got diphtheria . . . in the nasal cavity," he said quietly. "Yes . . . and his heart is weak. . . . It is a bad business."

"Better send for Schreck," said Olga Ivanovna.

"He's been. It was he noticed that the diphtheria had got into the nose. Yes . . . but what is Schreck? In reality, Schreck is nothing. He is Schreck, I am Korostelev, and nothing more!"

Time stretched into eternity. Olga Ivanovna lay dressed on her unmade bed, and slumbered. She felt that the whole flat from roof to ceiling was filled with a giant block of iron, and that if the iron were only removed, all would be well again. But then she remembered that there was no iron, but only Dymov's illness.

"*Nature morte . . .*" she thought, again losing consciousness. "Sport, *kurort*. . . . And what about Schreck? Schreck, greck, vreck, kreck. *Where are my friends now?* Do they know of the sorrow that has overtaken us? O Lord, save . . . deliver us! Schreck, greck. . . ."

And again the iron. Time stretched into eternity, and the clock downstairs struck innumerable times. Now and then the bell was rung. Doctors came. . . . In came the servant with an empty glass on a salver, and said—

"Shall I make the bed, ma'am?"

And, receiving no answer, she went out. Again the clock struck—dreams of rain on the Volga—and again some one arrived, this time, it seemed, a stranger. Olga Ivanovna started, and saw Korostelev.

"What time is it?" she asked.

"About three."

"Well, what?"

"Just that. I came to say that he's dying."

He sobbed, sat down on her bed, and wiped away his tears with his sleeve. At first Olga Ivanovna understood nothing; then she turned cold, and began to cross herself.

"He is dying," he repeated in a thin voice; and again he sobbed. "He is dying—because he sacrificed himself. What a loss to science!" He spoke bitterly. "This man, compared with the best of us, was a great man, an exceptional man! What gifts! What hopes he awakened in us all!" Korostelev wrung his hands. "Lord, my God, you will not find such a scholar if you search till judgment day! Oska Dymov, Oska Dymov, what have you done? My God!"

In despair he covered his face with his hands and shook his head.

"And what moral fortitude!" he continued, each second increasing in anger. "Good, pure, loving soul—not a man, but a crystal! How he served his science, how he's died for it. Worked—day and night—like an ox, sparing himself never; and he, the young scholar, the coming professor, was forced to seek a practice and spend his nights translating to pay for these . . . these dirty rags!"

Korostelev looked fiendishly at Olga Ivanovna, seized the sheet with both hands, and tore it as angrily as if it, and not she, were guilty.

"And he never spared himself . . . nor did others spare him. And for what purpose . . . why?"

"Yes, a man in a hundred!" came a deep voice from the dining-room.

Olga Ivanovna recalled her life with Dymov, from beginning to end, in all its details; and suddenly she realised that her husband was indeed an exceptional man, a rare—compared with all her other friends—a great man. And remembering how he was looked up to by her late father and by all his colleagues, she understood that there was indeed good reason to predict for him future fame. The walls, the ceiling, the lamp, the carpet winked at her derisively, as if saying, "You have let it slip by, slip by!" With a cry, she rushed out of the room, slipped past some unknown man in the dining-room, and rushed into her husband's study. Covered with a counterpane to the waist, Dymov lay, motionless, on the couch. His face had grown thin, and was a

greyish-yellow never seen on the living; his black eyebrows and his kindly smile were all that remained of Dymov. She felt his chest, his forehead, his hands. His chest was still warm, his forehead and hands were icy. And his half-closed eyes looked not at Olga Ivanovna, but down at the counterpane.

"Dymov!" she cried loudly. "Dymov!"

She wished to explain to him that the past was but a mistake; that all was not yet lost; that life might yet be happy and beautiful; that he was a rare, an uncommon, a great man; that she would worship him from this day forth, and pray, and torture herself with holy dread. . . .

"Dymov!" she cried, tapping his shoulder, refusing to believe that he would never awaken. "Dymov! Dymov!"

But in the drawing-room Korostelev spoke to the maid-servant.

"Don't ask silly questions! Go at once to the church watchman, and get the women's address. They will wash the body, and lay it out, and do all that's wanted."

## THE NAUGHTY BOY

**I**VAN IVANYCH LAPKIN, a pleasant looking young man, and Anna Semyonovna Zamblitzky, a young girl with a little snub nose, walked down the sloping bank and sat down on the bench. The bench was close to the water's edge, among thick bushes of young willow. A heavenly spot! You sat down, and you were hidden from the world. Only the fish could see you and the catspaws which flashed over the water like lightning. The two young persons were equipped with rods, fish hooks, bags, tins of worms and everything else necessary. Once seated, they immediately began to fish.

"I am glad that we're left alone at last," said Lapkin, looking round, "I've got a lot to tell you, Anna—tremendous . . . when I saw you for the first time . . . you've got a nibble . . . I understood then—why I am alive, I knew where my idol was, to whom I can devote my honest, hard-working life. . . . It must be a big one . . . it is biting . . . When I saw you—for the first time in my life I fell in love—fell in love passionately! Don't pull. Let it go on biting. . . . Tell me, darling, tell me—will you let me hope? No! I'm not worth it. I dare not even think of it—may I hope for . . . Pull!"

Anna lifted her hand that held the rod—pulled, cried out. A silvery green fish shone in the air.

"Goodness! it's a perch! Help—quick! It's slipping off." The perch tore itself from the hook—danced in the grass towards its native element and . . . leaped into the water.

But instead of the little fish that he was chasing, Lapkin quite by accident caught hold of Anna's hand—quite by accident pressed it to his lips. She drew back, but it was too late; quite by accident their lips met and kissed; yes, it was an absolute accident! They kissed and kissed. Then came vows and assurances. . . . Blissful moments! But there is no such thing as absolute happiness in this life. If happiness itself does not contain a poison, poison will enter in from without. Which happened this time. Suddenly, while the two were kissing, a laugh was heard. They looked at the river and were paralysed. The schoolboy Kolya, Anna's brother, was standing in the water, watching the young people and maliciously laughing.

"Aha—ha! Kissing!" said he. "Right O, I'll tell Mother."

"I hope that you—as a man of honour," Lapkin muttered, blushing. "It's disgusting to spy on us, it's loathsome to tell tales, it's rotten. As a man of honour . . ."

"Give me a shilling, then I'll shut up!" the man of honour retorted. "If you don't, I'll tell."

Lapkin took a shilling out of his pocket and gave it to Kolya, who squeezed it in his wet fist, whistled, and swam away. And the young people did not kiss any more just then.

Next day Lapkin brought Kolya some paints and a ball from town, and his sister gave him all her empty pill boxes. Then they had to present him with a set of studs like dogs' heads. The wretched boy enjoyed this game immensely, and to keep it going he began to spy on them. Wherever Lapkin and Anna went, he was there too. He did not leave them alone for a single moment.

"Beast!" Lapkin gnashed his teeth. "So young and yet such a full fledged scoundrel. What on earth will become of him later!"

During the whole of July the poor lovers had no life apart from him. He threatened to tell on them; he dogged them and demanded more presents. Nothing satisfied him



—finally he hinted at a gold watch. All right, they had to promise the watch.

Once, at table, when biscuits were being handed round, he burst out laughing and said to Lapkin: “Shall I let on? Ah—ha!”

Lapkin blushed fearfully and instead of a biscuit he began to chew his table napkin. Anna jumped up from the table and rushed out of the room.

And this state of things went on until the end of August, up to the day when Lapkin at last proposed to Anna. Ah! What a happy day that was! When he had spoken to her parents and obtained their consent Lapkin rushed into the garden after Kolya. When he found him he nearly cried for joy and caught hold of the wretched boy by the ear. Anna, who was also looking for Kolya came running up and grabbed him by the other ear. You should have seen the happiness depicted on their faces while Kolya roared and begged them:

“Darling, precious pets, I won’t do it again. O-oh—O-oh! Forgive me!” And both of them confessed afterwards that during all the time they were in love with each other they never experienced such happiness, such overwhelming joy as during those moments when they pulled the wretched boy’s ears.

## THE BLACK MONK

### I

ANDREY VASILYEVICH KOVRIN, *Magister*, had worn himself out, and unsettled his nerves. He made no effort to undergo regular treatment; but only incidentally, over a bottle of wine, spoke to his friend the doctor; and his friend the doctor advised him to spend all the spring and summer in the country. And in the nick of time came a long letter from Tanya Pesotzky, asking him to come and stay with her father at Borisovka. He decided to go.

But first (it was in April) he travelled to his own estate, to his native Kovrinka, and spent three weeks in solitude; and only when the fine weather came drove across the country to his former guardian and second parent, Pesotzky, the celebrated Russian horticulturist. From Kovrinka to Boriskova, the home of the Pesotzkys, was a distance of some seventy versts, and in the easy, springed calèche the drive along the roads, soft in springtime, promised real enjoyment.

The house at Borisovka was large, faced with a colonnade, and adorned with figures of lions with the plaster falling off. At the door stood a servant in livery. The old park, gloomy and severe, laid out in English fashion, stretched for nearly a verst from the house down to the river, and ended there in a steep clay bank covered with pines whose bare roots resembled shaggy paws. Below sparkled a deserted stream; overhead the snipe circled about with melancholy

cries—all, in short, seemed to invite a visitor to sit down and write a ballad. But the gardens and orchards, which together with the seed-plots occupied some eighty acres, inspired very different feelings. Even in the worst of weather they were bright and joy-inspiring. Such wonderful roses, lilies, camelias, such tulips, such a host of flowering plants of every possible kind and colour, from staring white to sooty black,—such a wealth of blossoms Kovrin had never seen before. The spring was only beginning, and the greatest rareties were hidden under glass; but already enough bloomed in the alleys and beds to make up an empire of delicate shades. And most charming of all was it in the early hours of morning, when dewdrops glistened on every petal and leaf.

In childhood the decorative part of the garden, called contemptuously by Pesotzky “the rubbish,” had produced on Kovrin a fabulous impression. What miracles of art, what studied monstrosities, what mockeries of nature! Espaliers of fruit trees, a pear tree shaped like a pyramidal poplar, globular oaks and lindens, apple-tree houses, arches, monograms, candelabra—even the date 1862 in plum trees, to commemorate the year in which Pesotzky first engaged in the art of gardening. There were stately, symmetrical trees, with trunks erect as those of palms, which after examination proved to be gooseberry or currant trees. But what most of all enlivened the garden and gave it its joyous tone was the constant movement of Pesotzky’s gardeners. From early morning to late at night, by the trees, by the bushes, in the alleys, and on the beds swarmed men as busy as ants, with barrows, spades, and watering-pots.

Kovrin arrived at Borisovka at nine o’clock. He found Tanya and her father in great alarm. The clear starlight night foretold frost, and the head gardener, Ivan Karlych, had gone to town, so that there was no one who could be relied upon. At supper they spoke only of the impending frost; and it was decided that Tanya should not go to bed at all, but should inspect the gardens at one o’clock.

and see if all were in order, while Yegor Semionovich should rise at three o'clock, or even earlier.

Kovrin sat with Tanya all the evening, and after midnight accompanied her to the garden. The air already smelt strongly of burning. In the great orchard, called "the commercial," which every year brought Yegor Semionovich thousands of rubles profit, there already crept along the ground the thick, black, sour smoke which was to clothe the young leaves and save the plants. The trees were marshalled like chessmen in straight rows—like ranks of soldiers; and this pedantic regularity, together with the uniformity of height, made the garden seem monotonous and even tiresome. Kovrin and Tanya walked up and down the alleys, and watched the fires of dung, straw, and litter; but seldom met the workmen, who wandered in the smoke like shadows. Only the cherry and plum trees and a few apple trees were in blossom, but the whole garden was shrouded in smoke, and it was only when they reached the seed-plots that Kovrin was able to breathe.

"I remember when I was a child sneezing from the smoke," he said, shrugging his shoulders, "but to this day I cannot understand how smoke saves plants from the frost."

"Smoke is a good substitute when there are no clouds," answered Tanya.

"But what do you want the clouds for?"

"In dull and cloudy weather we have no morning frosts."

"Is that so?" said Kovrin.

He laughed and took Tanya by the hand. Her broad, very serious, chilled face; her thick, black eyebrows; the stiff collar on her jacket which prevented her from moving her head freely; her dress tucked up out of the dew; and her whole figure, erect and slight, pleased him.

"Heavens! how she has grown!" he said to himself. "When I was here last time, five years ago, you were quite a child. You were thin, long-legged, and untidy, and wore a short dress, and I used to tease you. What a change in five years!"

"Yes, five years!" sighed Tanya. "A lot of things have happened since then. Tell me, Andrei, honestly," she said, looking merrily into his face, "do you feel that you have got out of touch with us? But why do I ask? You are a man, you live your own interesting life, you . . . Some estrangement is natural. But whether that is so or not, Andriusha, I want you now to look on us as your own. We have a right to that."

"I do, already, Tanya."

"Your word of honour?"

"My word of honour."

"You were surprised that we had so many of your photographs. But surely you know how my father adores you, worships you. You are a scholar, and not an ordinary man; you have built up a brilliant career, and he is firmly convinced that you turned out a success because he educated you. I do not interfere with his delusion. Let him believe it!"

Already dawn. The sky paled, and the foliage and clouds of smoke began to show themselves more clearly. The nightingale sang, and from the fields came the cry of quails.

"It is time for bed!" said Tanya. "It is cold too." She took Kovrin by the hand. "Thanks, Andriusha, for coming. We are cursed with most uninteresting acquaintances, and not many even of them. With us it is always garden, garden, garden, and nothing else. Trunks, timbers," she laughed, "pippins, rennets, budding, pruning, grafting. . . . All our life goes into the garden, we never even dream of anything but apples and pears. Of course this is all very good and useful, but sometimes I cannot help wishing for change. I remember when you used to come and pay us visits, and when you came home for the holidays, how the whole house grew fresher and brighter, as if someone had taken the covers off the furniture. I was then a very little girl, but I understood. . . ."

Tanya spoke for a time, and spoke with feeling. Then

suddenly it came into Kovrin's head that during the summer he might become attached to this little, weak, talkative being, that he might get carried away, fall in love—in their position what was more probable and natural? The thought pleased him, amused him, and as he bent down to the kind, troubled face, he hummed to himself Pushkin's couplet:

"Oniegin, I will not conceal  
That I love Tatyana madly."

By the time they reached the house Yegor Semionovich had risen. Kovrin felt no desire to sleep; he entered into conversation with the old man, and returned with him to the garden. Yegor Semionovich was tall, broad-shouldered, and fat. He suffered from shortness of breath, yet walked so quickly that it was difficult to keep up with him. His expression was always troubled and hurried, and he seemed to be thinking that if he were a single second late everything would be destroyed.

"There, brother, is a mystery for you!" he began, stopping to recover breath. "On the surface of the ground, as you see, there is frost, but raise the thermometer a couple of yards on your stick, and it is quite warm. . . . Why is that?"

"I confess I don't know," said Kovrin, laughing.

"No! . . . You can't know everything. . . . The biggest brain cannot comprehend everything. You are still engaged with your philosophy?"

"Yes, . . . I am studying psychology, and philosophy generally."

"And it doesn't bore you?"

"On the contrary, I couldn't live without it."

"Well, God grant . . ." began Yegor Semionovich, smoothing his big whiskers thoughtfully. "Well, God grant . . . I am very glad for your sake, brother, very glad. . . ."

Suddenly he began to listen, and making a terrible face, ran off the path and soon vanished among the trees in a cloud of smoke.

“Who tethered this horse to the tree?” rang out a despairing voice. “Which of you thieves and murderers dared to tether this horse to the apple tree? My God, my God! Ruined, ruined, spoiled, destroyed! The garden is ruined, the garden is destroyed! My God!”

When he returned to Kovrin his face bore an expression of injury and impotence.

“What on earth can you do with these accursed people?” he asked in a whining voice, wringing his hands. “Stepka brought a manure cart here last night and tethered the horse to an apple tree . . . tied the reins, the idiot, so tight, that the bark is rubbed off in three places. What can you do with men like this? I speak to him and he blinks his eyes and looks stupid. He ought to be hanged!”

When at last he calmed down, he embraced Kovrin and kissed him on the cheek.

“Well, God grant . . . God grant! . . .” he stammered. “I am very, very glad that you have come. I cannot say how glad. Thanks!”

Then, with the same anxious face, and walking with the same quick step, he went round the whole garden, showing his former ward the orangery, the hothouses, the sheds, and two beehives which he described as the miracle of the century.

As they walked about, the sun rose, lighting up the garden. It grew hot. When he thought of the long, bright day before him, Kovrin remembered that it was but the beginning of May, and that he had before him a whole summer of long, bright, and happy days; and suddenly through him pulsed the joyous, youthful feeling which he had felt when as a child he played in this same garden. And in turn, he embraced the old man and kissed him tenderly. Touched by remembrances, the pair went into the house and drank tea out of the old china cups, with cream and rich biscuits; and these trifles again reminded Kovrin of his childhood and youth. The splendid present and the

awakening memories of the past mingled, and a feeling of intense happiness filled his heart.

He waited until Tanya awoke, and having drunk coffee with her, walked through the garden, and then went to his room and began to work. He read attentively, making notes; and only lifted his eyes from his books when he felt that he must look out of the window or at the fresh roses, still wet with dew, which stood in vases on his table. It seemed to him that every little vein in his body trembled and pulsed with joy.

## II

But in the country Kovrin continued to live the same nervous and untranquil life as he had lived in town. He read much, wrote much, studied Italian; and when he went for walks, thought all the time of returning to work. He slept so little that he astonished the household; if by chance he slept in the daytime for half an hour, he could not sleep all the following night. Yet after these sleepless nights he felt active and gay.

He talked much, drank wine, and smoked expensive cigars. Often, nearly every day, young girls from the neighbouring country-houses drove over to Borisovka, played the piano with Tanya, and sang. Sometimes the visitor was a young man, also a neighbour, who played the violin well. Kovrin listened eagerly to their music and singing, but was exhausted by it, so exhausted sometimes that his eyes closed involuntarily, and his head drooped on his shoulder.

One evening after tea he sat upon the balcony, reading. In the drawing-room Tanya—a soprano, one of her friends—a contralto, and the young violinist studied the well-known serenade of Braga. Kovrin listened to the words, but though they were Russian, could not understand their meaning. At last, laying down his book and listening attentively, he understood. A girl with a disordered imagination heard by night in a garden some mysterious sounds,



sounds so beautiful and strange that she was forced to recognise their harmony and holiness, which to us mortals are incomprehensible, and therefore flew back to heaven. Kovrin's eyelids drooped. He rose, and in exhaustion walked up and down the drawing-room, and then up and down the hall. When the music ceased, he took Tanya by the hand and went out with her to the balcony.

"All day—since early morning," he began, "my head has been taken up with a strange legend. I cannot remember whether I read it, or where I heard it, but the legend is very remarkable and not very coherent. I may begin by saying that it is not very clear. A thousand years ago a monk, robed in black, wandered in the wilderness—somewhere in Syria or Arabia. . . . Some miles away the fishermen saw another black monk moving slowly over the surface of the lake. The second monk was a mirage. Now put out of your mind all the laws of optics, which legend, of course, does not recognise, and listen. From the first mirage was produced another mirage, from the second, a third, so that the image of the Black Monk is eternally reflected from one stratum of the atmosphere to another. At one time it was seen in Africa, then in Spain, then in India, then in the Far North. At last it issued from the limits of the earth's atmosphere, but never came across conditions which would cause it to disappear. Maybe it is seen to-day in Mars or in the constellation of the Southern Cross. Now the whole point, the very essence of the legend, lies in the prediction that exactly a thousand years after the monk went into the wilderness, the mirage will again be cast into the atmosphere of the earth and show itself to the world of men. This term of a thousand years, it appears, is now expiring. . . . According to the legend we must expect the Black Monk to-day or to-morrow."

"It is a strange story," said Tanya, whom the legend did not please.

"But the most astonishing thing," laughed Kovrin, "is that I cannot remember how this legend came into my head.

Did I read it? Did I hear it? Or can it be that I dreamed of the Black Monk? I cannot remember. But the legend interests me. All day long I thought of nothing else."

Releasing Tanya, who returned to her visitors, he went out of the house, and walked lost in thought beside the flower-beds. Already the sun was setting. The freshly watered flowers exhaled a damp, irritating smell. In the house the music had again begun, and from the distance the violin produced the effect of a human voice. Straining his memory in an attempt to recall where he had heard the legend, Kovrin walked slowly across the park, and then, not noticing where he went, to the river-bank.

By the path which ran down among the uncovered roots to the water's edge Kovrin descended, frightening the snipe, and disturbing two ducks. On the dark pine trees glowed the rays of the setting sun, but on the surface of the river darkness had already fallen. Kovrin crossed the stream. Before him now lay a broad field covered with young rye. Neither human dwelling nor human soul was visible in the distance; and it seemed that the path must lead to the unexplored, enigmatical region in the west where the sun had already set—where still, vast and majestic, flamed the afterglow.

"How open it is—how peaceful and free?" thought Kovrin, walking along the path. "It seems as if all the world is looking at me from a hiding-place and waiting for me to comprehend it."

A wave passed over the rye, and the light evening breeze blew softly on his uncovered head. Yet a minute more and the breeze blew again, this time more strongly, the rye rustled, and from behind came the dull murmur of the pines. Kovrin stopped in amazement. On the horizon, like a cyclone or waterspout, a great, black pillar rose up from earth to heaven. Its outlines were undefined; but from the first it might be seen that it was not standing still, but moving with inconceivable speed towards Kovrin; and the nearer it came the smaller and smaller it grew. Involun-

tarily Kovrin rushed aside and made a path for it. A monk in black clothing, with grey hair and black eyebrows, crossing his hands upon his chest, was borne past. His bare feet were above the ground. Having swept some twenty yards past Kovrin, he looked at him, nodded his head, and smiled kindly and at the same time slyly. His face was pale and thin. When he had passed by Kovrin he again began to grow, flew across the river, struck inaudibly against the clay bank and pine trees, and, passing through them, vanished like smoke.

"You see," stammered Kovrin, "after all, the legend was true!"

Making no attempt to explain this strange phenomenon; satisfied with the fact that he had so closely and so plainly seen not only the black clothing but even the face and eyes of the monk; agitated agreeably, he returned home.

In the park and in the garden visitors were walking quietly; in the house the music continued. So he alone had seen the Black Monk. He felt a strong desire to tell what he had seen to Tanya and Yegor Semionovich, but feared that they would regard it as an hallucination, and decided to keep his counsel. He laughed loudly, sang, danced a mazurka, and felt in the best of spirits; and the guests and Tanya noticed upon his face a peculiar expression of ecstasy and inspiration, and found him very interesting.

### III

When supper was over and the visitors had gone, he went to his own room, and lay on the sofa. He wished to think of the monk. But in a few minutes Tanya entered.

"There, Andriusha, you can read father's articles . . ." she said. "They are splendid articles. He writes very well."

"Magnificent!" said Yegor Semionovich, coming in after her, with a forced smile. "Don't listen to her, please! . . ."

Or read them only if you want to go to sleep—they are a splendid soporific.”

“In my opinion they are magnificent,” said Tanya, deeply convinced. “Read them, Andriusha, and persuade father to write more often. He could write a whole treatise on gardening.”

Yegor Semionovich laughed, blushed, and stammered out the conventional phrases used by abashed authors. At last he gave in.

“If you must read them, read first these papers of Gauché’s, and the Russian articles,” he stammered, picking out the papers with trembling hands. “Otherwise you won’t understand them. Before you read my replies you must know what I am replying to. But it won’t interest you . . . stupid. And it’s time for bed.”

Tanya went out. Yegor Semionovich sat on the end of the sofa and sighed loudly.

“Akh, brother mine . . .” he began after a long silence. “So you see, my dear *Magister*, I write articles, and exhibit at shows, and get medals sometimes. . . . Pesotzky, they say, has apples as big as your head. . . . Pesotzky has made a fortune out of his gardens. . . In one word:

“‘Rich and glorious is Kochubey.’”

“But I should like to ask you what is going to be the end of all this? The gardens—there is no question of that—are splendid, they are models. . . . Not gardens at all, in short, but a whole institution of high political importance, and a step towards a new era in Russian agriculture and Russian industry. . . . But for what purpose? What ultimate object?”

“That question is easily answered.”

“I do not mean in that sense. What I want to know is what will happen with the garden when I die? As things are, it would not last without me a single month. The secret does not lie in the fact that the garden is big and the workers

many, but in the fact that I love the work—you understand? I love it, perhaps, more than I love myself. Just look at me! I work from morning to night. I do everything with my own hands. All grafting, all pruning, all planting—everything is done by me. When I am helped I feel jealous, and get irritated to the point of rudeness. The whole secret is in love, in a sharp master's eye, in a master's hands, and in the feeling when I drive over to a friend and sit down for half an hour, that I have left my heart behind me and am not myself—all the time I am in dread that something has happened to the garden. Now suppose I die to-morrow, who will replace all this? Who will do the work? The head gardeners? The workmen? Why the whole burden of my present worries is that my greatest enemy is not the hare or the beetle or the frost, but the hands of the stranger."

"But Tanya?" said Kovrin, laughing. "Surely she is not more dangerous than a hare? . . . She loves and understands the work."

"Yes, Tanya loves it and understands it. If after my death the garden should fall to her as mistress, then I could wish for nothing better. But suppose—which God forbid—she should marry!" Yegor Semionovich whispered and looked at Kovrin with frightened eyes. "That's the whole crux. She might marry, there would be children, and there would be no time to attend to the garden. That is bad enough. But what I fear most of all is that she may marry some spendthrift who is always in want of money, who will lease the garden to tradesmen, and the whole thing will go to the devil in the first year. In a business like this a woman is the scourge of God."

Yegor Semionovich sighed and was silent for a few minutes.

"Perhaps you may call it egoism. But I do not want Tanya to marry. I am afraid! You've seen that fop who comes along with a fiddle and makes a noise. I know Tanya would never marry him, yet I cannot bear the sight of him.

. . . In short, brother, I am a character . . . and I know it."

Yegor Semionovich rose and walked excitedly up and down the room. It was plain that he had something very serious to say, but could not bring himself to the point.

"I love you too sincerely not to talk to you frankly," he said, thrusting his hands into his pockets. "In all delicate questions I say what I think, and dislike mystification. I tell you plainly, therefore, that you are the only man whom I should not be afraid of Tanya marrying. You are a clever man, you have a heart, and you would not see my life's work ruined. And what is more, I love you as my own son . . . and am proud of you. So if you and Tanya were to end . . . in a sort of romance . . . I should be very glad and very happy. I tell you this straight to your face, without shame, as becomes an honest man."

Kovrin smiled. Yegor Semionovich opened the door, and was leaving the room, but stopped suddenly on the threshold.

"And if you and Tanya had a son, I could make a horticulturist out of him," he added. "But that is an idle fancy. Good night!"

Left alone, Kovrin settled himself comfortably, and took up his host's articles. The first was entitled "Intermediate Culture," the second "A Few Words in Reply to the Remarks of Mr. Z. about the Treatment of the Soil of a New Garden," the third "More about Grafting." The others were similar in scope. But all breathed restlessness and sickly irritation. Even a paper with the peaceful title of "Russian Apple Trees" exhaled irritability. Yegor Semionovich began with the words "Audi alteram partem," and ended it with "Sapienti sat"; and between these learned quotations flowed a whole torrent of acid words directed against "the learned ignorance of our patent horticulturists who observe nature from their academic chairs," and against M. Gauché, "whose fame is founded on the admiration of the profane and *dilletanti*." And finally Kovrin came across an un-called-for and quite insincere expression of regret that it

is no longer legal to flog peasants who are caught stealing fruit and injuring trees.

“His is good work, wholesome and fascinating,” thought Kovrin, “yet in these pamphlets we have nothing but bad temper and war to the knife. I suppose it is the same everywhere; in all careers men of ideas are nervous, and victims of this kind of exalted sensitiveness. I suppose it must be so.”

He thought of Tanya, so delighted with her father's articles, and then of Yegor Semionovich. Tanya, small, pale, and slight, with her collar-bone showing, with her wildly-opened, her dark and clever eyes, which it seemed were always searching for something. And Yegor Semionovich with his little, hurried steps. He thought again of Tanya, fond of talking, fond of argument, and always accompanying even the most insignificant phrases with mimicry and gesticulation. Nervous—she must be nervous in the highest degree.

Again Kovrin began to read, but he understood nothing, and threw down his books. The agreeable emotion with which he had danced the mazurka and listened to the music still held possession of him, and aroused a multitude of thoughts. It flashed upon him that if this strange, unnatural monk had been seen by him alone, he must be ill, ill to the point of suffering from hallucinations. The thought frightened him, but not for long.

He sat on the sofa, and held his head in his hands, curbing the inexplicable joy which filled his whole being; and then walked up and down the room for a minute, and returned to his work. But the thoughts which he read in books no longer satisfied him. He longed for something vast, infinite, astonishing. Toward morning he undressed and went unwillingly to bed; he felt that he had better rest. When at last he heard Yegor Semionovich going to his work in the garden, he rang, and ordered the servant to bring him some wine. He drank several glasses; his consciousness became dim, and he slept.

## IV

Yegor Semionovich and Tanya often quarrelled and said disagreeable things to one another. This morning they had both been irritated, and Tanya burst out crying and went to her room, coming down neither to dinner nor to tea. At first Yegor Semionovich marched about, solemn and dignified, as if wishing to give everyone to understand that for him justice and order were the supreme interests in life. But he was unable to keep this up for long; his spirits fell, and he wandered about the park and sighed, "Akh, my God!" At dinner he ate nothing, and at last, tortured by his conscience, he knocked softly at the closed door, and called timidly:

"Tanya! Tanya!"

Through the door came a weak voice, tearful but determined:

"Leave me alone! . . . I implore you."

The misery of father and daughter reacted on the whole household, even on the labourers in the garden. Kovrin, as usual, was immersed in his own interesting work, but at last even he felt tired and uncomfortable. He determined to interfere, and disperse the cloud before evening. He knocked at Tanya's door, and was admitted.

"Come, come! What a shame!" he began jokingly; and then looked with surprise at her tear-stained and afflicted face covered with red spots. "Is it so serious, then? Well, well!"

"But if you knew how he tortured me!" she said, and a flood of tears gushed out of her big eyes. "He tormented me!" she continued, wringing her hands. "I never said a word to him. . . . I only said there was no need to keep unnecessary labourers, if . . . if we can get day workmen. . . . You know the men have done nothing for the whole week. I . . . I only said this, and he roared at me, and said a lot of things . . . most offensive . . . deeply insulting. And all for nothing."

"Never mind!" said Kovrin, straightening her hair. "You



have had your scoldings and your cryings, and that is surely enough. You can't keep up this for ever . . . it is not right . . . all the more since you know he loves you infinitely."

"He has ruined my whole life," sobbed Tanya. "I never hear anything but insults and affronts. He regards me as superfluous in his own house. Let him! He will have cause! I shall leave here to-morrow, and study for a position as telegraphist. . . . Let him!"

"Come, come. Stop crying, Tanya. It does you no good. . . . You are both irritable and impulsive, and both in the wrong. Come, and I will make peace!"

Kovrin spoke gently and persuasively, but Tanya continued to cry, twitching her shoulders and wringing her hands as if she had been overtaken by a real misfortune. Kovrin felt all the sorrier owing to the smallness of the cause of her sorrow. What a trifle it took to make this little creature unhappy for a whole day, or, as she had expressed it, for a whole life! And as he consoled Tanya, it occurred to him that except this girl and her father there was not one in the world who loved him as a kinsman; and had it not been for them, he, left fatherless and motherless in early childhood, must have lived his whole life without feeling one sincere caress, or tasting ever that simple, unreasoning love which we feel only for those akin to us by blood. And he felt that his tired, strained nerves, like magnets, responded to the nerves of this crying, shuddering girl. He felt, too, that he could never love a healthy, rosy-cheeked woman; but pale, weak, unhappy Tanya appealed to him.

He felt pleasure in looking at her hair and her shoulders; and he pressed her hand, and wiped away her tears. . . . At last she ceased crying. But she still continued to complain of her father, and of her insufferable life at home, imploring Kovrin to try to realise her position. Then by degrees she began to smile, and to sigh that God had cursed her with such a wicked temper; and in the end laughed aloud, called herself a fool, and ran out of the room.

A little later Kovrin went into the garden. Yegor Semionovich and Tanya, as if nothing had happened, were walking side by side up the alley, eating rye-bread and salt. Both were very hungry.

## V

Pleased with his success as peacemaker, Kovrin went into the park. As he sat on a bench and mused, he heard the rattle of a carriage and a woman's laugh—visitors evidently again. Shadows fell in the garden, the sound of a violin, the music of a woman's voice reached him almost inaudibly; and this reminded him of the Black Monk. Whither, to what country, to what planet, had that optical absurdity flown?

Hardly had he called to mind the legend and painted in imagination the black apparition in the rye-field when from behind the pine trees opposite to him, walked inaudibly—without the faintest rustling—a man of middle height. His grey head was uncovered, he was dressed in black, and barefooted like a beggar. On his pallid, corpse-like face stood out sharply a number of black spots. Nodding his head politely the stranger or beggar walked noiselessly to the bench and sat down, and Kovrin recognised the Black Monk. For a minute they looked at one another, Kovrin with astonishment, but the monk kindly and, as, before, with a sly expression on his face.

"But you are a mirage," said Kovrin. "Why are you here, and why do you sit in one place? That is not in accordance with the legend."

"It is all the same," replied the monk softly, turning his face toward Kovrin. "The legend, the mirage, I—all are products of your own excited imagination. I am a phantom."

"That is to say you don't exist?" asked Kovrin.

"Think as you like," replied the monk, smiling faintly.

"I exist in your imagination, and as your imagination is a part of Nature, I must exist also in Nature."

"You have a clever, a distinguished face—it seems to me as if in reality you had lived more than a thousand years," said Kovrin. "I did not know that my imagination was capable of creating such a phenomenon. Why do you look at me with such rapture? Are you pleased with me?"

"Yes. For you are one of the few who can justly be named the elected of God. You serve eternal truth. Your thoughts, your intentions, your astonishing science, all your life bear the stamp of divinity, a heavenly impress; they are dedicated to the rational and the beautiful, and that is, to the Eternal."

"You say, to eternal truth. Then can eternal truth be accessible and necessary to men if there is no eternal life?"

"There is eternal life," said the monk.

"You believe in the immortality of men."

"Of course. For you, men, there awaits a great and a beautiful future. And the more the world has of men like you the nearer will this future be brought. Without you, ministers to the highest principles, living freely and consciously, humanity would be nothing; developing in the natural order it must wait the end of its earthly history. But you, by some thousands of years, hasten it into the kingdom of eternal truth—and in this is your high service. You embody in yourself the blessing of God which rested upon the people."

"And what is the object of eternal life?" asked Kovrin.

"The same as all life—enjoyment. True enjoyment is in knowledge, and eternal life presents innumerable, inexhaustible fountains of knowledge; it is in this sense it was said: 'In My Father's house are many mansions. . . .'"

"You cannot conceive what a joy it is to me to listen to you," said Kovrin, rubbing his hands with delight.

"I am glad."

"Yet I know that when you leave me I shall be tormented by doubt as to your reality. You are a phantom, a

hallucination. But that means that I am physically diseased, that I am not in a normal state?"

"What if you are? That need not worry you. You are ill because you have overstrained your powers, because you have borne your health in sacrifice to one idea, and the time is near when you will sacrifice not merely it but your life also. What more could you desire? It is what all gifted and noble natures aspire to."

"But if I am physically diseased, how can I trust myself?"

"And how do you know that the men of genius whom all the world trusts have not also seen visions? Genius, they tell you now, is akin to insanity. Believe me, the healthy and the normal are but ordinary men—the herd. Fears as to a nervous age, over-exhaustion and degeneration can trouble seriously only those whose aims in life lie in the present—that is the herd."

"The Romans had as their ideal: *mens sana in corpore sano.*"

"All that the Greeks and Romans said is not true. Exaltations, aspirations, excitements, ecstasies—all those things which distinguish poets, prophets, martyrs to ideas from ordinary men are incompatible with the animal life, that is, with physical health. I repeat, if you wish to be healthy and normal go with the herd."

"How strange that you should repeat what I myself have so often thought!" said Kovrin. "It seems as if you had watched me and listened to my secret thoughts. But do not talk about me. What do you imply by the words: eternal truth?"

The monk made no answer. Kovrin looked at him, but could not make out his face. His features clouded and melted away; his head and arms disappeared; his body faded into the bench and into the twilight, and vanished utterly.

"The hallucination has gone," said Kovrin, laughing. "It is a pity."

He returned to the house lively and happy. What the

Black Monk had said to him flattered, not his self-love, but his soul, his whole being. To be the elected, to minister to eternal truth, to stand in the ranks of those who hasten by thousands of years the making mankind worthy of the kingdom of Christ, to deliver humanity from thousands of years of struggle, sin, and suffering, to give to one idea everything, youth, strength, health, to die for the general welfare—what an exalted, what a glorious ideal! And when through his memory flowed his past life, a life pure and chaste and full of labour, when he remembered what he had learnt and what he had taught, he concluded that in the words of the monk there was no exaggeration.

Through the park, to meet him, came Tanya. She was wearing a different dress from that in which he had last seen her.

“You here?” she cried. “We were looking for you, looking . . . But what has happened?” she asked in surprise, looking into his glowing, enraptured face, and into his eyes, now full of tears. “How strange you are, Andriusha!”

“I am satisfied, Tanya,” said Kovrin, laying his hand upon her shoulder. “I am more than satisfied; I am happy! Tanya, dear Tanya, you are inexpressibly dear to me. Tanya, I am so glad!”

He kissed both her hands warmly, and continued:

“I have just lived through the brightest, most wonderful, most unearthly moments. . . . But I cannot tell you all, for you would call me mad, or refuse to believe me. . . . Let me speak of you! Tanya, I love you, and have long loved you. To have you near me, to meet you ten times a day, has become a necessity for me. I do not know how I shall live without you when I go home.”

“No!” laughed Tanya. “You will forget us all in two days. We are little people, and you are a great man.”

“Let us talk seriously,” said he. “I will take you with me, Tanya! Yes? You will come? You will be mine?”

Tanya cried “What?” and tried to laugh again. But the laugh did not come, and, instead, red spots stood out on her

cheeks. She breathed quickly, and walked on rapidly into the park.

"I did not think . . . I never thought of this . . . never thought," she said, pressing her hands together as if in despair.

But Kovrin hastened after her, and, with the same glowing, enraptured face, continued to speak.

"I wish for a love which will take possession of me altogether, and this love only you, Tanya, can give me. I am happy! How happy!"

She was overcome, bent, withered up, and seemed suddenly to have aged ten years. But Kovrin found her beautiful, and loudly expressed his ecstasy:

"How lovely she is!"

## VI

When he learned from Kovrin that not only had a romance resulted, but that a wedding was to follow, Yegor Semionovich walked from corner to corner, and tried to conceal his agitation. His hands shook, his neck seemed swollen and purple; he ordered the horses to be put into his racing droshky, and drove away. Tanya, seeing how he whipped the horses and how he pushed his cap down over his ears, understood his mood, locked herself into her room, and cried all day.

In the orangery the peaches and plums were already ripe. The packing and despatch to Moscow of such a delicate load required much attention, trouble, and bustle. Owing to the heat of the summer every tree had to be watered; the process was costly in time and working-power; and many caterpillars appeared, which the workmen, and even Yegor Semionovich and Tanya, crushed with their fingers, to the great disgust of Kovrin. The autumn orders for fruit and trees had to be attended to, and a vast correspondence carried on. And at the very busiest time, when it seemed no one had a free moment, work began in the fields and deprived

the garden of half its workers. Yegor Semionovich, very sunburnt, very irritated, and very worried, galloped about, now to the garden, now to the fields; and all the time shouted that they were tearing him to bits, and that he would put a bullet through his brain.

On top of all came the bustle over Tanya's trousseau, to which the Pesótskys attributed infinite significance. With the eternal snipping of scissors, rattle of sewing-machines, smell of flat-irons, and the caprices of the nervous and touchy dress-maker, the whole house seemed to spin around. And, to make matters worse, visitors arrived every day, and these visitors had to be amused, fed, and lodged for the night. Yet work and worry passed unnoticed in a mist of joy. Tanya felt as if love and happiness had suddenly burst upon her, although ever since her fourteenth year she had been certain that Kovrin would marry nobody but herself. She was eternally in a state of astonishment, doubt, and disbelief in herself. At one moment she was seized by such great joy that she felt she must fly away to the clouds and pray to God; but a moment later she remembered that when August came she would have to leave the home of her childhood and forsake her father; and she was frightened by the thought—God knows whence it came—that she was trivial, insignificant, and unworthy of a great man like Kovrin. When such thoughts came she would run up to her room, lock herself in, and cry bitterly for hours. But when visitors were present, it broke in upon her that Kovrin was a singularly handsome man, that all the women loved him and envied her; and in these moments her heart was as full of rapture and pride as if she had conquered the whole world. When he dared to smile on any other woman she trembled with jealousy, went to her room, and again—tears. These new feelings possessed her altogether; she helped her father mechanically, noticing neither papers nor caterpillars, nor workmen, nor how swiftly time was passing by.

Yegor Semionovich was in much the same state of mind. He still worked from morning to night, flew about the gar-

dens, and lost his temper; but all the while he was wrapped in a magic reverie. In his sturdy body contended two men, one the real Yegor Semionovich, who, when he listened to the gardener, Ivan Karlovich's report of some mistake or disorder, went mad with excitement, and tore his hair; and the other the unreal Yegor Semionovich—a half-intoxicated old man, who broke off an important conversation in the middle of a word, seized the gardener by the shoulder, and stammered:

“You may say what you like, but blood is thicker than water. His mother was an astonishing, a most noble, a most brilliant woman. It was a pleasure to see her good, pure, open, angel face. She painted beautifully, wrote poetry, spoke five foreign languages, and sang. . . . Poor thing, Heaven rest her soul, she died of consumption!”

The unreal Yegor Semionovich sighed, and after a moment's silence continued:

“When he was a boy growing up to manhood in my house he had just such an angel face, open and good. His looks, his movements, his words were as gentle and graceful as his mother's. And his intellect! It is not for nothing he has the degree of *Magister*. But you just wait, Ivan Karlovich; you'll see what he'll be in ten years' time. Why, he'll be out of sight!”

But here the real Yegor Semionovich remembered himself, seized his head and roared:

“Devils! Frost-bitten! Ruined, destroyed! The garden is ruined; the garden is destroyed!”

Kovrin worked with all his former ardour, and hardly noticed the bustle about him. Love only poured oil on the flames. After every meeting with Tanya, he returned to his rooms in rapture and happiness, and set to work with his books and manuscripts with the same passion with which he had kissed her and sworn his love. What the Black Monk had told him of his election by God, of eternal truth, and of the glorious future of humanity, gave to all his work a peculiar, unusual significance. Once or twice every week,



either in the park or in the house, he met the monk, and talked with him for hours; but this did not frighten, but on the contrary delighted him, for he was now assured that such apparitions visit only the elect and exceptional who dedicate themselves to the ministry of ideas.

Assumption passed unobserved. Then came the wedding celebrated by the determined wish of Yegor Semionovich with what was called *éclat*, that is, with meaningless festivities which lasted for two days. Three thousand rubles were consumed in food and drink; but what with the vile music, the noisy toasts, the fussing servants, the clamour, and the closeness of the atmosphere, no one appreciated the expensive wines or the astonishing *hors d'œuvres* specially ordered from Moscow.

## VII

One of the long winter nights. Kovrin lay in bed, reading a French novel. Poor Tanya, whose head every evening ached as the result of the unaccustomed life in town, had long been sleeping, muttering incoherent phrases in her dreams.

The clock struck three. Kovrin put out the candle and lay down, lay for a long time with closed eyes unable to sleep owing to the heat of the room and Tanya's continued muttering. At half-past four he again lighted the candle. The Black Monk was sitting in a chair beside his bed.

"Good night!" said the monk, and then, after a moment's silence, asked, "What are you thinking of now?"

"Of glory," answered Kovrin. "In a French novel which I have just been reading, the hero is a young man who does foolish things, and dies from a passion for glory. To me this passion is inconceivable."

"Because you are too clever. You look indifferently on fame as a toy which cannot interest you."

"That is true."

"Celebrity has no attractions for you. What flattery, joy,

or instruction can a man draw from the knowledge that his name will be graven on a monument, when time will efface the inscription sooner or later? Yes, happily there are too many of you for brief human memory to remember all your names."

"Of course," said Kovrin. "And why remember them? . . . But let us talk of something else. Of happiness, for instance. What is this happiness?"

When the clock struck five he was sitting on the bed with his feet trailing on the carpet and his head turned to the monk, and saying:

"In ancient times a man became frightened at his happiness, so great it was, and to placate the gods laid before them in sacrifice his beloved ring. You have heard? Now I, like Polycrates, am a little frightened at my own happiness. From morning to night I experience only joy—joy absorbs me and stifles all other feelings. I do not know the meaning of grief, affliction, or weariness. I speak seriously, I am beginning to doubt."

"Why?" asked the monk in an astonished tone. "Then you think joy is a supernatural feeling? You think it is not the normal condition of things? No! The higher a man has climbed in mental and moral development the freer he is, the greater satisfaction he draws from life. Socrates, Diogenes, Marcus Aurelius knew joy and not sorrow. And the apostle said, 'rejoice exceedingly.' Rejoice and be happy!"

'And suddenly the gods will be angered," said Kovrin jokingly. "But it would hardly be to my taste if they were to steal my happiness and force me to shiver and starve."

Tanya awoke, and looked at her husband with amazement and terror. He spoke, he turned to the chair, he gesticulated, and laughed; his eyes glittered and his laughter sounded strange.

"Andriusha, whom are you speaking to?" she asked, seizing the hand which he had stretched out to the monk. "Andriusha, who is it?"

“Who?” answered Kovrin. “Why, the monk! . . . He is sitting there.” He pointed to the Black Monk.

“There is no one there, . . . no one, Andriusha; you are ill.”

Tanya embraced her husband, and, pressing against him as if to defend him against the apparition, covered his eyes with her hand.

“You are ill,” she sobbed, trembling all over. “Forgive me, darling, but for a long time I have fancied you were unnerved in some way. . . . You are ill, . . . physically, Andriusha.”

The shudder communicated itself to him. He looked once more at the chair, now empty, and suddenly felt weakness in his arms and legs. He began to dress.

“It is nothing, Tanya, nothing, . . .” he stammered, and still shuddered. “But I am a little unwell. . . . It is time to recognise it.”

“I have noticed it for a long time, and father noticed it,” she said, trying to restrain her sobs. “You have been speaking so funnily to yourself, and smiling so strangely, . . . and you do not sleep. O, my God, my God, save us!” she cried in terror. “But do not be afraid, Andriusha, do not fear, . . . for God’s sake do not be afraid. . . .”

She also dressed. . . . It was only as he looked at her that Kovrin understood the danger of his position, and realised the meaning of the Black Monk and of their conversations. It became plain to him that he was mad.

Both, themselves not knowing why, dressed and went into the hall; she first, he after her. There they found Yegor Semionovich in his dressing-gown. He was staying with them, and had been awakened by Tanya’s sobs.

“Do not be afraid, Andriusha,” said Tanya, trembling as if in fever. “Do not be afraid . . . father, this will pass off . . . it will pass off.”

Kovrin was so agitated that he could hardly speak. But he tried to treat the matter as a joke. He turned to his father-in-law and attempted to say:

"Congratulate me . . . it seems I have gone out of my mind." But his lips only moved, and he smiled bitterly.

At nine o'clock they put on his overcoat and a fur cloak, wrapped him up in a shawl, and drove him to the doctor's. He began a course of treatment.

## VIII

Again summer. By the doctor's orders Kovrin returned to the country. He had recovered his health, and no longer saw the Black Monk. It only remained for him to recruit his physical strength. He lived with his father-in-law, drank much milk, worked only two hours a day, never touched wine, and gave up smoking.

On the evening of the 19th June, before Elijah's day, a vesper service was held in the house. When the priest took the censer from the sexton, and the vast hall began to smell like a church, Kovrin felt tired. He went into the garden. Taking no notice of the gorgeous blossoms around him he walked up and down, sat for a while on a bench, and then walked through the park. He descended the sloping bank to the margin of the river, and stood still, looking questioningly at the water. The great pines, with their shaggy roots, which a year before had seen him so young, so joyous, so active, no longer whispered, but stood silent and motionless, as if not recognising him. . . . And, indeed, with his short-clipped hair, his feeble walk, and his changed face, so heavy and pale and changed since last year, he would hardly have been recognised anywhere.

He crossed the stream. In the field, last year covered with rye, lay rows of reaped oats. The sun had set, and on the horizon flamed a broad, red afterglow, fortelling stormy weather. All was quiet; and, gazing towards the point at which a year before he had first seen the Black Monk, Kovrin stood twenty minutes watching the crimson fade. When he returned to the house, tired and unsatisfied, Yegor Semionovich and Tanya were sitting on the steps of the

terrace, drinking tea. They were talking together, and, seeing Kovrin, stopped. But Kovrin knew by their faces that they had been speaking of him.

"It is time for you to have your milk," said Tanya to her husband.

"No, not yet," he answered, sitting down on the lowest step. "You drink it. I do not want it."

Tanya timidly exchanged glances with her father, and said in a guilty voice:

"You know very well that the milk does you good."

"Yes, any amount of good," laughed Kovrin. "I congratulate you, I have gained a pound in weight since last Friday." He pressed his hands to his head and said in a pained voice: "Why . . . why have you cured me? Bromide mixtures, idleness, warm baths, watching in trivial terror over every mouthful, every step . . . all this in the end will drive me to idiocy. I had gone out of my mind . . . I had the mania of greatness. . . . But for all that I was bright, active, and ever happy. . . . I was interesting and original. Now I have become rational and solid, just like the rest of the world. I am a mediocrity, and it is tiresome for me to live. . . . Oh, how cruelly . . . how cruelly you have treated me! I had hallucinations . . . but what harm did that cause to anyone? I ask you what harm?"

"God only knows what you mean!" sighed Yegor Semionovich. "It is stupid even to listen to you."

"Then you need not listen."

The presence of others, especially of Yegor Semionovich, now irritated Kovrin; he answered his father-in-law drily, coldly, even rudely, and could not look on him without contempt and hatred. And Yegor Semionovich felt confused, and coughed guiltily, although he could not see how he was in the wrong. Unable to understand the cause of such a sudden reversal of their former hearty relations, Tanya leaned against her father, and looked with alarm into his eyes. It was becoming plain to her that their relations every day grew worse and worse, that her father had aged greatly,

and that her husband had become irritable, capricious, excitable, and uninteresting. She no longer laughed and sang, she ate nothing, and whole nights never slept, but lived under the weight of some impending terror, torturing herself so much that she lay insensible from dinner-time till evening. When the service was being held, it had seemed to her that her father was crying; and now as she sat on the terrace she made an effort not to think of it.

"How happy were Buddha and Mahomet and Shakespeare that their kind-hearted kinsmen and doctors did not cure them of ecstasy and inspiration!" said Kovrin. "If Mahomet had taken potassium bromide for his nerves, worked only two hours a day, and drunk milk, that astonishing man would have left as little behind him as his dog. Doctors and kind-hearted relatives only do their best to make humanity stupid, and the time will come when mediocrity will be considered genius, and humanity will perish. If you only had some idea," concluded Kovrin peevishly, "if you only had some idea how grateful I am!"

He felt strong irritation, and to prevent himself saying too much, rose and went into the house. It was a windless night, and into the window was borne the smell of tobacco plants and jalap. Through the windows of the great dark hall, on the floor and on the piano, fell the moonrays. Kovrin recalled the raptures of the summer before, when the air, as now, was full of the smell of jalap and the moonrays poured through the window. . . . To awaken the mood of last year he went to his room, lighted a strong cigar, and ordered the servant to bring him wine. But now the cigar was bitter and distasteful, and the wine had lost its flavour of the year before. How much it means to get out of practice! From a single cigar, and two sips of wine, his head went round, and he was obliged to take bromide of potassium.

Before going to bed Tanya said to him:

"Listen. Father worships you, but you are annoyed with him about something, and that is killing him. Look at his face: he is growing old, not by days but by hours! I im-

plore you, Andriusha, for the love of Christ, for the sake of your dead father, for the sake of my peace of mind—be kind to him again!”

“I cannot, and I do not want to.”

“But why?” Tanya trembled all over. “Explain to me why!”

“Because I do not like him; that is all,” answered Kovrin carelessly, shrugging his shoulders. “But better not talk of that; he is your father.”

“I cannot, cannot understand,” said Tanya. She pressed her hands to her forehead and fixed her eyes on one point. “Something terrible, something incomprehensible is going on in this house. You, Andriusha, have changed; you are no longer yourself. . . . You—a clever, an exceptional man—get irritated over trifles. . . . You are annoyed by such little things that at any other time you yourself would have refused to believe it. No . . . do not be angry, do not be angry,” she continued, kissing his hands, and frightened by her own words. “You are clever, good, and noble. You will be just to father. He is so good.”

“He is not good, but merely good-humoured. These vaudeville uncles—of your father’s type—with well-fed, easy-going faces, are characters in their way, and once used to amuse me, whether in novels, in comedies, or in life. But they are now hateful to me. They are egoists to the marrow of their bones. . . . Most disgusting of all is their satiety, and this stomachic, purely bovine—or swinish—optimism.”

Tanya sat on the bed, and laid her head on a pillow.

“This is torture!” she said; and from her voice it was plain that she was utterly weary and found it hard to speak. “Since last winter not a moment of rest. . . . It is terrible, my God! I suffer . . .”

“Yes, of course! I am Herod, and you and your papa the massacred infants. Of course!”

His face seemed to Tanya ugly and disagreeable. The expression of hatred and contempt did not suit it. She even observed that something was lacking in his face; ever since

his hair had been cut off, it seemed changed. She felt an almost irresistible desire to say something insulting, but restrained herself in time, and overcome with terror, went out of the bedroom.

## IX

Kovrin received an independent chair. His inaugural address was fixed for the 2nd of December, and a notice to that effect was posted in the corridors of the University. But when the day came a telegram was received by the University authorities that he could not fulfill the engagement, owing to illness.

Blood came from his throat. He spat it up, and twice in one month it flowed in streams. He felt terribly weak, and fell into a somnolent condition. But this illness did not frighten him, for he knew that his dead mother had lived with the same complaint more than ten years. His doctors, too, declared that there was no danger, and advised him merely not to worry, to lead a regular life, and to talk less.

In January the lecture was postponed for the same reason, and in February it was too late to begin the course. It was postponed till the following year.

He no longer lived with Tanya, but with another woman, older than himself, who looked after him as if he were a child. His temper was calm and obedient; he submitted willingly, and when Varvara Nikolayevna—that was her name—made arrangements for taking him to the Crimea, he consented to go, although he felt that from the change no good would come.

They reached Sevastopol late one evening, and stopped there to rest, intending to drive to Yalta on the following day. Both were tired by the journey. Varvara Nikolayevna drank tea, and went to bed. But Kovrin remained up. An hour before leaving home for the railway station he had received a letter from Tanya, which he had not read; and the thought of this letter caused him unpleasant agitation. In the



depths of his heart he knew that his marriage with Tanya had been a mistake. He was glad that he was finally parted from her; but the remembrance of this woman, who towards the last had seemed to turn into a walking, living mummy, in which all had died except the great, clever eyes, awakened in him only pity and vexation against himself. The writing on the envelope reminded him that two years before he had been guilty of cruelty and injustice, and that he had avenged on people in no way guilty his spiritual vacuity, his solitude, his disenchantment with life. . . . He remembered how he had once torn into fragments his dissertation and all the articles written by him since the time of his illness, and thrown them out of the window, how the fragments flew in the wind and rested on the trees and flowers; in every page he had seen strange and baseless pretensions, frivolous irritation, and a mania for greatness. And all this had produced upon him an impression that he had written a description of his own faults. Yet when the last copybook had been torn up and thrown out of the window, he felt bitterness and vexation, and went to his wife and spoke to her cruelly. Heavens, how he had ruined her life! He remembered how once, wishing to cause her pain, he had told her that her father had played in their romance an unusual rôle, and had even asked him to marry her; and Yegor Semionovich, happening to overhear him, had rushed into the room, so dumb with consternation that he could not utter a word, but only stamped his feet on one spot and bellowed strangely as if his tongue had been cut out. And Tanya, looking at her father, cried out in a heart-rending voice, and fell insensible on the floor. It was hideous.

The memory of all this returned to him at the sight of the well-known handwriting. He went out on to the balcony. It was warm and calm, and a salt smell came to him from the sea. The moonlight, and the lights around, were imaged on the surface of the wonderful bay—a surface of a hue impossible to name. It was a tender and soft combination of dark blue and green; in parts the water resembled

copperas, and in parts, instead of water, liquid moonlight filled the bay. And all these combined in a harmony of hues which exhaled tranquillity and exaltation.

In the lower story of the inn, underneath the balcony, the windows were evidently open, for women's voices and laughter could plainly be heard. There must be an entertainment.

Kovrin made an effort over himself, unsealed the letter, and, returning to his room, began to read:

"My father has just died. For this I am indebted to you, for it was you who killed him. Our garden is being ruined; it is managed by strangers; what my poor father so dreaded is taking place. For this also I am indebted to you. I hate you with all my soul, and wish that you may perish soon! Ah, how I suffer! My heart burns with an intolerable pain! . . . May you be accursed! I took you for an exceptional man, for a genius; I loved you, and you proved a madman. . . ."

Kovrin could read no more; he tore up the letter and threw the pieces away. . . . He was overtaken by restlessness—almost by terror. . . . On the other side of the screen, slept Varvara Nikolayevna; he could hear her breathing. From the story beneath came the women's voices and laughter, but he felt that in the whole hotel there was not one living soul except himself. The fact that wretched, overwhelmed Tanya had cursed him in her letter, and wished him ill, caused him pain; and he looked fearfully at the door as if fearing to see again that unknown power which in two years had brought about so much ruin in his own life and in the lives of all who were dearest to him.

By experience he knew that when the nerves give way the best refuge lies in work. He used to sit at the table and concentrate his mind upon some definite thought. He took from his red portfolio a copybook containing the conspect of a small work of compilation which he intended to carry out during his stay in the Crimea, if he became tired of inactivity. . . . He sat at the table, and worked on this

conspicuous, and it seemed to him that he was regaining his former peaceful, resigned, impersonal mood. His conspect led him to speculation on the vanity of the world. He thought of the great price which life demands for the most trivial and ordinary benefits which it gives to men. To reach a chair of philosophy under forty years of age; to be an ordinary professor; to expound commonplace thoughts—and those thoughts the thoughts of others—in feeble, tiresome, heavy language; in one word, to attain the position of a learned mediocrity, he had studied fifteen years, worked day and night, passed through a severe psychical disease, survived an unsuccessful marriage—been guilty of many follies and injustices which it was torture to remember. Kovrin now clearly realised that he was a mediocrity, and he was willingly reconciled to it, for he knew that every man must be satisfied with what he is.

The conspect calmed him, but the torn letter lay upon the floor and hindered the concentration of his thoughts. He rose, picked up the fragments, and threw them out of the window. But a light wind blew from the sea, and the papers fluttered back on to the window sill. Again he was overtaken by restlessness akin to terror, and it seemed to him that in the whole hotel except himself there was not one living soul. . . . He went on to the balcony. The bay, as if alive, stared up at him from its multitude of light- and dark-blue eyes, its eyes of turquoise and fire, and beckoned him. It was warm and stifling; how delightful, he thought, to bathe!

Suddenly beneath the balcony a violin was played, and two women's voices sang. All this was known to him. The song which they sang told of a young girl, diseased in imagination, who heard by night in a garden mysterious sounds, and found in them a harmony and a holiness incomprehensible to us mortals. . . . Kovrin held his breath, his heart ceased to beat, and the magical, ecstatic rapture which he had long forgotten trembled in his heart again.

A high, black pillar, like a cyclone or waterspout, appeared on the opposite coast. It swept with incredible swiftness

across the bay towards the hotel; it became smaller and smaller, and Kovrin stepped aside to make room for it. . . . The monk, with uncovered grey head, with black eyebrows, barefooted, folding his arms upon his chest, swept past him, and stopped in the middle of the room.

"Why did you not believe me?" he asked in a tone of reproach, looking caressingly at Kovrin. "If you had believed me when I said you were a genius, these last two years would not have been passed so sadly and so barrenly."

Kovrin again believed that he was the elected of God and a genius; he vividly remembered all his former conversation with the Black Monk, and wished to reply. But the blood flowed from his throat on to his chest, and he, not knowing what to do, moved his hands about his chest till his cuffs were red with the blood. He wished to call Varvara Nikolayevna, who slept behind the screen, and making an effort to do so, cried:

"Tanya!"

He fell on the floor, and raising his hands, again cried:

"Tanya!"

He cried to Tanya, cried to the great garden with the miraculous flowers, cried to the park, to the pines with their shaggy roots, to the rye-field, cried to his marvellous science, to his youth, his daring, his joy, cried to the life which had been so beautiful. He saw on the floor before him a great pool of blood, and from weakness could not utter a single word. But an inexpressible, infinite joy filled his whole being. Beneath the balcony the serenade was being played, and the Black Monk whispered to him that he was a genius, and died only because his feeble, mortal body had lost its balance, and could no longer serve as the covering of genius.

When Varvara Nikolayevna awoke, and came from behind her screen, Kovrin was dead. But on his face was frozen an immovable smile of happiness.

## ON TRIAL

**I**N the district capital N. stands a brown Government building, used in turn by the Zemstvo Executive, the Session of Justices, the Peasant, Licensing, Recruiting, and many other local authorities; and here, on a dull autumn day, were held the district assizes.

This was the brown building of which a local official joked: "It's the seat of justice, of the police, of the militia—in fact, quite an institute for young gentlewomen."

In confirmation of the proverb that too many cooks spoil the broth, this brown building makes a bad impression on the unofficial man by its gloomy barrack-like view, its air of decay, and by the entire absence of even a pretence to comfort, without or within. Even on glaring spring days it is oppressed by deep shadows; and on bright moonlight nights, when trees and houses, blending in one thick shade, repose in deep gloom, it squats alone like a dumpy stone, crushing and out of place, on the modest landscape, spoils the harmony of its neighbours, and breathes an irritable restlessness, as if tortured by memories of past, unforgiven sins. Inside, it is a barn, painfully comfortless. It is strange indeed how these fastidious procurators, judges, marshals of the nobility who at home make scenes over a smoking chimney or a stain on the floor, are reconciled here with the humming ventilators, the sickening smell of wax matches, and the dirty, damp-spotted walls.

When at nine o'clock the court assembled trials began with unusual haste. Case after case ended quickly, "as a church service without hymns"; and no one reaped a single

picturesque impression from the hurried, heterogeneous procession of men, movements, speeches, misfortunes, truths, falsehoods. By two o'clock much work had been done: two men condemned to punitive regiments, one criminal of the privileged classes deprived of his rights and sent to gaol, one prisoner acquitted, and one case postponed.

At two o'clock the President announced the trial of Nikolay Kharlamov on the charge of murdering his wife. The court was constituted as during the earlier cases. The counsel for the accused was a new barrister—a young, beardless "Candidate" in a frock-coat with bright buttons.

"Bring in the accused!" cried the President.

But the accused was already on his way to the dock. He was a tall, sturdy peasant, aged fifty-five, bald, with an apathetic, hairy face, and a great carroty beard. Behind him marched a little insignificant soldier armed with a rifle.

Almost at the door of the dock an accident happened to this soldier. He slipped suddenly, and his rifle flew from his hand. Before it touched the floor he caught it, but knocked his knee sharply against the butt. Whether from pain or from confusion at his awkwardness, the soldier turned very red.

There was the usual questioning of the accused, assembling of jurymen, counting and swearing of witnesses. The indictment was read. A narrow-shouldered, pale secretary, much too thin for his uniform, with sticking-plaster on his cheek, read quickly in a low thick bass, which, as if fearing to injure his chest, he neither raised nor lowered; as accompaniment, the ventilators hummed tirelessly behind the judges' bench; and the general result was a chorus which broke on the silence of the room with drowsy, narcotic effect.

The presiding judge, a short-sighted, middle-aged man with a look of extreme fatigue, sat motionless, and held his hand to his forehead as if shading his eyes from the sun. While the ventilator hummed and the secretary droned, he was thinking of something not connected with work. When the

secretary paused to take breath and turn over a page, he started suddenly, and, bending to the ear of his colleague, asked with a sigh—

“Are you staying at Demianov’s, Matvey Petrovich?”

“Yes, Demianov’s,” was the reply, also given with a start.

“Next time I will stay there too. Tipiakov’s is absolutely unendurable. Noise and uproar all night! Tapping, coughing, crying children. It’s unbearable!”

The assistant procurator, a stout, sated brunet, with gold spectacles and a neatly trimmed beard, sat motionless as a statue, and, resting his face on his hand, read Byron’s *Cain*. His eyes expressed greedy absorption, and his brows rose higher and higher. Sometimes he lay back in his chair and looked indifferently ahead, but soon again became absorbed in his book. The defending advocate drew a blunt pencil along the table, and, his head inclined aside, thought. His young face expressed only concentrated, cold tedium, such tedium as shows on the faces of schoolboys and clerks who sit day after day in the same places and see the same people and the same walls. The speech he was to make in no way troubled him. And, indeed, what was it? By command of his senior it would follow a long-established convention; and, conscious that it was colourless and tiresome, without passion or fire, he would blurt it out to the jurymen, then gallop away through rain and mud to the railway station, thence to town, where he would be sent somewhere else in the district to make another stupid speech. It was tiresome!

At first the prisoner coughed nervously and paled. But soon even he succumbed to the all-pervading calm, monotony, and tedium. Glancing with dull respect at the judges’ uniforms and the jurymen’s tired faces, he blinked his eyes indifferently. The legal atmosphere and procedure, fear of which had so tortured him in gaol, acted now as a sedative. Nothing fulfilled his expectations. He had come into court charged of murder; yet he found no threatening faces, no indignant gestures, no loud phrases about justice, no interest in his uncommon lot; not even his judges turned on him a

long and searching glance. The dark windows, the walls, the secretary's voice, the procurator's pose—all were soaked with official indifference and exhaled a chill. It seemed as if a murderer were a simple office accessory, as if he were to be judged not by living men, but by some invisible machine, brought God knows whence.

The narcotised peasant did not understand that his judges were as used to the dramas and tragedies of life as hospital doctors are to death, and that it was just in this mechanical impartiality that lay the terror, the hopelessness of his case. For if, instead of sitting still, he had risen and begun to implore, to shed tears for mercy, to repent bitterly, to die of despair—all would have fallen as vainly upon numbed nerves and custom as waves upon a rock.

The indictment was finished. The President aimlessly stroked the table before him, blinked his eyes at the prisoner, and asked, idly rolling his tongue—

“Prisoner at the bar, do you confess to the murder of your wife on the evening of the 9th of July?”

“I am not guilty,” answered the accused man, rising, and holding the breast of his *khalat*.

The Court hurriedly set about the examination of witnesses, and soon had questioned two peasant women, five men, and the detective charged with the investigation of the crime. All of these, splashed with mud, fatigued with walking and waiting in the witnesses' room, melancholy and morose, told the same tale. Kharlamov, they agreed, lived with his wife “well,” and beat her only when he was drunk. At sunset on the 9th of July the old woman was found in the shed attached to her cabin with her skull beaten in. Beside her in a pool of blood lay a hatchet. When they looked for Kharlamov to tell him of the tragedy he was neither in the hut nor in the street. They looked for him about the village, searched the drink-shops and huts, but he had vanished. Two days later he appeared at the office, pale, tattered, trembling all over. He was handcuffed and locked up.



"Prisoner!" The President turned to Kharlamov. "Can you not explain to the court where you spent the two days after the murder?"

"I tramped the country. . . . I had nothing to eat or drink. . . ."

"But if you were innocent why did you hide yourself?"

"I was afraid. . . . I thought I might be accused."

"I see. . . . Very good. Sit down!"

The district physician who examined the woman's body was the last witness. He told the court all that he remembered out of the post-mortem protocol; and added what he had reasoned out on the way to the trial. The President blinked at the witness's new, shiny black coat, his fashionable necktie, his moving lips; and through his head ran the idle thought, "Every one wears short coats nowadays? Why is his cut long? Why long, and not short?"

Behind the President, boots creaked cautiously. The assistant procurator had come to the table to fetch a paper.

"Mikhail Vladimirovich!" The assistant procurator bent down to the President's ear. "This Koreisky has investigated the case with incredible carelessness. The man's brother was not even questioned; and you can't make head or tail of the description of the hut. . . ."

"What can you do? . . . What can you do?" sighed the President, leaning back in his chair.

"By the by," resumed the assistant procurator; "look, there in the hall, the first bench . . . the man with the actor's face. That is the local money magnate. He has about half a million in ready cash."

"Indeed! He doesn't look it. . . . Well, old man, shall we have an interval?"

"Let's finish the case, and then. . . ."

"How do you know? . . ." The President turned to the doctor. "So you find that death was immediate?"

"Yes, as the result of serious injury to the substance of the brain. . . ."

When the doctor finished, the President looked at the

blank space between procurator and defending counsel and asked: "Have you any questions to put?"

The assistant procurator without lifting his eyes from *Cain* shook his head. The defending counsel moved brusquely, coughed, and asked—

"Tell me, doctor, judging by the size of the wound, could you form any judgment as to . . . as to the murderer's mental condition? That is, I want to know if the size of the wound justifies our concluding that the accused was in an epileptic fit."

The President turned his sleepy, indifferent glance on the defending counsel. The procurator raised his eyes from *Cain* and looked at the President. But it was a mere look, expressing neither amusement nor surprise, expressing, in fact, nothing at all.

The doctor hesitated. "If you consider the force with which the accused delivered the blow. . . . Otherwise . . . But excuse me, I do not quite understand your point."

The defending lawyer got no answer to his question, and, indeed, needed none. He knew that it had arisen in his mind, and flowed from his lips, merely under the spell of the tedium, the stillness, the humming ventilators. Releasing the doctor, the court examined the articles produced as evidence. First they looked at a caftan, on the sleeve of which was a dark brown spot of blood. The origin of this spot was explained by Kharlamov as follows—

"Three days before my wife's death Penkov bled his horse. I was there, and, of course, helped him . . . and I got smeared with blood. . . ."

"But Penkov has just sworn that he does not remember you being present when the horse was bled."

"I do not know. . . ."

"Sit down."

The court examined the hatchet found beside the dead woman.

"That is not my hatchet," said the accused.

"Whose, then?"

"I do not know . . . I had no hatchet."

"No peasant can carry on his business without a hatchet. Your neighbour, Ivan Timofeyich, who mended the sledge with you, swears that the hatchet is yours. . . ."

"I know nothing . . . only this, that I swear before God"—Kharlamov extended his hand and opened wide his fingers—"I swear before my true Creator . . . I cannot even remember when I last had a hatchet. I once had one like that, only a little smaller, but my son Proshka lost it. About two years before he was taken as a soldier he went to cut wood—he went playing with the children, and lost it. . . ."

"That will do. Sit down!"

The persistent distrust and unwillingness of all to listen at last irritated and enraged Kharlamov. He blinked his eyes furiously, and on his cheek-bones appeared two bright red spots.

"Before the eyes of God!" he exclaimed, stretching out his hand. "If you do not believe me, then ask my son Proshka!" He spoke in a rough voice, and turned suddenly to the little soldier who guarded him. "Proshka, where is the hatchet? Where is the hatchet?"

It was a terrible moment. All in court, it seemed, sank into their seats and dwindled to points. . . . Through every head like lightning flashed one and the same terrible thought, and not one out of all of them dared to look at the soldier's face. Each did his best to discredit his own ears, to cherish the delusion that he had not heard aright.

"Prisoner, you are not allowed to speak to the guard!" said the President hastily.

No one saw the soldier's face, and terror flew through the court unseen. The usher rose from his bench, and on tiptoes, swinging his arms, went out of the hall. In half a minute came the sound of dull footfalls and such noises as are heard when sentries are relieved.

All raised their heads and, trying to look as if nothing uncommon had happened, continued their work. . . .

## EXPENSIVE LESSONS

*500 Commentary*  
*6 groups*  
*Dec 27/28*

**I**T is a great bore for an educated person not to know foreign languages. Vorotov felt it strongly, when on leaving the university after he had got his degree he occupied himself with a little scientific research.

*spelling*  
*reading*  
*chord*

“It’s awful!” he used to say, losing his breath (for although only twenty-six he was stout, heavy, and short of breath). “It’s awful. Without knowing languages I’m like a bird without wings. I’ll simply have to chuck the work.”

So he decided, come what might, to conquer his natural laziness and to study French and German, and he began to look out for a teacher.

One winter afternoon, as Vorotov sat working in his study, the servant announced a lady to see him.

“Show her in,” said Vorotov.

And a young lady, exquisitely dressed in the latest fashion, entered the study. She introduced herself as Alice Ossipovna Enquette, a teacher of French, and said that a friend of Vorotov’s had sent her to him.

“Very glad! Sit down!” said Vorotov, losing his breath, and clutching at the collar of his night shirt. (He always worked in a night shirt in order to breathe more easily.) “You were sent to me by Peter Sergueyevich? Yes . . . Yes . . . I asked him . . . Very glad!”

While he discussed the matter with Mademoiselle Enquette he glanced at her shyly, with curiosity. She was a genuine Frenchwoman, very elegant, and still quite young. From her pale and languid face, from her short, curly hair

and unnaturally small waist, you would not think her more than eighteen, but looking at her broad, well-developed shoulders, her charming back and severe eyes, Vorotov decided that she was certainly not less than twenty-three, perhaps even twenty-five; but then again it seemed to him that she was only eighteen. Her face had the cold, business-like expression of one who had come to discuss a business matter. Never once did she smile or frown, and only once a look of perplexity flashed into her eyes, when she discovered that she was not asked to teach children but a grown up, stout young man.

"So, Alice Osipovna," Vorotov said to her, "you will give me a lesson daily from seven to eight o'clock in the evening. With regard to your wish to receive a ruble a lesson, I have no objection at all. A ruble—well, let it be a ruble. . . ."

And he went on asking her if she wanted tea or coffee, if the weather was fine, and, smiling good naturedly, stroking the tablecloth with the palm of his hand, he asked her kindly who she was, where she had completed her education, and how she earned her living.

In a cold, business-like tone Alice Osipovna answered that she had completed her education at a private school, and then qualified as a domestic teacher, that her father had died recently of scarlet fever, her mother was alive and made artificial flowers, that she, Mademoiselle Enquette, gave private lessons at a pension in the morning, and from one o'clock right until the evening she taught in respectable private houses.

She went, leaving a slight and almost imperceptible perfume of a woman's dress behind her. Vorotov did not work for a long time afterwards but sat at the table stroking the green cloth and thinking.

"It's very pleasant to see girls earning their own living," he thought. "On the other hand it is very unpleasant to realise that poverty does not spare even such elegant and pretty girls as Alice Osipovna; she, too, must struggle for her existence Rotten luck! . . ."

Having never seen virtuous Frenchwomen he also thought that this exquisitely dressed Alice Osipovna, with her well-developed shoulders and unnaturally small waist was in all probability, engaged in something else besides teaching.

Next evening when the clock pointed to five minutes to seven, Alice Osipovna arrived, rosy from the cold; she opened Margot (an elementary text-book) and began without any preamble:

"The French grammar has twenty-six letters. The first is called A, the second B . . ."

"Pardon," interrupted Vorotov, smiling, "I must warn you, Mademoiselle, that you will have to change your methods somewhat in my case. The fact is that I know Russian, Latin and Greek very well. I have studied comparative philology, and it seems to me that we may leave out Margot and begin straight off to read some author." And he explained to the Frenchwoman how grown-up people study languages.

"A friend of mine," said he, "who wished to know modern languages put a French, German and Latin gospel in front of him and then minutely analysed one word after another. The result—he achieved his purpose in less than a year. Let us take some author and start reading."

The Frenchwoman gave him a puzzled look. It was evident that Vorotov's proposal appeared to her naïve and absurd. If he had not been grown up she would certainly have got angry and stormed at him, but as he was a very stout, adult man at whom she could not storm, she only shrugged her shoulders half-perceptibly and said:

"Just as you please."

Vorotov ransacked his bookshelves and produced a ragged French book.

"Will this do?" he asked.

"It's all the same."

"In that case let us begin. Let us start from the title, *Mémoires*."

"Reminiscences . . ." translated Mademoiselle Enquette.

"Reminiscences . . ." repeated Vorotov.

Smiling good naturedly and breathing heavily, he passed a quarter of an hour over the word *mémoires* and the same with the word *de*. This tired Alice Osipovna out. She answered his questions carelessly, got confused and evidently neither understood her pupil nor tried to. Vorotov asked her questions, and at the same time glanced furtively at her fair hair, thinking:

"The hair is not naturally curly. She waves it. Marvellous! She works from morning till night and yet she finds time to wave her hair."

At eight o'clock sharp she got up, gave him a dry, cold "Au revoir, Monsieur," and left the study. After her lingered the same sweet, subtle, agitating perfume. The pupil again did nothing for a long time, but sat by the table and thought.

During the following days he became convinced that his teacher was a charming girl serious and punctual, but very uneducated and incapable of teaching grown up people; so he decided he would not waste his time, but part with her and engage someone else. When she came for the seventh lesson he took an envelope containing seven rubles out of his pocket. Holding it in his hands and blushing furiously, he began:

"I am sorry, Alice Osipovna, but I must tell you. . . . I am placed in an awkward position. . . ."

The Frenchwoman glanced at the envelope and guessed what was the matter. For the first time during the lessons a shiver passed over her face and the cold, business-like expression disappeared. She reddened faintly, and casting her eyes down, began to play absently with her thin gold chain. And Vorotov, noticing her confusion, understood how precious this ruble was to her, how hard it would be for her to lose this money.

"I must tell you," he murmured, getting still more confused. His heart gave a thump. Quickly he put the envelope back into his pocket and continued:

"Excuse me. I . . . I will leave you for ten minutes. . . ."

And as though he did not want to dismiss her at all, but had only asked permission to retire for a moment he went into another room and sat there for ten minutes. Then he returned, more confused than ever; he thought that his leaving her like that would be explained by her in a certain way and this made him awkward.

The lessons began again.

Vorotov wanted them no more. Knowing that they would lead to nothing he gave the Frenchwoman a free hand; he did not question or interrupt her any more. She translated at her own sweet will, ten pages a lesson, but he did not listen. He breathed heavily and for want of occupation gazed now and then at her curly little head, her neck, her soft white hands, and inhaled the perfume of her dress.

He caught himself thinking about her as he ought not and it shamed him, or admiring her, and then he felt aggrieved and angry because she behaved so coldly towards him, in such a business-like way, never smiling and as if afraid that he might suddenly touch her. All the while he thought: How could he inspire her with confidence in him, how could he get to know her better, to help her, to make her realise how badly she taught, poor little soul?

Once Alice Osipovna came to the lesson in a dainty pink dress, a little *décolleté*, and such a sweet scent came from her that you might have thought she was wrapped in a cloud, that you had only to blow on her for her to fly away or dissolve like smoke. She apologised, saying she could only stay for half an hour, because she had to go straight from the lesson to a ball.

He gazed at her neck, at her bare shoulders and he thought he understood why Frenchwomen were known to be light-minded and easily won; he was drowned in this cloud of scent, beauty, and nudity, and she, quite unaware of his thoughts and probably not in the least interested in them, read over the pages quickly and translated full steam ahead:



“He walked over the street and met the gentleman of his friend and said: where do you rush? seeing your face so pale it makes me pain.”

The *Mémoires* had been finished long ago; Alice was now translating another book. Once she came to the lesson an hour earlier, apologising because she had to go to the Little Theatre at seven o'clock. When the lesson was over Vorotov dressed and he too went to the theatre. It seemed to him only for the sake of rest and distraction, and he did not even think of Alice. He would not admit that a serious man, preparing for a scientific career, a stay-at-home, should brush aside his book and rush to the theatre for the sake of meeting an unintellectual, stupid girl whom he hardly knew.

But somehow, during the intervals his heart beat, and, without noticing it, he ran about the foyer and the corridors like a boy, looking impatiently for someone. Every time the interval was over he was tired, but when he discovered the familiar pink dress and the lovely shoulders veiled with tulle his heart jumped as if from a presentiment of happiness, he smiled joyfully, and for the first time in his life he felt jealous.

Alice was with two ugly students and an officer. She was laughing, talking loudly and evidently flirting. Vorotov had never seen her like that. Apparently she was happy, contented, natural, warm. Why? What was the reason? Perhaps because these people were dear to her and belonged to the same class as she. Vorotov felt the huge abyss between him and that class. He bowed to his teacher, but she nodded coldly and quietly passed by. It was plain she did not want her cavaliers to know that she had pupils and gave lessons because she was poor.

After the meeting at the theatre Vorotov knew that he was in love. During lessons that followed he devoured his elegant teacher with his eyes, and no longer struggling, he gave full rein to his pure and impure thoughts. Alice's face was always cold. Exactly at eight o'clock every evening she said calmly, “Au revoir, Monsieur,” and he felt

that she was indifferent to him and would remain indifferent, that—his position was hopeless.

Sometimes in the middle of a lesson he would begin dreaming, hoping, building plans; he composed an amorous declaration, remembering that Frenchwomen were frivolous and complaisant, but he had only to give his teacher one glance for his thoughts to be blown out like a candle, when you carry it on to the verandah of a bungalow and the wind is blowing. Once, overcome, forgetting everything, in a frenzy, he could stand it no longer. He barred her way when she came from the study into the hall after the lesson and, losing his breath and stammering, began to declare his love:

“You are dear to me! . . . I love you. Please let me speak!”

Alice grew pale: probably she was afraid that after this declaration she would not be able to come to him any more and receive a ruble a lesson. She looked at him with terrified eyes and began in a loud whisper:

“Ah, it's impossible! Do not speak, I beg you! Impossible!”

Afterwards Vorotov did not sleep all night; he tortured himself with shame, abused himself, thinking feverishly. He thought that his declaration had offended the girl and that she would not come any more. He made up his mind to find out where she lived from the Address Bureau and to write her an apology. But Alice came without the letter. For a moment she felt awkward, and then opened the book and began to translate quickly, in an animated voice, as always:

“‘Oh, young gentleman, do not rend these flowers in my garden which I want to give to my sick daughter.’”

She still goes. Four books have been translated by now but Vorotov knows nothing beyond the word *mémoires*, and when he is asked about his scientific research work he waves his hand, leaves the question unanswered, and begins to talk about the weather.

## THE KISS

ON the evening of the twentieth of May, at eight o'clock, all six batteries of the N Artillery Brigade on their way to camp arrived at the village of Miestechky with the intention of spending the night.

The confusion was at its worst—some officers fussed about the guns, others in the church square arranged with the quartermaster—when from behind the church rode a civilian upon a most remarkable mount. The small, short-tailed bay with well-shaped neck progressed with a wobbly motion, all the time making dance-like movements with its legs as if some one were switching its hoofs. When he had drawn rein level with the officers the rider doffed his cap and said ceremoniously—

“His Excellency, General von Rabbek, whose house is close by, requests the honour of the officers’ company at tea. . . .”

The horse shook its head, danced, and wobbled to the rear; its rider again took off his cap, and, turning his strange steed, disappeared behind the church.

“The devil take it!” was the general exclamation as the officers dispersed to their quarters. “We can hardly keep our eyes open, yet along comes this von Rabbek with his tea! I know that tea!”

The officers of the six batteries had lively memories of a past invitation. During recent manœuvres they had been asked, together with their Cossack comrades, to tea at the house of a local country gentleman, an officer in retirement, by title a Count; and this hearty, hospitable Count over-

whelmed them with attentions, fed them to satiety, poured vodka down their throats, and made them stay the night. All this, of course, they enjoyed. The trouble was that the old soldier entertained his guests too well. He kept them up till daybreak while he poured forth tales of past adventures; he dragged them from room to room to point out valuable paintings, old engravings, and rare arms; he read them holograph letters from celebrated men. And the weary officers, bored to death, listened, gaped, yearned for their beds, and yawned cautiously in their sleeves, until at last when their host released them it was too late for sleep.

Was von Rabbek another old Count? It might easily be. But there was no neglecting his invitation. The officers washed and dressed, and set out for von Rabbek's house. At the church square they learnt that they must descend the hill to the river, and follow the bank till they reached the general's gardens, where they would find a path direct to the house. Or, if they chose to go up hill, they would reach the general's barns half a verst from Miestetchki. It was this route they chose.

"But who is this von Rabbek?" asked one. "The man who commanded the N Cavalry Division at Plevna?"

"No, that was not von Rabbek, but simply Rabbe—without the von."

"What glorious weather!"

At the first barn they came to, two roads diverged; one ran straight forward and faded in the dusk; the other turning to the right led to the general's house. As the officers drew near they talked less loudly. To right and left stretched rows of red-roofed brick barns, in aspect heavy and morose as the barracks of provincial towns. In front gleamed the lighted windows of von Rabbek's house.

"A good omen, gentlemen!" cried a young officer. "Our setter runs in advance. There is game ahead!"

On the face of Lieutenant Lobytko, the tall stout officer referred to, there was not one trace of hair though he was twenty-five years old. He was famed among comrades for

the instinct which told him of the presence of women in the neighbourhood. On hearing his comrade's remark, he turned his head and said—

“Yes. There are women there. My instinct tells me.”

A handsome, well-preserved man of sixty, in mufti, came to the hall door to greet his guests. It was von Rabbek. As he pressed their hands, he explained that though he was delighted to see them, he must beg pardon for not asking them to spend the night; as guests he already had his two sisters, their children, his brother, and several neighbours—in fact, he had not one spare room. And though he shook their hands and apologised and smiled, it was plain that he was not half as glad to see them as was last year's Count, and that he had invited them merely because good manners demanded it. The officers climbing the soft-carpeted steps and listening to their host understood this perfectly well; and realised that they carried into the house an atmosphere of intrusion and alarm. Would any man—they asked themselves—who had gathered his two sisters and their children, his brother and his neighbours, to celebrate, no doubt, some family festival, find pleasure in the invasion of nineteen officers whom he had never seen before?

A tall, elderly lady, with a good figure, and a long face with black eyebrows, who resembled closely the ex-Empress Eugenie, greeted them at the drawing-room door. Smiling courteously and with dignity, she affirmed that she was delighted to see the officers, and only regretted that she could not ask them to stay the night. But the courteous, dignified smile disappeared when she turned away, and it was quite plain that she had seen many officers in her day, that they caused not the slightest interest, and that she had invited them merely because an invitation was dictated by good breeding and by her position in the world.

In a big dining-room seated at a big table sat ten men and women, drinking tea. Behind them, veiled in cigar-smoke, stood several young men, among them one, red-whiskered and extremely thin, who spoke English loudly with

a lisp. Through an open door the officers saw into a brightly lighted room with blue wall-paper.

"You are too many to introduce singly, gentlemen!" said the general loudly, with affected joviality. "Make one another's acquaintance, please—without formalities!"

The visitors, some with serious, even severe faces, some smiling constrainedly, all with a feeling of awkwardness, bowed, and took their seats at the table. Most awkward of all felt Staff-Captain Riabovich, a short, round-shouldered, spectacled officer, whiskered like a lynx. While his brother officers looked serious or smiled constrainedly, his face, his lynx whiskers, and his spectacles seemed to explain: "I am the most timid, modest, undistinguished officer in the whole brigade." For some time after he took his seat at the table he could not fix his attention on any single thing. Faces, dresses, the cut-glass cognac bottles, the steaming tumblers, the moulded cornices—all merged in a single, overwhelming sentiment which caused him intense fright and made him wish to hide his head. Like an inexperienced lecturer he saw everything before him, but could distinguish nothing, and was in fact the victim of what men of science diagnose as "psychical blindness."

But slowly conquering his diffidence, Riabovich began to distinguish and observe. As became a man both timid and unsocial, he remarked first of all the amazing temerity of his new friends. Van Rabbek, his wife, two elderly ladies, a girl in lilac, and the red-whiskered youth who, it appeared, was a young von Rabbek, sat down among the officers as unconcernedly as if they had held rehearsals, and at once plunged into various heated arguments in which they soon involved their guests. That artillerists have a much better time than cavalrymen or infantrymen was proved conclusively by the lilac girl, while von Rabbek and the elderly ladies affirmed the converse. The consternation became desultory. Riabovich listened to the lilac girl fiercely debating themes she knew nothing about and took no interest in, and watched the insincere smiles which appeared on and disappeared from her face.

While the von Rabbek family with amazing strategy inveigled their guests into the dispute, they kept their eyes on every glass and mouth. Had every one tea, was it sweet enough, why didn't one eat biscuits, was another fond of cognac? And the longer Riabovich listened and looked, the more pleased he was with this disingenuous, disciplined family.

After tea the guests repaired to the drawing-room. Instinct had not cheated Lobytko. The room was packed with young women and girls, and ere a minute had passed the setter-lieutenant stood beside a very young, fair-haired girl in black, and, bending down as if resting on an invisible sword, shrugged his shoulders coquettishly. He was uttering, no doubt, most unentertaining nonsense, for the fair girl looked indulgently at his sated face, and exclaimed indifferently, "Indeed!" And this indifferent "Indeed!" might have quickly convinced the setter that he was on a wrong scent.

Music began. As the notes of a mournful valse throbbed out of the open window, through the heads of all flashed the feeling that outside that window it was spring-time, a night of May. The air was odourous of young poplar leaves, of roses and lilacs—and the valse and the spring were sincere. Riabovich, with valse and cognac mingling tipsily in his head, gazed at the window with a smile; then began to follow the movements of the women; and it seemed that the smell of roses, poplars, and lilacs came not from the gardens outside, but from the women's faces and dresses.

They began to dance. Young von Rabbek valsed twice round the room with a very thin girl; and Lobytko, slipping on the parquetted floor, went up to the girl in lilac, and was granted a dance. But Riabovich stood near the door with the wall-flowers, and looked silently on. Amazed at the daring of men who in sight of a crowd could take unknown women by the waist, he tried in vain to picture himself doing the same. A time had been when he envied his comrades their courage and dash, suffered from painful heart-searchings, and was hurt by the knowledge that he was timid,

round-shouldered, and undistinguished, that he had lynx whiskers, and that his waist was much too long. But with years he had grown reconciled to his own insignificance, and now looking at the dancers and loud talkers, he felt no envy, but only mournful emotions.

At the first quadrille von Rabbek junior approached and invited two non-dancing officers to a game of billiards. The three left the room; and Riabovich who stood idle, and felt impelled to join in the general movement, followed. They passed the dining-room, traversed a narrow glazed corridor, and a room where three sleepy footmen jumped from a sofa with a start; and after walking, it seemed, through a whole houseful of rooms, entered a small billiard-room.

Von Rabbek and the two officers began their game. Riabovich, whose only game was cards, stood near the table and looked indifferently on, as the players, with unbuttoned coats, wielded their cues, moved about, joked, and shouted obscure technical terms. Riabovich was ignored, save when one of the players jostled him or caught his cue, and turning towards him said briefly, "Pardon!" so that before the game was over he was thoroughly bored, and impressed by a sense of his superfluity, resolved to return to the drawing-room, and turned away.

It was on the way back that his adventure took place. Before he had gone far he saw that he had missed the way. He remembered distinctly the room with the three sleepy footmen; and after passing through five or six rooms entirely vacant, he saw his mistake. Retracing his steps, he turned to the left, and found himself in an almost dark room which he had not seen before; and after hesitating a minute, he boldly opened the first door he saw, and found himself in complete darkness. Through a chink of the door in front peered a bright light; from afar throbbed the dulled music of a mournful mazurka. Here, as in the drawing-room, the windows were open wide, and the smell of poplars, lilacs, and roses flooded the air.

Riabovich paused in irresolution. For a moment all was



still. Then came the sound of hasty footsteps; then, without any warning of what was to come, a dress rustled, a woman's breathless voice whispered "At last!" and two soft, scented, unmistakably womanly arms met round his neck, a warm cheek impinged on his, and he received a sounding kiss. But hardly had the kiss echoed through the silence when the unknown shrieked loudly, and fled away—as it seemed to Riabovich—in disgust. Riabovich himself nearly screamed, and rushed headlong towards the bright beam in the door-chink.

As he entered the drawing-room his heart beat violently, and his hands trembled so perceptibly that he clasped them behind his back. His first emotion was shame, as if every one in the room already knew that he had just been embraced and kissed. He retired into his shell, and looked fearfully around. But finding that hosts and guests were calmly dancing or talking, he regained courage, and surrendered himself to sensations experienced for the first time in life. The unexampled had happened. His neck, fresh from the embrace of two soft, scented arms, seemed anointed with oil; near his left moustache, where the kiss had fallen, trembled a slight, delightful chill, as from peppermint drops; and from head to foot he was soaked in new and extraordinary sensations, which continued to grow and grow.

He felt that he must dance, talk, run into the garden, laugh unrestrainedly. He forgot altogether that he was round-shouldered, undistinguished, lynx-whiskered, that he had an "indefinite exterior"—a description from the lips of a woman he had happened to overhear. As Madame von Rabbek passed him he smiled so broadly and graciously that she came up and looked at him questioningly.

"What a charming house you have!" he said, straightening his spectacles.

And Madame von Rabbek smiled back, said that the house still belonged to her father, and asked were his parents alive, how long he had been in the Army, and why he was so thin. After hearing his answers she departed. But

though the conversation was over, he continued to smile benevolently, and think what charming people were his new acquaintances.

At supper Riabovich ate and drank mechanically what was put before him, heard not a word of the conversation, and devoted all his powers to the unravelling of his mysterious, romantic adventure. What was the explanation? It was plain that one of the girls, he reasoned, had arranged a meeting in the dark room, and after waiting some time in vain had, in her nervous tension, mistaken Riabovich for her hero. The mistake was likely enough, for on entering the dark room Riabovich had stopped irresolutely as if he, too, were waiting for some one. So far the mystery was explained.

"But which of them was it?" he asked, searching the women's faces. She certainly was young, for old women do not indulge in such romances. Secondly, she was not a servant. That was proved unmistakably by the rustle of her dress, the scent, the voice . . .

When at first he looked at the girl in lilac she pleased him; she had pretty shoulders and arms, a clever face, a charming voice. Riabovich piously prayed that it was she. But, smiling insincerely, she wrinkled her long nose, and that at once gave her an elderly air. So Riabovich turned his eyes on the blonde in black. The blonde was younger, simpler, sincerer; she had charming kiss-curls, and drank from her tumbler with inexpressible grace. Riabovich hoped it was she—but soon he noticed that her face was flat, and bent his eyes on her neighbour.

"It is a hopeless puzzle," he reflected. "If you take the arms and shoulders of the lilac girl, add the blonde's curls, and the eyes of the girl on Lobytko's left, then——"

He composed a portrait of all these charms, and had a clear vision of the girl who had kissed him. But she was nowhere to be seen.

Supper over, the visitors, sated and tipsy, bade their enter-

tainers good-bye. Both host and hostess again apologised for not asking them to spend the night.

"I am very glad, very glad, gentlemen!" said the general, and this time seemed to speak sincerely, no doubt because speeding the parting guest is a kindlier office than welcoming him unwelcomed. "I am very glad indeed! I hope you will visit me on your way back. Without ceremony, please! Which way will you go? Up the hill? No, go down the hill and through the garden. That way is shorter."

The officers took his advice. After the noise and glaring illumination within doors, the garden seemed dark and still. Until they reached the wicket-gate all kept silence. Merry, half tipsy, and content, as they were, the night's obscurity and stillness inspired pensive thoughts. Through their brains, as through Riabovich's, sped probably the same question: "Will the time ever come when I, like von Rabbek, shall have a big house, a family, a garden, the chance of being gracious—even insincerely—to others, of making them sated, tipsy, and content?"

But once the garden lay behind them, all spoke at once, and burst into causeless laughter. The path they followed led straight to the river, and then ran beside it, winding around bushes, ravines, and over-hanging willow-trees. The track was barely visible; the other bank was lost entirely in gloom. Sometimes the black water imaged stars, and this was the only indication of the river's speed. From beyond it sighed a drowsy snipe, and beside them in a bush, heedless of the crowd, a nightingale chanted loudly. The officers gathered in a group, and swayed the bush, but the nightingale continued his song.

"I like his cheek!" they echoed admiringly. "He doesn't care a kopeck! The old rogue!"

Near their journey's end the path turned up the hill, and joined the road not far from the church enclosure; and there the officers, breathless from climbing, sat on the grass and smoked. Across the river gleamed a dull red light, and for want of a subject they argued the problem, whether it was

a bonfire, a window-light, or something else. Riabovich looked also at the light, and felt that it smiled and winked at him as if it knew about the kiss.

On reaching home, he undressed without delay, and lay upon his bed. He shared the cabin with Lobytko and a Lieutenant Marzliakov, a staid, silent little man, by repute highly cultivated, who took with him everywhere *The Messenger of Europe*, and read it eternally. Lobytko undressed, tramped impatiently from corner to corner, and sent his servant for beer. Merzliakov lay down, balanced the candle on his pillow, and hid his head behind *The Messenger of Europe*.

"Where is she now?" muttered Riabovich, looking at the soot-blackened ceiling.

His neck still seemed anointed with oil, near his mouth still trembled the speck of peppermint chill. Through his brain twinkled successively the shoulders and arms of the lilac girl, the kiss-curls and honest eyes of the girl in black, the waists, dresses, brooches. But though he tried his best to fix these vagrant images, they glimmered, winked, and dissolved; and as they faded finally into the vast black curtain which hangs before the closed eyes of all men, he began to hear hurried footsteps, the rustle of petticoats, the sound of a kiss. A strong, causeless joy possessed him. But as he surrendered himself to this joy, Lobytko's servant returned with the news that no beer was obtainable. The lieutenant resumed his impatient march up and down the room.

"The fellow's an idiot," he exclaimed, stopping first near Riabovich and then near Merzliakov. "Only the worst numbskull and blockhead can't get beer! *Canaille!*"

"Every one knows there's no beer here," said Merzliakov, without lifting his eyes from *The Messenger of Europe*.

"You believe that!" exclaimed Lobytko. "Lord in heaven, drop me on the moon, and in five minutes I'll find both beer and women! I will find them myself! Call me a rascal if I don't!"

He dressed slowly, silently lighted a cigarette, and went out.

"Rabbek, Grabbek, Labbek," he muttered, stopping in the hall. "I won't go alone, devil take me! Riabovich, come for a walk! What?"

As he got no answer, he returned, undressed slowly, and lay down. Merzliakov sighed, dropped *The Messenger of Europe*, and put out the light. "Well?" muttered Lobytko, puffing his cigarette in the dark.

Riabovich pulled the bed-clothes up to his chin, curled himself into a roll, and strained his imagination to join the twinkling images into one coherent whole. But the vision fled him. He soon fell asleep, and his last impression was that he had been caressed and gladdened, that into his life had crept something strange, and indeed ridiculous, but uncommonly good and radiant. And this thought did not forsake him even in his dreams.

When he awoke the feeling of anointment and peppermint chill were gone. But joy, as on the night before, filled every vein. He looked entranced at the window-panes gilded by the rising sun, and listened to the noises outside. Some one spoke loudly under the very window. It was Lebedietsky, commander of his battery, who had just overtaken the brigade. He was talking to the sergeant-major, loudly, owing to lack of practice in soft speech.

"And what next?" he roared.

"During yesterday's shoeing, your honour, *Golubtchik* was pricked. The *feldscher* ordered clay and vinegar. And last night, your honour, mechanic Artemieff was drunk, and the lieutenant ordered him to be put on the limber of the reserve gun-carriage."

The sergeant-major added that Karpov had forgotten the tent-pegs and the new lanyards for the friction-tubes, and that the officers had spent the evening at General von Rabbek's. But here at the window appeared Lebedetzky's red-bearded face. He blinked his short-sighted eyes at the drowsy men in bed, and greeted them.

"Is everything all right?"

"The saddle wheeler galled his withers with the new yoke," answered Lobytko.

The commander sighed, mused a moment, and shouted—

"I am thinking of calling on Alexandra Yegorovna. I want to see her. Good-bye! I will catch you up before night."

Fifteen minutes later the brigade resumed its march. As he passed von Rabbek's barns Riabovich turned his head and looked at the house. The Venetian blinds were down; evidently all still slept. And among them slept she—she who had kissed him but a few hours before. He tried to visualise her asleep. He projected the bedroom window opened wide with green branches peering in, the freshness of the morning air, the smell of poplars, lilacs, and roses, the bed, a chair, the dress which rustled last night, a pair of tiny slippers, a ticking watch on the table—all these came to him clearly with every detail. But the features, the kind, sleepy smile—all, in short, that was essential and characteristic—fled his imagination as quicksilver flees the hand. When he had covered half a verst he again turned back. The yellow church, the house, gardens, and river were bathed in light. Imaging an azure sky, the green-banked river specked with silver sunshine flakes was inexpressibly fair; and, looking at Miestechky for the last time, Riabovich felt sad, as if parting for ever with something very near and dear.

By the road before him stretched familiar, uninteresting scenes; to the right and left, fields of young rye and buckwheat with hopping rooks; in front, dust and the napes of human necks; behind, the same dust and faces. Ahead of the column marched four soldiers with swords—that was the advance guard. Next came the bandsmen. Advance guard and bandsmen, like mutes in a funeral procession, ignored the regulation intervals and marched too far ahead. Riabovich, with the first gun of Battery No. 5, could see four batteries ahead.

To a layman, the long, lumbering march of an artillery

brigade is novel, interesting, inexplicable. It is hard to understand why a single gun needs so many men; why so many, such strangely harnessed horses are needed to drag it. But to Riabovich, a master of all these things, it was profoundly dull. He had learned years ago why a solid sergeant-major rides beside the officer in front of each battery, why the sergeant-major is called the *unosni*, and why the drivers of leaders and wheelers ride behind him. Riabovich knew why the near horses are called saddle-horses, and why the off horses are called led-horses—and all of this was interesting beyond words. On one of the wheelers rode a soldier still covered with yesterday's dust, and with a cumbersome, ridiculous guard on his right leg. But Riabovich, knowing the use of this leg-guard, found it in no way ridiculous. The drivers, mechanically and with occasional cries, flourished their whips. The guns in themselves were impressive. The limbers were packed with tarpaulin-covered sacks of oats; and the guns themselves, hung around with tea-pots and satchels, looked like harmless animals, guarded for some obscure reason by men and horses. In the lee of the gun tramped six gunners, swinging their arms; and behind each gun came more *unosniye*, leaders, wheelers; and yet more guns, each as ugly and uninspiring as the one in front. And as every one of the six batteries in the brigade had four guns, the procession stretched along the road at least half a verst. It ended with a wagon train, with which, its head bent in thought, walked the donkey Magar, brought from Turkey by a battery commander.

Dead to his surroundings, Riabovich marched onward, looking at the napes ahead or at the faces behind. Had it not been for last night's event, he would have been half asleep. But now he was absorbed in novel, entrancing thoughts. When the brigade set out that morning he had tried to argue that the kiss had no significance save as a trivial though mysterious adventure; that it was without real import; and that to think of it seriously was to behave himself absurdly. But logic soon flew away and surrendered

him to his vivid imaginings. At times he saw himself in von Rabbek's dining-room, *tête-à-tête* with a composite being, formed of the girl in lilac and the blonde in black. At times he closed his eyes, and pictured himself with a different, this time quite an unknown, girl of cloudy feature; he spoke to her, caressed her, bent over her shoulder; he imagined war and parting . . . then reunion, the first supper together, children. . . .

"To the brakes!" rang the command as they topped the brow of each hill.

Riabovich also cried "To the brakes!" and each time dreaded that the cry would break the magic spell, and recall him to realities.

They passed a big country house. Riabovich looked across the fence into the garden, and saw a long path, straight as a ruler, carpeted with yellow sand, and shaded by young birches. In an ecstasy of enchantment, he pictured little feminine feet treading the yellow sand; and, in a flash, imagination restored the woman who had kissed him, the woman he had visualised after supper the night before. The image settled in his brain and never afterwards forsook him.

The spell reigned until midday, when a loud command came from the rear of the column.

"Attention! Eyes right! Officers!"

In a *calèche* drawn by a pair of white horses appeared the general of brigade. He stopped at the second battery, and called out something which no one understood. Up galloped several officers, among them Riabovich.

"Well, how goes it?" The general blinked his red eyes, and continued, "Are there any sick?"

Hearing the answer, the little skinny general mused a moment, turned to an officer, and said—

"The driver of your third-gun wheeler has taken off his leg-guard and hung it on the limber. *Canaille!* Punish him!"

Then raising his eyes to Riabovich, he added—

"And in your battery, I think, the harness is too loose."



Having made several other equally tiresome remarks, he looked at Lobytko, and laughed.

"Why do you look so downcast, Lieutenant Lobytko? You are sighing for Madame Lopukhov, eh? Gentlemen, he is pining for Madame Lopukhov!"

Madame Lopukhov was a tall, stout lady, long past forty. Being partial to big women, regardless of age, the general ascribed the same taste to his subordinates. The officers smiled respectfully; and the general, pleased that he had said something caustic and laughable, touched the coachman's back and saluted. The *calèche* whirled away.

"All this, though it seems to me impossible and unearthly, is in reality very commonplace," thought Riabovich, watching the clouds of dust raised by the general's carriage. "It is an everyday event, and within every one's experience. . . . This old general, for instance, must have loved in his day; he is married now, and has children. Captain Wachter is also married, and his wife loves him, though he has an ugly red neck and no waist. . . . Salmanoff is coarse, and a typical Tartar, but he has had a romance ending in marriage. . . . I, like the rest, must go through it all sooner or later."

And the thought that he was an ordinary man, and that his life was ordinary, rejoiced and consoled him. He boldly visualised *her* and his happiness, and let his imagination run mad.

Towards evening the brigade ended its march. While the other officers sprawled in their tents, Riabovich, Merzliakov, and Lobytko sat around a packing-case and supped. Merzliakov ate slowly, and, resting *The Messenger of Europe* on his knees, read on steadily. Lobytko, chattering without cease, poured beer into his glass. But Riabovich, whose head was dizzy from uninterrupted day-dreams, ate in silence. When he had drunk three glasses he felt tipsy and weak; and an overmastering impulse forced him to relate his adventure to his comrades.

\*A most extraordinary thing happened to me at von Rab-

bek's," he began, doing his best to speak in an indifferent, ironical tone. "I was on my way, you understand, from the billiard-room. . . ."

And he attempted to give a very detailed history of the kiss. But in a minute he had told the whole story. In that minute he had exhausted every detail; and it seemed to him terrible that the story required such a short time. It ought, he felt, to have lasted all the night. As he finished, Lobytko, who as a liar himself believed in no one, laughed incredulously. Merzliakov frowned, and, with his eyes still glued to *The Messenger of Europe*, said indifferently—

"God knows who it was! She threw herself on your neck, you say, and didn't cry out! Some lunatic, I expect!"

"It must have been a lunatic," agreed Riabovich.

"I, too, have had adventures of that kind," began Lobytko, making a frightened face. "I was on my way to Kovno. I travelled second class. The carriage was packed, and I couldn't sleep. So I gave the guard a ruble, and he took my bag, and put me in a *coupé*. I lay down, and pulled my rug over me. It was pitch dark, you understand. Suddenly I felt some one tapping my shoulder and breathing in my face. I stretched out my hand, and felt an elbow. Then I opened my eyes. Imagine! A woman! Coal-black eyes, lips red as good coral, nostrils breathing passion, breasts—buffers!"

"Draw it mild!" interrupted Merzliakov in his quiet voice. "I can believe about the breasts, but if it was pitch dark how could you see the lips?"

By laughing at Merzliakov's lack of understanding, Lobytko tried to shuffle out of the dilemma. The story annoyed Riabovich. He rose from the box, lay on his bed, and swore that he would never again take any one into his confidence.

Life in camp passed without event. The days flew by, each like the one before. But on every one of these days Riabovich felt, thought, and acted as a man in love. When at daybreak his servant brought him cold water, and poured it over his head, it flashed at once into his half-awakened

brain that something good and warm and caressing had crept into his life.

At night when his comrades talked of love and of women, he drew in his chair, and his face was the face of an old soldier who talks of battles in which he has taken part. And when the rowdy officers, led by setter Lobytko, made Don Juanesque raids upon the neighbouring "suburb," Riabovich, though he accompanied them, was morose and conscience-struck, and mentally asked *her* forgiveness. In free hours and sleepless nights, when his brain was obsessed by memories of childhood, of his father, his mother, of everything akin and dear, he remembered always Miestechky, the dancing horse, von Rabbek, von Rabbek's wife, so like the ex-Empress Eugenie, the dark room, the chink in the door.

On the thirty-first of August he left camp, this time not with the whole brigade but with only two batteries. As an exile returning to his native land, he was agitated and enthralled by day-dreams. He longed passionately for the queer-looking horse, the church, the insincere von Rabbeks, the dark room; and that internal voice which cheats so often the love-lorn whispered an assurance that he should see *her* again. But doubt tortured him. How should he meet her? What must he say? Would she have forgotten the kiss? If it came to the worst—he consoled himself—if he never saw her again, he might walk once more through the dark room, and remember. . . .

Towards evening the white barns and well-known church rose on the horizon. Riabovich's heart beat wildly. He ignored the remark of an officer who rode by, he forgot the whole world, and he gazed greedily at the river glimmering afar, at the green roofs, at the dove-cote, over which fluttered birds, dyed golden by the setting sun.

As he rode towards the church, and heard again the quartermaster's raucous voice, he expected every second a horseman to appear from behind the fence and invite the officers to tea. . . . But the quartermaster ended his harangue, the

officers hastened to the village, and no horseman appeared.

"When Rabbek hears from the peasants that we are back he will send for us," thought Riabovich. And so assured was he of this, that when he entered the hut he failed to understand why his comrades had lighted a candle, and why the servants were preparing the samovar.

A painful agitation oppressed him. He lay on his bed. A moment later he rose to look for the horseman. But no horseman was in sight. Again he lay down; again he rose; and this time, impelled by restlessness, went into the street, and walked towards the church. The square was dark and deserted. On the hill stood three silent soldiers. When they saw Riabovich they started and saluted, and he, returning their salute, began to descend the well-remembered path.

Beyond the stream, in a sky stained with purple, the moon slowly rose. Two chattering peasant women walked in a kitchen garden and pulled cabbage leaves; behind them their log cabins stood out black against the sky. The river bank was as it had been in May; the bushes were the same; things differed only in that the nightingale no longer sang, that it smelt no longer of poplars and young grass.

When he reached von Rabbek's garden Riabovich peered through the wicket-gate. Silence and darkness reigned. Save only the white birch trunks and patches of pathway, the whole garden merged in a black, impenetrable shade. Riabovich listened greedily, and gazed intent. For a quarter of an hour he loitered; then hearing no sound, and seeing no light, he walked wearily towards home.

He went down to the river. In front rose the general's bathing box; and white towels hung on the rail of the bridge. He climbed on to the bridge and stood still; then, for no reason whatever, touched a towel. It was clammy and cold. He looked down at the river which sped past swiftly, murmuring almost inaudibly against the bathing-box piles. Near the left bank glowed the moon's ruddy reflection, over-run by ripples which stretched it, tore it in two, and, it

seemed, would sweep it away as twigs and shavings are swept.

"How stupid! How stupid!" thought Riabovich, watching the hurrying ripples. "How stupid everything is!"

Now that hope was dead, the history of the kiss, his impatience, his ardour, his vague aspirations and disillusion appeared in a clear light. It no longer seemed strange that the general's horseman had not come, and that he would never again see *her* who had kissed him by accident instead of another. On the contrary, he felt, it would be strange if he did ever see her again. . . .

The water flew past him, whither and why no one knew. It had flown past in May; it had sped a stream into a great river; a river, into the sea; it had floated on high in mist and fallen again in rain; it might be, the water of May was again speeding past under Riabovich's eyes. For what purpose? Why?

And the whole world—life itself seemed to Riabovich an inscrutable, aimless mystification. . . . Raising his eyes from the stream and gazing at the sky, he recalled how Fate in the shape of an unknown woman had once caressed him; he recalled his summer fantasies and images—and his whole life seemed to him unnaturally thin and colourless and wretched. . . .

When he reached the cabin his comrades had disappeared. His servant informed him that all had set out to visit "General Fonrabbkin," who had sent a horseman to bring them. . . . For a moment Riabovich's heart thrilled with joy. But that joy he extinguished. He cast himself upon his bed, and wroth with his evil fate, as if he wished to spite it, ignored the invitation.

## A GENTLEMAN FRIEND

WHEN she came out of the hospital the charming Vanda, or, according to her passport, "the honourable lady-citizen Nastasya Kanavkina," found herself in a position in which she had never been before: without a roof and without a sou. What was to be done?

First of all, she went to a pawnshop to pledge her turquoise ring, her only jewellery. They gave her a ruble for the ring . . . but what can you buy for a ruble? For that you can't get a short jacket *à la mode*, or an elaborate hat, or a pair of brown shoes; yet without these things she felt naked. She felt as though, not only the people, but even the horses and dogs were staring at her and laughing at the plainness of her clothes. And her only thought was for her clothes; she did not care at all what she ate or where she slept.

"If only I were to meet a gentleman friend . . ." she thought. "I could get some money . . . Nobody would say 'No,' because . . ."

But she came across no gentleman friends. It's easy to find them of nights in the *Renaissance*, but they wouldn't let her go into the *Renaissance* in that plain dress and without a hat. What's to be done? After a long time of anguish, vexed and weary with walking, sitting, and thinking, Vanda made up her mind to play her last card: to go straight to the rooms of some gentleman friend and ask him for money.

"But who shall I go to?" she pondered. "I can't possibly go to Misha . . . he's got a family . . . The ginger-headed old man is at his office . . ."

Vanda recollected Finkel, the dentist, the converted Jew who gave her a bracelet three months ago. Once she had poured a glass of beer on his head at the German club. She was awfully glad that she had thought of Finkel.

"He'll be certain to give me some, if only I find him in . . ." she thought, on her way to him. "And if he won't, then I'll break every single thing there."

She had her plan already prepared. She approached the dentist's door. She would run up the stairs, with a laugh, fly into his private room and ask for twenty-five rubles . . . But when she took hold of the bell-pull, the plan went clean out of her head. Vanda suddenly began to be afraid and agitated, a thing which had never happened to her before. She was never anything but bold and independent in drunken company; but now, dressed in common clothes, and just like any ordinary person begging a favour, she felt timid and humble.

"Perhaps he has forgotten me . . ." she thought, not daring to pull the bell. "And how can I go up to him in a dress like this? As if I were a pauper, or a dowdy respectable . . ."

She rang the bell irresolutely.

There were steps behind the door. It was the porter.

"Is the doctor at home?" she asked.

She would have been very pleased now if the porter had said "No," but instead of answering he showed her into the hall, and took her jacket. The stairs seemed to her luxurious and magnificent, but what she noticed first of all in all the luxury was a large mirror in which she saw a ragged creature without an elaborate hat, without a modish jacket, and without a pair of brown shoes. And Vanda found it strange that, now that she was poorly dressed and looking more like a seamstress or a washerwoman, for the first time she felt ashamed, and had no more assurance or boldness

left. In her thoughts she began to call herself Nastya Kanavkina, instead of Vanda as she used.

"This way, please!" said the maid-servant, leading her to the private room. "The doctor will be here immediately . . . Please, take a seat."

Vanda dropped into an easy chair.

"I'll say: 'Lend me . . .'" she thought. "That's the right thing, because we are acquainted. But the maid must go out of the room . . . It's awkward in front of the maid . . . What is she standing there for?"

In five minutes the door opened and Finkel entered—a tall, swarthy, convert Jew, with fat cheeks and goggle-eyes. His cheeks, eyes, belly, fleshy hips—were all so full, repulsive, and coarse! At the *Renaissance* and the German club he used always to be a little drunk, to spend a lot of money on women, patiently put up with all their tricks—for instance, when Vanda poured the beer on his head, he only smiled and shook his finger at her—but now he looked dull and sleepy; he had the pompous, chilly expression of a superior, and he was chewing something.

"What is the matter?" he asked, without looking at Vanda. Vanda glanced at the maid's serious face, at the blown-out figure of Finkel, who obviously did not recognise her, and she blushed.

"What's the matter?" the dentist repeated, irritated.

"To . . . oth ache . . ." whispered Vanda.

"Ah . . . which tooth . . . where?"

Vanda remembered she had a tooth with a hole.

"At the bottom . . . to the right," she said.

"H'm . . . open your mouth."

Finkel frowned, held his breath, and began to work the aching tooth loose.

"Do you feel any pain?" he asked, picking at her tooth with some instrument.

"Yes, I do . . ." Vanda lied. "Shall I remind him?" she thought, "he'll be sure to remember . . . But . . . the maid . . . what is she standing there for?"



Finkel suddenly snorted like a steam-engine, straight into her mouth, and said:

"I don't advise you to have filling put in. The tooth is quite useless."

Again he picked at the tooth for a little, and soiled Vanda's lips and gums with his tobacco-stained fingers. Again he held his breath and dived into her mouth with something cold . . .

Vanda suddenly felt a terrible pain, shrieked and seized Finkel's hand . . .

"Never mind . . ." he murmured. "Don't be frightened . . . This tooth isn't any use."

And his tobacco-stained fingers, covered with blood, held up the extracted tooth before her eyes. The maid came forward and put a bowl to her lips.

"Rinse your mouth with cold water at home," said Finkel. "That will make the blood stop."

He stood before her in the attitude of a man impatient to be left alone at last.

"Good-bye . . ." she said, turning to the door.

"H'm! And who's to pay me for the work?" Finkel asked laughingly.

"Ah . . . yes!" Vanda recollected, blushed and gave the dentist the ruble she had got for the turquoise ring.

When she came into the street she felt still more ashamed than before, but she was not ashamed of her poverty any more. Nor did she notice any more that she hadn't an elaborate hat or a modish jacket. She walked along the street spitting blood and each red spittle told her about her life, a bad, hard life; about the insults she had suffered and had still to suffer—to-morrow, a week, a year hence—her whole life, till death . . .

"Oh, how terrible it is!" she whispered. "My God, how terrible!"

But the next day she was at the *Renaissance* and she danced there. She wore a new, immense red hat, a new jacket *à la mode* and a pair of brown shoes. She was treated to supper by a young merchant from Kazan.

## A TRIFLING OCCURRENCE

N IKOLAY ILYICH BIELIAYEV, a Petersburg landlord, very fond of the racecourse, a well fed, pink young man of about thirty-two, once called towards evening on Madame Irnin—Olga Ivanovna—with whom he had a *liaison*, or, to use his own phrase, spun out a long and tedious romance. And indeed the first pages of his romance, pages of interest and inspiration, had been read long ago; now they dragged on and on, and presented neither novelty nor interest.

Finding that Olga Ivanovna was not at home, my hero lay down a moment on the drawing-room sofa and began to wait.

“Good evening Nikolay Ilyich,” he suddenly heard a child’s voice say. “Mother will be in in a moment. She’s gone to the dressmaker’s with Sonya.”

In the same drawing-room on the sofa lay Olga Ivanovna’s son, Aliosha, a boy about eight years old, well built, well looked after, dressed up like a picture in a velvet jacket and long black stockings. He lay on a satin pillow, and apparently imitating an acrobat whom he had lately seen in the circus, lifting up first one leg, then the other. When his elegant legs began to be tired, he moved his hands, or he jumped up impetuously and then went on all fours, trying to stand with his legs in the air. All this he did with a most serious face, breathing heavily, as if he himself found no happiness in God’s gift of such a restless body.

“Ah, how do you do, my friend?” said Bieliayev. “Is it you? I didn’t notice you. Is your mother well?”

At the moment Aliosha had just taken hold of the toe of his left foot in his right hand and got into a most awkward pose. He turned head over heels, jumped up, and glanced from under the big, fluffy lampshade at Bieliayev.

"How can I put it?" he said, shrugging his shoulders. "As a matter of plain fact mother is never well. You see she's a woman, and women, Nikolay Ilyich, have always some pain or another."

For something to do, Bieliayev began to examine Aliosha's face. All the time he had been acquainted with Olga Ivanovna he had never once turned his attention to the boy and had completely ignored his existence. A boy is stuck in front of your eyes, but what is he doing here, what is his *rôle*?—you don't want to give a single thought to the question.

In the evening dusk Aliosha's face with a pale forehead and steady black eyes unexpectedly reminded Bieliayev of Olga Ivanovna as she was in the first pages of the romance. He had the desire to be affectionate to the boy.

"Come here, whipper-snapper," he said. "Come and let me have a good look at you, quite close."

The boy jumped off the sofa and ran to Bieliayev.

"Well?" Nikolay Ilyich began, putting his hand on the thin shoulders. "And how are things with you?"

"How shall I put it? . . . They used to be much better before."

"How?"

"Quite simple. Before, Sonya and I only had to do music and reading, and now we're given French verses to learn. You've had your hair cut lately?"

"Yes, just lately."

"That's why I noticed it. Your beard's shorter. May I touch it . . . Doesn't it hurt?"

"No, not a bit."

"Why is it that it hurts if you pull one hair, and when you pull a whole lot, it doesn't hurt a bit? Ah, ah! You know it's a pity you don't have side-whiskers. You should shave here, and at the sides . . . and leave the hair just here."

The boy pressed close to Bieliayev and began to play with his watch-chain.

"When I go to the gymnasium," he said, "Mother is going to buy me a watch. I'll ask her to buy me a chain just like this. What a fine locket! Father has one just the same, but yours has stripes, here, and his has got letters . . . Inside it's mother's picture. Father has another chain now, not in links, but like a ribbon . . ."

"How do you know? Do you see your father?"

"I? Mm . . . no . . . I . . ."

Aliosha blushed and in the violent confusion of being detected in a lie began to scratch the locket busily with his finger-nail. Bieliayev looked steadily at his face and asked:

"Do you see your father?"

"No . . . no!"

"But, be honest—on your honour. By your face I can see you're not telling me the truth. If you made a slip of the tongue by mistake, what's the use of shuffling. Tell me, do you see him? As one friend to another."

Aliosha mused.

"And you won't tell Mother?" he asked.

"What next."

"On your word of honour."

"My word of honour."

"Swear an oath."

"What a nuisance you are! What do you take me for?"

Aliosha looked round, made big eyes and began to whisper.

"Only for God's sake don't tell Mother! Never tell it to anyone at all, because it's a secret. God forbid that Mother should ever get to know; then I and Sonya and Pelagueya will pay for it . . . Listen. Sonya and I meet Father every Tuesday and Friday. When Pelagueya takes us for a walk before dinner, we go into Apfel's sweet-shop and Father's waiting for us. He always sits in a separate room, you know, where there's a splendid marble table and an ash-tray shaped like a goose without a back . . ."

"And what do you do there?"

"Nothing!—First, we welcome one another, then we sit down at a little table and Father begins to treat us to coffee and cakes. You know, Sonya eats meat-pies, and I can't bear pies with meat in them! I like them made of cabbage and eggs. We eat so much that afterwards at dinner we try to eat as much as we possibly can so that Mother shan't notice."

"What do you talk about there?"

"To Father? About anything. He kisses us and cuddles us, tells us all kinds of funny stories. You know, he says that he will take us to live with him when we are grown up. Sonya doesn't want to go, but I say 'Yes.' Of course, it'll be lonely without Mother; but I'll write letters to her. How funny: we could go to her for our holidays then—couldn't we? Besides, Father says that he'll buy me a horse. He's a splendid man. I can't understand why Mother doesn't invite him to live with her or why she says we mustn't meet him. He loves Mother very much indeed. He's always asking us how she is and what she's doing. When she was ill, he took hold of his head like this . . . and ran, ran, all the time. He is always telling us to obey and respect her. Tell me, is it true that we're unlucky?"

"H'm . . . how?"

"Father says so. He says: 'You are unlucky children.' It's quite strange to listen to him. He says: 'You are unhappy, I'm unhappy, and Mother's unhappy.' He says: 'Pray to God for yourselves and for her.'"

Aliosha's eyes rested upon the stuffed bird and he mused.

"Exactly . . ." snorted Bieliayev. "This is what you do. You arrange conferences in sweet-shops. And your mother doesn't know?"

"N—no . . . How could she know? Pelagueya won't tell for anything. The day before yesterday Father stood us pears. Sweet, like jam. I had two."

"H'm . . . well, now . . . tell me, doesn't your father speak about me?"

"About you? How shall I put it?"

Aliosha gave a searching glance to Bieliayev's face and shrugged his shoulders.

"He doesn't say anything in particular."

"What does he say, for instance?"

"You won't be offended?"

"What next? Why, does he abuse me?"

"He doesn't abuse you, but you know . . . he is cross with you. He says that it's through you that Mother's unhappy and that you . . . ruined Mother. But he is so queer! I explain to him that you are good and never shout at Mother, but he only shakes his head."

"Does he say those very words: that I ruined her?"

"Yes. Don't be offended, Nikolay Ilyich!"

Bieliayev got up, stood still a moment, and then began to walk about the drawing-room.

"This is strange, and . . . funny," he murmured, shrugging his shoulders and smiling ironically. "He is to blame all round, and now *I've* ruined her, eh? What an innocent lamb! Did he say those very words to you: that I ruined your mother?"

"Yes, but . . . you said that you wouldn't get offended."

"I'm not offended, and . . . and it's none of your business! No, it . . . it's quite funny though. I fell into the trap, yet I'm to be blamed as well."

The bell rang. The boy dashed from his place and ran out. In a minute a lady entered the room with a little girl. It was Olga Ivanovna, Aliosha's mother. After her, hopping, humming noisily, and waving his hands, followed Aliosha.

"Of course, who is there to accuse except me?" he murmured, sniffing. "He's right, he's the injured husband."

"What's the matter?" asked Olga Ivanovna.

"What's the matter! Listen to the kind of sermon your dear husband preaches. It appears I'm a scoundrel and a murderer, I've ruined you and the children. All of you are unhappy, and only I am awfully happy! Awfully, awfully happy!"

"I don't understand, Nikolay! What is it?"

"Just listen to this young gentleman," Bieliayev said, pointing to Aliosha.

Aliosha blushed, then became pale suddenly, and his whole face was twisted in fright.

"Nikolay Ilyich," he whispered loudly. "Shh!"

"Ask him, if you please," went Bieliayev. "That stupid fool Pelagueya of yours, takes them to sweet-shops and arranges meetings with their dear father there. But that's not the point. The point is that the dear father is a martyr, and I'm a murderer, I'm a scoundrel, who broke the lives of both of you. . . ."

"Nikolay Ilyich!" moaned Aliosha. "You gave your word of honour!"

"Ah, let me alone!" Bieliayev waved his hand. "This is something more important than any words of honour. The hypocrisy revolts me, the lie!"

"I don't understand," muttered Olga Ivanovna, and tears began to glimmer in her eyes. "Tell me, Liolka,"—she turned to her son, "Do you see your father?"

Aliosha did not hear and looked with horror at Bieliayev.

"It's impossible," said the mother. "I'll go and ask Pelagueya."

Olga Ivanovna went out.

"But, but you gave me your word of honour," Aliosha said, trembling all over.

Bieliayev waved his hand at him and went on walking up and down. He was absorbed in his insult, and now, as before, he did not notice the presence of the boy. He, a big serious man, had nothing to do with boys. And Aliosha sat down in a corner and in terror told Sonya how he had been deceived. He trembled, stammered, wept. This was the first time in his life that he had been set, roughly, face to face with a lie. He had never known before that in this world besides sweet pears and cakes and expensive watches, there exist many other things which have no name in children's language.

## AFTER THE THEATRE

NADYA ZELENINA had just returned with her mother from the theatre, where they had been to see a performance of "Yevgeny Oniegin." Entering her room, she quickly threw off her dress, loosened her hair, and sat down hurriedly in her petticoat and a white blouse to write a letter in the style of Tatyana.

"I love you,"—she wrote—"but you don't love me; no, you don't!"

The moment she had written this, she smiled.

She was only sixteen years old, and so far she had not been in love. She knew that Gorny, the officer, and Gronsdev, the student, loved her; but now, after the theatre, she wanted to doubt their love. To be unloved and unhappy—how interesting. There is something beautiful, affecting, romantic in the fact that one loves deeply while the other is indifferent. Oniegin is interesting because he does not love at all, and Tatyana is delightful because she is very much in love; but if they loved each other equally and were happy, they would seem boring, instead.

"Don't go on protesting that you love me," Nadya wrote on, thinking of Gorny, the officer, "I can't believe you. You're very clever, educated, serious; you have a great talent, and perhaps, a splendid future waiting, but I am an uninteresting poor-spirited girl, and you yourself know quite well that I shall only be a drag upon your life. It's true I carried you off your feet, and you thought you had met your ideal in me, but that was a mistake. Already you ar



asking yourself in despair, 'Why did I meet this girl?' Only your kindness prevents you from confessing it."

Nadya pitied herself. She wept and went on.

"If it were not so difficult for me to leave mother and brother I would put on a nun's gown and go where my eyes direct me. You would then be free to love another. If I were to die!"

Through her tears she could not make out what she had written. Brief rainbows trembled on the table, on the floor and the ceiling, as though Nadya were looking through a prism. Impossible to write. She sank back in her chair and began to think of Gorny.

Oh, how fascinating, how interesting men are! Nadya remembered the beautiful expression of Gorny's face, appealing, guilty, and tender, when someone discussed music with him,—the efforts he made to prevent the passion from sounding in his voice. Passion must be concealed in a society where cold reserve and indifference are the signs of good breeding. And he does try to conceal it, but he does not succeed, and everybody knows quite well that he has a passion for music. Never-ending discussions about music, blundering pronouncements by men who do not understand—keep him in incessant tension. He is scared, timid, silent. He plays superbly, as an ardent pianist. If he were not an officer, he would be a famous musician.

The tears dried in her eyes. Nadya remembered how Gorny told her of his love at a symphony concert, and again downstairs by the cloak-room.

"I am so glad you have at last made the acquaintance of the student Gronsdev," she continued to write. "He is a very clever man, and you are sure to love him. Yesterday he was sitting with us till two o'clock in the morning. We were all so happy. I was sorry that you hadn't come to us. He said a lot of remarkable things."

Nadya laid her hands on the table and lowered her head. Her hair covered the letter. She remembered that Gronsdev also loved her, and that he had the same right to her

letter as Gorny. Perhaps she had better write to Gronsdev? For no cause, a happiness began to quicken in her breast. At first it was a little one, rolling about in her breast like a rubber ball. Then it grew broader and bigger, and broke forth like a wave. Nadya had already forgotten about Gorny and Gronsdev. Her thoughts became confused. The happiness grew more and more. From her breast it ran into her arms and legs, and it seemed that a light fresh breeze blew over her head, stirring her hair. Her shoulders trembled with quiet laughter. The table and the lampglass trembled. Tears from her eyes splashed the letter. She was powerless to stop her laughter; and to convince herself that she had a reason for it, she hastened to remember something funny.

"What a funny poodle!" she cried, feeling that she was choking with laughter. "What a funny poodle!"

She remembered how Gronsdev was playing with Maksim the poodle after tea yesterday; how he told a story afterwards of a very clever poodle who was chasing a crow in the yard. The crow gave him a look and said:

"Oh, you swindler!"

The poodle did not know he had to do with a learned crow. He was terribly confused, and ran away dumfounded. Afterwards he began to bark.

"No, I'd better love Gronsdev," Nadya decided, and tore up the letter.

She began to think of the student, of his love, of her own love, with the result that the thoughts in her head swam apart and she thought about everything, about her mother, the street, the pencil, the piano. She was happy thinking, and found that everything was good, magnificent. Her happiness told her that this was not all, that a little later it would be still better. Soon it will be spring, summer. They will go with mother to Gorbiky in the country. Gorny will come for his holidays. He will walk in the orchard with her, and make love to her. Gronsdev will come too. He will play croquet with her and bowls. He

will tell funny, wonderful stories. She passionately longed for the orchard, the darkness, the pure sky, the stars. Again her shoulders trembled with laughter and she seemed to awake to a smell of wormwood in the room; and a branch was tapping at the window.

She went to her bed and sat down. She did not know what to do with her great happiness. It overwhelmed her. She stared at the crucifix which hung at the head of her bed and saying:

“Dear God, dear God, dear God.”

## OLD AGE

STATE-COUNCILLOR UZELKOV, architect, arrived in his native town, where he had been summoned to restore the cemetery church. He was born in the town, he had grown up and been married there, and yet when he got out of the train he hardly recognised it. Everything was changed. For instance, eighteen years ago, when he left the town to settle in Petersburg, where the railway station is now boys used to hunt for marmots: now as you come into the High Street there is a four storied "Hôtel Vienna," with apartments, where there was of old an ugly grey fence. But not the fence or the houses, or anything had changed so much as the people. Questioning the hall-porter, Uzelkov discovered that more than half of the people he remembered were dead or paupers or forgotten.

"Do you remember Uzelkov?" he asked the porter. "Uzelkov, the architect, who divorced his wife. . . . He had a house in Sviribev Street. . . . Surely you remember."

"No, I don't remember anyone of the name."

"Why, it's impossible not to remember. It was an exciting case. All the cabmen knew, even. Try to remember. His divorce was managed by the attorney, Shapkin, the swindler . . . the notorious sharper, the man who was thrashed at the club. . . ."

"You mean Ivan Nikolaich?"

"Yes. . . . Is he alive? dead?"

"Thank heaven, his honour's alive. His honour's a notary now, with an office. Well-to-do. Two houses in Kirpichny Street. Just lately married his daughter off."

Uzelkov strode from one corner of the room to another.

An idea flashed into his mind. From boredom, he decided to see Shapkin. It was afternoon when he left the hotel and quietly walked to Kirpichny Street. He found Shapkin in his office and hardly recognised him. From the well-built, alert attorney with a quick, impudent, perpetually tipsy expression, Shapkin had become a modest, grey-haired, shrunken old man.

"You don't recognise me . . . You have forgotten . . ." Uzelkov began. "I'm your old client, Uzelkov."

"Uzelkov? Which Uzelkov? Ah!"

Remembrance came to Shapkin: he recognised him and was confused. Began exclamations, questions, recollections.

"Never expected . . . never thought . . ." chuckled Shapkin. "What will you have? Would you like champagne? Perhaps you'd like oysters. My dear man, what a lot of money I got out of you in the old days—so much that I can't think what I ought to stand you."

"Please don't trouble," said Uzelkov. "I haven't time. I must go to the cemetery and examine the church. I have a commission."

"Splendid. We'll have something to eat and a drink and go together. I've got some splendid horses! I'll take you there and introduce you to the churchwarden. . . . I'll fix up everything. . . . But what's the matter, my dearest man? You're not avoiding me, not afraid? Please sit nearer. There's nothing to be afraid of now. . . . Long ago, I really was pretty sharp, a bit of a rogue . . . but now I'm quieter than water, humbler than grass. I've grown old; got a family. There are children. . . . Time to die!"

The friends had something to eat and drink, and went in a coach and pair to the cemetery.

"Yes, it was a good time," Shapkin was reminiscent, sitting in the sledge. "I remember, but I simply can't believe it. Do you remember how you divorced your wife? It's almost twenty years ago, and you've probably forgotten everything, but I remember it as though I conducted the petition yesterday. My God, how rotten I was! Then I was

a smart, casuistical devil, full of sharp practice and devilry . . . and I used to run into some shady affairs, particularly when there was a good fee, as in your case, for instance. What was it you paid me then? Five—six hundred. Enough to upset anybody! By the time you left for Petersburg you'd left the whole affair completely in my hands. 'Do what you like!' And your former wife, Sofya Mikhailovna, though she did come from a merchant family, was proud and selfish. To bribe her to take the guilt on herself was difficult—extremely difficult. I used to come to her for a business talk, and when she saw me, she would say to her maid: 'Masha, surely I told you I wasn't at home to scoundrels.' I tried one way, then another . . . wrote letters to her, tried to meet her accidentally—no good. I had to work through a third person. For a long time I had trouble with her, and she only yielded when you agreed to give her ten thousand. She succumbed. . . . She began to weep, spat in my face, but she yielded and took the guilt on herself."

"If I remember it was fifteen, not ten thousand she took from me," said Uzelkov.

"Yes, of course . . . fifteen, my mistake." Shapkin was disconcerted. "Anyway it's all past and done with now. Why shouldn't I confess, frankly? Ten I gave to her, and the remaining five I bargained out of you for my own share. I deceived both of you. . . . It's all past, why be ashamed of it? And who else was there to take from, Boris Petrovich, if not from you? I ask you. . . . You were rich and well-to-do. You married in caprice: you were divorced in caprice. You were making a fortune. I remember you got twenty thousand out of a single contract. Whom was I to tap, if not you? And I must confess, I was tortured by envy. If you got hold of a nice lot of money, people would take off their hats to you: but the same people would beat me for shillings and smack my face in the club. But why recall it? It's time to forget."

"Tell me, please, how did Sofya Mikhailovna live afterwards?"

"With her ten thousand? *On ne peut plus* badly. . . . God knows whether it was frenzy or pride and conscience that tortured her, because she had sold herself for money—or perhaps she loved you; but, she took to drink, you know. She received the money and began to gad about with officers in troikas. . . . Drunkenness, philandering, debauchery. . . . She would come into a tavern with an officer, and instead of port or a light wine, she would drink the strongest cognac to drive her into a frenzy."

"Yes, she was eccentric. I suffered enough with her. She would take offence at some trifle and then get nervous. . . . And what happened afterwards?"

"A week passed, a fortnight. . . . I was sitting at home writing. Suddenly, the door opened and she comes in. 'Take your cursed money,' she said, and threw the parcel in my face. . . . She could not resist it. . . . Five hundred were missing. She had only got rid of five hundred."

"And what did you do with the money?"

"It's all past and done with. What's the good of concealing it? . . . I certainly took it. What are you staring at me like that for? Wait for the sequel. It's a complete novel, the sickness of a soul! Two months passed by. One night I came home drunk, in a wicked mood. . . . I turned on the light and saw Sofya Mikhailovna sitting on my sofa, drunk too, wandering a bit, with something savage in her face as if she had just escaped from the mad-house. 'Give me my money back,' she said. 'I've changed my mind. If I'm going to the dogs, I want to go madly, passionately. Make haste, you scoundrel, give me the money.' How indecent it was!"

"And you . . . did you give it her?"

"I remember. . . . I gave her ten rubles."

"Oh . . . is it possible?" Uzelkov frowned. "If you couldn't do it yourself, or you didn't want to, you could have written to me. . . . And I didn't know . . . I didn't know."

"My dear man, why should I write, when she wrote herself afterwards when she was in hospital?"

"I was so taken up with the new marriage that I paid no attention to letters. . . . But you were an outsider; you had no antagonism to Sofya Mikhailovna. . . . Why didn't you help her?"

"We can't judge by our present standards, Boris Petrovich. Now we think in this way; but then we thought quite differently. . . . Now I might perhaps give her a thousand rubles; but then even ten rubles . . . she didn't get them for nothing. It's a terrible story. It's time to forget. . . . But here you are!"

The sledge stopped at the churchyard gate. Uzelkov and Shapkin got out of the sledge, went through the gate and walked along a long, broad avenue. The bare cherry trees, the acacias, the grey crosses and monuments sparkled with hoar-frost. In each flake of snow the bright sunny day was reflected. There was the smell you find in all cemeteries of incense and fresh-dug earth.

"You have a beautiful cemetery," said Uzelkov. "It's almost an orchard."

"Yes, but it's a pity the thieves steal the monuments. Look, there, behind that cast-iron memorial, on the right, Sofya Mikhailovna is buried. Would you like to see?"

The friends turned to the right, stepping in deep snow towards the cast-iron memorial.

"Down here," said Shapkin, pointing to a little stone of white marble. "Some subaltern or other put up the monument on her grave."

Uzelkov slowly took off his hat and showed his bald pate to the snow. Eyeing him, Shapkin also took off his hat, and another baldness shone beneath the sun. The silence round about was like the tomb, as though the air were dead, too. The friends looked at the stone, silent, thinking.

"She is asleep!" Shapkin broke the silence. "And she cares very little that she took the guilt upon herself and drank cognac. Confess, Boris Petrovich!"

"What?" asked Uzelkov, sternly.

"That, however loathsome the past may be, it's better



than this." And Shapkin pointed to his grey hairs.

"In the old days I did not even think of death. . . . If I'd meet her, I would have circumvented her, but now . . . well, now!"

Sadness took hold of Uzelkov. Suddenly he wanted to cry, passionately, as he once desired to love. . . . And he felt that these tears would be exquisite, refreshing. Moisture came out of his eyes and a lump rose in his throat, but . . . Shapkin was standing by his side, and Uzelkov felt ashamed of his weakness before a witness. He turned back quickly and walked towards the church.

Two hours later, having arranged with the churchwarden and examined the church, he seized the opportunity while Shapkin was talking away to the priest, and ran to shed a tear. He walked to the stone surreptitiously, with stealthy steps, looking round all the time. The little white monument stared at him absently, so sadly and innocently, as though a girl and not a wanton *divorceé* were beneath.

"If I could weep, could weep!" thought Uzelkov.

But the moment for weeping had been lost. Though the old man managed to make his eyes shine, and tried to bring himself to the right pitch, the tears did not flow and the lump did not rise in his throat. . . . After waiting for about ten minutes, Uzelkov waved his arm and went to look for Shapkin.

## THE HOLLOW

### I

THE village of Ukleyevo being situated in a hollow, only the church-steeple and the chimneys of the calico factories could be seen from the high road and the railway station. When passers-by asked what village it was, they were told: "That is where the Cantor ate all the caviar at a funeral."

It seems, at the obsequies for the mill-owner Kostiukov, the elderly Cantor saw among the *hors-d'œuvres* some fresh caviar, and proceeded to gobble it up. His friends tapped him on the shoulder, they pulled him by the sleeve, but he was so literally insensible with enjoyment he felt nothing—he could only swallow. The pot had contained 4 lbs. of caviar, and he ate it all. Ten years had elapsed since then, the Cantor was dead, but everyone remembered about the caviar. Perhaps it was owing to their straitened existence, or perhaps the people were incapable of observation; however it be, this unimportant incident was the only thing related about Ukleyevo.

Fever was in perpetual abode; also a viscous mire, even in summer, particularly by the side of the palings where aged willows hanging their branches cast a shade over the road. Just about there, it always smelt of factory refuse and acetic acid, which was used in preparing the calico-print.

The factories were four in number—three calico-print

ones and a tannery. They lay, not in the village, but on the outskirts, a little distance away. They were small factories, each employing about 400 workers. The residuum from the tannery frequently fouled the rivulet, the refuse infected the meadow, the peasants' cattle suffered from Siberian plague, and the tannery was ordered to close. It was considered closed, and continued to work secretly, with the assent of the commissary of police and the district doctor, to whom the proprietor paid ten rubles a month each.

There were only two decent houses in the whole village; these were built of stone, and each had a tin roof; in the one were the offices of the Volost, in the other, two-storied, just opposite the church, lived Tzybukin,—Grigory Petrov.

Grigory kept a grocery store—that was for the sake of appearances; he really dealt in vodka, cattle, leather, corn, pigs. He traded in what he required, and when, for instance, magpies were needed abroad for ladies' hats, he made 30 kopecks on each couple; he would appropriate the felling-rights of a wood, he would lend money on interest. He was, in fact, an enterprising man.

He had two sons; the elder, Anisim, served in the detective division of police, and was seldom at home. The younger son, Stepan, went into business to help his father, but, as he suffered from bad health and was deaf, they did not expect any real help from him. His wife Aksinya, a handsome svelte woman, wore a hat on holidays and carried a parasol; she rose early and went to bed late, and, with her skirts gathered up and rattling her keys, she ran about all day to the store-house, or the cellar, or the shop. Old Tzybukin's eyes kindled with pleasure as he looked at her, and he often wished she was married to his elder son, instead of to the younger deaf one, who apparently regarded feminine beauty with indifference.

The old man was very domestic, and loved his family more than anything in the world, especially his elder son and his daughter-in-law.

Aksinya was no sooner married to her deaf husband than

she revealed an unusual capacity for business, and very soon understood to whom credit could be given, and to whom not. She always kept the keys, not entrusting them even to her deaf husband; she wrestled with accounts, examined the horses by the teeth like a muzhik; was always bright or abusive; but whatever she did or said, the old man was touched and murmured: "What a daughter-in-law. Hm—yes. Matushka!"

He was a widower, but less than a year after his son's marriage he could endure his widowhood no longer, and also got married. At thirty versts from Ukleyevo they found an unmarried woman, Varvara Nikolayevna, of good family, middle-aged, and handsome. No sooner had she established herself in the house, on the second floor, than everything assumed a brighter hue, just as if new panes had been placed in all the windows. The image-lamps burned clear and undimmed, the tables were covered with cloths, or linen white as snow, red flowers appeared in the windows and in the patch in front of the house, and at dinner each had a plate given him instead of feeding out of the stewpot. When Varvara Nikolayevna smiled her pleasant kind smile, it seemed to be diffused over the whole house. And—it had never happened before—the old, the poor, the pilgrims took to coming into the yard. Through the windows were heard the sing-song voices of the Ukleyevo women, or the sickly cough of the suffering weak men discharged for drunkenness from the factories. Varvara helped them with money, bread, old clothes, and subsequently, when she got used to the place, she even drew on the grocery store for supplies. Once, the deaf one saw her carry away two-eighths of a pound of tea; this troubled him.

"Mamasha took two-eighths of a pound of tea from here," he communicated to his father—"where shall I write it down?"

The old man said nothing; stood still, reflected, knit his brows, and went upstairs to his wife.

"Varvarushka, if you require anything from the shop, take

it," he said fondly. "Take anything you want—don't mind anyone."

Next day as he crossed the yard, the deaf one called to her:

"Mamasha, if you require anything—take it."

This almsgiving was something new, something bright and cheerful, like the red flowers and the image-lamps. When during carnival, or at the festival of the patron saint, which lasted three days, the peasants had such badly tainted salt-meat foisted on them that it was well-nigh impossible to stand by the barrels, and scythes, women's shawls and hats were pawned by the drunkards, and the factory-hands wallowed in the mire stupefied by bad brandy, and sin hung in the air like fog—then it all seemed somehow easier to bear, at the thought that there in the house was a quiet cleanly woman, who had nothing to do with salt-meat and brandy. Her alms acted in those dark distressful days as a safety-valve in a machine.

They were always very busy in the house of Tzybukin. Before sunrise Aksinya was spluttering over her ablutions in the vestibule, the samovar was boiling in the kitchen, and hissing as if predicting something unpleasant. Old Grigory Petrov, looking neat and clean, clad in a long black frock-coat and print trousers, wearing high polished boots, walked about the room, tapping his heels like the father-in-law in a well-known song. Then the shop was opened. When it was daylight the little droshky was brought to the door, and away drove this energetic old man. As he sat there, with his cap pulled down to his ears, no one would have credited him with fifty-six years. His wife and daughter-in-law always saw him off. When he was wearing his new frock-coat, and driving his big black cob, which had cost 300 rubles, he did not like the peasants to approach him with their requests and complaints. He disliked and despised the peasants, and if he saw any peasant hanging about the gate he would shout angrily at them:

"What are you doing there? Get on with you."

And if it was a beggar he would shout:

"God will help you!"

He was on business bent. Then his wife, wearing a black apron, tidied the rooms or helped in the kitchen; Aksinya attended to work in the shop; across the yard drifted the sound of jingling bottles and money, or laughter and shouting or angry words from purchasers whom Aksinya insulted. The secret and clandestine sale of vodka was carried on in the shop at the same time. The deaf one also sat in the shop, or else, hatless, with his hands in his pockets, walked about the streets absently casting glances into the cottages or up at the sky. Tea was drunk six times a day, and four times a day they sat down to meals. In the evening the accounts were made up and inscribed, then all went to bed and slept soundly.

The three print factories were joined by the telephone to the domiciles in Ukleyevo of the mill-owners Khrymin Senior, Khrymin Junior, and Kostiukov. The telephone was also put into the offices of the Volost, but there it soon ceased to work, and bugs and cockroaches established themselves in it. The Senior of the Volost was somewhat illiterate, and wrote every word with a capital, so when the telephone broke down he said:

"It will be rather difficult for us now without the telephone."

The Senior Khrymins were always at law with the Junior Khrymins, and sometimes the Juniors fought among themselves, and brought law-suits against each other; then their factory had to close for a month, perhaps two, until peace was restored. This provided a certain amount of distraction for the inhabitants of Ukleyevo, as each row gave rise to much gossip and talk.

Kostiukov and the Junior Khrymins organised some racing for the carnival; they drove furiously through Ukleyevo slaughtering calves in their career. Aksinya, rustling in her starched petticoats, took a turn in the street by the grocery store; the Junior Khrymins caught her up, and it looked

as if they had forcibly carried her off. Then out came old Tzybukin to show off his new horse, and he took with him Varvara.

In the evening, after the racing was over, and many had betaken themselves to bed, at Khrymin Junior's they made music on an expensive harmonium; if the moon was shining, it added to the sounds of joy and gaiety in Ukleyevo, which then seemed less of a hole.

## II

Anisim, the eldest son, very seldom came home—only on the big festivals; on the other hand, he often sent gifts and letters to his people; the letters were written in a strange, magnificent handwriting, and each time on a sheet of paper resembling a petition. The letters were full of expressions which Anisim never used in conversation: "My dear father and mother, I send you a pound of green tea for the satisfying of your physical needs." At the end of each letter was scribbled, as if with a broken nib, "Anisim Tzybukin," and below, again in that most excellent handwriting, "Agent." The letters were read aloud several times, and the old man, touched and crimson with emotion, said: "There now, he did not want to live at home; he left to improve himself—well, quite right! Each destined for his part!"

Just before Shrove-tide there were heavy rain and sleet; the old man and Varvara go to the window to look at it, when lo! who arrives from the station in a sleigh but Anisim. They did not at all expect him. He seemed apprehensive, and uneasy from his first entering into the room, nor did this manner alter during his whole stay, although he affected a certain sprightliness. He was in no hurry to leave them again, and it rather looked as if he had been discharged from the Service. Varvara was pleased at his arrival; she observed him rather shyly, sighed and shook her head:

"Now, how is this, batushka?" she asked. "This lad is

already in his twenty-eighth year, and is still dissipating as a bachelor. Oh, fie upon it!"

Her soft, even tones did not carry into the next room. "Oh, fie upon it!" was all they heard. She began to whisper with the old man and Aksinya; their faces assumed the sly, mysterious expression of conspirators. They decided to marry Anisim.

"Oh, fie upon it! . . . your brother has been married some time," said Varvara, "while you remain without a mate, like a cock in the market-place. How is that? Get married, with God's help. Go back into the Service if you like, and your wife will stay at home to help us in the work. You lead an irregular life, my lad, and have forgotten what is order, I see. Oh! fie upon you! Shame on you town-folk!"

When the Tzybukins married, the most beautiful brides were selected for them, as they are for the rich, so they sought for beauty for Anisim. He himself had an insignificant, uninteresting appearance, a weak, unhealthy constitution; was short, had puffy, swollen cheeks, just as if he inflated them; he never blinked, which gave him a hard, piercing expression; he had a scant carrotty beard, which, when he indulged in thought, he poked into his mouth and nibbled. Added to all this, he frequently indulged in drink, which could be detected by his face and his walk. When, however, they communicated to him the fact that they had found him a bride, a very beautiful one, he said: "Oh! well, there is nothing wrong with me either. Our family of Tzybukin, one must allow, are all good-looking."

Quite close to the town was the village of Torguyevo. One half of it had, not long since, been incorporated with the town; the other half remained village. In the former lived a widow in a small house with her sister. The sister was very poor, and was hired by the day. This latter had a daughter, Lipa, who also hired by the day. Lipa's beauty was well recognised in Torguyevo, but her extreme poverty intimidated people. It was concluded, either that some



middle-aged man or widower would wed her, regardless of her poverty, or he would carry her off "without more ado," and she would be able to provide for her mother. Varvara heard of Lipa from the other marriage-promoters, and went over to Torguyevo.

Later, as is necessary, the formal interview in the aunt's house was agreed upon, with a repast of "zauski" (*hors-d'œuvre*) and wine. Lipa was attired in a new pink frock, specially made for the occasion; a crimson ribbon like a flame gleamed in her hair. She was an emaciated little being, pale and weak, with pretty soft features, and a skin tanned by exposure to the weather. The expression of her eyes were those of a child, trusting and inquisitive, and she always smiled in a sad timid way. She was quite young—a girl with an undeveloped figure, yet of a marriageable age. She was decidedly pleasing, except for her large masculine hands, which now hung idly by her side like two great claws.

"She has no fortune . . . we don't mind that," said the old man to the aunt. "For our son, Stepan, we also chose a wife from a poor family; now we cannot sufficiently congratulate ourselves, in the house or in the business . . . she is worth her weight in gold."

Lipa stood by the door, and seemed to say: "Do with me what you will, I trust you." But her mother, Praskovya the day-worker, was concealing herself in the kitchen, dying of fright. Once, in her youth, a merchant for whom she washed the floors, stamped on her in his rage, which so frightened her that she swooned away, and for the rest of her life fear lurked in her breast. Seated in the kitchen, she attempted to hear what the guests were saying, and all the time crossed herself, pressing her fingers to her forehead, and with her eyes fixed on the image of the saint. Anisim, slightly drunk, opened the kitchen-door, and said brightly:

"Why are you sitting here, precious mamasha? It is dull without you."

Praskovya, quailing and pressing her hand to her wasted skinny bosom, said:

“Mercy, what do you want? I am much obliged to you.”

After the inspection, the wedding-day was fixed upon.

At home Anisim did nothing but walk about the rooms whistling, then, suddenly remembering something, would stand quite still, absorbed in thought, fixing his eyes on the floor as if he would like to pierce with a look far into the earth. He expressed no satisfaction at getting married, or getting married so soon—the first Monday after Quasimodo Sunday—nor a wish to see his bride-elect again; he just whistled. It was evident that he was only marrying because his father and step-mother wished it, and because in the village it was customary: sons married to provide workers in the house. He was in no hurry to leave, and behaved altogether differently to what he did on former visits. He seemed absent-minded too, and his answers were seldom to the point.

### III

In the village dwelt two maiden sisters, sempstresses both. They were given the order for the new dresses for the wedding, so they often came over to fit, and stayed a long time partaking of tea. They made a cinnamon-coloured dress trimmed with black lace and jet for Varvara, and a pale green one with a yellow front and a train for Aksinya. When the toilettes were finished, Tzybukin paid the sisters in kind from the shop, and they departed from him with a heavy heart, bearing in their arms a bundle of stearine candles and some sardines which they did not at all want. When they had left the village behind them, they sat on a mound and wept.

Anisim arrived three days before the wedding in a new suit of clothes. He had new goloshes, and, instead of a tie, a red ribbon with a pattern of rings on it; he also had

a new cloak, slung over his shoulder. Having solemnly addressed a prayer to God, he greeted his father, and gave him ten silver rubles and ten 50-kopeck pieces; he gave Varvara the same; and to Aksinya he gave twenty 25-kopeck pieces. The great charm of this present consisted in the fact that all the money was quite new, as if carefully selected, and gleamed in the sun. Anisim, attempting to appear staid and serious, puffed out his cheeks, twisted his face and smelt of wine—he must have jumped out at every station and run to the buffet. There was still that would-be-easy manner, something unnatural, about him. The old man and Anisim drank tea and had a bite, while Varvara turned and re-turned her new rubles in her hand, and asked questions about their fellow-countrymen living in the town.

“They are all right, thank God,” answered Anisim. “There has been an event in Ivan Yegorov’s family . . . he has lost his old woman, Sofya Nikiforovna, from consumption. The ‘repast to her memory,’ ordered at the confectioners, was two rubles and a half per head, wine included. What fellows our countrymen are! For them also it was two and a half rubles—and they ate nothing. Can a peasant appreciate good food?”

“Two and a half!” said the old man, shaking his head.

“Well, what of that? It is not the country. You enter a restaurant to take a snack, you ask for this and that, soon there is a group, you drink . . . you look up, why, it is dawn. . . . ‘Excuse me, three or four rubles each to pay.’ And when you are with Samarodov, he insists on coffee and cognac to end up with, and cognac is six griveniks (60 kopecks) a glass.”

“It’s all lies! It’s all lies!” said the old man ecstatically.

“I am always with Samarodov now. It is Samarodov who writes my letters to you. He writes splendidly. And if I told you, mamasha,” gaily added Anisim, turning to Varvara, “what sort of a fellow this Samarodov is, you would not believe it. We call him Muktar, for he is like an Armenian, quite black. I see through him; I know all his affairs as

well as I do my own five fingers. He feels it too, mamasha, and follows me round, never leaves me, and now we are as inseparable as water. He is rather afraid of me, but cannot exist without me; where I go, he goes. I have right good eyes, mamasha; I go to a rag-fair, I see a peasant selling a shirt. 'Stay, that is a stolen shirt.' And it is true, the shirt was stolen."

"But how do you know?" asks Varvara.

"I don't know, but just my eyes are like that. I don't know what shirt is there, but only that something draws me to it: it is stolen, that's all. Among us detectives, they say now: 'Well, Anisim, go and shoot woodcock.' That means to search for stolen booty. Yes, anyone may steal, but how are they to hide it? The earth is large, but there is nowhere to conceal plunder."

"In our village, a sheep and two yearling ewes were stolen last week, at Guntoriov's," said Varvara, sighing. "And there was no one to search for them. Fie upon it!"

"Well, what of that? Search can be made—it's nothing, it's quite easy."

The wedding-day arrived; it was a cool, clear, joyous April day. From early morning troikas and pairs were being furiously driven through Ukleyevo; there was a jingle of grelots, and multi-coloured ribbons were flowing from the horses' manes and shaft-bows. The rooks were cawing among the willows, disturbed by this unusual stir and bustle, and the starlings sang unwearyingly as if rejoicing that there was a wedding at the Tzybukins'. In the house a repast was laid out consisting of long fish, hams, stuffed chickens, a variety of salt and pickled foods, and a number of bottles of vodka and wines. Added to this was a smell of smoked sausages and sour lobsters. By the table, stamping his heels and grinding one knife on another, stood the old man. Varvara was in constant request; with a harassed mien, and breathless, she ran to the kitchen, where Kostiukov's male-cook, and the neat woman-cook from Khrymin Junior, had been working since dawn. Aksinya, with her hair curled, in

her stays, without a dress, wearing new creaky boots, flew about the yard like a whirlwind, her bare neck and knees gleaming in the sunlight. It was all very noisy; there were high words and swearing; the passers-by paused by the wide open gate, feeling there was something unusual astir.

"They have gone for the bride," was the rumour.

The horses' bells tinkled, and the sound died far away in the distance. After two o'clock people began running; the bells were heard again: the bride is coming!

The church was full, the candelabra lit, and the choristers, according to the old man's desire, were singing from sheets of music. The glitter of lights and the bright dresses dazzled Lipa. It seemed to her that the choristers, with their loud voices, were knocking on her head with hammers. Her stays, which she was wearing for the first time in her life, and her boots, pinched her, and her impression was that of regaining consciousness after a fainting fit; she saw, and could understand nothing. Anisim in a black frock-coat, wearing a red ribbon instead of a tie, was pensive, gazing into space; and each time the choir raised their high voices he hastily crossed himself. He felt some emotion in his innermost heart, and he would have liked to have wept. The church was so familiar to him from his earliest childhood. Long ago his late mother had brought him here for communion. Long ago he had sung in the choir with the other boys. He knew so well each nook and ikon. And now they were marrying him; he must marry for propriety's sake. Then, as if he did not understand it, he forgot altogether about the wedding. Tears prevented him from seeing the ikons; he was very heavy at heart. He prayed, and asked God that the impending misfortunes which were about to engulf him, if not to-day, then to-morrow, should pass over him somehow, like the thunder-clouds during a drought pass over the country without emitting one drop of rain. And although his sins piled up in the past were many, very many, and irreparable ones, so that it seemed unavailing to pray for forgiveness, yet he prayed, and also sobbed aloud.

This nobody heeded, as they merely thought: He is drunk.

A child's plaintive voice was heard:

"Dear Nanny, take me away."

"Silence there!" called the priest.

On their return from the church the bride and bridegroom were followed by a large concourse of people. There were crowds by the shop, by the gate, in the yard, and standing by the house were some women who had come to sing pæans to the newly-married. The young couple had hardly crossed the threshold when the choristers, who were already standing in the vestibule with the music in their hands, burst loudly into song. A band, purposely hired from the town, also started to play. Frothy beverages in high beakers were brought round, then the contractor-carpenter Yelizarov, a tall spare man, with such bushy eyebrows that his eyes were almost invisible, turning to the young couple, said:

"Anisim, and you my child, love one another; be God-fearing, my children, and the Queen of Heaven will not abandon you."

He then fell on the old man's neck and wept.

"Grigory Petrov, let us weep, let us weep for joy!" he said in a shrill voice, and immediately and suddenly began to laugh, continuing in a deep bass voice: "Ho, ho, ho! And you have a good sister-in-law. She keeps everything running smooth, there is no rattling, all the machinery is in good repair and well screwed together."

Although born in the district of Yegoryev, he had worked almost since childhood in the factories of Ukleyevo and the surrounding district, and was therefore a resident in these parts. He had been known a long time as a tall and emaciated old man, and had long ago been given the name of the "Crutch." Perhaps it was because he had been occupied for upwards of forty years only on repairs in the factories, that he viewed every man and thing from the one aspect of sound or unsound: Do they want repairing? And now, before sitting down to table, he tried several chairs to see if they were sound, and he even felt the gang-fish.

After a go at the frothy beverages, every one took a seat at the tables. The guests chatted and creaked their chairs, the choristers sang in the vestibule, the band played, the peasant women in a monotone extolled the married couple; all which made such a terrifying noise and wild medley of sound that one's head felt like splitting. The Crutch twisted and turned in his chair, jostled his neighbours with his elbows, interfered with their talk, wept and laughed.

"Ah! girls, girls, girls!" he muttered quickly, "Aksinyushka, Varvarushka, we will all live in peace and good-will, my little dears."

He drank but little as a rule, and now he was drunk after one glass of "English brandy." This distasteful drink, made of no one knows what, numbed the brains of all those who drank it, just as if they were suffering from concussion.

There were priests, factory clerks with their wives, tradesmen and publicans from other villages. The Senior of the Volost and his scribe, who had served together for fourteen years, and during all that time had not signed a single paper, nor dismissed from the offices of the Volost a single person, without defrauding them or imposing on them, now sat side by side, both adipose, satiated, and looking so replete with iniquity that even the tissue of their skin had something rascally about it. The wife of the scribe, a wizen, squint-eyed woman, brought with her all her children, and, like a very bird of prey, leered at all the dishes, and seized all that came within her reach, filling her pockets for herself and her children.

Lipa sat like one paralysed, and with the same expression as she had in church. Anisim, from the time of his first acquaintance with her, had never addressed her a single word, so that he did not know, up to now, what kind of a voice she had. Sitting now by her side, he still kept silence, drinking "English brandy," and when he had got drunk he said to his aunt, who sat opposite:

"I have a friend named Samarodov. A very special fellow. He belongs to the first guild of merchants, and so glib! But.

auntie, I see through him, and he knows it. Let us drink to the health of Samarodov."

Wearied and confused, Varvara made the round of the tables, serving the guests, but was apparently satisfied that there was so much and such food that no one would be able to find fault.

The sun went down, and the supper continued. The company no longer knew what they ate or what they drank; no one could hear distinctly what was being said; only at intervals, when the music in the yard softened, some woman or other could be heard shouting:

"You have sucked our blood—devils, destruction be on you!"

In the evening there was dancing to music. The Junior Khrymins arrived with their wine, and one of them, while the quadrille was being danced, held a bottle in each hand and a glass in his mouth. This immensely added to the general hilarity. Between the quadrille they danced their squatting-dance. Green Aksinya flitted about, and her train made quite a wind; someone tore away the flounce, and the Crutch exclaimed:

"I say, children, the skirting is down!"

Aksinya had gray naïve eyes which seldom blinked, while an artless smile often lit up her face. With those unblinking eyes, a small head on the end of a long neck, and her slim figure, there was something snake-like about her. In her green dress with the yellow front, and with her peculiar smile, she resembled a viper when it looks out of the young rye in spring, stretching and drawing in its neck at the passer-by. Khrymin's behaviour with her was very free. It had long been noticed that with the elder of them she was on terms of the utmost familiarity. The deaf husband noticed nothing, never looked at her; he sat with his legs crossed, eating nuts, and made such a noise cracking them with his teeth that it sounded each time like a pistol-shot.

And now, Tzybukin himself entered the dancing circle, and waved his handkerchief as a sign that he too wished to dance.



Through the house and out into the yard went the acclamation:

“Himself will dance! Himself!”

Varvara danced while the old man waved his handkerchief and tapped his heels; but the onlookers in the yard, leaning on each other and looking in at the window went into ecstasies, and for a minute forgave him all—his riches and his offences.

“Bravo! Capital fellow, Grigory Petrov!” the crowd vociferated. “Go on!—ha, ha!—you are good for a lot yet!”

All this was over late, after one o’clock. Anisim, staggering, went up to thank the musicians and singers, and presented them each with a new 50-kopec piece. The old man, not staggering, but pausing on each foot, saw the guests off, and told each one:

“The wedding cost two thousand rubles.”

When they had all dispersed, someone was discovered to have exchanged the Shikalovo publican’s new “podiovka” (sleeveless coat) for an old one. Anisim at once called out excitedly:

“Wait, I’ll find him at once. I know who took it! Wait!”

He ran out into the street, and chased someone. He was captured, brought home, and they shoved him, drunk, red with anger, and sweating, into the room where the aunt had already helped Lipa to bed.

#### IV

After the lapse of five days Anisim, about to take departure, went upstairs to Varvara to say good-bye. All the image-lamps were burning, there was a smell of incense, and Varvara herself was seated at the window knitting stockings of red wool.

“You have stayed a very little while with us,” she said; “do you find it dull? Fie upon you! We live in comfort, your wedding was celebrated in a very fitting manner. The old man says two thousand rubles were spent on it. In a

word we live like tradespeople, only there it is, it's dull here. Then we defraud too many people. It makes my heart ache to cheat so. . . . Oh, my God! Whether we barter a horse, or buy anything, or hire workers, everywhere there is fraud. Fraud, and again fraud. The linseed oil in the grocery stores is rancid, putrid; birch-gum would be better for people. Is it impossible, for mercy's sake, to deal in good butter?"

"Each destined for his part, mamasha!"

"But must it mean corruption? Aie, aie! If you spoke to your father. . . ."

"But speak to him yourself."

"Nay, but I have, and he uses the same phrase as you do: 'Each destined for his part.' In the world beyond you will be tried for that: each destined for his part! God is a just judge."

"But of course there will be no trial," and Anisim sighed. "For you see there is no God, mamasha. Who will there be to judge?"

Varvara looked at him in astonishment, smiled, and clasped her hands. Seeing that she was so genuinely surprised at his words and regarded him as an oddity, he grew troubled:

"It may be that there is a God, but no faith," he said. "When I was married, I did not feel like myself. Look, it is like when you take an egg from under a hen and a chick chirps inside, so my conscience chirped while I was being married. I thought: There is a God. And then when I came out of the church the feeling was gone. And how should I know if there is a God or not? No one taught us about Him, the child is hardly weaned from its mother's breast before it learnt: Each destined for his part. Papa, you see, does not believe in God either. You said once that Guntoriov's sheep had been stolen. . . . I found the thief; it was a peasant of Shikalovo who stole them. He stole them, and my papa has the hide. . . . There's faith for you!"

Anisim blinked his eyes and shook his head.

And the Senior of the Volost does not believe in God," he continued, "nor the scribe either, nor the sacristan. And if they go to church and observe the fasts, it is only so that people should not speak ill of them, and in case there may indeed be some last Judgment. It is said, if the end of the world came now, it is because men have grown weak, they honour not their parents, and so forth. That's all nonsense. I, mamasha, understand that all the trouble comes from people having so little conscience. I see clearly, and understand. When a man has stolen a shirt, I can find him. The fellow is sitting in a tavern; to you it may appear that he is merely drinking tea, but I, tea or no tea, can see besides that he has no conscience. Thus you go through the whole day, and don't find a man with a conscience. The whole reason is because they do not know if there is a God or not. . . . Well, mamasha, good-bye, keep well, and bear me no ill-will."

Anisim made Varvara a low bow.

"We thank you for all you have done," he said. "You are a great benefit to our family; you are a very good woman, and I am very grateful to you."

Anisim seemed much affected, went out, then returned again and said:

"Samarodov has involved me in a business matter. Either we shall become rich or we shall be ruined. If anything should happen, you will comfort my father, won't you, mamasha?"

"Oh! come now, what are you saying? Fie upon you! . . . God is merciful. But see, Anisim, you should show a little fondness for your wife; you look at each other so crossly; if only you smiled."

"How strange she is," said Anisim, sighing. "She does not seem to understand anything—always remains silent. She is very young, we must let her develop."

The big, sleek, white cob and tarantass were waiting at the door. Old Tzybukin sprang into it, seated himself alertly, and took the reins. Anisim embraced Varvara, Aksinya, and

his brother. Lipa was also standing at the door, standing motionless, looking away, just as if she had not come to see anyone off, as if she were there without a purpose. Anisim went up to her, and touched her on the cheek ever so lightly with his lips. "Good-bye," he said. And she, without, looking at him, smiled so strangely; her face quivered, and everyone, for some reason or other, felt sorry for her. Anisim also leapt into his seat, and sat with his arms akimbo as if he thought himself very elegant.

When they had climbed out of the hollow, Anisim glanced several times back at the village. It was a warm, clear day. For the first time this year the cattle were being driven out to graze, and girls and women in holiday attire were walking by the herds. A brown bull was bellowing, rejoicing in his freedom, and striking the ground with his fore-feet. The larks were singing everywhere in the air, above, below. Anisim noticed too the pretty white church—it had lately been whitewashed—and remembered how he had prayed there five days ago; he glanced at the school with its green roof, at the river where once he used to bathe and fish; and a feeling of joy possessed him—he wished a wall would suddenly rise in front of him out of the ground, and prevent him from going any further; then he would remain with only a past.

When they arrived at the station, they went to the buffet and drank a glass of sherry. The old man felt in his pocket for his purse.

"I will treat you!" said Anisim.

The old man, with a full heart, clapped him on the shoulder, and winked at the waiter as much as to say: "See what a son I have!"

"If you remain at home, Anisim, and attend to the business, you could name your price! My boy, I would gild you from head to toe!"

"It is quite impossible, papasha."

The sherry was sourish and smelt of sealing-wax, but they drank another glassful.

On his return from the station, just at first the old man hardly recognised his youngest daughter-in-law. As soon as her husband had left, Lipa underwent a change; she suddenly became quite cheerful. Barefooted, in an old worn petticoat, her sleeves turned up to the shoulder, she sang in clear, silvery tones as she scrubbed the stairs; then, as she poured the contents of the pail outside, she stood and looked at the sun, smiling so brightly that she too seemed akin to the larks.

An old worker passing by the gate shook his head, and croaked:

"That daughter-in-law of yours, Grigory Petrov, was once more sent by God," he said. "They are not women, they are angels."

## V

On the 8th of July, a Friday, Yelizarov, nicknamed the Crutch, and Lipa were returning from the village of Kazanskoe, where they had been for the festival of the patron saint: the Virgin Mary of Kazan. Far behind lagged Prascovia, sick and sorry and out of breath. It was towards evening.

"A-aa," said the Crutch in astonishment as he listened to Lipa. "A-aa, well?"

"I am very fond of jam, Ilya Makarych," said Lipa. "I seat myself in a corner, drink tea and eat jam. Or Varvara Nikolayevna and I drink tea together, and she tells me some pretty tale. They have a lot of jam—four pots. 'Eat, Lipa,' she says, 'don't be afraid.'"

"A-aa . . . four pots!"

"They live so well, tea and white loaves, and as much meat as they want. They live comfortably, but, Ilya Makarych, I am frightened. Oh, ee—ee, but I am frightened!"

"But what are you frightened of, my child?" asked the Crutch, glancing round to see if Praskovya was far behind.

"First, on the day of the wedding I was frightened of

Anisim Grigoryich. There was nothing special—he was not rude; only when he came near me I felt cold all over me, in all my bones. And I never slept one single night; I shook all over, and prayed to God. And now, Ilya Makarych, I fear Aksinya. There's nothing wrong with her; she is always smiling, only at times she looks out of the window, and her eyes are so angry that they turn green just like those of the sheep in the shed. The Junior Khrymins be-devil her: 'Your old man, they say, has a small estate called Butiokino, 40 deciatins; on the property, they say, there is sand and water, so you, Aksinya, arrange for a brick-kiln to be erected, and we will take shares.' Bricks are now worth twenty rubles a thousand. A very profitable affair. Last evening after supper, Aksinya said to the old man: 'I want,' says she, 'to construct a brick-kiln in Butiokino: I will be superintendent.' So she says, and smiles. Grigory Petrov's face darkened; you could see it did not please him: 'So long as I live we work together.' Her eyes gleamed, and she ground her teeth. We had fritters—she never ate one."

"A-aa!" said the Crutch in astonishment. "She could not eat?"

"And I tell you, when she goes to bed, mercy!" continued Lipa. "After a short half-hour of sleep, up she jumps, walks—walks and peers about to see if a peasant is setting anything on fire, or has stolen anything. It is dreadful to be with her, Ilya Makarych. The Junior Khrymins never went to bed after the wedding; they went into the town for some trial. People gossip, and say it is because of Aksinya. Two of the brothers had promised to construct the kiln, the third took offence, so the factory closed for a month, and my uncle Prokhov, out of work, was begging at the doors for crusts. 'You, uncle! begging?' says I, 'you ought to plough, or chop wood, not degrade yourself in this way.' 'I am off all honest work,' says he. 'I don't understand it, my little Lipa.'"

By a small aspen-grove they stood still to rest and await Praskovya. Yelizarov had for many years been a contractor,

but as he kept no horses, he went through the whole district on foot, carrying a small sack which contained bread and onions. He strided along swinging his arms, so it was not easy to walk alongside of him. At the entrance to the grove stood a marestone; Yelizarov tried it to see if it was in good repair. Praskovya reached them panting; her wrinkled face, with its timorous expression, to-day was radiant: she had been to church like other people, and had gone to the fair, where they had drunk pear-kvass! This was so rare a treat for her, that it seemed to her that she was living in joy for the first time in her life. When they had rested, they all three proceeded on their way side by side. The sun was setting fast, its rays penetrated through the grove and threw light on the stems of the trees. There was a sound of voices in front, the Ukleyevo women had got far ahead, but had stopped in the grove, no doubt to pick mushrooms.

"Hullo! lassies!" called Yelizarov. "Hullo! beauties!"

In answer there came laughter.

"Here is the Crutch! The Crutch! Old Grizzly!"

And the echo also laughed. Soon the grove was behind them, the tops of the factory chimneys appeared, and the cross glittering on the bell-tower. This was the village, the very same village, "where the Cantor ate all the caviar at the funeral." They are very near home now; it only remains to go down into the hollow. Lipa and Praskovya, who were barefooted, sat down on the grass and put on their boots; the contractor sat down too. When you looked and saw the willows, the white church, and the river, Ukleyevo looked attractive and peaceful; it was only the roofs of the factories—painted a dark colour for economy's sake—that were unsightly. You saw the rye on the declivity on the farther side, and here and there ricks and sheaves as if strewn by a storm, and some new-mown rye lying in swaths; and the oats too were ripe, and shone in the sun like mother-of-pearl. It was harvest-time. To-day was a holiday, to-morrow was Saturday; they would gather in the rye, carry the hay, and then it was Sunday, again a holiday. Every day there was

a sound of distant thunder; it was steamy, it looked like rain, and as each one glanced at the fields their thought was: May God grant us time to gather in the corn. And they were cheerful and happy, though a little uneasy.

"Mowers are expensive now," said Praskovya. "One ruble forty a day!"

People were still streaming from the fair at Kazanskoe: women, factory-hands in new caps, mendicants, children. Then a cart went by raising a cloud of dust, behind it galloped an unsold horse, as if rejoicing in the fact; then someone went by leading a stubborn cow by the horn; then again a cart, bearing drunken peasants who were hanging their legs over the side. One old woman was leading by the hand a small boy in a large cap and large high-boots. The boy was exhausted by the heat, and his heavy boots interfered with the flexion of his knees, nevertheless he continued to blow a toy trumpet with all his might. They had already reached the bottom of the hill and were turning into the street, and still the toy trumpet could be heard.

"And our factory-owners are not quite themselves," said Yelizarov. "It's unlucky! Kostiukov raged at me.—'A great number of planks went for the cornice,' he says. 'A great number!'—'As many as were required, Vasily Danilych, and no more,' I say; 'I don't eat planks with my gruel.'—'How dare you,' says he, 'speak to me like that? A block-head like you! Don't forget I made you contractor!' he screams at me.—'What a wonder!' says I. 'Still, before I was a contractor, I drank tea every day.'—'You are all rogues,' says he. I remained silent. We may be rogues in this world, but you will be rogues in the next, I thought—ha—ha—ha! The next day he thawed. 'Don't be angry with me for what I said, Makarych. If I said more than was necessary, you see it is my privilege; I am the merchant of a more ancient guild than you—you must keep silent.'—'You are,' I say, 'the merchant of a more ancient guild than I! I am only a carpenter, that's true. But St. Joseph was a carpenter. Our business is honourable and pleasing to



God, and if you are pleased to be more ancient, then be gracious to us, Vasily Danilych.' Later I thought—that is, after this conversation—like this I thought: What is more ancient? The merchant of an ancient guild, or a carpenter? Maybe the carpenter, my children!"

The Crutch became thoughtful, then he added: "It is so, children. Whosoever suffers and labours, he is the most honourable."

The sun had set, and over the river, and around the churchyard, and from the open spaces surrounding the fabrics rose a thick mist white as milk. Then, as darkness came on apace, one by one the lights began to blink, and at times it seemed as if the mist was hovering over a bottomless abyss. It seemed to Lipa and her mother, who were born poor, and were prepared to live so to the end, ready to surrender to others all except their timid gentle souls, that, for a moment perhaps, this was some dream: a great mysterious world, and they stronger and older than anyone, standing in one of the furthest unlimited ridges of life. It was so pleasant up here; they smiled a happy smile, and forgot that it would be necessary to return below.

At last they reached home. There were mowers sitting on the ground, at the gate, and by the shop. Usually, those from Ukleyevo did not come and work for Tzybukin, so it was necessary to hire others, and it looked in the darkness as if they were people with long black beards. The shop was still open, and through the door the deaf Stepan was seen playing draughts with the servant-boy. Some of the mowers were softly singing under their breath, others were calling loudly for their wages, without obtaining them, as they were required to work again on the morrow. Old Tzybukin, in shirt-sleeves, was drinking tea with Aksinya under the birch trees by the door. A lamp was burning on the table.

"Ga—affer!" the mowers called from the gate provokingly. "Pay at least half! Ga—affer!"

Again there was a sound of laughter, then once more they started singing under their breath.

The Crutch also sat down to have some tea.

"Well, so we have been to the fair," he began. "We had an excellent walk, my dears, an excellent walk, thank the Lord. But an unpleasant incident occurred. Sasha, the farrier, buys some tobacco and gives the merchant a 50-kopeck piece. The money was false," continued the Crutch looking round. He had meant to whisper it, but spoke it in a strangulated hoarse voice that was audible to everyone. "The 50-kopeck piece turned out to be false. They ask, where did it come from? 'This,' says he, 'is what Anisim Tzybukin gave me on the occasion of his wedding. . . .' They called for the sergeant; he came. . . . Now, see, Petrovich, whatever happens there will be chatter. . . ."

"Ga—affer!" the voices provokingly called from the gate. "Ga—affer!"

There was silence.

"Ah, children, children, children," muttered the Crutch quickly, as he rose from his seat, overcome with sleep. "Thank you for the tea and sugar. It is time to rest; I am nothing but a ruin, my girders are rotting within me. Ha, ha, ha!"

And as he left he gave a sob, and said: "It must be time to die!"

Old Tzybukin did not finish his tea; he sat there buried in thought, and looked as if he was listening to the Crutch's footsteps, who was by now far down the street.

"Sashka the farrier lied, that's all," said Aksinya, guessing his thoughts.

He went into the house, and returned shortly afterwards with a packet; he opened it, and displayed the glittering new rubles. He took one, tried it on his teeth, threw it on the tray; he threw another. . . .

"Beyond doubt these rubles are false," he said incredulously to Aksinya. "Anisim brought these same ones with him; they are his wedding-present. Take them, my daugh-

ter," he whispered, thrusting the packet into her hand, "take, and throw them into the well. The devil take them! And see that there is no chatter. Whatever happens. . . . Clear away the samovar, put out the lights."

As Lipa and Praskovya sat in the shed, they saw the lights go out one by one; only upstairs in Varvara's room the blue and red image-lamp glimmered, breathing peace, contentment, and nescience. Praskovya could not get accustomed to the idea that her daughter had married into a rich family, and when she arrived she hung timidly about the vestibule, smiling apologetically, so they sent her away with some tea and sugar. Lipa could not get accustomed to it either, and after her husband had left she did not sleep in a bed, but wherever she happened to be, in the kitchen or the shed. She washed the floors, or did the ironing, which all seemed to her the same as when she was a day-worker. So now, after their return from the pilgrimage, they drank tea in the kitchen with the cook, then went out into the shed and lay against the wall between the sleighs. It was very dark, and smelt of harness. All the lights were out, the deaf one was heard closing the shop, and the mowers settling themselves in the yard for the night. Far away at the Junior Khrymins they were playing the expensive harmonium. . . . Praskovya and Lipa fell asleep.

They were awakened by some footsteps; the moon was shining brightly, and at the entrance to the shed stood Aksinya with some bedding in her arms.

"It may be cooler here," she said, and entering lay down at the very threshold with the moon shining full on her. She did not sleep, she sighed deeply, tossed and flung nearly all her clothing off; by the magic light of the moon what a beautiful, what a proud creature she looked! Some time went by, and again steps were heard; then the old man, very pale, stood in the doorway.

"Aksinya," he called, "are you here? What?"

"Well?" she answered wrathfully.

"I told you just now to throw the money into the well. Have you done it?"

"Anything else! Throw riches in the water! I paid some of the mowers. . . ."

"My God!" said the old man in astonishment and fear. "Shameless woman! Oh, my God!"

He wrung his hands and went out, and as he went he muttered to himself. A little later Aksinya sat up, heaved a deep sigh of dissatisfaction, arose, gathered up her bedding in her arms, and went out.

"Why did you marry me here, mother dear?" asked Lipa.

"Marriage is a necessity, my child, and so not in our control."

And the consciousness of an inconsolable affliction was about to overwhelm them. Then they felt as if Someone was looking down from heaven, those great blue heights from whence the stars keep watch and see all that is going on in Ukleyevo. And, however great be Evil, wondrous and peaceful is the night, and in God's kingdom Good reigns, and will ever reign peaceful and wondrous; for on earth all is waiting to emerge into right, just as the light of the moon emerges from the night.

They both felt comforted, and, leaning one against the other, they fell asleep.

## VI

The news had spread some time that Anisim had been arrested for coining and circulating counterfeit money. Months went by, some six months, the long winter was over, spring had come, and the inhabitants of his home and the village had become accustomed to the idea that Anisim was sitting in prison. When anyone passed the house at night they remembered that Anisim was sitting in prison; when the church-bells tolled for some reason or other, they again remembered that Anisim was sitting in prison and awaiting his sentence.

It seemed as if a shadow lay over the place. The house darkened, the roof grew rusty, the door of the shop, once painted green and heavily bound in iron, looked, as deaf Stepan himself said, "like the disused door of a ruin." Old Tzybukin was a sorry sight, his hair and his beard grew untended, he seated himself heavily in the tarantass, he no longer shouted to the beggars: "God will help you!" His strength declined visibly; people were already less afraid of him, and the sergeant drew up an official report about the shop, but as heretofore he continued to receive the things he required. Tzybukin was summoned three times to the town, to be tried on charges of contraband dealing in wine, and each time the case was deferred on account of the non-appearance of witnesses. So the old man was worn out. He frequently went to see his son; engaged someone for something, forwarded petitions to someone or other, offered a banner somewhere. He presented to the inspector of the prison in which Anisim was detained a silver plate with the inscription in enamel, "The heart knows no measure," and a long spoon accompanied this present.

"But make a stir—is there no one to make a stir?" asked Varvara. "Oh, fie upon it! You should ask one of the gentlemen; they might write to the commander-in-chief. . . . If only they would release him till the trial. The poor lad will be ill in prison."

She was much concerned about it, but at the same time was growing stouter and paler. As heretofore, she trimmed the image-lamps, saw that the house was kept clean and tidy, regaled the guests with jam and apple-pasty. The deaf one and Aksinya attended to the business. They had started a new work, a brick-kiln at Butiokino, whither Aksinya drove every day in the tarantass. She drove herself, and on meeting any acquaintance she stretched out her neck like a viper in unripe rye, and smiled naïvely and enigmatically. Lipa was always playing with her baby, which was born just before Lent—such a small wizened piteous baby that it was even strange that he should cry,

look, and be reckoned a human being, and also go by the name of Nikifor. As he lay in his cradle, Lipa would go to the door, and call out to him:

“Good-day, Nikifor Anisimych!”

Then rush headlong back and kiss him, then again go to the door, and again greet him:

“Good-day, Nikifor Anisimych!”

He would kick his little pink legs in the air, and laugh and cry at the same moment, like the carpenter Yelizarov.

At last the date of the trial was announced. The old man left five days before. Then it became known that people from the village had been called as witnesses; the old workmen went too, also receiving a summons to appear. The trial was on Thursday. Sunday came, and the old man did not return, nor was there any news. On Tuesday, towards even Varvara sat at the open window listening for the old man. In the next room Lipa was playing with her baby, tossing and rocking it, and saying in a transport of joy:

“He will grow big—big. He will be a muzhik, and we will do our day’s work together. We will do our day’s work together!”

“Come now!” said Varvara offended. “Why do you talk of day-work, you silly? He will be a merchant.”

Lipa began singing softly, but soon afterwards forgot, and again said:

“He will grow big—big, he will be a muzhik, and we will do our day-work together.”

“Come now! You repeat it too often.”

Lipa, with Nikifor in her arms, came to the doorway, and asked:

“Mamenka, why do I love him so? Why am I sorry for him?” she continued in a trembling voice, while tears dimmed her eyes. “Who is he? What is he? Light as a feather, a wee little thing, yet I love him, love him just like a real man. He can do nothing, say nothing, yet I understand all he wants by his little eyes.”

Varvara listened: was not that the sound of the evening

train arriving at the station? Was the old man coming? She no longer heard or understood what Lipa was saying, no longer knew how the time went by; she was trembling all over, not from fear but out of great curiosity. She saw a cart full of peasants dash by with a great clatter; they were the returning witnesses. As the telega drove by the shop, the old workman jumped out, and went into the yard. She heard people greeting him, and asking him about something.

“Forfeiture of his rights and estates,” he said in a loud voice, “and Siberia with penal servitude for six years.”

Aksinya emerged from the darkness of the shop, from whence she had just despatched some kerosene; she still held a bottle in one hand, a funnel in the other, and a piece of silver in her mouth.

“And where is papasha?” she lisped.

“At the station,” answered the workman. “‘When it is darker,’ he said, ‘I will come home.’”

When it became known in the yard that Anisim was sentenced to penal servitude, the cook, in the kitchen, set up a wailing as if someone were dead, thinking the occasion required it:

“Why did you leave us, Anisim Grigoryich, little falcon dear?”

The dogs barked anxiously; Varvara, much distressed, ran to the window, and called out with all her might to the cook:

“Enough, Stepanida, enough! Don’t be in despair, for Christ’s sake!”

They forgot to bring the samovar; no one could think of anything. Lipa alone could in no way understand what was the matter, and continued to play with her baby.

When the old man arrived from the station, no one asked him any questions; he greeted them, and walked through all the rooms in silence; he had no supper.

“There was no one to plead for him,” began Varvara when they were alone. “I—I told you to ask one of the gen-

tlemen; you would not listen. . . . Perhaps a petition. . . .”

“I did petition,” said the old man, with a wave of the hand. “When they read the sentence on Anisim I was with the gentleman who defended him: ‘No use,’ he said, ‘it is too late.’ And Anisim himself said, ‘It is too late.’ All the same, as I left the court I spoke to an advocate. I gave him earnest-money. . . . I will wait a little, a week, then I’ll go again. God have mercy on us!”

The old man again wandered in silence through the rooms; when he returned to Varvara, he said:

“I can’t be well. My head feels . . . in a fog. My thoughts are in a muddle.”

He closed the door so that Lipa should not hear, and continued in a low voice:

“My money affairs are in a bad way. You remember before the wedding, Anisim brought me some new rubles and half rubles? I hid one packet, the rest I mixed with my own. . . . Formerly, God rest his soul, when my grandfather, Dmitry Filatych, was alive he used often to go on business to Moscow or the Crimea. He had a wife: this same wife, while he was away on business, used to run riot. There were six children. Now it happened, when my grandfather was drunk, he would joke and say: ‘I shall never know which are my children and which are someone else’s?’ A cheerful nature his! But now I can’t make out which is real money and which is counterfeit, it seems to me they are all false coins.”

“Well, I never! God help you!”

“When I take a ticket at the station, I hand three rubles, then I think to myself: Are they false? And I’m frightened. I can’t be well.”

“They say, we are all in God’s hands. . . . Oh, dear! Oh dear!” said Varvara, shaking her head. “We ought to remember, too, Petrovich. . . . Times are bad, and whatever happens you are no longer a young man. You will die; then see to it that they do not wrong your grandson. Alas, I am afraid they may defraud Nikifor; they will



surely. His father one may say no longer exists; his mother is young and foolish. If you left him a bit of land, say Butiokino, for the boy. Do that, Petrovich. Think about it," added Varvara, entreatingly. "He is a nice little boy; I am sorry for him. Look, go to-morrow and sign a paper. What use waiting?"

"I forgot about the grandson," said Tzybukin. "I must go and see him. So you say the boy is all right? Well, may he grow up, God grant it!"

He opened the door, and beckoned with his finger to Lipa. She came to him with the baby in her arms.

"Lipinka, if you want anything, ask for it," he said. "And whatever you have a mind for, eat; we won't complain—only keep well. . . ." He made the sign of the Cross over the child. "And take care of the grandson; though my son is not here, my grandson remains."

Tears rolled down his cheeks; he gave a sob and went out. A little while afterwards he went to bed and slept soundly, having spent seven sleepless nights.

## VII

The old man went for a short visit to town. Someone told Aksinya he had been to the notary to make a will, in which he bequeathed Butiokino—that Butiokino where she had established her brick-kiln—to his grandson Nikifor. They communicated this to her one morning, as Varvara and the old man were sitting under the birch trees by the door drinking tea. She closed the door of the shop facing the street and the one into the yard; she collected all the keys she had ever had, and flung them at the old man's feet.

"I shall not work any more for you!" she screamed, suddenly beginning to sob. "I have become not a daughter-in-law but a worker! All the people jeer; 'See,' they say, 'what a good worker Tzybukin has found.' I am not in your hire! I am not poor, nor a serf, I have a father and a mother."

Leaving her tears unwiped, she turned on the old man her overflowing eyes full of spite and distorted with anger; her face and neck were crimson and all the muscles strained, as she screamed with all her might:

"I won't serve you any more! I am worn out. It's work day in day out, sitting in the shop, smuggling vodka at night, that's what I have to do, while all the benefits are for the convict's wife and her brat. She is mistress here and gentlewoman, and I am her servant! Give it all to the prisoner's wife till she stifles, I am going home. Find for yourselves another fool—damned Herods!"

The old man never once in his life had scolded or punished his children, never even entertained the thought that anyone in the family could speak rudely to him, or behave themselves in an unseemly manner; and now he was so frightened that he ran into the house and hid himself behind the cupboard. And Varvara was so panic-stricken that she could not get up from seat, and waved both hands as if she were defending herself from bees.

"What's the meaning of this? Batiushka!" she murmured in horror. "How can she scream like that? Oh, fie upon it! The people will hear! Ai, ai! Softly, softly!"

"You have given up Butiokino to the convict's wife," Aksinya continued to scream. "Give her everything; I want nothing from you, plague you! You are all of one gang. I've seen enough of it, it will do—you rob the passer-by, the traveller, the thief, the old, the young! And who sells vodka without a license? And circulates false coin! You have filled a chest with false coins."

By the wide open gates a crowd had already assembled, and were looking into the yard.

"Let them all look!" screamed Aksinya. "I disgrace you, do I? You blush with shame for me? You are humbled by my conduct? Hie, Stepan," she called to her deaf husband. "In a moment we will be off home, I will go to my father and mother, I won't stay any longer with a convict's people. Be quick!"

The linen was hanging in the yard, she wrenched down her own skirt and camisole, which were still wet, and flung them into the deaf one's arms; throwing herself in a frenzy on the linen which was not hers, she tore it down, flung it on the ground, and trampled on it.

"Ai, ai! Batiushka! stop her," moaned Varvara. "What's all this? Let her have Butiokino, let her have it, for Christ's sake!"

"What a woman!" they said at the gate. "Wha—at a woman! She has lost her senses."

Aksinya rushed into the kitchen where the washing was being done. Lipa was washing, while the cook had gone to the brook to rinse some of the linen. The cauldron was steaming on the stove, the trough was also steaming, and the kitchen itself was full of steam. On the floor lay a heap of unwashed linen, and by it, on a seat, so that if he fell he would not hurt himself, stretching his pink legs, lay Nikifor. Just as Aksinya entered Lipa had taken her chemise out of the heap, put it in the trough, and had already stretched out her hand for the large scoop full of boiling water which stood on the table.

"Give it here," said Aksinya, looking at her with a look of hatred, and taking the chemise out of the trough. "It is not your business to touch my linen, you are a convict's wife, and it behoves you to know your place!"

Lipa looked at her panic-stricken, without understanding what she meant, then caught the look which she threw at the child, suddenly understood, and turned into stone.

"You have taken my land—that's for you!"

Saying which, Aksinya seized the scoop with the boiling water and dashed it over Nikifor.

Then was heard a scream such as never before had been heard in Ukleyevo; no one thought a small weak creature like Lipa could have uttered such a scream. A silence fell over the yard. Aksinya returned into the house without a word, smiling naïvely as heretofore. The deaf one walked about the yard for some time holding the linen in

his arms, then without haste began hanging it up again. Until the cook came back from the brook, no one could make up their mind to go into the kitchen and find out what had happened.

### VIII

They carried Nikifor to the local hospital, where at evening he died. Lipa did not wait till they came to fetch her, but wrapped the little dead body in a blanket, and carried it away. The hospital was quite new, having only been recently built; it had large windows, and stood on a hill; the glow of the setting sun on the glass almost gave it the appearance of being on fire. Below the hospital was a small village. Lipa came down the road before leaving the village, and sat down by its pond. Some woman or other brought a horse to drink; the horse refused to drink.

"What more do you want?" said the woman, softly and perplexed. "What is the matter with you?"

A boy in a red shirt sat by the water cleaning his father's boots. Not another soul was to be seen in the village or on the hill.

"It won't drink . . ." said Lipa, looking at the horse.

Then the woman and the boy went away, and there was no one to be seen. The sun set under a brocade of purple and gold, while long red and lilac clouds, stretching over all the sky, kept watch over him. Somewhere in the distance a bittern made a doleful and bellowing noise, just like a cow confined to its shed. The cry of this mysterious bird was heard every spring, but no one knew what kind of a bird it was, nor where it lived. Above the hospital, by the pond, in the bushes, behind the village, and all around in the fields, the nightingales were singing and trilling. The cuckoo was counting some one's age, was always getting mixed in the reckoning, and began again. The frogs, bursting with anger, were calling to one another, and you could distinctly hear the words: "e—te—takova, e—te—takova" (and you also!

and you also!) What a noise there was! It seemed as if all these creatures were crying and singing on purpose, so that no one should sleep this spring night; so that everyone, even the angry frogs, should appreciate and enjoy every minute of it; for we only live once!

Lipa did not remember how long she had sat by the pond, but when she arose the silver crescent of the moon was shining in the sky, as well as a great number of stars. All in the village slept, and there was not one light anywhere. It was twelve versts home, but she did not think of her strength, nor whither she went; the moon shone sometimes in front of her, sometimes to the right, the same cuckoo cried in a hoarse-growing voice and with a seemingly derisive laugh: See, where are you going?

Lipa walked so fast that she lost her head-kerchief. She looked at the sky, and thought. Where was her little boy's soul, was it following her, or was it up above among the stars, and no longer thinking of his mother? Oh! how lonely to be in the fields at night, in the midst of these songs when you yourself could not sing, in the midst of these incessant cries of joy when you yourself could not rejoice; when the stars were watching in the skies, also lonely and indifferent as to whether it was spring or winter, as to whether people were alive or dead. When your soul is oppressed with grief, it is worse to be alone. If only her mother were with her, the Crutch, or the cook, or at least a muzhik.

"Boo—oo," cried the bittern. "Boo—oo."

Then, suddenly, a human voice it was that said distinctly: "Yoke them, Vavila."

A few paces in front, by the side of the road, a wood-fire was burning—that is to say, the red embers were glowing, there were flames. Some horses seemed to be munching; the outline of two carts could be discerned in the darkness; on one cart was a barrel, on the other some sacks, and by the carts were two men. One man was just putting a horse to, the other was standing motionless by the fire with his hands behind his back. Some dogs began to growl by the

side of the carts. He who led the horse stopped, and said: "It sounds as if someone were on the road."

"Sharik, be quiet," called the other to the dog.

By his voice you could tell the other was an old man. Lipa stayed her steps, and said: "God is our help!"

The old man went up to her, and said to her after a pause: "Good even!"

"Your dog won't bite, gaffer?"

"No, it's all right, he won't hurt."

"I have come from the hospital," said Lipa, after a moment's silence. "My little boy died there. See, I am taking him home."

The old man must have heard this with displeasure, for he moved away, and replied hurriedly:

"That's all right, my dear. God's will be done! Lad, you are dawdling," he said, turning to his fellow-traveller. "You might hurry!"

"Can't find the shaft-bow," said the lad. "Have you seen it?"

"You arrant Vavila!"

The old man took the brand from the fire, blew on it, thus lighting up his own face; then, when they had found the shaft bow, he turned the light on Lipa. He looked at her, and his look was full of compassion and tenderness.

"You are a mother," he said— "every mother grieves for her child."

After that he sighed and shook his head. Vavila threw something on the fire, stamped it out, and darkness reigned. The visions disappeared and as a little while before there were only the fields and the star-filled sky, the sound of birds interfering with each other's sleep, and there where there had been a fire a corn-crake seemed to be twittering.

After a moment's darkness the carts, the old man, and the Lanky Vavila became visible again; soon the telegraph started forward with a screech.

"Are you saints?" Lipa asked the old man.

"No, we are from Firsanov."

"The way you looked at me just now touched my heart. The lad too is gentle. I thought, 'they must be saints.'"

"Have you far to go?"

"To Ukleyevo."

"Seat yourself; we will take you to Kuzmenok. Then you go to the right and we go to the left."

Vavila got into the cart with the barrel, the old man and Lipa got into the other. They proceeded at a foot's pace with Vavila leading.

"My little son was in pain all day," said Lipa. "He looked at me with his little eyes and made no sound; he wanted to speak and could not. Father in Heaven have mercy on his soul! I fell to the floor in my anguish, I stood up, and fell by the bedside. Tell me, gaffer, why does a child suffer before death? When a man suffers, or a muzhik, or a woman, it is for the remittance of their sins, but a child, when it has no sin? Why?"

"Who can tell?" answered the old man.

They continued their way for half an hour in silence.

"It is impossible to know everything, the why, the wherefore," said the old man. "Birds are given two wings, not four, because it is more convenient to fly with two; so it is with man to know, not everything, but a half or even a quarter. Just so much as is necessary for him to live, that much he knows."

"Gaffer, I would find it easier to walk, for my heart feels like breaking."

"No, no, sit down."

The old man yawned and made the sign of the Cross over his mouth:

"Nichevo," he repeated, "your grief is a great grief, but life is long, and there will be more good and more bad, there will be all sorts. Great is our Mother Russia!" he said, glancing on both sides of the road. "I have been all over Russia, and see everything therein, and believe my words, my dear: there will be good and there will be bad. I have tramped through Siberia, and to the region of the Amoor,

and to Altai, and settled in Siberia, tilled the ground, then grew a longing for Mother Russia, and back I came to my native village. Back I came to Russia on foot, and I remember, as we were on the ferry-boat, I, a bag of bones, in rags, barefooted, starving, sucking a crust, a passing gentleman comes on board—may God give his soul peace when a dies—and he looks at me pityingly, with tears in his eyes: 'Poor fellow,' says he, 'you eat black bread and see but dark days. . . .' I came back, without a peg to call my own; I had a wife, she stayed in Siberia, we buried her there. So I lived as best I could. Well, I tell you there was good and bad. I have no wish to die, I could live another twenty years—that means, there has been more good than bad. And great is our Mother Russia!" he said again, taking a look on both sides of the road.

"Gaffer," asked Lipa, "when a man dies, how many days after does his soul remain on earth?"

"Ah, who can tell? Here, we will ask Vavila; he has been to school. They teach them everything now. Vavila!" called the old man.

"Eh?"

"Vavila, when a man dies, how many days after does his soul remain on earth?"

Vavila stopped his horse, and answered at once:

"Nine days. My grandfather Cyril died, his soul stayed in our cottage thirteen days."

"How do you know?"

"There was a knocking in the stove for thirteen days."

"All right. Go on," said the old man; he evidently did not believe a word of it.

At Kuzmenok the carts turned on to the chaussée, and Lipa went her way. It was dawn, yet when she descended into the hollow the huts and church of Ukleyevo were hidden in mist. It was cold, and it seemed to her that the same cuckoo was calling. When Lipa reached the house everyone was still sleeping, and the cattle had not been taken out to graze. She sat on the doorstep and waited. The old



man was the first to come out; he at once, at a glance, understood what had happened, and for a long while was unable to utter a word, he only moved his lips.

"Alas, Lipa," he said, "you have not kept the grandson. . . ."

They awoke Varvara, who wrung her hands, wept, and at once began to arrange the baby for burial.

"It was a nice little child. Alas, alas!" she added, "he was the only boy, and she did not keep him, dear oh dear!"

There was a requiem for him in the morning and in the evening; the next day they buried him. After the burial the guests and the clergy ate a great deal, just as if they had not eaten for a long while. Lipa served the guests, and the priest raising his fork on which he held a piece of salted orange-agaric, said to her:

"Don't fret for the child. Of such are the Kingdom of Heaven."

It was only when everyone had dispersed that Lipa realised what had happened; that Nikifor was no more, nor would be again; she understood and wept. She did not know in which room to retire and weep, as she felt now after the death of her child there was no longer any place for her in the house; she was superfluous, and the others also felt it.

"Here, what is this noise you are making?" suddenly Aksinya called out, appearing in the doorway. At the funeral she had worn new black clothes, and was powdered. "Be quiet!"

Lipa tried to stop, but being unable to she only sobbed the louder.

"Do you hear?" cried Aksinya as she stamped with rage. "To whom am I speaking? Out you go in the yard, and don't put foot inside here again, convict's wife! Off with you!"

"Now, now," rather anxiously said old Tzybukin. "Aksiuta, mutashka, be calm. . . . She is weeping, quite naturally . . . her baby has died. . . ."

“Quite naturally . . .” mocked Aksinya. “Let her stay the night, and to-morrow, may no trace of her remain. Quite naturally!” she mocked again, and with a laugh directed her steps towards the shop.

Next day, early in the morning, Lipa retired to Torguevo to her mother.

## IX

In the course of time, the roof and the door of the shop were repainted and looked like new; geraniums flowered as before in the window-sills; and all that which had happened three years ago in the house of Tzybukin was almost forgotten.

Then, and now, Grigory Petrovich is reckoned the master, but in reality everything is in the hands of Aksinya; she sells and buys, nothing is done without her consent. The brick-kiln is working well; and since the railway has required bricks, the price has gone up to twenty-four rubles a thousand; women and girls carry the bricks to the station, and load wagons, for which employment they receive a quarter ruble (25 kopecks) a day.

Aksinya has shares in the business with the Khrymins, and it is called “Khrymin Junior & Co.” They opened an inn by the station; and it is there they now play the expensive harmonium. The post-master and the station-master often frequent the inn; they also are doing a bit of business. Khrymin Junior has given a gold watch to deaf Stepan, which every now and again he extracts from his pocket and puts to his ear.

In the village they say Aksinya has acquired fresh vigour; and verily if you saw her as she drives to the brick-kiln in the morning, with the usual smile on her face, looking handsome and happy, and if you saw her as she attended to business at the kiln, you would feel she had indeed a great vitality. They are all afraid of her in the house, in the village, at the kiln. When she arrives at the post-office, the post-master jumps up and says to her:

"Pray, pray take a seat, Aksinya Abramovna."

There was one middle-aged landlord, a swell, who wore a sleeveless coat of fine cloth and high-polished boots, who sold horses to her and was so captivated by her conversation that he conceded to her all she wished, held her hand in his for quite a while, and gazing into her bright, cunning, naïve eyes, said:

"For a woman like you, Aksinya Abramovna, I am prepared to render any service. Only tell me, when can we meet alone, without interference?"

"Oh, whenever you like."

So now, the middle-aged swell comes nearly every day to the shop to drink beer. The beer is frightfully bitter, like wormwood, the landowner screws up his face but drinks it.

Old Tzybukin no longer interferes with the business. He does not even keep the money. He does not mention the fact, but he cannot be sure which is the true and which is the false coin; he speaks to no one of this failing. He has grown very forgetful, and if he is not given food he does not ask for it; they are quite accustomed to dine without him, and Varvara often says:

"Our old man went to bed again last night without food." This she says quite calmly for they are used to it. In summer or winter he walks about in a thick fur-lined pelisse. But in the very hot weather he stays at home. He usually puts on his pelisse, turns up the collar, wraps the cloak round him, and walks about the country or along the road to the station, or sits from morning to evening on the bench by the church gates. Here he sits motionless; passers-by greet him, he does not answer; as ever he dislikes the muzhik. If he is asked any question he answers quite sensibly and civilly, although briefly.

In the village gossip has it, that his daughter-in-law has driven him out of his own home and does not allow him anything to eat, that he is supported by the charity of others; some people rejoice at this, others pity him.

Varvara has grown still stouter and paler and continues

her good works, which Aksinya does not interfere with. There is so much jam now that they do not manage to eat it all before the fresh lot comes; it candies, and Varvara not knowing what to do with it almost weeps.

They were beginning to forget Anisim, when one day a letter came from him written in verse on a large sheet of paper looking like a petition, and in the same wonderful handwriting as before. Apparently his friend Samorodov was also wiping out his offences in prison. Below the verses, written in an ugly, hardly decipherable handwriting was one sentence: "I am ill, wretched; send help for Christ's sake."

One day—it was a bright autumn day, towards evening—old Tzybukin sat by the church gates with the collar of his pelisse turned up, so that all that was visible was his nose and the visor of his cap. At the other end of the long bench sat Yelizarov, and by his side sat the school-factotum, Yakov, an old toothless septuagenarian. The Crutch and the factotum were talking.

"Young people should support the aged; honour their father and mother." Yakov spoke irascibly. "And this here daughter-in-law has driven her father-in-law out of his own house. The old man has neither eaten nor drunk for three days. What will happen to him?"

"For three days?" said the Crutch in astonishment.

"There he sits without opening his mouth; he has grown very weak. Why remain silent? He ought to complain in court—she would not be exonerated."

"Who was exonerated in court?" asked the Crutch, not listening.

"What for?"

"The woman is all right, she is energetic; it is impossible to carry on their business without, . . . well, without fraud."

"From his own house," continued Yakov irascibly. "To make a home and then be driven out, just think what ado! Plague on it!"

Tzybukin listened without moving.

"Your own house or someone else's, it is all the same

provided it is warm and the women don't get angry," said the Crutch with a smile. "When I was young I very much regretted my Nastasya; she was so gentle and it was always: 'Makarych, buy a house; Makarych, buy a horse.' And as she was dying she still said: 'Makarych, buy yourself a little droshky, so as you do not have to walk.' And the only thing I ever bought her was some gingerbread."

"The husband is deaf and stupid," continued Yakov, not listening to the Crutch. "Such a fool, that he is no better than a goose. Can he understand anything? Strike a goose on the head with a stick it won't understand either."

The Crutch arose to return to the factory, Yakov also got up, and they both left still talking. When they had gone about fifteen steps away, old Tzibukin also rose and with uncertain tread, as if he were on slippery ice, followed them. The light of evening was descending on the village; the last rays of the sun still shone on the road above; an old woman and some children were returning from the woods carrying baskets of yellow and brown mushrooms. There were crowds of women and girls going to the station with bricks; all of them had their noses and cheeks covered in thick red brick-dust, and they sang as they went. In front walked Lipa, singing at the top of her high-pitched voice, looking up at the sky with a look of rapture and triumph, that the day, thank God, was over and they were going to rest. Her mother, Praskovya, was also in the crowd; she was carrying a small bundle and was out of breath.

"Good even, Makarych," said Lipa, catching sight of the Crutch. "Good evening, my dove!"

"Good even, Lipynka," said the Crutch, pleased to see her. "Women, girls, be fond of the rich carpenter! Ha, ha! My children, my children"—the Crutch heaved a sigh—"my little dears."

The Crutch and Yakov passed on, still talking. Then the crowd met old Tzybukin, and there was a sudden silence. Lipa and Praskovya lagged a little behind, and when the

old man came in line with them Lipa bowed low to him and said:

“Good even, Petrovich.”

Her mother did likewise. The old man stopped, and without answering looked at them both; his lips trembled and his eyes filled with tears. Lipa reached for a bit of porridge-paste from her mother's bundle and handed it to him. He took and ate it.

The sun had set, its rays had disappeared from the road above; it was getting dark and cold; Lipa and Praskovya passed on, and long afterwards were seen making the sign of the Cross.

## VIEROCHKA

**I**VAN ALEXEYEVICH OGNIOV well remembers the August evening when he opened noisily the glazed hall door and went out on to the terrace. He wore a light cloak and a wide-brimmed straw hat—the very hat which now, beside his top-boots, lies in the dust underneath his bed. He remembers that he carried a heavy package of books and manuscripts, and that in his free hand was a stout stick.

In the doorway, holding up a lamp, stood his host, Kuznetsov, aged and bald-headed, with his long grey beard, and his cotton jacket, white as snow. And Kuznetsov smiled benevolently and nodded his head.

“Good-bye, old friend!” cried Ogniov.

Kuznetsov laid the lamp on the hall table, and followed Ogniov to the terrace. The narrow shadows of the two men swept down the steps, and, crossing the flower-beds, swayed, and came to a stop with the heads silhouetted against the lime-trees.

“Good-bye, and yet once more, thank you, old friend,” said Ogniov. “Thanks for your heartiness, your kindness, your love. . . . Never . . . never in my whole life shall I forget your goodness. . . . You have been so kind . . . and your daughter has been so kind . . . all of you have been so kind, so gay, so hearty. . . . So good, indeed, that I cannot express my gratitude.”

Under stress of feeling, under influence of the parting glass, Ogniov’s voice sounded like a seminarist’s, and his

feeling showed not only in his words but in the nervous twitching of eyes and shoulders. And Kuznetzov, touched also by emotion and wine, bent over the young man and kissed him.

"I have grown ~~as used to you as if I were your dog,~~ <sup>so used to you</sup>" continued Ogniov. "I have been with you day after day. I have spent the night at your house a dozen times, and drunk so much of your liqueurs that it frightens me to think of it. . . . But, most of all, Gavriil Petrovich, I thank you for your co-operation and help. Without you, I should have been worrying over my statistics till October. But I will put in my preface: 'It is my duty to express to M. Kuznetzov, President of the N. District Zemstvo Executive, my gratitude for his kind assistance.' Statistics have a brilliant future! Give my deepest regards to Vera Gavriilovna! And tell the doctors, the two magistrates, and your secretary that I shall never forget their kindness. . . . And now, old friend, let us embrace and kiss for the last time!"

Ogniov again kissed the old man. When he reached the last step, he turned his head and said—

"I wonder shall we ever meet again."

"God knows," answered Kuznetzov. "Probably never."

"I fear so. Nothing will lure you to Petersburg, and it is not likely that I shall ever return to these parts. Good-bye!"

"But leave your books," called Kuznetzov after him. "Why carry such a weight? My man will bring them tomorrow."

But Ogniov, who had not heard him, walked quickly away. Warmed with wine, his heart was full at the same time of sorrow and joy. He walked forward reflecting how often in life we meet such kindly men and women, how sad it is that they leave but memories behind. It is as on a journey. The traveller sees on the flat horizon the outline of a crane; the weak wind bears its plaintive cry; yet in a moment it is gone; and strain his eyes as he may towards the blue distance, he sees no bird, and hears no sound. So



in the affairs of men, faces and voices tremble a moment before us, and slip away into the gone-before, leaving behind them nothing but the vain records of memory. Having been every day at hearty Kuznetzov's house since he arrived that spring at N., Ogniov had come to know and love as kinsmen the old man, his daughter, their servants. He knew every spot in the old house, the cosy terrace, the turns in the garden paths, the trees outlined against garden and bathing-box. And now in a few seconds when he had passed the picket-gate, all these would be memories, void for evermore of real significance. A year—two years—would pass, and all these kindly images, dulled beyond restoring, would recur only in memory as the shapeless impressions of a dream.

"In life," thought Ogniov, as he approached the gate, "there is nothing better than men. Nothing!"

It was warm and still. The whole world smelt of heliotropes, mignonette, and tobacco-plants which had not yet shed their blooms. Around shrubs and tree-trunks flowed a sea of thin, moonlight-soaked mist; and—what long remained in Ogniov's memory—wisps of vapour, white as ghosts, floated with motion imperceptibly slow across the garden path. Near the moon, shining high in heaven, swam transparent patches of cloud. The whole world, it seemed, was built of coal-black shadows and wandering wisps of white; and, to Ogniov, it seemed as if he were looking not at Nature, but at a decorated scene, as if clumsy pyrotechnists, illuminating the garden with white Bengal fire, had flooded the air with a sea of snowy smoke.

As Ogniov approached the wicket-gate a black shadow moved from the low palisade and came to meet him.

"Vera Gavriilovna," he exclaimed joyfully. "You here! After I had looked for you everywhere to say good-bye! . . . Good-bye, I am going."

"So early—it is barely eleven o'clock."

"But late for me. I have a five-verst walk, and I must pack up to-night. I leave early to-morrow. . . ."

Before Ogniov stood Kuznetzov's daughter, twenty-one-

year-old Vera, whom he had seen so often, pensive and carelessly-dressed and interesting. Day-dreaming girls who spend whole days lying down in desultory reading, who suffer from tedium and melancholy, usually dress without care. But if Nature has given them taste and the instinct of beauty, this negligence in dress has often a charm of its own. And, indeed, Ogniov, recalling the vision of pretty Vera, cannot imagine her without a loose jacket, hanging in folds away from her waist, without untidy curls on her forehead, without the red, shaggy-tasselled shawl which all day long lay in the hall among the men's caps, or on the chest in the dining-room, where the old cat used it unceremoniously as bed. The shawl and the creased jacket seemed to express the easy-going indolence of a sedentary life. But perhaps it was because Ogniov liked Vera, that every button and fold exhaled to him goodness and poetry, something foreign to women insincere, void of the instinct of beauty, and cold. . . . And Vera, too, had a good figure, regular features, and pretty wavy hair. To Ogniov, who knew few women, she seemed beautiful.

"I am going away," he said again, bidding her good-bye at the wicket-gate. "Think well of me! And thanks for everything!"

And again twitching his shoulders, and speaking in the sing-song seminarist's voice which he had used to the old man, he thanked Vera for her hospitality, her kindness, her heartiness.

"I wrote about you to my mother in every letter," he said. "If all men were like you and your father, life on earth would be paradise. Every one in your house is the same. So simple, so hearty, so sincere. . . ."

"Where are you going?"

"First to my mother, in Oriol. I shall spend two days there. Then to St. Petersburg to work."

"And then?"

"Then? I shall work all winter, and in spring go somewhere in the country to collect material. Well . . . be

happy, live a hundred years, and think well of me! This is the last time we meet."

Ogniov bowed his head and kissed Vierochnka's hand, then in silent confusion straightened his cloak, rearranged his package of books, and said—

"What a thick mist to-night!"

"Yes. Have you not forgotten anything?"

"Nothing . . . I think."

For a moment Ogniov stood silently. Then he turned awkwardly to the gate and went out of the garden.

"Wait! Let me go with you as far as the wood," said Vera, running after him.

They followed the road. Trees no longer obscured the view, and they could see the sky, and the country far ahead. Through breaks in the veil of semi-transparent smoke, the world exposed its fairness; the white mist lay unevenly around bushes and hayricks, or wandered in tiny cloudlets, clinging to the surface as if not to cut off the view. The road could be seen all the way to the wood, and in the ditches beside it rose little bushes which trapped and hindered the vagabond mist wisps. Half a verst away rose a dark belt of forest.

"Why has she come? I shall have to see her home," Ogniov asked himself. But looking at Vera's profile, he smiled kindly, and said—

"I hate going away in weather like this. This evening is quite romantic, what with the moonlight, the silence . . . and all the honours! Do you know what, Vera Gavriilovna? I am now twenty-nine years old, yet have never had a single romance! In all my life so far, not one! So of trysts, paths of sighs, and kisses, I know only by hearsay. It is abnormal. Sitting in my own room in town, I never notice the void. But here in the open air I somehow feel it . . . strongly . . . it is almost annoying."

"But what is the cause?"

"I can't say. Perhaps it is because so far I have never had time, perhaps simply because I have never yet met a

woman who . . . But I have few friends, and seldom go anywhere."

They walked three hundred yards in silence. As Ogniov looked at Vera's shawl and uncovered head, he recalled the past spring and summer days, when far from his grey St. Petersburg rooms, caressed by kindly Nature and by kindly friends, pursuing his much-loved work, he had seen slip by, uncounted, sunset after dawn, day after day, nor noticed how, foreshadowing summer's end, the nightingale first, the quail, and then the corncrake ceased their songs. Time had passed unseen; and that, he supposed, meant that life had spun out pleasantly and without jar. He recalled how at the end of April he had arrived at N., a poor man, unused to society; and expected nothing but tedium, solitude, and contempt for statistics—which in his opinion took a high place among the useful sciences. He remembered the April evening of his arrival at the inn of Old-Believer Riabukhin, where for twenty kopecks a day he was given a bright, clean room, with only one restriction, that he should smoke out of doors. He remembered how he had rested a few hours, and, asking for the address of the President of the Zemstvo Executive, had set out on foot to Gavriil Petrovich's house; how he had tramped through four versts of rich meadows and young plantations; how high under a veil of cloud trembled a lark, filling the world with silver sounds, while above the green pastures, with a stolid, pompous flapping of wings, the rooks flew up and down.

"Is it possible?" Ogniov asked himself, "that they breathe this air every day, or is it perfumed only this evening in honour of me?"

He remembered how, expecting a dry, business-like reception, he had entered Kuznetzov's study timidly, with averted face, and shyly stroked his beard. And how the old man contracted his brows, and failed utterly to understand what this young man with his statistics wanted with the Zemstvo Executive. But as he began to understand what statistics really mean, and how they are collected, Gavriil Petrovich

woke up, smiled, and with infantile curiosity began to examine his visitor's note-books. . . . And on the evening of the same day, Ogniov sat at Kuznetzov's supper-table, grew tipsy on strong liqueurs, and, watching the placid faces and lazy gestures of his new acquaintances, felt spreading through his whole body that sweet, drowsy indolence of one who, wanting to continue his sleep, stretches himself and smiles. And his new-found friends looked at him lovingly, asked were his father and mother alive, how much he earned a month, and whether he often went to the theatre.

Ogniov recalled the long drives through the cantons, the picnics, the fishing parties, the trip to the convent when the Mother Superior presented each visitor with a bead-purse; he recalled the endless, heated, truly Russian arguments, in which the disputants, banging their fists on the table, misunderstood and interrupted without knowing what they meant to say, wandered from the subject, and after arguing fiercely a couple of hours, exclaimed with a laugh, "The devil knows what this dispute is about. We began about health, and are now arguing about rest in the grave!"

"Do you remember when you and I rode to Shestovo with the doctor?" asked Ogniov as they drew near to the wood. "We met a lunatic. I gave him five kopecks, and he crossed himself thrice, and threw the money in my face. What hosts of impressions I carry away—if fused in a compact mass, I should have a big ingot of gold! I never understood why clever, sensitive men crowd into big cities instead of living in the country. Is there more space and truth on the Nevsky, and in the big damp houses? My house, for instance, which is packed from top to bottom with artists, students, and journalists, always seems to me to embody an absurd prejudice."

Some twenty paces from the wood the road crossed a narrow bridge with posts at the corners. During their spring walks, this bridge was a stopping place for the Kuznetzovs and their visitors. Thence they could draw

echoes from the wood, and watch the road as it vanished in a black drive.

"We are at the bridge," said Ogniov. "You must return."

Vera stopped, and drew a deep breath.

"Let us sit down for a minute," she said, seating herself on a pillar. "When we say good-bye to friends we always sit down here."

Ogniov sat beside her on his parcel of books, and continued to speak. Vera breathed heavily, and looked straight into the distance, so that he could not see her face.

"Perhaps some day, in ten years' time, we'll meet somewhere again," he said. "Things will be different. You will be the honoured mother of a family, and I the author of a respectable, useless book of statistics, fat as forty albums put together. . . . To-night, the present counts, it absorbs and agitates us. But ten years hence we shall remember neither the date nor the month, nor even the year, when we sat on this bridge together for the last time. You, of course, will be changed. You will change."

"What?"

"I asked you just now. . . ."

"I did not hear."

Only now did Ogniov notice the change that had come over Vera. She was pale and breathless; her hands and lips trembled; and instead of the usual single lock of hair falling on her forehead, there were two. She did her best to mask her agitation and avoid looking him in the face; and to help in this, she first straightened her collar as if it were cutting her neck, and then drew the red shawl from one side to the other.

"You are cold, I am afraid," began Ogniov. "You must not sit in the mist. Let me see you home."

Vera did not answer.

"What is the matter?" resumed Ogniov. "You do not answer my questions. You are ill?"

Vera pressed her hand firmly to her cheek, and suddenly drew it away.

"It is too awful," she whispered, with a look of intense agony. "Too awful!"

"What is too awful?" asked Ogniov, shrugging his shoulders, and making no effort to conceal his surprise. "What is the matter?"

Still breathing heavily and twitching her shoulders, Vera turned away from him, and after looking a moment at the sky, began—

"I have to speak to you, Ivan Alekseyevich. . . ."

"I am listening."

"I know it will seem strange to you . . . you will be astonished, but I do not care. . . ."

Ogniov again shrugged his shoulders and prepared to listen.

"It is this . . . ," began Vera, averting her eyes, and twirling the shawl-tassels in her fingers. "You see, this is . . . that is what I wanted to say. . . . It will seem absurd to you . . . and stupid . . . but I cannot bear it!"

Vera's words, half smothered in incoherent stammerings, were suddenly interrupted by tears. She hid her face in the shawl, and wept bitterly. Ogniov, confused and stupefied, coughed, and, having no idea what to say or do, looked helplessly around. He was unused to tears, and Vera's breakdown seemed to make his own eyes water.

"Come, come!" he stammered helplessly. "Vera Gavriilovna? What does this mean? Are you ill? Some one has annoyed you? Tell me what it is . . . and perhaps I can help you."

And when, in a last attempt to console her, he drew her hands cautiously from her face, she smiled at him through her tears, and said—

"I . . . I love you!"

The words, simple and ordinary, were spoken in a simple and ordinary voice. But Ogniov, covered with intense confusion, turned his face away.

His confusion was followed by fright. The atmosphere of mournfulness, warmth, and sentiment inspired by liqueurs

and leave-takings, suddenly made way for a sharp, unpleasant feeling of awkwardness. Feeling that his whole soul had been turned inside out, he looked shyly at Vera; and she, having avowed her love, and cast for ever away her woman's enhancing inaccessibility, seemed smaller, simpler, meaner.

"What does it all mean?" he asked himself in terror. "And then . . . do I love her . . . or not?—that is the problem."

But she, now that the hardest, painfullest part was ended, breathed easily and freely. She rose from her seat, and, looking straight into Ogniov's eyes, spoke quickly, warmly, without constraint.

Those who have been overtaken by sudden terror seldom remember details, and Ogniov to-day recalls not one of Vera's words. He remembers only their import and the emotions they brought forth. He remembers her voice, which seemed to come from a strangled throat, a voice hoarse with emotion, and the magic passion and harmony in its intonations. Crying, smiling, scattering tear-drops from her eyes, she confessed that since the first days of their friendship she had been won by his originality, his intellect, his kind, clever eyes, and by the aims and aspirations of his life. That she loved him devoutly, passionately, madly; that in summer when she went from the garden into the house, and saw his coat in the hall, or heard his voice, her heart thrilled with a presage of intense joy; that his most trivial jokes had made her laugh; that every figure in his note-books exhaled to her wisdom and majesty; that even his cane standing in the hall had seemed to her lovelier than the trees.

The wood, the patches of mist, even the black roadside ditches were charmed, it seemed, as they listened. But Ogniov's heart felt only estrangement and pain. Avowing her love, Vera was entrancingly fair; her words were noble and impassioned. But Ogniov felt not the pleasure or vital joy which he himself yearned for, but only sympathy with Vera, and pain that a fellow-creature should suffer so for his sake. Heaven only knows why it was so! But whether



the cause was book-learned reason, or merely that impregnable objectivity which forbids some men to live as men, the ecstasy and passion of Vera seemed to him affected and unreal. Yet even while he felt this, something whispered that, in the light of Nature and personal happiness, that which he listened to then was a thousand times more vital than all his books, his statistics, his eternal verities. And he was angry, and reproached himself, though he had no idea wherein he was at fault.

What increased his confusion was that he knew he must reply. An answer was inevitable. To say to Vera plainly "I do not love you!" he had not the strength. But he could not say "I do," for with all his searchings he could not find in his heart a single spark.

And he listened silently while she said that she could know no greater happiness than to see him, to follow him, to go with him wheresoever he might go, to be his wife and helper . . . and that if he abandoned her she would die of grief.

"I cannot stay here," she exclaimed, wringing her hands. "I have come to detest this house, and this wood, and this air. I am tired of this changeless restfulness and aimless life; I can stand no longer our colourless, pale people, as like one another as two drops of water! They are genial and kind . . . because they are contented, because they have never suffered and never struggled. But I can stand it no more. . . . I want to go to the big grey houses, where people suffer, embittered by labour and need. . . ."

And all this seemed to Ogniov affected and unreal. When Vera ceased to speak he was still without an answer. But silence was impossible, and he stammered out—

"I . . . Vera Gavriilovna . . . I am very grateful to you, although I feel that I deserve no such . . . such feelings. In the second place, as an honest man, I must say that . . . happiness is based on mutuality . . . that is, when both parties . . . when they love equally."

Ogniov suddenly felt ashamed of his stammering speech,

and was silent. He felt that his expression was guilty, stupid, and dull, and that his face was strained and drawn out. And Vera, it seemed, could read the truth in his looks, for she paled, looked at him with terror, and averted her eyes.

"You will forgive me," stammered Ogniov, feeling the silence past bearing. "I respect you so very, very much that . . . that I am sorry . . ."

Vera suddenly turned away, and walked rapidly towards the house. Ogniov followed her.

"No, there is no need!" she said, waving her hand. "Do not come! I will go alone. . . ."

"But still . . . I must see you home."

All that Ogniov had said, even his last words, seemed to him flat and hateful. The feeling increased with each step. He raged at himself and, clenching his fists, cursed his coldness and awkwardness with women. In a last vain effort to stir his own feelings he looked at Vera's pretty figure, at her hair, at the imprints of her little feet on the dusty road. He remembered her words and her tears. But all this filled him only with pain, and left his feelings dead.

"Yes. . . . A man cannot force himself to love!" he reasoned, and at the same time thought, "When shall I ever love except by force? I am nearly thirty. Better than Vierochnka among women I have never met . . . and never shall meet. Oh, accursed old age! Old age at thirty!"

Vera walked before him, each moment quickening her step. Her face was bowed to the ground, and she did not look round once. It seemed to Ogniov that she had suddenly grown slighter and that her shoulders were narrower.

"I can imagine her feelings," he said to himself. "Shame . . . and such pain as to make her wish for death! . . . And in her words there was life and poetry, and meaning enough to have melted a stone! But I . . . I am senseless and blind."

"Listen, Vera Gavriilovna." This cry burst from him

against his will. "You must not think that I . . . that I . . ."

Ogniov hesitated and said nothing more. At the wicket-gate Vera turned, looked at him for an instant, and, wrapping her shawl tightly around her shoulders, walked quickly up the path.

Ogniov remained alone. He turned back to the wood, and walked slowly, stopping now and then and looking towards the gate. His movements expressed doubt of himself. He searched the road for the imprints of Vierochnka's feet. He refused to credit that one whom he liked so much had avowed to him her love, and that he had awkwardly, boorishly scorned her. For the first time in life he realised how little one's actions depend from mere goodwill; and he felt as feels every honourable, kindly man who, despite his intentions, has caused his nearest and dearest unmeant and unmerited suffering.

His conscience stung him. When Vierochnka vanished in the garden he felt that he had lost something very dear which he would never find again. With Vera, it seemed to him, a part of his youth had passed away, and he knew that the precious moments he had let slip away without profit would never return.

When he reached the bridge he stopped in thought, and sought the cause of his unnatural coldness. That it lay not outside himself, but within, he saw clearly. And he frankly confessed that this was not the rational calmness boasted by clever men, not the coldness of inflated egoism, but simply impotence of soul, dull insensibility to all that is beautiful, old age before its day—the fruit, perhaps, of his training, his grim struggle for bread, his friendless, bachelor life.

He walked slowly, as if against his own will, from the bridge to the wood. There where on a pall of impenetrable black the moonlight shone in jagged patches he remained alone with his thoughts; and he passionately longed to regain all that he had lost.

And Ogniov remembers that he returned to the house. Goaded himself forward with memories of what had passed, straining his imagination to paint Vera's face, he walked quickly as far as the garden. From road and garden the mist had melted away, and a bright, newly washed moon looked down from an unflecked sky; the east alone frowned with clouds. Ogniov remembers his cautious steps, the black windows, the drowsy scent of heliotropes and mignonette. He remembers how old friend Karpo, wagging genially his tail, came up and snuffed at his hand. But no other living thing did he see. He remembers how he walked twice around the house, stood awhile before the black window of Vera's room; and abandoning his quest with a sigh returned to the road.

An hour later he was back in town; and, weary, broken, leaning his body and hot face against the gate, knocked at the inn. In the distance barked a sleepy dog; and the night watchman at the church beat an iron shield.

"Still gadding about at night!" grumbled the Old-Believer, as in a long, woman's night-dress he opened the door. "What do you gain by it? It would be better for you if you stayed at home and prayed to God!"

When he entered his room Ogniov threw himself upon the bed, and long gazed steadily at the fire. At last he rose, shook his head, and began to pack his trunk.

## ✓ A TIRESOME STORY

(FROM AN OLD MAN'S JOURNAL)

### I

THERE lives in Russia an emeritus professor, Nikolay Stepanovich, privy councillor and knight. He has so many Russian and foreign Orders that when he puts them on the students call him "the holy picture." His acquaintance is most distinguished. Not a single famous scholar lived or died during the last twenty-five or thirty years but he was intimately acquainted with him. Now he has no one to be friendly with, but speaking of the past the long list of his eminent friends would end with such names as Pirogov, Kavelin, and the poet Nekrasov, who bestowed upon him their warmest and most sincere friendship. He is a member of all the Russian and of three foreign universities, et cetera, et cetera. All this, and a great deal besides, forms what is known as my name.

This name of mine is very popular. It is known to every literate person in Russia; abroad it is mentioned from professional chairs with the epithets "eminent and esteemed." It is reckoned among those fortunate names which to mention in vain or to abuse in public or in the Press is considered a mark of bad breeding. Indeed, it should be so; because with my name is inseparably associated the idea of a famous, richly gifted, and indubitably useful person. I am a steady worker, with the endurance of a camel, which is

important. I am also endowed with talent, which is still more important. In passing, I would add that I am a well-educated, modest, and honest fellow. I have never poked my nose into letters or politics, never sought popularity in disputes with the ignorant, and made no speeches either at dinners or at my colleagues' funerals. Altogether there is not a single spot on my learned name, and it has nothing to complain of. It is fortunate.

The bearer of this name, that is myself, is a man of sixty-two, with a bald head, false teeth and an incurable tic. My name is as brilliant and prepossessing, as I myself am dull and ugly. My head and hands tremble from weakness; my neck, like that of one of Turgenev's heroines, resembles the handle of a counter-bass; my chest is hollow and my back narrow. When I speak or read my mouth twists, and when I smile my whole face is covered with senile, deathly wrinkles. There is nothing imposing in my pitiable face, save that when I suffer from the tic, I have a singular expression which compels anyone who looks at me to think: "This man will die soon, for sure."

I can still read pretty well; I can still hold the attention of my audience for two hours. My passionate manner, the literary form of my exposition and my humour make the defects of my voice almost unnoticeable, though it is dry, harsh, and hard like a hypocrite's. But I write badly. The part of my brain which governs the ability to write refused office. My memory has weakened, and my thoughts are too inconsequent; and when I expound them on paper, I always have a feeling that I have lost the sense of their organic connection. The construction is monotonous, and the sentence feeble and timid. I often do not write what I want to, and when I write the end I cannot remember the beginning. I often forget common words, and in writing a letter I always have to waste much energy in order to avoid superfluous sentences and unnecessary incidental statements; both bear clear witness of the decay of my intellectual activity. And it is remarkable that, the simpler the letter, the more tor-

menting is my effort. When writing a scientific article I feel much freer and much more intelligent than in writing a letter of welcome or a report. One thing more: it is easier for me to write German or English than Russian.

As regards my present life, I must first of all note insomnia, from which I have begun to suffer lately. If I were asked: "What is now the chief and fundamental fact of your existence?" I would answer: "Insomnia." From habit, I still undress at midnight precisely and get into bed. I soon fall asleep but wake just after one with the feeling that I have not slept at all. I must get out of bed and light the lamp. For an hour or two I walk about the room from corner to corner and inspect the long familiar pictures. When I am weary of walking I sit down to the table. I sit motionless thinking of nothing, feeling no desires; if a book lies before me I draw it mechanically towards me and read without interest. Thus lately in one night I read mechanically a whole novel with a strange title, "Of What the Swallow Sang." Or in order to occupy my attention I make myself count to a thousand, or I imagine the face of some one of my friends, and begin to remember in what year and under what circumstances he joined the faculty. I love to listen to sounds. Now, two rooms away from me my daughter Liza will say something quickly, in her sleep; then my wife will walk through the drawing-room with a candle and infallibly drop the box of matches. Then the shrinking wood of the cupboard squeaks or the burner of the lamp tinkles suddenly, and all these sounds somehow agitate me.

Not to sleep of nights confesses one abnormal; and therefore I wait impatiently for the morning and the day, when I have the right not to sleep: Many oppressive hours pass before the cock crows. He is my harbinger of good. As soon as he has crowed I know that in an hour's time the porter downstairs will awake and for some reason or other go up the stairs, coughing angrily; and later beyond the windows the air begins to pale gradually and voices echo in the street.

The day begins with the coming of my wife. She comes in to me in a petticoat, with her hair undone, but already washed and smelling of eau de Cologne, and looking as though she came in by accident, saying the same thing every time: "Pardon, I came in for a moment. You haven't slept again?" Then she puts the lamp out, sits by the table and begins to talk. I am not a prophet but I know beforehand what the subject of conversation will be, every morning the same. Usually, after breathless inquiries after my health, she suddenly remembers our son, the officer, who is serving in Warsaw. On the twentieth of each month we send him fifty rubles. This is our chief subject of conversation.

"Of course it is hard on us," my wife sighs. "But until he is finally settled we are obliged to help him. The boy is among strangers; the pay is small. But if you like, next month we'll send him forty rubles instead of fifty. What do you think?"

Daily experience might have convinced my wife that expenses do not grow less by talking of them. But my wife does not acknowledge experience and speaks about our officer punctually every day, about bread, thank Heaven, being cheaper and sugar a half-penny dearer—and all this in a tone as though it were news to me.

I listen and agree mechanically. Probably because I have not slept during the night strange idle thoughts take hold of me. I look at my wife and wonder like a child. In perplexity I ask myself: This old, stout, clumsy woman, with sordid cares and anxiety about bread and butter written in the dull expression of her face, her eyes tired with eternal thoughts of debts and poverty, who can talk only of debts and poverty, who can talk only of expenses and smile only when things are cheap—was this once the slim Varya whom I loved passionately for her fine clear mind, her pure soul, her beauty, and as Othello loved Desdemona, for her "compassion" of my science? Is she really the same, my wife Varya, who bore me a son?

I gaze intently into the fat, clumsy old woman's face. I



seek in her my Varya; but from the past nothing remains but her fear for my health and her way of calling my salary "our" salary and my hat "our" hat. It pains me to look at her, if only a little, I let her talk as she pleases, and I am silent even when she judges people unjustly, or scolds me because I do not practise and do not publish text-books.

Our conversation always ends in the same way. My wife suddenly remembers that I have not yet had tea, and gives a start:

"Why am I sitting down?" she says, getting up. "The samovar has been on the table a long while, and I sit chatting. How forgetful I am? Good gracious!"

She hurries away, but stops at the door to say:

"We owe Yegor five months' wages. Do you realise it? It's a bad thing to let the servants' wages run on. I've said so often. It's much easier to pay ten rubles every month than fifty for five!"

Outside the door she stops again:

"I pity our poor Liza more than anybody. The girl studies at the Conservatoire. She's always in good society, and the Lord only knows how she's dressed. That fur-coat of hers! It's a sin to show yourself in the street in it. If she had a different father, it would do, but everyone knows he is a famous professor, a privy councillor."

So, having reproached me for my name and title, she goes away at last. Thus begins my day. It does not improve.

When I have drunk my tea, Liza comes in, in a fur-coat and hat, with her music, ready to go to the Conservatoire. She is <sup>22</sup>twenty-two. She looks younger. She is pretty, rather like my wife when she was young. She kisses me tenderly on my forehead and my hand.

"Good morning, Papa. Quite well?"

As a child she adored ice-cream, and I often had to take her to a confectioner's. Ice-cream was her standard of beauty. If she wanted to praise me, she used to say: "Papa, you are ice-creamy." One finger she called the pistachio, the other the cream, the third the raspberry finger and so

on. And when she came to say good morning, I used to lift her on to my knees and kiss her fingers, and say:

“The cream one, the pistachio one, the lemon one.”

And now from force of habit I kiss Liza's fingers and murmur:

“Pistachio one, cream one, lemon one.” But it does not sound the same. I am cold like the ice-cream and I feel ashamed. When my daughter comes in and touches my forehead with her lips I shudder as though a bee had stung my forehead, I smile constrainedly and turn away my face. Since my insomnia began a question has been driving like a nail into my brain. My daughter continually sees how terribly I, an old man, blush because I owe the servant his wages; she sees how often the worry of small debts forces me to leave my work and to pace the room from corner to corner for hours, thinking; but why hasn't she, even once, come to me without telling her mother and whispered: “Father, here's my watch, bracelets, earrings, dresses . . . Pawn them all . . . You need money”? Why, seeing how I and her mother try to hide our poverty, out of false pride—why does she not deny herself the luxury of music lessons? I would not accept the watch, the bracelets, or her sacrifices—God forbid!—I do not want that.

Which reminds me of my son, the Warsaw officer. He is a clever, honest, and sober fellow. But that doesn't mean very much. If I had an old father, and I knew that there were moments when he was ashamed of his poverty, I think I would give up my commission to someone else and hire myself out as a navy. These thoughts of the children poison me. What good are they? Only a mean and irritable person can take refuge in thinking evil of ordinary people because they are not heroes. But enough of that.

At a quarter to ten I have to go and lecture to my dear boys. I dress myself and walk the road I have known these thirty years. For me it has a history of its own. Here is a big grey building with a chemist's shop beneath. A tiny house once stood there, and it was a beer-shop. In this

beer-shop I thought out my thesis, and wrote my first love-letter to Varya. I wrote it in pencil on a scrap of paper that began "Historia Morbi." Here is a grocer's shop. It used to belong to a little Jew who sold me cigarettes on credit, and later on to a fat woman who loved students "because every one of them had a mother." Now a red-headed merchant sits there, a very nonchalant man, who drinks tea from a copper tea-pot. And here are the gloomy gates of the University that have not been repaired for years; a weary porter in a sheepskin coat, a broom, heaps of snow . . . Such gates cannot produce a good impression on a boy who comes fresh from the provinces and imagines that the temple of science is really a temple. Certainly, in the history of Russian pessimism, the age of university buildings, the dreariness of the corridors, the smoke-stains on the walls, the meagre light, the dismal appearance of the stairs, the clothes-pegs and the benches, hold one of the foremost places in the series of predisposing causes. Here is our garden. It does not seem to have grown any better or any worse since I was a student. I do not like it. It would be much more sensible if tall pine-trees and fine oaks grew there instead of consumptive lime-trees, yellow acacias and thin clipped lilac. The student's mood is created mainly by every one of the surroundings in which he studies; therefore he must see everywhere before him only what is great and strong and exquisite. Heaven preserve him from starveling trees, broken windows, and drab walls and doors covered with torn oilcloth.

As I approach my main staircase the door is open wide. I am met by my old friend, of the same age and name as I, Nikolay the porter. He grunts as he lets me in:

"It's frosty, Your Excellency."

Or if my coat is wet:

"It's raining a bit, Your Excellency."

Then he runs in front of me and opens all the doors on my way. In the study he carefully takes off my coat and at the same time manages to tell me some university news.

Because of the close acquaintance that exists between all the University porters and keepers, he knows all that happens in the four faculties, in the registry, in the chancellor's cabinet, and the library. He knows everything. When, for instance, the registration of the rector or dean is under discussion, I hear him talking to the junior porters, naming candidates and explaining offhand that so and so will not be approved by the Minister, so and so will himself refuse the honour; then he plunges into fantastic details of some mysterious papers received in the registry, of a secret conversation which appears to have taken place between the Minister and the curator, and so on. These details apart, he is almost always right. The impressions he forms of each candidate are original, but also true. If you want to know who read his thesis, joined the staff, resigned or died in a particular year, then you must seek the assistance of this veteran's colossal memory. He will not only name you the year, month, and day, but give you the accompanying details of this or any other event. Such memory is the privilege of love.

He is the guardian of the university traditions. From the porters before him he inherited many legends of the life of the university. He added to this wealth much of his own and if you like he will tell you many stories, long or short. He can tell you of extraordinary savants who knew *everything*, of remarkable scholars who did not sleep for weeks on end, of numberless martyrs to science; good triumphs over evil with him. The weak always conquer the strong, the wise man the fool, the modest the proud, the young the old. There is no need to take all these legends and stories for sterling; but filter them, and you will find what you want in your filter, a noble tradition and the names of true heroes acknowledged by all.

In our society all the information about the learned world consists entirely of anecdotes of the extraordinary absent-mindedness of old professors, and of a handful of jokes, which are ascribed to Guber or to myself or to Babukhin.

But this is too little for an educated society. If it loved science, savants and students as Nikolay loves them, it would long ago have had a literature of whole epics, stories, and biographies. But unfortunately this is yet to be.

The news told, Nikolay looks stern and we begin to talk business. If an outsider were then to hear how freely Nikolay uses the jargon, he would be inclined to think that he was a scholar, posing as a soldier. By the way, the rumours of the university-porter's erudition are very exaggerated. It is true that Nikolay knows more than a hundred Latin tags, can put a skeleton together and on occasion make a preparation, can make the students laugh with a long learned quotation, but the simple theory of the circulation of the blood is as dark to him now as it was twenty years ago.

At the table in my room, bent low over a book or a preparation, sits my dissector, Piotr Ignatyevich. He is a hard-working, modest man of thirty-five without any gifts, already bald and with a big belly. He works from morning to night, reads tremendously and remembers everything he has read. In this respect he is not merely an excellent man, but a man of gold; but in all others he is a cart-horse, or if you like a learned blockhead. The characteristic traits of a cart-horse which distinguish him from a creature of talent are these. His outlook is narrow, absolutely bounded by his specialism. Apart from his own subject he is as naïve as a child. I remember once entering the room and saying:

"Think what bad luck! They say, Skobelev is dead."

Nikolay crossed himself; but Piotr Ignatyevich turned to me:

"Which Skobelev do you mean?"

Another time,—some time earlier—I announced that Professor Perov was dead. That darling Piotr Ignatyevich asked:

"What was his subject?"

I imagine that if Patti sang into his ears, or Russia were attacked by hordes of Chinamen, or there was an earthquake, he would not lift a finger, but would go on in the

quietest way with his eye screwed over his microscope. In a word: "What's Hecuba to him?" I would give anything to see how this dry old stick goes to bed with his wife.

Another trait: a fanatical belief in the infallibility of science, above all in everything that the Germans write. He is sure of himself and his preparations, knows the purpose of life, is absolutely ignorant of the doubts and disillusionments that turn talents grey,—a slavish worship of the authorities, and not a shadow of need to think for himself. It is hard to persuade him and quite impossible to discuss with him. Just try a discussion with a man who is profoundly convinced that the best science is medicine, the best men doctors, the best traditions—the medical! From the ugly past of medicine only one tradition has survived,—the white necktie that doctors wear still. For a learned, and more generally for an educated person there can exist only a general university tradition, without any division into traditions of medicine, of law, and so on. But it's quite impossible for Piotr Ignatyevich to agree with that; and he is ready to argue it with you till doomsday.

His future is quite plain to me. During the whole of his life he will make several hundred preparations of extraordinary purity, will write any number of dry, quite competent, essays, will make about ten scrupulously accurate translations; but he won't invent gunpowder. For gunpowder, imagination is wanted, inventiveness, and a gift for divination, and Piotr Ignatyevich has nothing of the kind. In short, he is not a master of science but a labourer.

Piotr Ignatyevich, Nikolay, and I whisper together. We are rather strange to ourselves. One feels something quite particular, when the audience booms like the sea behind the door. In thirty years I have not grown used to this feeling, and I have it every morning. I button up my frock-coat nervously, ask Nikolay unnecessary questions, get angry . . . It is as though I were afraid; but it is not fear, but something else which I cannot name nor describe.

Unnecessarily, I look at my watch and say:

“Well, it’s time to go.”

And we march in, in this order: Nikolay with the preparations or the atlases in front, myself next, and after me, the cart-horse, modestly hanging his head; or, if necessary, a corpse on a stretcher in front and behind the corpse Nikolay and so on. The students rise when I appear, then sit down and the noise of the sea is suddenly still. Calm begins.

I know what I will lecture about, but I know nothing of how I will lecture, where I will begin and where I will end. There is not a single sentence ready in my brain. But as soon as I glance at the audience, sitting around me in an amphitheatre, and utter the stereotyped “In our last lecture we ended with . . .” and the sentences fly out of my soul in a long line—then it is full steam ahead. I speak with irresistible speed, and with passion, and it seems as though no earthly power could check the current of my speech. In order to lecture well, that is without being wearisome and to the listener’s profit, besides talent you must have the knack of it and experience; you must have a clear idea both of your own powers, of the people to whom you are lecturing, and of the subject of your remarks. Moreover, you must be quick in the uptake, keep a sharp eye open, and never for a moment lose your field of vision.

When he presents the composer’s thought, a good conductor does twenty things at once. He reads the score, waves his baton, watches the singer, makes a gesture now towards the drum, now to the double-bass, and so on. It is the same with me when lecturing. I have some hundred and fifty faces before me, quite unlike each other, and three hundred eyes staring me straight in the face. My purpose is to conquer this many-headed hydra. If I have a clear idea how far they are attending and how much they are comprehending every minute while I am lecturing, then the hydra is in my power. My other opponent is within me. This is the endless variety of forms, phenomena and laws, and the vast number of ideas, whether my own or others’, which depend upon them. Every moment I must be skilful

enough to choose what is most important and necessary from this enormous material, and just as swiftly as my speech flows to clothe my thought in a form which will penetrate the hydra's understanding and excite its attention. Besides I must watch carefully to see that my thoughts shall not be presented as they have been accumulated, but in a certain order, necessary for the correct composition of the picture which I wish to paint. Further, I endeavour to make my speech literary, my definitions brief and exact, my sentences as simple and elegant as possible. Every moment I must hold myself in and remember that I have only an hour and forty minutes to spend. In other words, it is a heavy labour. At one and the same time you have to be a savant, a schoolmaster, and an orator, and it is a failure if the orator triumphs over the schoolmaster in you or the schoolmaster over the orator.

After lecturing for a quarter, for half an hour, I notice suddenly that the students have begun to stare at the ceiling or Piotr Ignatyevich. One will feel for his handkerchief, another settle himself comfortably, another smile at his own thoughts. This means their attention is tried. I must take steps. I seize the first opening and make a pun. All the hundred and fifty faces have a broad smile, their eyes flash merrily, and for a while you can hear the boom of the sea. I laugh too. Their attention is refreshed and I can go on.

No sport, no recreation, no game ever gave me such delight as reading a lecture. Only in a lecture could I surrender myself wholly to passion and understand that inspiration is not a poet's fiction, but exists indeed. And I do not believe that Hercules, even after the most delightful of his exploits, felt such a pleasant weariness as I experienced every time after a lecture.

This was in the past. Now at lectures I experience only torture. Not half an hour passes before I begin to feel an invincible weakness in my legs and shoulders. I sit down in my chair, but I am not used to lecture sitting. In a moment I am up again, and lecture standing. Then I sit down



again. Inside my mouth is dry, my voice is hoarse, my head feels dizzy. To hide my state from my audience I drink some water now and then, cough, wipe my nose continually, as though I was troubled by a cold, make inopportune puns, and finally announce the interval earlier than I should. But chiefly I feel ashamed.

Conscience and reason tell me that the best thing I could do now is to read my farewell lecture to the boys, give them my last word, bless them and give up my place to someone younger and stronger than I. But, heaven be my judge, I have not the courage to act up to my conscience.

Unfortunately, I am neither philosopher nor theologian. I know quite well I have no more than six months to live; and it would seem that now I ought to be mainly occupied with questions of the darkness beyond the grave, and the visions which will visit my sleep in the earth. But somehow my soul is not curious of these questions, though my mind grants every atom of their importance. Now before my death it is just as it was twenty or thirty years ago. Only science interests me. When I take my last breath I shall still believe that Science is the most important, the most beautiful, the most necessary thing in the life of man; that she has always been and always will be the highest manifestation of love, and that by her alone will man triumph over nature and himself. This faith is, perhaps, at bottom naïve and unfair, but I am not to blame if this and not another is my faith. To conquer this faith within me is for me impossible.

But this is beside the point. I only ask that you should incline to my weakness and understand that to tear a man who is more deeply concerned with the destiny of a brain tissue than the final goal of creation away from his rostrum and his students is like taking him and nailing him up in a coffin without waiting until he is dead.

Because of my insomnia and the intense struggle with my increasing weakness a strange thing happens inside me. In the middle of my lecture tears rise to my throat, my eyes

begin to ache, and I have a passionate and hysterical desire to stretch out my hands and moan aloud. I want to cry out that fate has doomed me, a famous man, to death; that in some six months here in the auditorium another will be master. I want to cry out that I am poisoned; that new ideas that I did not know before have poisoned the last days of my life, and sting my brain incessantly like mosquitoes. At that moment my position seems so terrible to me that I want all my students to be terrified, to jump from their seats and rush panic-stricken to the door, shrieking in despair.

It is not easy to live through such moments.

## II

After the lecture I sit at home and work. I read reviews, dissertations, or prepare for the next lecture, and sometimes I write something. I work with interruptions, since I have to receive visitors.

The bell rings. It is a friend who has come to talk over some business. He enters with hat and stick. He holds them both in front of him and says:

“Just a minute, a minute. Sit down, cher confrère. Only a word or two.”

First we try to show each other that we are both extraordinarily polite and very glad to see each other. I make him sit down in the chair, and he makes me sit down; and then we touch each other's waists, and put our hands on each other's buttons, as though we were feeling each other and afraid to burn ourselves. We both laugh, though we say nothing funny. Sitting down, we bend our heads together and begin to whisper to each other. We must gild our conversation with such Chinese formalities as: “You remarked most justly” or “I have already had the occasion to say.” We must giggle if either of us makes a pun, though it's a bad one. When we have finished with the business, my friend gets up with a rush, waves his hat towards my work, and begins to take his leave. We feel each other once more and

laugh. I accompany him down to the hall. There I help my friend on with his coat, but he emphatically declines so great an honour. Then, when Yegor opens the door my friend assures me that I will catch cold, and I pretend to be ready to follow him into the street. And when I finally return to my study my face keeps smiling still, it must be from inertia.

A little later another ring. Someone enters the hall, spends a long time taking off his coat and coughs. Yegor brings me word that a student has come. I tell him to show him up. In a minute a pleasant-faced young man appears. For a year we have been on these forced terms together. He sends in abominable answers at examinations, and I mark him gamma. Every year I have about seven of these people to whom, to use the students' slang, "I give a plough" or "haul them through." Those of them who fail because of stupidity or illness, usually bear their cross in patience and do not bargain with me; only sanguine temperaments, "open natures," bargain with me and come to my house, people whose appetite is spoiled or who are prevented from going regularly to the opera by a delay in their examinations. With the first I am over-indulgent; the second kind I keep on the run for a year.

"Sit down," I say to my guest. "What was it you wished to say?"

"Forgive me for troubling you, Professor . . ." he begins, stammering and never looking me in the face. "I would not venture to trouble you unless . . . I was up for my examination before you for the fifth time . . . and I failed. I implore you to be kind, and give me a 'satis,' because . . ."

The defence which all idlers make of themselves is always the same. They have passed in every other subject with distinction, and failed only in mine, which is all the more strange because they had always studied my subject most diligently and know it thoroughly. They failed through some inconceivable misunderstanding.

"Forgive me, my friend," I say to my guest. "But I

can't give you a 'satis'—impossible. Go and read your lectures again, and then come. Then we'll see."

Pause. I get a desire to torment the student a little, because he prefers beer and the opera to science; and I say with a sigh:

"In my opinion, the best thing for you now is to give up the Faculty of Medicine altogether. With your abilities, if you find it impossible to pass the examination, then it seems you have neither the desire nor the vocation to be a doctor."

My sanguine friend's face grows grave.

"Excuse me, Professor," he smiles, "but it would be strange, to say the least, on my part. Studying medicine for five years and suddenly—to throw it over."

"Yes, but it's better to waste five years than to spend your whole life afterwards in an occupation which you dislike."

Immediately I begin to feel sorry for him and hasten to say:

"Well, do as you please. Read a little and come again."

"When?" the idler asks, dully.

"Whenever you like. To-morrow, even."

And I read in his pleasant eyes. "I can come again; but you'll send me away again, you beast."

"Of course," I say, "you won't become more learned because you have to come up to me fifteen times for examination; but this will form your character. You must be thankful for that."

Silence. I rise and wait for my guest to leave. But he stands there, looking at the window, pulling at his little beard and thinking. It becomes tedious.

My sanguine friend has a pleasant, succulent voice, clever, amusing eyes, a good-natured face, rather puffed by assiduity to beer and much resting on the sofa. Evidently he could tell me many interesting things about the opera, about his love affairs, about the friends he adores; but, unfortunately, it is not the thing. And I would so eagerly listen!

"On my word of honour, Professor, if you give me a 'satis' I'll . . ."

As soon as it gets to "my word of honour," I wave my hands and sit down to the table. The student thinks for a while and says, dejectedly:

"In that case, good-bye . . . Forgive me!"

"Good-bye, my friend . . . Good-bye!"

He walks irresolutely into the hall, slowly puts on his coat, and, when he goes into the street, probably thinks again for a long while; having excogitated nothing better than "old devil" for me, he goes to a cheap restaurant to drink beer and dine, and then home to sleep. Peace be to your ashes, honest labourer! *at least inventive*

A third ring. Enters a young doctor in a new black suit, gold-rimmed spectacles and the inevitable white necktie. He introduces himself. I ask him to take a seat and inquire his business. The young priest of science begins to tell me, not without agitation, that he passed his doctor's examination this year, and now has only to write his dissertation. He would like to work with me, under my guidance; and I would do him a great kindness if I would suggest a subject for his dissertation.

"I should be delighted to be of use to you, mon cher confrère," I say. "But first of all, let us come to an agreement as to what is a dissertation. Generally we understand by this, work produced as the result of an independent creative power. Isn't that so? But a work written on another's subject, under another's guidance, has a different name."

The aspirant is silent. I fire up and jump out of my seat. "Why do you all come to me? I can't understand," I cry out angrily. "Do I keep a shop? I don't sell theses across the counter. For the one thousandth time I ask you all to leave me alone. Forgive my rudeness, but I've got tired of it at last!"

The aspirant is silent. Only, a tinge of colour shows on his cheek. His face expresses his profound respect for my famous name and my erudition, but I see in his eyes that he

despises my voice, my pitiable figure, my nervous gestures. When I am angry I seem to him a very queer fellow.

"I do not keep a shop," I storm. "It's an amazing business! Why don't you want to be independent? Why do you find freedom so objectionable?"

I say a great deal, but he is silent. At last by degrees I grow calm, and, of course, surrender. The aspirant will receive a valueless subject from me, will write under my observation a needless thesis, will pass his tedious disputation *cum laude* and will get a useless and learned degree.

The rings follow in endless succession, but here I confine myself to four. The fourth ring sounds, and I hear the familiar steps, the rustling dress, the dear voice.

Eighteen years ago my dear friend, the oculist, died and left behind him a seven year old daughter, Katy, and sixty thousand rubles. By his will he made me guardian. Katy lived in my family till she was ten. Afterwards she was sent to College and lived with me only in her holidays in the summer months. I had no time to attend to her education. I watched only by fits and starts; so that I can say very little about her childhood.

The chief thing I remember, the one I love to dwell upon in memory, is the extraordinary confidence which she had when she entered my house, when she had to have the doctor,—a confidence which was always shining in her darling face. She would sit in a corner somewhere with her face tied up, and would be sure to be absorbed in watching something. Whether she was watching me write and read books, or my wife bustling about, or the cook peeling the potatoes in the kitchen or the dog playing about—her eyes invariably expressed the same thing: "Everything that goes on in this world,—everything is beautiful and clever." She was inquisitive and adored to talk to me. She would sit at the table opposite me, watching my movements and asking questions. She is interested to know what I read, what I do at the University, if I'm not afraid of corpses, what I do with my money.

“Do the students fight at the University?” she would ask.

“They do, my dear.”

“You make them go down on their knees?”

“I do.”

And it seemed funny to her that the students fought and that I made them go down on their knees, and she laughed. She was a gentle, good, patient child.

Pretty often I happened to see how something was taken away from her, or she was unjustly punished, or her curiosity was not satisfied. At such moments sadness would be added to her permanent expression of confidence—nothing more. I didn't know how to take her part, but when I saw her sadness, I always had the desire to draw her close to me and comfort her in an old nurse's voice: “My darling little orphan!”

I remember too she loved to be well dressed and to sprinkle herself with scents. In this she was like me. I also love good clothes and fine scents.

I regret that I had neither the time nor the inclination to watch the beginnings and the growth of the passion which had completely taken hold of *Katya* when she was no more than fourteen or fifteen. I mean her passionate love for the theatre. When she used to come from the College for her holidays and live with us, nothing gave her such pleasure and enthusiasm to talk about as plays and actors. She used to tire us with her incessant conversation about the theatre. I alone hadn't the courage to deny her my attention. My wife and children did not listen to her. When she felt the desire to share her raptures she would come to my study and coax:

“Nikolay Stepanvich, do let me speak to you about the theatre.”

I used to show her the time and say:

“I'll give you half an hour. Fire away!”

Later on she used to bring in pictures of the actors and actresses she worshipped—whole dozens of them. Then

several times she tried to take part in amateur theatricals, and finally when she left College she declared to me she was born to be an actress.

I never shared Katya's enthusiasms for the theatre. My opinion is that if a play is good then there's no need to trouble the actors for it to make the proper impression; you can be satisfied merely by reading it. If the play is bad, no acting will make it good.

When I was young I often went to the theatre, and nowadays my family takes a box twice a year and carries me off for an airing there. Of course this is not enough to give me the right to pass verdicts on the theatre; but I will say a few words about it. In my opinion the theatre hasn't improved in the last thirty or forty years. I can't find any more than I did then, a glass of clean water, either in the corridors or the foyer. Just as they did then, the attendants fine me sixpence for my coat, though there's nothing illegal in wearing a warm coat in winter. Just as it did then, the orchestra plays quite unnecessarily in the intervals, and adds a new, gratuitous impression to the one received from the play. Just as they did then, men go to the bar in the intervals and drink spirits. If there is no perceptible improvement in little things, it will be useless to look for it in the bigger things. When an actor, hide-bound in theatrical traditions and prejudices, tries to read simple straightforward monologue: "To be or not to be," not at all simply, but with an incomprehensible and inevitable hiss and convulsions over his whole body, or when he tries to convince me that Chatzky, who is always talking to fools and is in love with a fool, is a very clever man and that "The Sorrows of Knowledge" is not a boring play,—then I get from the stage a breath of the same old routine that exasperated me forty years ago when I was regaled with classical lamentation and beating on the breast. Every time I come out of the theatre a more thorough conservative than I went in.

It's quite possible to convince the sentimental, self-confident crowd that the theatre in its present state is an educa-



tion. But not a man who knows what true education is would swallow this. I don't know what it may be in fifty or a hundred years, but under present conditions the theatre can only be a recreation. But the recreation is too expensive for continual use, and robs the country of thousands of young, healthy, gifted men and women, who if they had not devoted themselves to the theatre would be excellent doctors, farmers, school mistresses, or officers. It robs the public of its evenings, the best time for intellectual work and friendly conversation. I pass over the waste of money and the moral injuries to the spectator when he sees murder, adultery, or slander wrongly treated on the stage.

But Katya's opinion was quite the opposite. She assured me that even in its present state the theatre is above lecture-rooms and books, above everything else in the world. The theatre is a power that unites in itself all the arts, and the actors are men with a mission. No separate art or science can act on the human soul so strongly and truly as the stage; and therefore it is reasonable that a medium actor should enjoy much greater popularity than the finest scholar or painter. No public activity can give such delight and satisfaction as the theatrical.

So one fine day Katya joined a theatrical company and went away, I believe, to Ufa, taking with her a lot of money, a bagful of rainbow hopes, and some very high-class views on the business.

Her first letters on the journey were wonderful. When I read them I was simply amazed that little sheets of paper could contain so much youth, such transparent purity, such divine innocence, and at the same time so many subtle, sensible judgments, that would do honour to a sound masculine intelligence. The Volga, nature, the towns she visited, her friends, her successes and failures—she did not write about them, she sang. Every line breathed the confidence which I used to see in her face; and with all this a mass of grammatical mistakes and hardly a single step.

Scarce six months passed before I received a highly poet-

ical enthusiastic letter, beginning, "I have fallen in love." She enclosed a photograph of a young man with a clean-shaven face, in a broad-brimmed hat, with a plaid thrown over his shoulders. The next letters were just as splendid, but stops already began to appear and the grammatical mistakes to vanish. They had a strong masculine scent. Katya began to write about what a good thing it would be to build a big theatre somewhere in the Volga, but on a cooperative basis, and to attract the rich business-men and shipowners to the undertaking. There would be plenty of money, huge receipts, and the actors would work in partnership. . . . Perhaps all this is really a good thing, but I can't help thinking such schemes could only come from a man's head.

Anyhow for eighteen months or a couple of years everything seemed to be all right. Katya was in love, had her heart in her business and was happy. But later on I began to notice clear symptoms of a decline in her letters. It began with Katya complaining about her friends. This is the first and most ominous sign. If a young scholar or littérateur begins his career by complaining bitterly about other scholars or littérateurs, it means that he is tired already and not fit for his business. Katya wrote to me that her friends would not come to rehearsals and never knew their parts; that they showed an utter contempt for the public in the absurd plays they staged and the manner they behaved. To swell the box-office receipts—the only topic of conversation—serious actresses degrade themselves by singing sentimentalities, and tragic actors sing music-hall songs, laughing at husbands who are deceived and unfaithful wives who are pregnant. In short, it was amazing that the profession, in the provinces, was not absolutely dead. The marvel was that it could exist at all with such thin, rotten blood in its veins.

In reply I sent Katya a long and, I confess, a very tedious letter. Among other things I wrote: "I used to talk fairly often to actors in the past, men of the noblest character, who honoured me with their friendship. From my conver-

sations with them I understood that their activities were guided rather by the whim and fashion of society than by the free working of their own minds. The best of them in their lifetime had to play in tragedy, in musical comedy, in French farce, and in pantomime; yet all through they considered that they were treading the right path and being useful. You see that this means that you must look for the cause of the evil, not in the actors, but deeper down, in the art itself and the attitude of society towards it." This letter of mine only made Katya cross. "You and I are playing in different operas. I didn't write to you about men of the noblest character, but about a lot of sharks who haven't a spark of nobility in them. They are a horde of savages who came on the stage only because they wouldn't be allowed anywhere else. The only ground they have for calling themselves artists is their impudence. Not a single talent among them, but any number of incapables, drunkards, intriguers, and slanderers. I can't tell you how bitterly I feel it that the art I love so much is fallen into the hands of people I despise. It hurts me that the best men should be content to look at evil from a distance and not want to come nearer. Instead of taking an active part, they write ponderous platitudes and useless sermons. . . ." and more in the same strain.

A little while after I received the following: "I have been inhumanly deceived. I can't go on living any more. Do as you think fit with my money. I loved you as a father and as my only friend. Forgive me."

So it appeared that *he* too belonged to the horde of savages. Later on, I gathered from various hints, that there was an attempt at suicide. Apparently, Katya tried to poison herself. I think she must have been seriously ill afterwards, for I got the following letter from Yalta, where most probably the doctors had sent her. Her last letter to me contained a request that I should send her at Yalta a thousand rubles, and it ended with the words: "Forgive me for writing such a sad letter. I buried my baby yesterday."

After she had spent about a year in the Crimea she returned home.

She had been traveling for about four years, and during these four years I confess that I occupied a strange and unenviable position in regard to her. When she announced to me that she was going on to the stage and afterwards wrote to me about her love; when the desire to spend took hold of her, as it did periodically, and I had to send her every now and then one or two thousand rubles at her request; when she wrote that she intended to die, and afterwards that her baby was dead,—I was at a loss every time. All my sympathy with her fate consisted in thinking hard and writing long tedious letters which might as well never have been written. But then I was *in loco parentis* and I loved her as a daughter.

Katya lives half a mile away from me now. She took a five-roomed house and furnished it comfortably, with the taste that was born in her. If anyone were to undertake to depict her surroundings, then the dominating mood of the picture would be indolence. Soft cushions, soft chairs for her indolent body; carpets for her indolent feet; faded, dim, dull colours for her indolent eyes; for her indolent soul, a heap of cheap fans and tiny pictures on the walls, pictures in which novelty of execution was more noticeable than content; plenty of little tables and stands, set out with perfectly useless and worthless things, shapeless scraps instead of curtains. . . . All this, combined with a horror of bright colours, of symmetry, and space, betokened a perversion of the natural taste as well as indolence of the soul. For whole days Katya lies on the sofa and reads books, mostly novels and stories. She goes outside her house but once in the day, to come and see me.

I work. Katya sits on the sofa at my side. She is silent, and wraps herself up in her shawl as though she were cold. Either because she is sympathetic to me, or I because I had got used to her continual visits while she was still a little girl, her presence does not prevent me from concentrat-

ing on my work. At long intervals I ask her some question or other, mechanically, and she answers very curtly; or, for a moment's rest, I turn towards her and watch how she is absorbed in looking through some medical review or newspaper. And then I see that the old expression of confidence in her face is there no more. Her expression now is cold, indifferent, distracted, like that of a passenger who has to wait a long while for his train. She dresses as she used—well and simply, but carelessly. Evidently her clothes and her hair suffer not a little from the sofas and hammocks on which she lies for days together. And she is not curious any more. She doesn't ask me questions any more, as if she had experienced everything in life and did not expect to hear anything new.

About four o'clock there is a sound of movement in the hall and the drawing-room. It's Liza come back from the Conservatoire, bringing her friends with her. You can hear them playing the piano, trying their voices and giggling. Yegor is laying the table in the dining-room and making a noise with the plates.

"Good-bye," says Katya. "I sha'n't go in to see your people. They must excuse me. I haven't time. Come and see me."

When I escort her into the hall, she looks me over sternly from head to foot, and says in vexation:

"You get thinner and thinner. Why don't you take a cure? I'll go to Sergey Fiodorovich and ask him to come. You must let him see you."

"It's not necessary, Katya."

"I can't understand why your family does nothing. They're a nice lot."

She puts on her jacket with her rush. Inevitably, two or three hair-pins fall out of her careless hair on to the floor. It's too much bother to tidy her hair now; besides she is in a hurry. She pushes the straggling strands of hair untidily under her hat and goes away.

As soon as I come into the dining-room, my wife asks:

"Was that Katya with you just now? Why didn't she come to see us. It really is extraordinary. . . ."

"Mamma!" says Liza reproachfully, "if she doesn't want to come, that's her affair. There's no need for us to go on our knees."

"Very well; but it's insulting. To sit in the study for three hours, without thinking of us. But she can do as she likes."

Varya and Liza both hate Katya. This hatred is unintelligible to me; probably you have to be a woman to understand it. I'll bet my life on it that you'll hardly find a single one among the hundred and fifty young men I see almost every day in my audience, or the hundred old ones I happen to meet every week, who would be able to understand why women hate and abhor Katya's past, her being pregnant and unmarried and her illegitimate child. Yet at the same time I cannot bring to mind a single woman or girl of my acquaintance who would not cherish such feelings, either consciously or instinctively. And it's not because women are purer and more virtuous than men. If virtue and purity are not free from evil feeling, there's precious little difference between them and vice. I explain it simply by the backward state of women's development. The sorrowful sense of compassion and the torment of conscience, which the modern man experiences when he sees distress have much more to tell me about culture and moral development than have hatred and repulsion. The modern woman is as lachrymose and as coarse in heart as she was in the middle ages. And in my opinion those who advise her to be educated like a man have wisdom on their side.

But still my wife does not like Katya, because she was an actress, and for her ingratitude, her pride, her extravagances, and all the innumerable vices one woman can always discover in another.

Besides myself and my family we have two or three of my daughter's girl friends to dinner and Aleksander Adolfovich Gnekker, Liza's admirer and suitor. He is a fair young

man, not more than thirty years old, of middle height, very fat, broad shouldered, with reddish hair round his ears and a little stained moustache, which give his smooth chubby face the look of a doll's. He wears a very short jacket, a fancy waistcoat, large-striped trousers, very full on the hip and very narrow in the leg, and brown boots without heels. His eyes stick out like a lobster's, his tie is like a lobster's tail, and I can't help thinking even that the smell of lobster soup clings about the whole of this young man. He visits us every day; but no one in the family knows where he comes from, where he was educated, or how he lives. He cannot play or sing, but he has a certain connection with music as well as singing, for he is agent for somebody's pianos, and is often at the Academy. He knows all the celebrities, and he manages concerts. He gives his opinion on music with great authority and I have noticed that everybody hastens to agree with him.

Rich men always have parasites about them. So do the sciences and the arts. It seems that there is no science or art in existence, which is free from such "foreign bodies" as this Mr. Gnekker. I am not a musician and perhaps I am mistaken about Gnekker, besides I don't know him very well. But I can't help suspecting the authority and dignity with which he stands beside the piano and listens when anyone is singing or playing.

You may be a gentleman and a privy councillor a hundred times over; but if you have a daughter you can't be guaranteed against the pettinesses that are so often brought into your house and into your own humour, by courtings, engagements, and weddings. For instance, I cannot reconcile myself to my wife's solemn expression every time Gnekker comes to our house, nor to those bottles of Château Lafitte, port, and sherry which are put on the table only for him, to convince him beyond doubt of the generous luxury in which we live. Nor can I stomach the staccato laughter which Liza learned at the Academy, and her way of screwing up her eyes, when men are about the house. Above all, I can't

understand why it is that such a creature should come to me every day and have dinner with me—a creature perfectly foreign to my habits, my science, and the whole tenour of my life, a creature absolutely unlike the men I love. My wife and the servants whisper mysteriously that that is “the bridegroom,” but still I can’t understand why he’s there. It disturbs my mind just as much as if a Zulu were put next to me at table. Besides, it seems strange to me that my daughter whom I used to think of as a baby should be in love with that necktie, those eyes, those chubby cheeks.

Formerly, I either enjoyed my dinner or was indifferent about it. Now it does nothing but bore and exasperate me. Since I was made an Excellency and Dean of the Faculty, for some reason or other my family found it necessary to make a thorough change in our menu and the dinner arrangements. Instead of the simple food I was used to as a student and a doctor, I am now fed on potage-purée, with some *sosulki* swimming about in it, and kidneys in Madeira. The title of General and my renown have robbed me for ever of *sch*i and savoury pies, and roast goose with apple sauce, and bream with *kasha*. They robbed me as well of my maid servant Agasha, a funny, talkative old woman, instead of whom I am now waited on by Yegor, a stupid, conceited fellow who always has a white glove in his right hand. The intervals between the courses are short, but they seem terribly long. There is nothing to fill them. We don’t have any more of the old good-humour, the familiar conversations, the jokes and the laughter; no more mutual endearments, or the gaiety that used to animate my children, my wife, and myself when we met at the dinner table. For a busy man like me dinner was a time to rest and meet my friends, and a feast for my wife and children, not a very long feast, to be sure, but a gay and happy one, for they knew that for half an hour I did not belong to science and my students, but solely to them and to no one else. No more chance of getting tipsy on a single glass of wine, no more Agasha, no more bream with *Kasha*, no more the old uproar to welcome our



little *contretemps* at dinner, when the cat fought the dog under the table, or Katya's head-band fell down her cheek into her soup.

Our dinner nowadays is as nasty to describe as to eat. On my wife's face there is pompousness, an assumed gravity, and the usual anxiety. She eyes our plates nervously: "I see you don't like the meat? . . . Honestly, don't you like it?" And I must answer, "Don't worry, my dear. The meat is very good." She: "You're always taking my part, Nikolay Stepanych. You never tell the truth. Why has Aleksander Adolfovich eaten so little?" and the same sort of conversation for the whole of dinner. Liza laughs staccato and screws up her eyes. I look at both of them, and at this moment at dinner here I can see quite clearly that their inner lives have slipped out of my observation long ago. I feel as though once upon a time I lived at home with a real family, but now I am dining as a guest with an unreal wife and looking at an unreal Liza. There has been an utter change in both of them, while I have lost sight of the long process that led up to the change. No wonder I don't understand anything. What was the reason of the change? I don't know. Perhaps the only trouble is that God did not give my wife and daughter the strength He gave me. From my childhood I have been accustomed to resist outside influences and have been hardened enough. Such earthly catastrophes as fame, being made General, the change from comfort to living above my means, acquaintance with high society, have scarcely touched me. I have survived safe and sound. But it all fell down like an avalanche on my weak, unhardened wife and Liza, and crushed them.

Gnekker and the girls talk of fugues and counter-fugues; singers and pianists, Bach and Brahms, and my wife, frightened of being suspected of musical ignorance, smiles sympathetically and murmurs: "Wonderful . . . Is it possible? . . . Why? . . ." Gnekker eats steadily, jokes gravely, and listens condescendingly to the ladies' remarks. Now and then he has the desire to talk bad French, and then he finds

it necessary for some unknown reason to address me magnificently, "Votre Excellence."

And I am morose. Apparently I embarrass them all and they embarrass me. I never had any intimate acquaintance with class antagonism before, but now something of the kind torments me indeed. I try to find only bad traits in Gnekker. It does not take long and then I am tormented because one of my friends has not taken his place as bridegroom. In another way too his presence has a bad effect upon me. Usually, when I am left alone with myself or when I am in the company of people I love, I never think of my merits; and if I begin to think about them they seem as trivial as though I had become a scholar only yesterday. But in the presence of a man like Gnekker my merits appear to me like an extremely high mountain, whose summit is lost in the clouds, while Gnekkers move about the foot, so small as hardly to be seen.

After dinner I go up to my study and light my little pipe, the only one during the whole day, the sole survivor of my old habit of smoking from morning to night. My wife comes into me while I am smoking and sits down to speak to me. Just as in the morning, I know beforehand what the conversation will be.

"We ought to talk seriously, Nikolay Stepanych," she begins. "I mean about Liza. Why won't you attend?"

"Attend to what?"

"You pretend you don't notice anything. It's not right. It's not right to be unconcerned. Gnekker has intentions about Liza. What do you say to that?"

"I can't say he's a bad man, because I don't know him; but I've told you a thousand times already that I don't like him."

"But that's impossible . . . impossible . . ."

She rises and walks about in agitation.

"It's impossible to have such an attitude to a serious matter," she says. "When our daughter's happiness is concerned, we must put everything personal aside. I know you don't

like him. . . . Very well. . . . But if we refuse him now and upset everything, how can you guarantee that Liza won't have a grievance against us for the rest of her life? Heaven knows there aren't many young men nowadays. It's quite likely there won't be another chance. He loves Liza very much and she likes him, evidently. Of course he hasn't a settled position. But what is there to do? Please God, he'll get a position in time. He comes of a good family, and he's rich."

"How did you find that out?"

"He said so himself. His father has a big house in Kharkov and an estate outside. You must certainly go to Kharkov."

"Why?"

"You'll find out there. You have acquaintances among the professors there. I'd go myself. But I'm a woman. I can't."

"I will not go to Kharkov," I say morosely.

My wife gets frightened; a tormented expression comes over her face.

"For God's sake, Nikolay Stepanych," she implores, sobbing. "For God's sake help me with this burden! It hurts me."

It is painful to look at her.

"Very well, Varya," I say kindly, "If you like—very well I'll go to Kharkov, and do everything you want."

She puts her handkerchief to her eyes and goes to cry in her room. I am left alone.

A little later they bring in the lamp. The familiar shadows that have wearied me for years fall from the chairs and the lamp-shade on to the walls and the floor. When I look at them it seems that it's night already, and the cursed insomnia has begun. I lie down on the bed; then I get up and walk about the room; then lie down again. My nervous excitement generally reaches its highest after dinner, before the evening. For no reason I begin to cry and hide my head in the pillow. All the while I am afraid somebody may come

in; I am afraid I shall die suddenly; I am ashamed of my tears; altogether, something intolerable is happening in my soul. I feel I cannot look at the lamp or the books or the shadows on the floor, or listen to the voices in the drawing-room any more. Some invisible, mysterious force pushes me rudely out of my house. I jump up, dress hurriedly, and go cautiously out into the street so that the household shall not notice me. Where shall I go?

The answer to this question has long been there in my brain: "To Katya."

### III

As usual she is lying on the Turkish divan or the couch and reading something. Seeing me she lifts her head languidly, sits down, and gives me her hand.

"You are always lying down like that," I say after a reposeful silence. "It's unhealthy. You'd far better be doing something."

"Ah?"

"You'd far better be doing something, I say."

"What? . . . A woman can be either a simple worker or an actress."

"Well, then—if you can't become a worker, be an actress." She is silent.

"You had better marry," I say, half-joking.

"There's no one to marry: and no use if I did."

"You can't go on living like this."

"Without a husband? As if that mattered. There are as many men as you like, if you only had the will."

"This isn't right, Katya."

"What isn't right?"

"What you said just now."

Katya sees that I am changed, and desires to soften the bad impression.

"Come. Let's come here. Here."

She leads me into a small room, very cosy, and points to the writing table.

"There. I made it for you. You'll work here. Come every day and bring your work with you. They only disturb you there at home. . . . Will you work here? Would you like to?"

In order not to hurt her by refusing, I answer that I shall work with her and that I like the room immensely. Then we both sit down in the cosy room and begin to talk.

The warmth, the cosy surroundings, the presence of a sympathetic being, rouses in me now not a feeling of pleasure as it used but a strong desire to complain and grumble. Anyhow it seems to me that if I moan and complain I shall feel better.

"It's a bad business, my dear," I begin with a sigh. "Very bad."

"What is the matter?"

"I'll tell you what is the matter. The best and most sacred right of kings is the right to pardon. And I have always felt myself a king so long as I used this right prodigally. I never judged, I was compassionate, I pardoned everyone right and left. When others protested and revolted I only advised and persuaded. All my life I've tried to make my society tolerable to the family of students, friends and servants. And this attitude of mine towards people, I know, educated every one who came into contact with me. But now I am king no more. There's something going on in me which belongs only to slaves. Day and night evil thoughts roam about in my head, and feelings which I never knew before have made their home in my soul. I hate and despise; I'm exasperated, disturbed, and afraid. I've become strict beyond measure, exacting, unkind, and suspicious. Even the things which in the past gave me the chance of making an extra pun, now bring me a feeling of oppression. My logic has changed too. I used to despise money alone; now I cherish evil feelings, not to memory, but to the rich, as if they were guilty. I used to hate violence and arbi-

trariness; now I hate the people who employ violence, as if they alone are to blame and not all of us, who cannot educate one another. What does it all mean? If my new thoughts and feelings come from a change of my convictions, where could the change have come from? Has the world grown worse and I better, or was I blind and indifferent before? But if the change is due to the general decline of my physical and mental powers—I am sick and losing weight every day—then I'm in a pitiable position. It means that my new thoughts are abnormal and unhealthy, that I must be ashamed of them and consider them valueless. . . .”

“Sickness hasn't anything to do with it,” Katya interrupts. “Your eyes are opened—that's all. You've begun to notice things you didn't want to notice before for some reason. My opinion is that you must break with your family finally first of all and then go away.”

“You're talking nonsense.”

“You don't love them any more. Then, why do you behave unfairly? And is it a family! Mere nobodies. If they died to-day, no one would notice their absence to-morrow.”

Katya despises my wife and daughter as much as they hate her. It's scarcely possible nowadays to speak of the right of people to despise one another. But if you accept Katya's point of view and own that such a right exists, you will notice that she has the same right to despise my wife and Liza as they have to hate her.

“Mere nobodies!” she repeats. “Did you have any dinner to-day? It's a wonder they didn't forget to tell you dinner was ready. I don't know how they still remember that you exist.”

“Katya!” I say sternly. “Please be quiet.”

“You don't think it's fun for me to talk about them, do you? I wish I didn't know them at all. You listen to me, dear. Leave everything and go away: go abroad—the quicker, the better.”

“What nonsense! What about the University?”

“And the University, too. What is it to you? There’s no sense in it all. You’ve been lecturing for thirty years, and where are your pupils? Have you many famous scholars? Count them up. But to increase the number of doctors who exploit the general ignorance and make hundreds of thousands,—there’s no need to be a good and gifted man. You aren’t wanted.”

“My God, how bitter you are!” I get terrified. “How bitter you are. Be quiet, or I’ll go away. I can’t reply to the bitter things you say.”

The maid enters and calls us to tea. Thank God, our conversation changes round the samovar. I have made my moan, and now I want to indulge another senile weakness—reminiscences. I tell Katya about my past, to my great surprise with details that I never suspected I had kept safe in my memory. And she listens to me with emotion, with pride, holding her breath. I like particularly to tell how I once was a student at a seminary and how I dreamed of entering the University.

“I used to walk in the seminary garden,” I tell her, “and the wind would bring the sound of a song and the thrumming of an accordion from a distant tavern, or a *troika* with bells would pass quickly by the seminary fence. That would be quite enough to fill not only my breast with a sense of happiness, but my stomach, legs, and hands. As I heard the sound of the accordion or the bells fading away, I would see myself a doctor and paint pictures, one more glorious than another. And, you see, my dreams came true. There were many more things I dared to dream of. I have been a favourite professor thirty years, I have had excellent friends and an honourable reputation. I loved and married when I was passionately in love. I had children. Altogether, when I look back the whole of my life seems like a nice, clever composition. The only thing I have to do now is not to spoil the *finale*. For this, I must die like a man. If death is really a danger then I must meet it as becomes a teacher, a scholar, and a citizen of a Christian State. But I am spoil-

ing the *finale*. I am drowning, and I run to you and beg for help, and you say: 'Drown. It's your duty.'"

At this point a ring at the bell sounds in the hall. Katya and I both recognise it and say:

"That must be Mikhail Fiodorovich."

And indeed in a minute Mikhail Fiodorovich, my colleague, the philologist, enters. He is a tall, well-built man about fifty years old, clean shaven, with thick grey hair and black eyebrows. He is a good man and an admirable friend. He belongs to an old aristocratic family, a prosperous and gifted house which has played a notable *rôle* in the history of our literature and education. He himself is clever, gifted, and highly educated, but not without his eccentricities. To a certain extent we are all eccentric, queer fellows, but his eccentricities have an element of the exceptional, not quite safe for his friends. Among the latter I know not a few who cannot see his many merits clearly because of his eccentricities.

As he walks in he slowly removes his gloves and says in his velvety bass:

"How do you do? Drinking tea. Just in time. It's hellishly cold."

Then he sits down at the table, takes a glass of tea and immediately begins to talk. What chiefly marks his way of talking is his invariably ironical tone, a mixture of philosophy and jest, like Shakespeare's grave-diggers. He always talks of serious matters; but never seriously. His opinions are always acid and provocative, but thanks to his tender, easy, jesting tone, it sometimes happens that his acidity and provocativeness don't tire one's ears, and one very soon gets used to it. Every evening he brings along some half-dozen stories of the university life and generally begins with them when he sits down at the table.

"O Lord," he sighs with an amusing movement of his black eyebrows, "there are some funny people in the world."

"Who?" asks Katya.

"I was coming down after my lecture to-day and I met that old idiot N—— on the stairs. He walks along, as



usual pushing out that horse jowl of his, looking for some one to bewail his headaches, his wife, and his students, who won't come to his lectures. 'Well,' I think to myself, 'he's seen me. It's all up—no hope for me. . . .'

And so on in the same strain. Or he begins like this, "Yesterday I was at Z's public lecture. Tell it not in Gath, but I do wonder how our *alma mater* dares to show the public such an ass, such a double-dyed blockhead as Z. Why he's a European fool. Good Lord, you won't find one like him in all Europe—not even if you looked in daytime, and with a lantern. Imagine it: he lectures as though he were sucking a stick of barley-sugar—su—su—su. He gets a fright because he can't make out his manuscript. His little thoughts will only just keep moving, hardly moving, like a bishop riding a bicycle. Above all you can't make out a word he says. The flies die of boredom; it's so terrific. It can only be compared with the boredom in the great Hall at the Commemoration, when the traditional speech is made. To hell with it!"

Immediately an abrupt change of subject.

"I had to make the speech; three years ago. Nikolay Stepanych will remember. It was hot, close. My full uniform was tight under my arms, tight as death. I read for half an hour, an hour, an hour and a half, two hours. 'Well,' I thought, 'thank God I've only ten pages left.' And I had four pages of peroration that I needn't read at all. 'Only six pages then,' I thought. Imagine it. I just gave a glance in front of me and saw sitting next to each other in the front row a general with a broad ribbon and a bishop. The poor devils were bored stiff. They were staring about madly to stop themselves from going to sleep. For all that they are still trying to look attentive, to make some appearance of understanding what I'm reading, and look as though they like it. 'Well,' I thought, 'if you like it, then you shall have it. I'll spite you.' So I set to and read the four pages, every word."

When he speaks only his eyes and eyebrows smile as it is

generally with the ironical. At such moments there is no hatred or malice in his eyes but a great deal of acuteness and that peculiar fox-cunning which you can catch only in very observant people. Further, about his eyes I have noticed one more peculiarity. When he takes his glass from Katya, or listens to her remarks or follows her with a glance as she goes out of the room for a little while, then I catch in his look something humble, prayerful, pure. . . .

The maid takes the samovar away and puts on the table a big piece of cheese, some fruit, and a bottle of Crimean champagne, a thoroughly bad wine which Katya got to like when she lived in the Crimea. Mikhail Fiodorovich takes two packs of cards from the shelves and sets them out for patience. If one may believe his assurances, some games of patience demand a great power of combination and concentration. Nevertheless while he sets out the cards he amuses himself by talking continually. Katya follows his cards carefully, helping him more by mimicry than words. In the whole evening she drinks no more than two small glasses of wine, I drink only a quarter of a glass, the remainder of the bottle falls to Mikhail Fiodorovich, who can drink any amount without ever getting drunk.

During patience we solve all kinds of questions, mostly of the lofty order, and our dearest love, science, comes off second best.

"Science, thank God, has had her day," says Mikhail Fiodorovich very slowly. "She has had her swan-song. Ye-es. Mankind has begun to feel the desire to replace her by something else. She was grown from the soil of prejudice, fed by prejudices, and is now the same quintessence of prejudices as were her bygone grandmothers: alchemy, metaphysics and philosophy. As between European scholars and the Chinese who have no sciences at all the difference is merely trifling, a matter only of externals. The Chinese had no scientific knowledge,\* but what have they lost by that?"

"Flies haven't any scientific knowledge either," I say; "but what does that prove?"

"It's no use getting angry, Nikolay Stepanych. I say this only between ourselves. I'm more cautious than you think. I sha'n't proclaim it from the housetops, God forbid! The masses still keep alive a prejudice that science and art are superior to agriculture and commerce, superior to crafts. Our persuasion makes a living from this prejudice. It's not for you and me to destroy it. God forbid!"

During patience the younger generation also comes in for it.

"Our public is degenerate nowadays," Mikhail Fiodorovich sighs. "I don't speak of ideals and such things, I only ask that they should be able to work and think decently. 'Sadly I look at the men of our time'—it's quite true in this connection."

"Yes, they're frightfully degenerate," Katya agrees. "Tell me, had you one single eminent person under you during the last five or ten years?"

"I don't know how it is with the other professors,—but somehow I don't recollect that it ever happened to me."

"In my lifetime I've seen a great many of your students and young scholars, a great many actors. . . . What happened? I never once had the luck to meet, not a hero or a man of talent, but an ordinarily interesting person. Everything's dull and incapable, swollen and pretentious. . . ."

All these conversations about degeneracy give me always the impression that I have unwittingly overheard an unpleasant conversation about my daughter. I feel offended because the indictments are made wholesale and are based upon such ancient hackneyed commonplaces and such penny-dreadful notions as degeneracy, lack of ideals, or comparisons with the glorious past. Any indictment, even if it's made in a company of ladies, should be formulated with all possible precision; otherwise it isn't an indictment, but an empty calumny, unworthy of decent people.

I am an old man, and have served for the last thirty years; but I don't see any sign either of degeneracy or the lack of ideals. I don't find it any worse now than before. My

porter, Nikolay, whose experience in this case has its value, says that students nowadays are neither better nor worse than their predecessors.

If I were asked what was the thing I did not like about my present pupils, I wouldn't say offhand or answer at length, but with a certain precision. I know their defects and there's no need for me to take refuge in a mist of commonplaces. I don't like the way they smoke, and drink spirits, and marry late; or the way they are careless and indifferent to the point of allowing students to go hungry in their midst, and not paying their debts into "The Students' Aid Society." They are ignorant of modern languages and express themselves incorrectly in Russian. Only yesterday my colleague, the hygienist, complained to me that he had to lecture twice as often because of their incompetent knowledge of physics and their complete ignorance of meteorology. They are readily influenced by the most modern writers, and some of those not the best, but they are absolutely indifferent to classics like Shakespeare, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus and Pascal; and their worldly unpracticality shows itself mostly in their inability to distinguish between great and small. They solve all difficult questions which have a more or less social character (emigration, for instance) by getting up subscriptions, but not by the method of scientific investigation and experiment, though this is at their full disposal, and, above all, corresponds to their vocation. They readily become house-doctors, assistant house-doctors, clinical assistants, or consulting doctors, and they are prepared to keep these positions until they are forty, though independence, a sense of freedom, and personal initiative are quite as necessary in science, as, for instance, in art or commerce. I have pupils and listeners, but I have no helpers or successors. Therefore I love them and am concerned for them, but I'm not proud of them . . . and so on.

However great the number of such defects may be, it's only in a cowardly and timid person that they give rise to pessimism and distraction. All of them are by nature acci-

dental and transitory, and are completely dependent on the conditions of life. Ten years will be enough for them to disappear or give place to new and different defects, which are quite indispensable, but will in their turn give the timid a fright. Students' shortcomings often annoy me, but the annoyance is nothing in comparison with the joy I have had these thirty years in speaking with my pupils, lecturing to them, studying their relations and comparing them with people of a different class.

Mikhail Fiodorovich is a slanderer. Katya listens and neither of them notices how deep is the pit into which they are drawn by such an outwardly innocuous recreation as condemning one's neighbours. They don't realise how a simple conversation gradually turns into mockery and derision, or how they both begin even to employ the manners of calumny.

"There are some queer types to be found," says Mikhail Fiodorovich. "Yesterday I went to see our friend Yegor Pietrovich. There I found a student, one of your medicos; a third-year man, I think. His face . . . rather in the style of Dobroliubov—the stamp of profound thought on his brow. We began to talk. 'My dear fellow—an extraordinary business. I've just read that some German or other—can't remember his name—has extracted a new alkaloid from the human brain—idiotine.' Do you know he really believed it, and produced an expression of respect on his face, as much as to say, 'See, what a power we are.'"

"The other day I went to the theatre. I sat down. Just in front of me in the next row two people were sitting: one, 'one of the chosen,' evidently a law student, the other a whiskery medico. The medico was as drunk as a cobbler. Not an atom of attention to the stage. Dozing and nodding. But the moment some actor began to deliver a loud monologue, or just raised his voice, my medico thrills, digs his neighbour in the ribs. 'What's he say? Something no—ble?' 'Noble,' answers 'the chosen.' 'Brrravo!' bawls the medico. 'No—ble. Bravo.' You see ~~the~~ drunken blockhead didn't

come to the theatre for art, but for something noble. He wants nobility."

Katya listens and laughs. Her laugh is rather strange. She breathes out in swift, rhythmic, and regular alternation with her inward breathing. It's as though she were playing an accordion. Of her face, only her nostrils laugh. My heart fails me. I don't know what to say. I lose my temper, crimson, jump up from my seat and cry:

"Be quiet, won't you? Why do you sit here like two toads, poisoning the air with your breath? I've had enough."

In vain I wait for them to stop their slanders. I prepare to go home. And it's time, too. Past ten o'clock.

"I'll sit here a little longer," says Mikhail Fiodorovich, "if you give me leave, Ekaterina Vladimirovna?"

"You have my leave," Katya answers.

"*Bene*. In that case, order another bottle, please."

Together they escort me to the hall with candles in their hands. While I'm putting on my overcoat, Mikhail Fiodorovich says:

"You've grown terribly thin and old lately, Nikolay Stepanych. What's the matter with you? Ill?"

"Yes, a little."

"And he will not look after himself," Katya puts in sternly.

"Why don't you look after yourself? How can you go on like this? God helps those who help themselves, my dear man. Give my regards to your family and make my excuses for not coming. One of these days, before I go abroad, I'll come to say good-bye. Without fail. I'm off next week."

I came away from Katya's irritated, frightened by the talk about my illness and discontented with myself. "And why," I ask myself, "shouldn't I be attended by one of my colleagues?" Instantly I see how my friend, after sounding me, will go to the window silently, think a little while, turn towards me and say, indifferently, trying to prevent me from reading the truth in his face: "At the moment I don't see anything particular but, still, *cher confrère*, I would advise

you to break off your work. . . ." And that will take my last hope away.

Who doesn't have hopes? Nowadays, when I diagnose and treat myself, I sometimes hope that ignorance deceives me, that I am mistaken about the albumen and sugar which I find, as well as about my heart, and also about the anasarca which I have noticed twice in the morning. While I read over the therapeutic text-books again with the eagerness of a hypochondriac, and change the prescriptions every day, I still believe that I will come across something hopeful. How trivial it all is!

Whether the sky is cloudy all over or the moon and stars are shining in it, every time I come back home I look at it and think that death will take me soon. Surely at that moment my thoughts should be as deep as the sky, as bright, as striking . . . but no! I think of myself, of my wife, Liza, Gnekker, the students, people in general. My thoughts are not good, they are mean; I juggle with myself, and at this moment my attitude towards life can be expressed in the words the famous Arakheev wrote in one of his intimate letters: "All good in the world is inseparably linked to bad, and there is always more bad than good." Which means that everything is ugly, there's nothing to live for, and the sixty-two years I have lived out must be counted as lost. I surprise myself in these thoughts and try to convince myself they are accidental and temporary and not deeply rooted in me, but I think immediately:

"If that's true, why am I drawn every evening to those two toads." And I swear to myself never to go to Katya any more, though I know I will go to her again to-morrow.

As I pull my door bell and go upstairs, I feel already that I have no family and no desire to return to it. It is plain my new, Arakheev thoughts are not accidental or temporary in me, but possess my whole being. With a bad conscience, dull, indolent, hardly able to move my limbs, as though I had a ten ton weight upon me, I lie down in my bed and soon fall asleep.

And then—insomnia.

## IV

The summer comes and life changes.

One fine morning Liza comes in to me and says in a joking tone:

"Come, Your Excellency. It's all ready."

They lead My Excellency into the street, put me into a cab and drive me away. For want of occupation I read the signboards backwards as I go. The word "Tavern" becomes "Nrevat." That would do for a baron's name: Baroness Nrevat. Beyond, I drive across the field by the cemetery, which produces no impression upon me whatever, though I'll soon lie there. After a two hours' drive, My Excellency is led into the ground-floor of the bungalow, and put into a small, lively room with a light-blue paper.

Insomnia at night as before, but I am no more wakeful in the morning and don't listen to my wife, but lie in bed. I don't sleep, but I am in a sleepy state, half-forgetfulness, when you know you are not asleep, but have dreams. I get up in the afternoon, and sit down at the table by force of habit, but now I don't work any more but amuse myself with French yellow-backs sent me by Katya. Of course it would be more patriotic to read Russian authors, but to tell the truth I'm not particularly disposed to them. Leaving out two or three old ones, all the modern literature doesn't seem to me to be literature but a unique home industry which exists only to be encouraged, but the goods are bought with reluctance. The best of these home-made goods can't be called remarkable and it's impossible to praise it sincerely without a saving "but"; and the same must be said of all the literary novelties I've read during the last ten or fifteen years. Not one remarkable, and you can't dispense with "but." They have cleverness, nobility, and no talent; talent, nobility, and no cleverness; or finally, talent, cleverness, but no nobility.

I would not say that French books have talent, cleverness,



and nobility. Nor do they satisfy me. But they are not so boring as the Russian; and it is not rare to find in them the chief constituent of creative genius—the sense of personal freedom, which is lacking to Russian authors. I do not recall one single new book in which from the very first page the author did not try to tie himself up in all manner of conventions and contracts with his conscience. One is frightened to speak of the naked body, another is bound hand and foot by psychological analysis, a third must have “a kindly attitude to his fellowmen,” the fourth heaps up whole pages with descriptions of nature on purpose to avoid any suspicion of a tendency. . . . One desires to be in his books a bourgeois at all costs, another at all costs an aristocrat. Deliberation, cautiousness, cunning: but no freedom, no courage to write as one likes, and therefore no creative genius.

All this refers to *belles-lettres*, so-called.

As for serious articles in Russian, on sociology, for instance, or art and so forth, I don't read them, simply out of timidity. For some reason in my childhood and youth I had a fear of porters and theatre attendants, and this fear has remained with me up till now. Even now I am afraid of them. It is said that only that which one cannot understand seems terrible. And indeed it is very difficult to understand why hall-porters and theatre attendants are so pompous and haughty and importantly polite. When I read serious articles, I have exactly the same indefinable fear. Their portentous gravity, their playfulness, like an archbishop's, their over-familiar attitude to foreign authors, their capacity for talking dignified nonsense—“filling a vacuum with emptiness”—it is all inconceivable to me and terrifying, and quite unlike the modesty and the calm and gentlemanly tone to which I am accustomed when reading our writers on medicine and the natural sciences. Not only articles; I have difficulty also in reading translations even when they are edited by serious Russians. The presumptuous benevolence of the prefaces, the abundance of notes by the translator (which prevents one from concentrating), the parenthetical queries

and *sics*, which are so liberally scattered over the book or the article by the translator—seem to me an assault on the author's person, as well as on my independence as a reader.

Once I was invited as an expert to the High Court. In the interval one of my fellow-experts called my attention to the rude behaviour of the public prosecutor to the prisoners, among whom were two women intellectuals. I don't think I exaggerated at all when I replied to my colleague that he was not behaving more rudely than authors of serious articles behave to one another. Indeed their behaviour is so rude that one speaks of them with bitterness. They behave to each other or to the writers whom they criticise either with too much deference, careless of their own dignity, or, on the other hand, they treat them much worse than I have treated Gnekker, my future son-in-law, in these notes and thoughts of mine. Accusations of irresponsibility, of impure intentions, of any kind of crime even, are the usual adornment of serious articles. And this, as our young medicos love to say in their little articles—quite *ultima ratio*. Such an attitude must necessarily be reflected in the character of the young generation of writers, and therefore I'm not at all surprised that in the new books which have been added to our *belles lettres* in the last ten or fifteen years, the heroes drink a great deal of vodka and the heroines are not sufficiently chaste.

I read French books and look out of the window, which is open—I see the pointed palings of my little garden, two or three skinny trees, and there, beyond the garden, the road, fields, then a wide strip of young pine-forest. I often delight in watching a little boy and girl, both white-haired and ragged, climb on the garden fence and laugh at my baldness. In their shining little eyes I read, "Come out, thou baldhead." These are almost the only people who don't care a bit about my reputation or my title.

I don't have visitors every day now. I'll mention only the visits of Nikolay and Piotr Ignatyevich. Nikolay comes to me usually on holidays, pretending to come on business, but

really to see me. He is very hilarious, a thing which never happens to him in the winter.

"Well, what have you got to say?" I ask him, coming out into the passage.

"Your Excellency!" he says, pressing his hand to his heart and looking at me with a lover's rapture. "Your Excellency! So help me God! God strike me where I stand! *Gaudeamus igitur juvenestus.*"

And he kisses me eagerly on the shoulders, on my sleeves, and buttons.

"Is everything all right over there?" I ask.

"Your Excellency! I swear to God . . ."

He never stops swearing, quite unnecessarily, and I soon get bored, and send him to the kitchen, where they give him dinner. Piotr Ignatyevich also comes on holidays specially to visit me and communicate his thoughts to me. He usually sits by the table in my room, modest, clean, judicious, without daring to cross his legs or lean his elbows on the table, all the while telling me in a quiet, even voice what he considers very piquant items of news gathered from journals and pamphlets.

These items are all alike and can be reduced to the following type: A Frenchman made a discovery. Another—a German—exposed him by showing that this discovery had been made as long ago as 1870 by some American. Then a third—also a German—outwitted them both by showing that both of them had been confused, by taking spherules of air under a microscope for dark pigment. Even when he wants to make me laugh, Piotr Ignatyevich tells his story at great length, very much as though he were defending a thesis, enumerating his literary sources in detail, with every effort to avoid mistakes in the dates, the particular number of the journal and the names. Moreover, he does not say Petit simply but inevitably, Jean Jacques Petit. If he happens to stay to dinner, he will tell the same sort of piquant stories and drive all the company to despondency. If Gnekker and Liza begin to speak of fugues and counter-fugues in his

presence he modestly lowers his eyes, and his face falls. He is ashamed that such trivialities should be spoken of in the presence of such serious men as him and me.

In my present state of mind five minutes are enough for him to bore me as though I had seen and listened to him for a whole eternity. I hate the poor man. I wither away beneath his quiet, even voice and his bookish language. His stories make me stupid. . . . He cherishes the kindest feelings towards me and talks to me only to give me pleasure. I reward him by staring at his face as if I wanted to hypnotise him, and thinking "Go away. Go, go. . . ." But he is proof against my mental suggestion and sits, sits, sits. . . . *No will?*

While he sits with me I cannot rid myself of the idea: "When I die, it's quite possible that he will be appointed in my place." Then my poor audience appears to me as an oasis where the stream has dried up, and I am unkind to Piotr Ignatyevich, and silent and morose as if he were guilty of such thoughts and not I myself. When he begins, as usual, to glorify the German scholars, I no longer jest good-naturedly, but murmur sternly:

"They're fools, your Germans . . ."

It's like the late Professor Nikita Krylov when he was bathing with Pirogov at Reval. He got angry with the water, which was very cold, and swore about "These scoundrelly Germans." I behave badly to Piotr Ignatyevich; and it's only when he is going away and I see through the window his grey hat disappearing behind the garden fence that I want to call him back and say: "Forgive me, my dear fellow."

The dinner goes yet more wearily than in winter. The same Gnekker, whom I now hate and despise, dines with me every day. Before, I used to suffer his presence in silence, but now I say biting things to him, which make my wife and Liza blush. Carried away by an evil feeling, I often say things that are merely foolish, and don't know why I say them. Thus it happened once that after locking

at Gnekker contemptuously for a long while, I suddenly fired off, for no reason at all:

“Eagles than barnyard-fowls may lower bend;  
But fowls shall never to the heav’ns ascend.”

More’s the pity that the fowl Gnekker shows himself more clever than the eagle professor. Knowing my wife and daughter are on his side he maintains these tactics. He replies to my shafts with a condescending silence. (“The old man’s off his head. . . . What’s the good of talking to him?”), or makes good-humored fun of me. It is amazing to what depths of pettiness a man may descend. During the whole dinner I can dream how Gnekker will be shown to be an adventurer, how Liza and my wife will realise their mistake, and I will tease them—ridiculous dreams like these at a time when I have one foot in the grave.

Now there arose misunderstandings, of a kind which I formerly knew only by hearsay. Though it is painful I will describe one which occurred after dinner the other day.

I sit in my room smoking a little pipe. Enters my wife, as usual, sits down and begins to talk. What a good idea it would be to go to Kharkov now while the weather is warm and there is the time, and inquire what kind of man our Gnekker is.

“Very well. I’ll go,” I agree.

My wife gets up, pleased with me, and walks to the door; but immediately returns:

“By-the-bye, I’ve one more favour to ask. I know you’ll be angry; but it’s my duty to warn you . . . Forgive me, Nikolay,—but all our neighbours have begun to talk about the way you go to Katya’s continually. I don’t deny that she’s clever and educated. It’s pleasant to spend the time with her. But at your age and in your position it’s rather strange to find pleasure in her society. . . . Besides she has a reputation enough to. . . .”

All my blood rushes instantly from my brain. My eyes flash fire. I catch hold of my hair, and stamp and cry, in a voice that is not mine:

Invidia - no rest - ever - etc.

"Leave me alone, leave me, leave me. . . ."

My face is probably terrible, and my voice strange, for my wife suddenly gets pale and calls aloud, with a despairing voice, also not her own. At our cries rush in Liza and Gnekker, then Yegor.

My feet grow numb, as though they did not exist. I feel that I am falling into somebody's arms. Then I hear crying for a little while and sink into a faint which lasts for two or three hours.

Now for Katya. She comes to see me before evening every day, which of course must be noticed by my neighbours and my friends. After a minute she takes me with her for a drive. She has her own horse and a new buggy she bought this summer. Generally she lives like a princess. She has taken an expensive detached bungalow with a big garden, and put into it all her town furniture. She has two maids and a coachman. I often ask her:

"Katya, what will you live on when you've spent all your father's money?"

"We'll see, then," she answers.

"But this money deserves to be treated more seriously, my dear. It was earned by a good man and honest labour."

"You've told me that before. I know."

First we drive by the field, then by a young pine forest, which you can see from my window. Nature seems to me as beautiful as she used, although the devil whispers to me that all these pines and firs, the birds and white clouds in the sky will not notice my absence in three or four months when I am dead. Katya likes to take the reins, and it is good that the weather is fine and I am sitting by her side. She is in a happy mood, and does not say bitter things.

"You're a very good man, Nikolay," she says. "You are a rare bird. There's no actor who could play your part. Mine or Mikhail's, for instance—even a bad actor could manage, but yours—there's nobody. I envy you, envy you terribly! What am I? What?"

She thinks for a moment, and asks:

"I'm a negative phenomenon, am I not?"

"Yes," I answer.

"H'm . . . what's to be done then?"

What answer can I give? It's easy to say "Work," or "Give your property to the poor," or "Know yourself," and because it's so easy to say this I don't know what to answer.

My therapist colleagues, when teaching methods of cure, advise one "to individualise each particular case." This advice must be followed in order to convince one's self that the remedies recommended in the text-books as the best and most thoroughly suitable as a general rule, are quite unsuitable in particular cases. It applies to moral affections as well.

But I must answer something. So I say:

"You've too much time on your hands, my dear. You must take up something. . . . In fact, why shouldn't you go on the stage again, if you have a vocation."

"I can't."

"You have the manner and tone of a victim. I don't like it, my dear. You have yourself to blame. Remember, you began by getting angry with people and things in general; but you never did anything to improve either of them. You didn't put up a struggle against the evil. You got tired. You're not a victim of the struggle but of your own weakness. Certainly you were young then and inexperienced. But now everything can be different. Come on, be an actress. You will work; you will serve in the temple of art. . . ."

"Don't be so clever, Nikolay," she interrupts. "Let's agree once for all: let's speak about actors, actresses, writers, but let us leave art out of it. You're a rare and excellent man. But you don't understand enough about art to consider it truly sacred. You have no *flair*, no ear for art. You've been busy all your life, and you never had time to acquire the *flair*. Really . . . I don't love these conversations about art!" she continues nervously. "I don't love

them. They've vulgarised it enough already, thank you."

"Who's vulgarised it?"

"*They* have vulgarised it by their drunkenness, newspapers by their over-familiarity, clever people by philosophy."

"What's philosophy got to do with it?"

"A great deal. If a man philosophises, it means he doesn't understand."

So that it should not come to bitter words, I hasten to change the subject, and then keep silence for a long while. It's not till we come out of the forest and drive towards Katya's bungalow, I return to the subject and ask:

"Still, you haven't answered me why you don't want to go on the stage?"

"Really, it's cruel," she cries out, and suddenly blushes all over. "You want me to tell you the truth outright. Very well if . . . if you will have it! I've no talent! No talent and . . . much ambition! There you are!"

After this confession, she turns her face away from me, and to hide the trembling of her hands, tugs at the reins.

As we approach her bungalow, from a distance we see Mikhail already, walking about by the gate, impatiently awaiting us.

"This Fiodorovich again," Katya says with annoyance. "Please take him away from me. I'm sick of him. He's flat. . . . Let him go to the deuce."

Mikhail Fiodorovich ought to have gone abroad long ago, but he has postponed his departure every week. There have been some changes in him lately. He's suddenly got thin, begun to be affected by drink—a thing that never happened to him before, and his black eyebrows have begun to get grey. When our buggy stops at the gate he cannot hide his joy and impatience. Anxiously he helps Katya and me from the buggy, hastily asks us questions, laughs, slowly rubs his hands, and that gentle, prayerful, pure something that I used to notice only in his eyes is now poured over all his face. He is happy and at the same time ashamed of his happiness, ashamed of his habit of coming to Katya's



every evening, and he finds it necessary to give a reason for his coming, some obvious absurdity, like: "I was just passing on business, and I thought I'd just drop in for a second."

All three of us go indoors. First we drink tea, then our old friends, the two packs of cards, appear on the table, with a big piece of cheese, some fruit, and a bottle of Crimean champagne. The subjects of conversation are not new, but all exactly the same as they were in the winter. The university, the students, literature, the theatre—all of them come in for it. The air thickens with slanders, and grows more close. It is poisoned by the breath, not of two toads as in winter, but now by all three. Besides the velvety, baritone laughter and the accordion-like giggle, the maid who waits upon us hears also the unpleasant jarring laugh of a musical comedy general: "He, he, he!"

*stopped acting, all 3*

## V

There sometimes come fearful nights with thunder, lightning, rain, and wind, which the peasants call "sparrow-nights." There was one such sparrow-night in my own personal life. . . .

I wake after midnight and suddenly leap out of bed. Somehow it seems to me that I am going to die immediately. I do not know why, for there is no single sensation in my body which points to a quick end; but a terror presses on my soul as though I had suddenly seen a huge, ill-boding fire in the sky.

I light the lamp quickly and drink some water straight out of the decanter. Then I hurry to the window. The weather is magnificent. The air smells of hay and some delicious thing besides. I see the spikes of my garden fence, the sleepy starveling trees by the window, the road, the dark strip of forest. There is a calm and brilliant moor in the sky and not a single cloud. Serenity. Not a ~~let~~

stirs. To me it seems that everything is looking at me and listening for me to die.

Dread seizes me. I shut the window and run to the bed. I feel for my pulse. I cannot find it in my wrist; I seek it in my temples, my chin, my hand again. They are all cold and slippery with sweat. My breathing comes quicker and quicker; my body trembles, all my bowels are stirred, and my face and forehead feel as though a cobweb had settled on them.

What shall I do? Shall I call my family? No use. I do not know what my wife and Liza will do when they come in to me.

I hide my head under the pillow, shut my eyes and wait, wait . . . My spine is cold. It almost contracts within me. And I feel that death will approach me only from behind, very quietly.

"Kivi, kivi." A squeak sounds in the stillness of the night. I do not know whether it is in my heart or in the street.

God, how awful! I would drink some more water; but now I dread opening my eyes, and fear to raise my head. The terror is unaccountable, animal. I cannot understand why I am afraid. Is it because I want to live, or because a new and unknown pain awaits me?

Upstairs, above the ceiling, a moan, then a laugh . . . I listen. A little after steps sound on the staircase. Someone hurries down, then up again. In a minute steps sound downstairs again. Someone stops by my door and listens.

"Who's there?" I call.

The door opens. I open my eyes boldly and see my wife. Her face is pale and her eyes red with weeping.

"You're not asleep, Nicolai Stepanovich?" she asks.

"What is it?"

"For God's sake go down to Liza. Something is wrong with her."

"Very well . . . with pleasure," I murmur, very glad  
of his  
of his

As I follow my wife I hear what she tells me, and from agitation understand not a word. Bright spots from her candle dance over the steps of the stairs; our long shadows tremble; my feet catch in the skirts of my dressing-gown. My breath goes, and it seems to me that someone is chasing me, trying to seize my back. "I shall die here on the staircase, this second," I think, "this second." But we have passed the staircase, the dark hall with the Italian window and we go into Liza's room. She sits in bed in her chemise; her bare legs hang down and she moans.

"Oh, my God . . . oh, my God!" she murmurs, half shutting her eyes from our candles. "I can't, I can't."

"Liza, my child," I say, "what's the matter?"

Seeing me, she calls out and falls on my neck.

"Papa darling," she sobs. "Papa dearest . . . my sweet. . . I don't know what it is . . . It hurts."

She embraces me, kisses me and lisps endearments which I heard her lisp when she was still a baby.

"Be calm, my child. God's with you," I say. "You mustn't cry. Something hurts me too."

I try to cover her with the bedclothes; my wife gives her to drink; and both of us jostle in confusion round the bed. My shoulders push into hers, and at that moment I remember how we used to bathe our children.

"But help her, help her!" my wife implores. "Do something!" And what can I do? Nothing. There is some weight on the girl's soul; but I understand nothing, know nothing and can only murmur:

"It's nothing, nothing . . . It will pass . . . Sleep sleep."

As if on purpose a dog suddenly howls in the yard, at first low and irresolute, then aloud, in two voices. I never put any value on such signs as dogs' whining or screeching owls; but now my heart contracts painfully, and I hasten to explain the howling.

"Nonsense," I think. "It's the influence of one organism on another. My great nervous strain was transmitted

to my wife, to Liza, and to the dog. That's all. Such transmissions explain presentiments and previsions."

A little later when I return to my room to write a prescription for Liza I no longer think that I shall die soon. My soul simply feels heavy and dull, so that I am even sad that I did not die suddenly. For a long while I stand motionless in the middle of the room, pondering what I shall prescribe for Liza; but the moans above the ceiling are silent and I decide not to write a prescription, but stand there still.

There is a dead silence, a silence, as one man wrote, that rings in one's ears. The time goes slowly. The bars of moonshine on the window-sill do not move from their place, as though congealed . . . The dawn is still far away.

But the garden-gate creaks; someone steals in, and strips a twig from the starveling trees, and cautiously knocks with it on my window.

"Nikolay Stepanovich!" I hear a whisper. "Nikolay Stepanovich!"

I open the window, and I think that I am dreaming. Under the window, close against the wall stands a woman in a black dress. She is brightly lighted by the moon and looks at me with wide eyes. Her face is pale, stern and fantastic in the moon, like marble. Her chin trembles.

"It is I . . ." she says, "I . . . Katya!"

In the moon all women's eyes are big and black, people are taller and paler. Probably that is the reason why I did not recognise her in the first moment.

"What's the matter?"

"Forgive me," she says. "I suddenly felt so dreary . . . I could not bear it. So I came here. There's a light in your window . . . and I decided to knock . . . Forgive me . . . Ah, if you knew how dreary I felt! What are you doing now?"

"Nothing. Insomnia."

Her eyebrows lift, her eyes shine with tears and all her

face is illumined as with light, with the familiar, but long unseen, look of confidence.

"Nikolay Stepanovich!" she says imploringly, stretching out both her hands to me. "Dear, I beg you . . . I implore . . . If you do not despise my friendship and my respect for you, then do what I implore you."

"What is it?"

"Take my money."

"What next? What's the good of your money to me?"

"You will go somewhere to be cured. You must cure yourself. You will take it? Yes? Dear . . . Yes?"

She looks into my face eagerly and repeats:

"Yes? You will take it?"

"No, my dear, I won't take it . . .", I say. "Thank you."

She turns her back to me and lowers her head. Probably the tone of my refusal would not allow any further talk of money.

"Go home to sleep," I say. "I'll see you to-morrow."

"It means, you don't consider me your friend?" she asks sadly.

"I don't say that. But your money is no good to me."

"Forgive me," she says, lowering her voice by a full octave. "I understand you. To be obliged to a person like me . . . a retired actress . . . But good-bye."

And she walks away so quickly that I have no time even to say "Good-bye."

## VI

I am in Kharkov.

Since it would be useless to fight against my present mood, and I have no power to do it, I made up my mind that the last days of my life shall be irreproachable, on the formal side. If I am not right with my family, which I certainly admit, I will try at least to do as it wishes. Besides I am lately become so indifferent that it's positively

all the same to me whether I go to Kharkov, or Paris, or Berdichev.

I arrived here at noon and put up at a hotel not far from the cathedral. The train made me giddy, the draughts blew through me, and now I am sitting on the bed with my head in my hands waiting for the tic. I ought to go to my professor friends to-day, but I have neither the will nor the strength.

The old hall-porter comes in to ask whether I have brought my own bed-clothes. I keep him about five minutes asking him questions about Gnekker, on whose account I came here. The porter happens to be Kharkov-born, and knows the town inside out; but he doesn't remember any family with the name of Gnekker. I inquire about the estate. The answer is the same.

The clock in the passage strikes one, . . . two, . . . three . . . The last months of my life, while I wait for death, seem to me far longer than my whole life. Never before could I reconcile myself to the slowness of time as I can now. Before, when I had to wait for a train at the station, or to sit at an examination, a quarter of an hour would seem an eternity. Now I can sit motionless in bed the whole night long, quite calmly thinking that there will be the same long, colourless night to-morrow, and the next day. . . .

In the passage the clock strikes five, six, seven . . . It grows dark. There is dull pain in my cheek—the beginning of the tic. To occupy myself with thoughts, I return to my old point of view, when I was not indifferent, and ask: Why do I, a famous man, a privy councillor, sit in this little room, on this bed with a strange grey blanket? Why do I look at this cheap tin washstand and listen to the wretched clock jarring in the passage? Is all this worthy of my fame and my high position among people? And I answer these questions with a smile. My *naïveté* seems funny to me—the *naïveté* with which as a young man I exaggerated the value of fame and of the exclusive position

spoken with reverence. My portrait has appeared in "Niva" and in "The Universal Illustration." I've even read my biography in a German paper, but what of that? I sit lonely, by myself, in a strange city, on a strange bed, rubbing my aching cheek with my palm. . . .

Family scandals, the hardness of creditors, the rudeness of railway men, the discomforts of the passport system, the expensive and unwholesome food at the buffets, the general coarseness and roughness of people,—all this and a great deal more that would take too long to put down, concerns me as much as it concerns any bourgeois who is known only in his own little street. Where is the exclusiveness of my position then? We will admit that I am infinitely famous, that I am a hero of whom my country is proud. All the newspapers give bulletins of my illness, the post is already bringing in sympathetic addresses from my friends, my pupils, and the public. But all this will not save me from dying in anguish on a stranger's bed in utter loneliness. Of course there is no one to blame for this. But I must confess I do not like my popularity. I feel that it has deceived me.

At about ten I fall asleep, and, in spite of the tic sleep soundly, and would sleep for a long while were I not awakened. Just after one there is a sudden knock at my door.

"Who's there?"

"A telegram."

"You could have brought it to-morrow," I storm, as I take the telegram from the porter. "Now I shan't sleep again."

"I'm sorry. There was a light in your room. I thought you were not asleep."

I open the telegram and look first at the signature—my wife's. What does she want?

"Gnekker married Liza secretly yesterday. Return."

I read the telegram. For a long while I am not startled. Not Gnekker's or Liza's action frightens me, but the indif-

ference with which I receive the news of their marriage. Men say that philosophers and true *savants* are indifferent. It is untrue. Indifference is the paralysis of the soul, premature death.

I go to bed again and begin to ponder with what thoughts I can occupy myself. What on earth shall I think of? I seem to have thought over everything, and now there is nothing powerful enough to rouse my thought.

When the day begins to dawn, I sit in bed clasping my knees and, for want of occupation I try to know myself. "Know yourself" is good, useful advice; but it is a pity that the ancients did not think of showing us the way to avail ourselves of it.

Before, when I had the desire to understand somebody else, or myself, I used not to take into consideration actions, wherein everything is conditional, but desires. Tell me what you want, and I will tell you what you are.

And now I examine myself. What do I want?

I want our wives, children, friends, and pupils to love in us, not the name or the firm or the label, but the ordinary human beings. What besides? I should like to have assistants and successors. What more? I should like to wake in a hundred years' time, and take a look, if only with one eye, at what has happened to science. I should like to live ten years more. . . . What further?

Nothing further. I think, think a long while and cannot make out anything else. However much I were to think, wherever my thoughts should stray, it is clear to me that the chief, all-important something is lacking in my desires. In my infatuation for science, my desire to live, my sitting here on a strange bed, my yearning to know myself, in all the thoughts, feelings, and ideas I form about anything, there is wanting the something universal which could bind all these together in one whole. Each feeling and thought lives detached in me, and in all my opinions about science, the theatre, literature, and my pupils, and in all the little pictures which my imagination paints, not even the most



cunning analyst will discover what is called the general idea or the god of the living man.

And if this is not there, then nothing is there.

In poverty such as this a serious infirmity, fear of death, influence of circumstances and people would have been enough to overthrow and shatter all that I formerly considered as my conception of the world, and all wherein I saw the meaning and joy of my life. Therefore, it is nothing strange that I have darkened the last months of my life by thoughts and feelings worthy of a slave or a savage, and that I am now indifferent and do not notice the dawn. If there is lacking in a man that which is higher and stronger than all outside influences, then verily a good cold in the head is enough to upset his balance and to make him see each bird an owl and hear a dog's whine in every sound; and all his pessimism or his optimism with their attendant thoughts, great and small, seem then to be merely symptoms and no more.

I am beaten. Then it's no good going on thinking, no good talking. I shall sit and wait in silence for what will come.

*might as well be dead.*

In the morning the porter brings me tea and the local paper. Mechanically I read the advertisements on the first page, the leader, the extracts from newspapers and magazines, the local news . . . Among other things I find in the local news an item like this: "Our famous scholar, emeritus professor Nicolai Stepanovich, arrived in Kharkov yesterday by the express, and stayed at —— hotel."

Evidently big names are created to live detached from those who bear them. Now my name walks in Kharkov, undisturbed. In some three months it will shine as bright as the sun itself, inscribed in letters of gold on my tombstone—at a time when I myself will be under the sod . . .

A faint knock at the door. Somebody wants me.

"Who's there? Come in!"

The door opens. I step back in astonishment, and hasten

to pull my dressing gown together. Before me stands Katya.

"How do you do?" she says, panting from running up the stairs. "You didn't expect me? I . . . I've come too."

She sits down and continues, stammering and looking away from me. "Why don't you say 'Good morning'? I arrived too . . . to-day. I found out you were at this hotel, and came to see you."

"I'm delighted to see you," I say, shrugging my shoulders. "But I'm surprised. You might have dropped straight from heaven. What are you doing here?"

"I? . . . I just came."

Silence. Suddenly she gets up impetuously and comes over to me.

"Nikolay Stepanyich!" she says, growing pale and pressing her hands to her breast. "Nikolay Stepanyich! I can't go on like this any longer. I can't. For God's sake tell me now, immediately. What shall I do? Tell me, what shall I do?"

"What can I say? I am beaten. I can say nothing."

"But tell me, I implore you," she continues, out of breath and trembling all over her body. "I swear to you, I can't go like this any longer. I haven't the strength."

She drops into a chair and begins to sob. She throws her head back, wrings her hands, stamps with her feet; her hat falls from her head and dangles by its string, her hair is loosened.

"Help me, help," she implores. "I can't bear it any more."

She takes a handkerchief out of her little travelling bag and with it pulls out some letters which fall from her knees to the floor. I pick them up from the floor and recognise on one of them Mikhail Fiodorovich's hand-writing, and accidentally read part of a word: "passionat. . . ."

"There's nothing that I can say to you, Katya," I say.

"Help me," she sobs, seizing my hand and kissing it.

"You're my father, my only friend. You're wise and learned, and you've lived long! You were a teacher. Tell me what to do."

I am bewildered and surprised, stirred by her sobbing, and I can hardly stand upright.

"Let's have some breakfast, Katya," I say with a constrained smile.

Instantly I add in a sinking voice:

"I shall be dead soon, Katya. . . ."

"Only one word, only one word," she weeps and stretches out her hands to me. "What shall I do?"

"You're a queer thing, really. . . .", I murmur. "I can't understand it. Such a clever woman and suddenly — weeping. . . ."

Comes silence. Katya arranges her hair, puts on her hat, then crumples her letters and stuffs them in her little bag, all in silence and unhurried. Her face, her bosom and her gloves are wet with tears, but her expression is dry already, stern . . . I look at her and am ashamed that I am happier than she. It was but a little while before my death, in the ebb of my life, that I noticed in myself the absence of what our friends the philosophers call the general idea; but this poor thing's soul has never known and never will know shelter all her life, all her life.

"Katya, let's have breakfast," I say.

"No, thank you," she answers coldly.

One minute more passes in silence.

"I don't like Kharkov," I say. "It's too grey. A grey city."

"Yes . . . ugly. . . . I'm not here for long. . . . On my way. I leave to-day."

"For where?"

"For the Crimea . . . I mean, the Caucasus."

"So. For long?"

"I don't know."

Katya gets up and gives me her hand with a cold smile looking away from me.

I would like to ask her: "That means you won't be at my funeral?" But she does not look at me; her hand is cold and like a stranger's. I escort her to the door in silence. . . . She goes out of my room and walks down the long passage, without looking back. She knows that my eyes are following her, and probably on the landing she will not look back.

No, she did not look back. The black dress showed for the last time, her steps were stilled. . . . Goodbye, my treasure!

**THE END**

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