

Count Tolstoi.

THE COSSACKS.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

- 2/6 A RUSSIAN PROPRIETOR.
,, THE COSSACKS.
,, IVAN ILYITCH.
,, THE INVADERS.
,, MY RELIGION.
,, LIFE.
,, MY CONFESSION.
,, CHILDHOOD, BOYHOOD, YOUTH.
,, THE PHYSIOLOGY OF WAR.
,, WHAT TO DO?
,, WAR AND PEACE. (4 Vols.)
,, THE LONG EXILE.
,, SEVASTOPOL.
,, THE KREUTZER SONATA.
3/6 ANNA KARÈNINA.
,, THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

THE COSSACKS

TALE OF THE CAUCASUS IN THE
YEAR 1852

BY

COUNT LYOF N. TOLSTOÏ

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

BY

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AUTHORISED TRANSLATION

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else, not noticing that this was not as interesting to his companions as it was to himself.

A man is never so much of an egotist as at the moment when his whole being is stirred with spiritual exaltation. It seems to him that there is nothing in the world more beautiful, more interesting, than himself at such a moment.

"Dmitri Andréyevitch, the driver won't wait any longer," said a young body-servant, in a sheep-skin coat, and muffled up in a scarf, coming in at this moment. "The horses were ready at twelve, and now it is four."

Dmitri Andréyevitch looked at his Ványusha. In the folds of his scarf, in his felt boots, in his sleepy face, he seemed to hear the voice of a new life summoning him — a life of toil, privation, activity.

"Well, this time it is good-bye in earnest," he said, trying to fasten a neglected button.

Paying no heed to the suggestion to give an extra fee to the impatient driver, he put on his cap, and then paused in the middle of the room. The young men kissed each other once and again; paused, and then exchanged still a third kiss. The one who had been called Dmitri went to the table, drained a champagne glass, seized the homely little man by the hand, and a flush spread over his face.

It is no use, I will tell you — I must be frank toward you, and I can be, because I am your friend. You love her, do you not? I always thought so — am I not right?”

“Yes,” assented his friend, with a still more affectionate smile.

“And possibly —”

“If you please, I am ordered to put out the candles,” said the sleepy servant, who had been listening to the last part of the conversation, and was wondering why these gentlemen confined themselves always to one and the same subject. “To whom shall this account be charged? To you?” he added, addressing the tall young man, as though knowing beforehand with whom he had to deal.

“Yes,” replied the tall man; “how much is it?”

“Twenty-six rubles.”

The tall man pondered for a moment, but made no objection, and stuffed the score into his pocket.

Meantime the other two kept on with their own affairs.

“Farewell, my dear old fellow,” said the homely little gentleman, with the affectionate eyes.

The tears started to the eyes of both of them. They came out on the porch.

"Oh! see here," exclaimed the traveller, reddening, and turning to the tall young man. "You settle the account with Chevalier, and then write me."

"All right," replied the other, drawing on his gloves, and then, as they stood on the steps, he added most unexpectedly: "How I envy you!"

The traveller had taken his scat in the sledge, and wrapped himself up in his furs; but when he heard those last words he said: "Well, then, come along with me," and moved along in the sledge, so as to make room for him. His voice trembled.

But the other replied, "Good-bye, Mitya; God grant you. . . ." He had no other wish for him except that he should start as soon as possible, and that was why he did not finish his sentence.

They were all silent. Then one of them said, "Good-bye." A voice rang out, "Go on." And the driver started up his horses.

"Yelizár, bring up my team," cried one of the friends left behind. The cab-drivers and coachman started up, clucked, and twitched on their reins. The frozen wheels creaked over the snow.

"Splendid young fellow, that Olyénin!" exclaimed one of the young men. "But what an odd freak to go off to the Caucasus, and as a

*yunker*¹ too! I wouldn't be hired to do it! Are you going to dine at the club to-morrow?"

"I am."

And the friends separated.

It seemed warm to the traveller; his furs were oppressive. He sat on the bottom of the sledge and threw back his furs, and the hired three-span, with their bristling manes, dashed from one dark street into another, past houses which he had never seen before. It seemed to Olyénin that only those bound on long journeys ever rode through these streets.

All about was dark, silent, and melancholy, and his soul was so full of recollections, of love, of regrets, and of pleasant, oppressive tears. . . .

¹ A *yunker* (German, *junker*) is a young man of noble family attached to the army as non-commissioned officer. Count Tolstoi himself passed his examination at Tiflis and became a *yunker* in 1851.

CHAPTER II.

"I AM in love! Very much in love! Splendid fellows! It is good!" He repeated these words over and over, and felt a strong inclination to shed tears.

But he had not a very distinct idea of what he should weep about, nor who were splendid fellows, nor with whom he was in love.

From time to time he cast a fleeting glance at some house, and wondered why it was built in such a strange way; and then again he wondered why the driver and Ványusha, who were such complete strangers to him, were riding so near to him, and swaying and jolting, just as he himself did, as the off horses twitched on the frozen traces. And once more he exclaimed:—

"Splendid fellows! I am in love!" and this time, he added: "How well that suits! Admirable!"

And now he began to wonder for what purpose he had said that, and he asked himself: "It can't be that I am drunk, can it?"

The fact was, Olyénin had taken two whole bottles of champagne, but it was not the wine alone that served to stimulate him. He recalled all the apparently cordial words of friendship which were shyly, perhaps even unexpectedly, said to him, before his departure. He recalled the warm pressure of hands, the glances, the moments of silence that spoke louder than words, the tone of voice in which his friend had said, "Good-bye, Mitya," just as he had taken his seat in the sledge. He recalled his own resolute frankness.

And all this had a softening influence upon him. Before his departure, not only his friends and his relatives, not only those who were indifferent to him, but also uncongenial, unfriendly people, without exception, as it were with one consent, had seemed to manifest a sudden affection for him, and bid him farewell as though he were going to the confessional or to death.

"It may be that I am destined not to return from the Caucasus," he said to himself. And it seemed to him that his heart was overflowing with love for his friends, and for some one else beside. And a feeling of self-pity came over him.

But it was not love for his friends that thus softened and elevated his soul, and prevented him

from keeping back the thoughtless words that sprang to his lips of their own accord — nor was it love for any woman — for he had never, as yet, been in love — that induced this state of mind.

It was love for himself, the warm, sanguine love of youth toward all that was good in his heart (and now it seemed to him that there was nothing, but good there); this it was that started the fountains of his tears, and caused him to mutter disconnected words.

Olyénin was a young man who had left the university before his graduation, who had never been in active service, — having merely had his name registered in some government office, — who had squandered half of his patrimony, and who, though he was now twenty-four years old, had never chosen any career, and had never done anything. He had been what is called a “young man” in Moscow society.

Since his eighteenth year, Olyénin had been as absolutely free from restraint as was possible only for the rich young men of Russia during “the forties,” especially when they had lost their parents in childhood. He had not been troubled by any kind of fetters, either physical or moral. He could do whatever he pleased; he had no need of anything whatever; he recognized no claims upon

him. He was independent of family and country and religion and want. He was utterly lacking in faith; he held himself accountable to no one. But, though he had these characteristics, he was far from being a gloomy, life-weary, logical young man, but, on the contrary, he was forever being carried away by impulses. He would argue that love did not exist, and the mere presence of a handsome young woman threw him into uncontrollable emotion.

He had been long convinced that rank and honors were absurdities, yet he could not help feeling gratified when Prince Sergyér, at the ball, came over to him and made flattering remarks.

But, though he gave his impulses free rein, he did not allow them to run away with him. In any case when he had taken up some new enthusiasm, as soon as he began to suspect that toil and strife, even the petty struggles of life, were at hand, he instinctively made haste to get rid of the feeling or affair, and to regain his freedom.

In this way he had begun to devote himself to a life of pleasure, to service of his country, to overseeing his estate, to music, which he had at one time seriously thought of adopting as his profession. He had even made some experiments in

love toward women, but he had no belief in such a thing.

He had been in a quandary as to the question where — whether in art or in science, in love or in practical activity — it was best for him to exercise all the youthful energy which a man possesses only once in his life, not the energy of intellect, of heart, of imagination, but rather the fresh spontaneity which, when once lost, can never return, the virtue only once given to a man, to make himself whatever he wishes or seems best to him, and to make of the whole world all that his heart desires.

It is true, there are men lacking this potency, and these, entering life, accept the first harness that is put on them, and work soberly in it to the end of their days. But Olyénin was too powerfully conscious in himself of the presence of this omnipotent divinity of youth, this capacity of being absorbed in one desire, in one thought, the capacity of willing and of doing, of throwing himself head first into any bottomless abyss without knowing why or wherefore. He carried with him this consciousness, was proud of it, and, without himself knowing it, was made happy by it. Hitherto the only object of his affection had been himself, and this was inevitable because he expected

from himself nothing but what was good, and he had not as yet lost his illusions about himself.

Now that he was taking his departure from Moscow, he found himself in that happy youthful frame of mind in which, recognizing the mistakes that he has made, a young man suddenly confesses that he has not been on the right track, that all his previous actions have been undirected and meaningless, that hitherto he has not even had the desire to live rightly, — but that now, as he leaves his former haunts, a new life is beginning, in which he will avoid his old mistakes, his old regrets, and beyond a peradventure find nothing but happiness.

It always happens, when you take a long journey, that, even after the horses have been changed two or three times, the imagination lags behind in the very place whence you started, and then suddenly, on the first morning that finds you on the road, leaps forward to the goal and there begins to build the air-castles of the future. This was what happened to Olyénin.

As soon as he was beyond the city limits and saw the wide stretch of snow-covered fields, he rejoiced in the sense of solitude; he wrapped his furs around him, stretched himself out comfortably in the bottom of the sledge, and dozed. The part-

ing with his friends had stirred him deeply, and his mind began to call up all the events of the past winter which he had spent in Moscow;— pictures of what had happened, mingled with confused thoughts and regrets, began to throng through his imagination.

He remembered the friend from whom he had taken leave, and his relations to the young girl of whom they had been speaking. This young girl was rich.

“How was it possible for him to love her when he knew that she was in love with me?” he asked himself, and unworthy suspicions arose in his mind. “Men are so dishonorable, when one comes to search into their motives. But why is it that I have never yet really fallen in love?”

The question presented itself fairly before him. “They all tell me that I have never been in love. Can it be that I am a moral monster?”

And he began to recall his former flames. His memory took him back to his first entry into society, and the sister of one of his friends, with whom he used to spend whole evenings at the table, near the lamp, which cast its light on her slender fingers, busied with her embroidery, and on the lower part of her pretty, delicate face; and he remembered their conversations, as intermina-

ble as the game of "Fox,"¹ and his general sense of awkwardness and constraint, and his constant sense of effort to overcome this diffidence. But a voice kept whispering in his ear, "Not this one, not this one," and indeed it had proved to be not *this one*.

Then he recalled a ball, and how he danced the mazurka with the beautiful D——.

"How deeply in love I was that evening, and how happy! And what a sense of pain and vexation came over me the next morning when I awoke and realized that I was still free! Why is it that love has eluded me? Why has she not held me captive hand and foot?" he asked himself. "No! there is no such thing as love! Our young neighbor, who used to tell me and Dubrovin and the marshal that she loved the stars, — she also was not *the one*."

And then he recalls his experiment in managing his estate in the country, and again finds no cause for self-congratulation. The question comes into his mind whether "they" will have much to say about his going off to the Caucasus, but he himself has no clear idea of whom he means by *they*, and this thought is followed by another, that makes him frown and utter inarticulate sounds; it is the

¹ "Zhiſ-zhiſ kurlika," "The fox is alive."

recollection of his tailor, M. Capel, and the unpaid account of six hundred and seven-eight rubles; he even recalls the words that he had used in urging the tailor to wait another year, and the expression of perplexity and submission to fate that came into the tailor's face.

"Oh! my God! my God!" he exclaims again and again, winking his eyes and trying to banish the unwelcome thought. "And yet she loved me in spite of all that," he says, trying to comfort himself with the thought of the young girl of whom they had been speaking that evening. "Yes, if I had married her, I should have got out of debt, but now my tailor's bill is still unpaid, and Vasilyef holds my note of hand."

He passed in review the last evening that he had played cards with Mr. Vasilyef at the club, where he went directly after leaving her house, and he remembered his humiliating entreaties to be allowed to play one more hand, and his opponent's haughty refusal.

"A year of economy and I shall clear it all off, and—the devil take 'em."

But, in spite of this assurance, he begins once more to calculate his debts, the periods that they had to run, and the possible time for their redemption.

“Let me see! I have an account at Morel’s, as well as at Chevalier’s.” And he recalls that whole night in which he had run up such an account. It was for a carouse with the gypsies, which had been arranged in honor of visitors from Petersburg, — Sashka B——, one of the Emperor’s staff, and Prince D——, and a certain elderly gentleman of some note.

“I wonder why it was that they were so self-satisfied, and what ground they have for the formation of that select circle, admission to which, according to their conceit, is such an honor. Is it because they are attached to the Emperor’s staff? Why! it is perfectly disgusting the way they look down upon other men, as blockheads and boors! I made it evident to them that I had no wish to become one of them. Nevertheless, André, my overseer, I suppose, would have been mightily impressed at seeing me on such intimate terms with gentlemen like Sashka B——, colonel and aid to the Emperor. . . . And, besides, no one drank more than I did that evening; I taught the gypsies a new song, and they all listened. Supposing I have done all sorts of foolish things, still I am at heart a very, very worthy young man.”

This was his honest conviction.

Morning found Olyénin at the third post-station.

He drank his tea, helped Ványusha rearrange his parcels and trunks, and then took his place in the sledge in accordance with all reason, good order, and comfort, knowing where his belongings were, disposed — where his money was, and how much he had, and with his necessary documents ready to show — and all this seemed to him to have been done in such a practical way that it filled his heart with joy, and the long journey assumed the aspect of a perpetual pleasure excursion.

During the whole course of the morning he was busy with arithmetical calculations; how many versts he had already gone; how far it was to the next post-station, to the next city; how much distance he should accomplish before dinner, before tea; how far it was to Stavropol; and what proportion of the whole journey was represented by the part already accomplished.

Then he also calculated how much money he had, how much he had spent, how much was needed to settle all his debts, and what portion of his whole income he should be obliged to disburse each month.

In the evening, while drinking his tea, he made the calculation that he was seven-elevenths of the whole distance from Moscow to Stavropol and that his debts demanded seven months of close

economy and one-eighth of all his fortune, — and, having thus satisfied his mind, he wrapped himself up in his furs, stretched out in the sledge, and once more fell into a doze.

This time his imagination began to picture what lay before him in the Caucasus. All his dreams of the future were woven with visions of such heroes as Amalat-bek, of Circassian maids, mountain gorges, tremendous torrents, and perils. There was nothing clear and definite in all this; but glory, alluring, and death, threatening, constituted the interest of this unknown future. Now he imagined himself with unheard-of bravery and amazing prowess killing and conquering a countless multitude of mountaineers; now that he himself was a mountainer, taking sides with his countrymen to defend his independence against the Russians.

As soon, however, as he began to fill out the picture with details, then his old Moscow acquaintances made their appearance. Sashka B—— seemed to be there fighting against him with the Russians or the mountaineers. In some inexplicable way even his tailor, M. Capel, takes part in the triumphs of the victor. If, meantime, he recalls his old humiliations, weaknesses, errors, still the recollection has its pleasant side. It is

clear that there, amid the mountains, Circassian maids, and perils, such errors cannot be repeated. He has once for all made confession of them, before the shrine of his own soul, and they are done with forever.

There is one other very precious vision that constantly rises in the young man's conceptions of the future.

This dream is about a woman.

And now she presents herself to his imagination in the guise of a Circassian slave among the mountains, a maiden of graceful form, with long braids of hair and deep, submissive eyes. He beholds the lonely hut among the mountains, and at the door *she* stands waiting and watching for him to return to her, weary, covered with dust, with blood, with glory; and he marvels at her kiss, her shoulders, her witching voice, her submissiveness. She is lovely but uncultivated, wild, and rough. During the long winter evenings he lays the first foundations of her education. She is clever, receptive, gifted, and quickly adapts herself to all the indispensable requirements of knowledge. Why should it not be so? She has great capacity for acquiring a new language, for reading the masterpieces of French literature and understanding them. "Notre Dame de Paris," for example, will

surely be a delight to her. She will even be able to speak French, and in the drawing-room she will be able to show more natural dignity than any lady of the highest society. She can sing too — simply, powerfully, passionately.

“Ah, what rubbish!” he said to himself, and just then they arrived at some post-station, and he was obliged to transfer his luggage from one sledge to another and give the men vodka money. But once more his mind was filled with the same imaginations which he had just called rubbish, and again he seemed to see the Circassian maids, himself returning to Russia crowned with glory, becoming the Emperor’s aid, winning a lovely wife!

“But there! I don’t believe that there is such a thing as love,” he found himself saying, “and honors are rubbish. . . . And how about that six hundred and seventy-eight rubles? . . . But will not a conquered province put more wealth into my hands than I shall need for my whole life? . . . Besides it will not be right to make use of such wealth for myself alone. I shall have to share it. . . . But with whom? . . . Six hundred and seventy-eight rubles to Capel, and then we can see about the rest. . . .”

And now his thought becomes entirely confused with disconnected visions, and only Ványusha’s

voice and the consciousness of arrested motion disturb his healthy young sleep, and in a daze he crawls into a fresh sledge at another station, and thus his journey proceeds.

The next morning the same thing takes place — the same post-stations, the same tea, the same horses with their energetic motions, the same brief colloquies with Ványusha, the same indefinite visions as the day closes, and the same healthy young sleep of fatigue through the night.

CHAPTER III.

THE farther Olyénin travelled from the centre of Russia, the more distant all his recollection seemed ; the nearer he came to the Caucasus, the more light-hearted he grew. The idea of going away entirely, of never returning, of never again appearing in society, kept recurring to his mind.

“Now, these men whom I see here are not people ; not one of them knows me and not one of them can have ever been in the same society in Moscow in which I moved, or knows about my past. And no one in that society will know what I have been doing during my life among those people.”

A hitherto unexampled sense of freedom from all his past life came over him, as he found himself amid all the coarse beings whom he encountered on the way and whom he did not dream of calling *people* in the same sense as his old acquaintances in Moscow. The rougher they were, the less they were marked by the characteristics of civilized life, the greater became his sense of freedom.

Stavropol, through which he was forced to pass, vexed his spirit. The signboards, — even signboards in French, — the ladies in baroſches, the hacks drawn up along the square, the boulevards, a gentleman in cloak and cap, who was promenading along the boulevard and staring at the passers-by, — all had an unpleasant effect upon him.

“Who knows but these people know some of my acquaintances?” And again he recalls the club, the tailor, the cards, gay society. . . .

After he had left Stavropol behind him, he began, therefore, to feel in a better frame of mind; it became wild, and, what was better than all, picturesque and warlike. And Olyénin’s heart grew lighter and lighter. All the Cossacks, the drivers, the station-keepers, seemed to him artless beings with whom one could artlessly jest or converse, without any thought of making class distinctions. They all belonged to the whole human race, which Olyénin loved without knowing it, and they all showed a friendly disposition toward him.

Even before they passed out of the country of the Don Cossacks, the sledge was exchanged for a wheeled vehicle, and beyond Stavropol it became so warm that Olyénin no longer wore his fur coat.

He had met the spring, and it came to Olyénin like a joyful surprise.

At night they were cautioned not to leave the station-house, and it began to be remarked toward evening* that they were on dangerous ground. Ványusha began to be a little alarmed; a loaded musket lay ready for instant use. This made Olyénin still more light-hearted. At one station the superintendent related a terrible story of a murder that had recently occurred on the highway. They began to meet with men carrying weapons.

“Now, this is the beginning,” said Olyénin, and he began to long for a view of the snow-covered mountains of which so many had spoken to him.

One time, toward evening, the Nogai driver pointed with his whip toward the mountains appearing above the clouds. Olyénin eagerly began to strain his sight, but it was growing dark and the clouds half concealed the mountains. It seemed to Olyénin that there was something gray, white, and curly, and in spite of all his endeavor he could not distinguish anything beautiful in the aspect of the mountains of which he had read and heard so much.

It seemed to him that the mountains and the clouds were absolutely alike, and that the peculiar beauty of the snow-capped mountains, about which he had been told, was as much a figment of the

imagination as the music of Bach, or love for a woman, in which he had no belief, and so he ceased to have any longing for the mountains.

But the next day, early in the morning, he was waked up by the coolness in his post-carriage, and looked out indifferently. The air was wonderfully clear.

Suddenly he saw, twenty paces distant from him, as it seemed at the first moment, the pure white mountain masses, with their tender curves, and the marvellous perfect aerial outlines of the summits against the far-off sky.

And when he comprehended all the distance between him and the mountains and the sky, all the majesty of the mountains, and when he realized all the endlessness of that beauty, he was alarmed lest it were an illusion, a dream. He shook himself so as to wake up.

But the mountains were still there!

"What is that? Tell me what that is!" he asked of the driver.

"Oh! the mountains!" replied the Nogayets, indifferently.

"And so have I been looking at them for a long time! aren't they splendid! They won't believe me at home!" said Ványusha.

As the three-span flew swiftly over the level

road, it seemed as if the mountains ran along the horizon, shining in the sunrise with their rosy summits.

At first the mountains roused in Olyénin's mind only a sentiment of wonder, then of delight; but afterward, as he gazed at this chain of snowy mountains, not piled upon other, dark mountains, but growing and rising straight out of the steppe, little by little he began to get into the spirit of their beauty, and he *felt* the mountains.

From that moment all that he had seen, all that he had thought, all that he had felt, assumed for him the new, sternly majestic character of the mountains. All his recollections of Moscow, his shame and his repentance, all his former illusions about the Caucasus, — all disappeared and never returned again.

“Now life begins,” seemed to be sounded into his ear by some solemn voice. And the road, the distant outline of the Terek, now coming into sight, and the post-stations, and the people, — all seemed to him no longer insignificant.

He looks at the sky and remembers the mountains, he looks at himself, at Ványusha, and again the mountains!

Here two Cossacks appear on horseback, their muskets balanced over their backs, and rythmically

swinging as their horses gallop along with brown and gray legs intermingling; but the mountains! . . .

Beyond the Terek, smoke seems to be rising from some aul or native village; but the mountains!

The sun stands high and gleams on the river winding among the reeds; but the mountains! . . .

From a Cossack station comes an *arba*, or native cart—pretty women are riding in it, young women; but the mountains! . . .

Abreks' gallop across the steppe, and I am coming, I fear them not, I have weapons and strength and youth; but the mountains! . . .

¹ The hostile mountaineer who crosses over to the Russian side of the Terek for the purpose of theft or rapine is called *abreck*. —
Author's note.

CHAPTER IV.

THE whole line of the Terek, along which, for some eighty versts, are scattered the outposts of the Grebensky Cossacks, has a distinctive character, not only by reason of its situation, but also of population.

The river Terek, which separates the Cossacks from the mountaineers, flows turbid and swift, but still in a broad and tranquil current, constantly depositing gray silt on the low, reed-grown right bank, and undermining the steep but not lofty left bank, with its tangled roots of century-old oaks, decaying plane trees, and underbrush.

On the right bank lie auls, or native villages, subject to Russian rule, but restless; along the left bank, half a verst from the river, and seven or eight versts apart, stretch the Cossack posts. In former times, the majority of these villages were on the very edge of the river, but the Terek each year, sweeping farther away from the mountains toward the north, has kept undermining them, and now there remain in sight only the old ruins, gardens, pear trees, poplars, limes, thickly over-

grown, and twined about with blackberries and wild grapevines. No one any longer lives there, and the only signs of life are the tracks on the sand, made by deer, wolves, hares, and pheasants, which haunt such places.

A road runs from village to village, cut in a bee line, through the forest. Along the road are the military stations or cordons, guarded by Cossacks. Between the cordons are watch-towers with sentinels. Only a narrow strip of fertile forest-land — say seven hundred yards wide — constitutes the Cossacks' domain.

On the north begin the sandy dunes of the Nogař, or Mozdok steppe, stretching far away, and commingling, God knows where, with the Trukh-mensky, Astrakhan, and Kirgiz-Kařsak steppes.

On the south, beyond the Terek, is the Great Chechnya, the ridge of the Kotchkalósof range, the Black Mountains, then still another sierra, and finally the snow-covered mountains which rise high in the air, — as yet untrodden by the foot of man.

On the fertile strip of forest-land, producing all kinds of vegetables, have lived, since immemorial times, a warlike, handsome, and wealthy Russian population, professing the "old faith," and called the Grebensky or Border Cossacks.

Very, very long ago, their ancestors, the "Old

Believers," fled from Russia and settled beyond the Terek among the Chechens on the Ridge (Greben) or the first spur of the wooded range of the Great Chechnya. These Cossacks intermarried with their new neighbors, the Chechens, and adopted the habits, mode of life, and manners of the mountaineers; but they succeeded in maintaining even there the Russian language and their old belief in their pristine purity. A tradition, still preserved among them, declares that the Tsar Iván the Terrible came to the Terek, invited the elders of the Cossacks from the Ridge to meet him, gave them the land on that side of the river, charged them to live in peace, and promised not to demand their allegiance nor to change their belief.

Ever since that time the Cossack families have kept up their relations with the mountaineers, and the chief traits of their character are love of liberty, laziness, brigandage, and war. The influence of Russia has been exerted only in a detrimental way, by forced conscriptions, removal of bells, and the presence of troops quartered among them. The Cossack is inclined to have less detestation for the mountaineer brave who has killed his brother than for the soldier who is quartered on him for the sake of protecting his village, but

who scents up his hut with tobacco smoke. He respects his mountain enemy ; but he disdains the soldier, whom he regards as an alien oppressor.

In the Cossacks' eyes, the Russian peasant is a nondescript creature, uncouth, and beneath contempt, the type of which they find in the peripatetic Little Russian pedlar or emigrant, called by the Cossacks *Shafoval*, or tile-wearer.

The height of style among them is to dress like the Circassian. He procures his best weapons from the mountaineers ; from them also he buys or steals his best horses. The young Cossack brave prides himself on his knowledge of the Tatar language, and, when he is on a drunken spree, he speaks Tatar even with his brother.

And yet this petty Christian population, barricaded in a little corner of the world, surrounded by semi-civilized Mahometan tribes and by soldiers, regards itself as having attained the highest degree of culture, looks upon the Cossack as alone worthy of the name of man, affecting to despise everybody else. He spends the most of his time at the cordons, in expeditions, hunting, and fishing. He very rarely condescends to stay at home. His presence in the village is an exception to the rule : but when he is there he *lounges*. Wine is a common commodity among all the

Cossacks, and drunkenness is not so much a universal propensity as it is a rite, the non-fulfilment of which would be regarded as apostasy.

The Cossack looks upon a woman as the instrument of his well-being. As long as she is unmarried she is allowed to make merry, but once a wife she must put aside the pleasures of youth and work even till the end of her days to add to his comfort; he is thoroughly oriental in his demand upon her obedience and toil.

As the result of this state of things, the women, though to all appearances in subjection, become powerfully developed both physically and morally, and, as is commonly the case in the East, possess incomparably more influence and consequence in domestic affairs than in the West. Their seclusion from society, and their habituation to hard manual labor give them still more authority and command in domestic affairs. The Cossack, who, in the presence of strangers, regards it as unbecoming to talk affectionately or gossip with his wife, cannot help feeling her superiority when he is left alone with her. His whole house, his whole estate, his whole establishment, have been acquired by her, and are maintained solely by her labors and exertions. And though he is obstinately convinced that toil is degrading for a

Cossack, and is the proper occupation only of a Nogai laborer or a woman, yet he has a dim consciousness that everything that redounds to his comfort, and that he calls his own, is the result of this toil, and that it is in the power of his mother or his wife, even though he looks upon her as his *serf*, to deprive him of all that makes his life agreeable.

Moreover, the constant hard field labor, and the duties intrusted to them, give a peculiarly independent, masculine character to the Greben women, and have served to develop in them, to a remarkable degree, physical powers, healthy minds, decision and stability of character. The women are for the most part stronger and more intelligent, better developed, and handsomer than the men.

The beauty of the women among the Grebensky Cossacks is due to the striking union in them of the purest type of the Circassian with the full and powerful build of the northern woman. Their usual dress is Circassian: the Tatar shirt, the beshmet or under-tunic, and the footgear called *chuwydki*, but they wear their kerchiefs in the Russian way. The wearing of clean, rich, and elegant attire, and the decoration of the cottages, belong to the inseparable conditions of their existence.

In their relations to the men, the women, and especially the girls, enjoy unlimited freedom.

The Cossacks subsist largely from the products of their vineyards and fruit gardens, their melon and gourd patches, their fishing and hunting, their fields of maize and millet, and from the spoils of war. The village of Novo-Mlinsk is considered to be the metropolis of the Grebensky Cossacks. Here more than elsewhere are preserved the manners and customs of the old Grebentsui, and the women of this village have always been famous throughout the Caucasus for their beauty.

It stands about three versts from the Terek, from which it is separated by dense woods. On one side of the principal village street is a stream; on the other are green vineyards and orchards, beyond which can be seen the sand dunes of the Nogaï steppe.

The village is surrounded by earthworks and a thorn hedge. At each end of the street there are lofty gates, hung between high posts and protected by a narrow reed-thatched roof; near each one there stands, on a wooden platform, a monstrous cannon, which has not been fired for a century; it is the relic of some Cossack victory.

A Cossack in uniform, with cap and gun, is sometimes found and sometimes not found stand-

ing at the gates on sentinel duty ; sometimes he salutes and sometimes he forgets to salute the officer passing by.

Under the gate roof, on a white board, is painted, in black letters : —

266 houses. 897 males. 1012 females.
--

The Cossacks' houses are all raised on posts two or three feet from the ground, are neatly thatched with reeds, and have high ridgepoles. The houses, without exception, even though they are not new, are neat and well cared for, and with their variegated steep gables present a comfortable and picturesque appearance as they stand in ample grounds along the wide streets and lanes.

In front of the bright, commodious windows of many of the houses, behind the fences, grow dark green poplars, delicate, bright-leaved acacias, with their fragrant white blossoms, or else the boldly flaunting yellow of the sunflower, and the twining tendrils of the peas and grapevines.

On the wide square can be seen two or three shops with gay-colored wares, seeds, gourds, and gingerbread ; and behind a high fence, through a

row of ancient poplar, stands, looking down upon the rest, the colonel's house, with its folding windows.

The streets, especially in summer, during working hours, are generally deserted; the Cossacks are away on duty, the young men at the cordons and on expeditions, the old men off hunting or fishing or helping the women in the gardens or orchards. Only the entirely decrepit, the children, and the sick remain at home.

CHAPTER V.

It was one of those wonderful evenings such as are found only in the Caucasus. The sun had sunk behind the mountains, but it was still light. The twilight glow embraced a third of the sky, and against its brilliancy stood out in sharp contrast the dull white masses of the mountains. The atmosphere was rare, calm, and full of distant sounds. The mountains cast their long shadows for versts across the steppe.

Everywhere it is deserted — on the steppe, across the river, along the roads. If now and then horseback riders make their appearance anywhere, then instantly the Cossacks from the cordons and the Chechens from the aul alike gaze in wonder and curiosity and try to guess who such suspicious people may be.

At the first approach of evening, the people, in dread of each other, hasten to their dwellings, and only wild beasts or birds of prey, having no fear of men, are left to raven freely through the wilderness.

Even before the sun has set, the Cossack

women, who have been making wattles in the gardens, are on their way home, gayly talking as they hasten along ; and the gardens soon become deserted, like all the rest of the region.

But the streets at this hour of the day become extremely animated. From all sides the populace move toward the village — on foot, on horseback, and in squeaking, two-wheeled arbas. Maidens, with their skirts tucked up, and carrying fagots, come merrily chattering and hasten to the gates to meet the cattle, which throng in from the steppe, enveloped in a cloud of dust and gnats. The plump cows and buffaloes scatter through the streets, and the Cossack women, in their bright-colored beshmets, circulate among them. Their sharp repartees, their merry laughter and shrieks, are heard, mingled with the lowing of the cattle.

Here comes a mounted Cossack, armed, on leave of absence from the cordon ; he rides up to a hut, and, tapping on the window, leans down to it ; immediately after appears the pretty young head of a Cossack maiden, and you hear the murmur of their gay, affectionate banter.

Yonder a ragged Nogai laborer, with high cheek-bones, is bringing reeds from the steppe ; he drives his squeaking arba across the clean, wide yard and takes off the yoke from the oxen,

which shake their heads ; then he exchanges some words in Tatar with his master.

In one place, almost the whole width of the street is occupied by a great puddle, which, year in and year out, obliges people to go out of their way and pass it by laboriously, clinging to the fences ; along the edge of this comes a bare-legged Cossack woman, with a bundle of fagots on her back ; she lifts her skirt very high above her white ankles, and a Cossack huntsman, riding by, flings his merry jest at her, " Hold it up a little higher, hussy ! " and aims his gun at her ; the young woman drops her skirt in her confusion, and off tumbles the bundle of fagots.

An old Cossack, with pantaloons tucked up and his gray chest bare, on his way home from his day's fishing, carries over his shoulder a *sanetka*, or mesh, full of silvery herring, still flapping ; in order to make a shorter cut, he crawls through his neighbor's broken hedge, and, in the operation, catches his coat on a thorn and tears it.

Yonder an old woman drags along a dry branch, and the blows of an axe are heard echoing around the corner. The Cossack children shout at the top of their voices, as they whip their tops wherever there is a level spot on the street. Women can be seen climbing through the fences,

so as to save extra steps. From all the chimneys rises the pungent smoke from burning cow-dung. In every yard is seen the increased bustle that precedes the silence of the night.

Dame¹ Ulitka, the wife of the Cossack ensign and school-teacher, comes out to the gate of her yard and stands there waiting for her cattle, which her daughter Maryánka is driving down the street. She has barely time to open the wicket gate when a huge cow buffalo, with gnats swarming about her, rushes lowing into the yard. Behind her saunter the fat kine, seeming with their big eyes to acknowledge the dignity of their mistress, and switch their sides lazily with their tails.

The buxom beauty, Maryánka approaches the yard, and, throwing down her stick, closes the gate, and, with frplicsome feet, hastens to separate and drive the cattle to their stalls.

"You devil's own girl, you'll spoil your chu-vyáki ; take them off instantly."

Maryanka is not in the least affronted by being called "the devil's own child," and regards these words as a sort of subtile flattery ; she gayly goes on with her chores. Her face is enveloped in a twisted kerchief ; she wears a rose-colored shirt and a green beshmet. She disappears under

¹ Bábuka.

the shed where the fat cattle have already hastened, and soon her voice is heard, as she caressingly talks with the cow buffalo.

“Won't you stand still! — There, there, now! there, old lady!”¹

Soon after the young girl goes with her mother from the stable to the dairy,² both carrying two brimming crocks of milk, the product of the evening's milking. From the clay chimney of the dairy pours the dense smoke; the milk is quickly boiled into cream.

While the young girl is busy with the fire, the old mother goes down again to the gate. Twilight settles down over the village. The air is filled with the odor of vegetables, of cattle, and the pungent smoke of the dung.

Everywhere along the street hasten the Cossack women with lighted rags in their hands. In the yards can be heard only the sound of the cattle puffing and peacefully chewing the cud, and the voices of women and children ringing through the streets. It is a work day, and it is a rare thing when the drunken voice of a man is heard.

A Cossack woman, old and tall and masculine,

¹ *Mátushka*, little mother.

² Dairy, literally little hut: the *izbushka*, among the Cossacks, is a low, cool, wooden structure where the milk is boiled and kept. — *Author's note.*

with her rag torch in her hand, comes across the street from the opposite house, and asks Dame Ulitka for a light.

“Well, mother, got your work done up?” is her first question.

“The girl is tending the fire. Why, d’ye want a light?” asks Dame Ulitka, proud of being able to confer a favor.

The two old women go to the cottage together; Dame Ulitka’s clumsy hands, not used to handling delicate objects, tremble as she takes off the cover of the precious match-box, for matches are a rarity in the Caucasus. The visitor sits down on the step, with the evident intention of having a little gossip.

“Well, Dame, is your man at the school?” she asks.

“Yes, he’s always teaching the young ones, mother. He writes that he’ll be here for the festival,” replies Dame Ulitka.

“There’s a learned man for you! There’s some good in that!”

“Of course there is!”

“And my Lukásha is at the outpost; he can’t get leave of absence.” Now, the visitor knows that this is no news to Dame Ulitka, but still she can’t refrain from telling her, for she must

say something about her Lukasha, who has just been enrolled as a Cossack. She makes no secret of her wish to arrange a match between him and the cornet's daughter, Maryánka.

"Does he have to stay at the outpost?"

"Indeed he does, mother. He has not been home since Christmas. The other day I sent him some shirts by Fomushkin. He brought back word, all was well; the officers are pleased with the lad. They expect another attack of the abreks, they say. Lukashka, says he, is happy, all right."

"Well, thank the Lord for that," says the cornet's wife. "In one word, he is the *Urvan*!"

Lukashka had gained the name of *urvan*, or the seizer, because of his bravery in seizing a young Cossack from the water just as he was drowning, and Dame Ulitka called him by this name, so as to have something agreeable to say to Lukashka's mother.

"I bless the Lord for it every day — he is a good son; he is a brave lad; they all like him," says Lukashka's mother. "Only I wish he were married, then I could die contented."

"Well, aren't there girls enough in the village!" demanded the shrewd Dame Ulitka, awkwardly fumbling with her crooked fingers in her attempt to put the cover on the match-box.

"Plenty of them, mother, plenty of them," says Lukashka's mother, and shakes her head. "Your girl, Maryánushka, there's a girl for you, one won't find her like in the whole region!"

Dame Ulitka saw through her visitor's insinuation, and, though she approved of Lukashka, and thought him a promising Cossack, she wanted to turn the conversation, — in the first place, because she was the ensign's wife and was rich, while Lukashka — well, he was the son of a mere Cossack, and his father was dead; in the second place, because she did not want to lose her daughter too soon. But the chief reason was that propriety demanded such a course.

"Yes," says she, warily and discreetly, "Maryánushka is growing up; by and by we shall think of getting her married."

"I will send the match-makers, yes, I will send them; come, let us arrange about the gardens; we will come and formally ask your favor," says Lukashka's mother. "We will go and pass the compliments to Ilyá Vasilyévitch."

"What has Ilyás to do with it!" says Dame Ulitka, haughtily. "I am the one who is to be spoken to. But there is time enough for all that."

Lukashka's mother sees, by the proud look on

Dame Ulitka's face, that it would be inexpedient to say anything more, lights the match and sets fire to her rag torch, and, as she rises to go, she adds, "Don't forget, mother; remember what I have said. I am going now, I must get my fire started."

As she steps down toward the street and waves her lighted torch in her outstretched hand she meets Maryánka, who greets her with a courtesy.

"She's a qucenly maiden, a regular worker," she says to herself, as she looks at the beauty. "How much more has she got to grow, I should like to know! It's high time for her to be married, yes, and in a nice house of her own, and Lukashka is the husband for her!"

Dame Ulitka had still some work to do, but her heart was heavy within her, and she sat on the threshold without stirring until Maryánka came to call her.

CHAPTER VI.

THE men of the village spend their time in expeditions and at the cordon or "posts," as the Cossacks call them.

This same Lukashka the Urvan, of whom the two old women had been talking at the cottage, was standing just before sunset on the watch-tower of the Nizhni-Prototsky "post," which is situated on the very bank of the Terek. As he leaned on the railing, he gazed with blinking eyes, now far away across the Terek, then down on his comrades, the Cossacks, but it was seldom that he had anything to say to them.

The sun was already nearing the snow-covered crest of the mountains, gleaming white from underneath the feathery clouds, which, as they rolled down into the ravines at their feet, took on darker and darker shadows.

The transparent evening air seemed to open out into wider vistas. From the thick wild forest breathed a fresh coolness, but at the post it was still hot. The voices of the Cossacks as they

chatted rang clear and loud, and seemed to hover in the air. The swift tawny Terek, swerving directly from its immovable banks, rolled on its irresistible mass. It was now beginning to fall, and here and there the damp sand showed brown and gray along the banks and shallows. The shore directly opposite the outpost was a perfect wilderness; only endless stretches of low desert reeds lay between the river and the mountains. A little to one side could be seen on the low bank the clay-built houses of a Chechen aul, with their flat roofs and funnel-shaped chimneys. From the height of his watch-tower, the Cossack's keen eyes could make out through the evening smoke the blue and red dresses of the women as they moved about in the distant village.

Although the Cossacks were expecting that at any moment the hostile abreks would cross over from the other shore and attack them; although it was the month of May, when the forests along the Terek are so dense that it is extremely difficult for a person to force his way through them, and the river is so low that it can be waded almost anywhere; and although, only two days before, a Cossack messenger had galloped up from the colonel with a circular letter to all the posts, informing them that spies had brought word that

a band of abreks, divided into squads of eight, were preparing to cross the Terek, so that especial caution was demanded,—still it could not be observed that there was any special caution taken at the “posts” along the line.

The Cossacks were engaged as though they were safe at home, one in fishing, another in tippling, another in hunting; their horses were not saddled, their arms were not even in reach. Only one horse was saddled and allowed to browse with its feet hobbled, along the edge of the forest; this precaution was taken by the officer of the day. And only the sentinel on guard was in uniform and armed with musket and dagger. The sergeant, a tall, haggard Cossack, with an extraordinarily long back and short legs and arms, in an unbuttoned beshmet, was sitting on the bank of the hut, his eyes closed with an expression of sovereign laziness and tedium, and rolling his head from one hand to the other.

An aged Cossack, with a wide, grayish black beard and dressed in nothing but a shirt belted with a black leather strap, was stretched out at the edge of the river and lazily watching the Terek as it monotonously rolled by its turbid, swirling waters.

All the rest were overcome by the heat and

were half undressed; one was washing his shirt by the water's edge, another plaiting a pair of reins; a third was purring a song, as he lay stretched out on the hot sand along the bank.

One of the Cossacks, with a thin face burned black by the sun, was apparently dead-drunk and lay under one wall of the hut; two hours before it had been in the shadow, but was now exposed directly to the oblique rays of the glaring sun.

Lukashka, who was standing on the watch-tower, was a tall, handsome youth, twenty years old, the very picture of his mother. His face and his whole build, in spite of the angularity of youth, expressed the greatest strength of body and of will. He had only recently been enrolled, yet, by the broad lines of his face and the steadfast assurance of his attitude, it was plain to see that he had already succeeded in acquiring that martial and haughty carriage peculiar to Cossacks and to men generally who are in the habit of being constantly armed, that he was a Cossack and regarded himself at the very highest valuation. His wide cherkeska was ragged, his cap was set on awry, in the fashion of the mountaineers, his leggings loosely twisted below the knees.

His attire was not rich, but it fitted him with that peculiar Cossack grace which arises from the imitation of the Chechen jigit or brave.

The genuine jigit has a fine unconcern for ragged and careless dress ; but he is careful to have his weapons of the richest description. But the adjustment, the fit, and the belting of his torn and ragged clothes, and the general equipment, unite to give a distinguished appearance, which not every one is able to command, and which catches the eye of the Cossack or mountaineer.

Lukashka had the air of the genuine jigit ; with his hand resting on his dagger, and blinking his eyes, he kept gazing at the distant aul. Taken separately, his features were not handsome ; but afterward, as you saw his superb physique, his intelligent face with its dark brows, you could not help exclaiming, " A brave lad ! "

" Why are all the women pouring out of yonder aul, I wonder ? " he said, in a clear voice, lazily separating his gleaming, white teeth, and not addressing any one in particular.

Nazárka, who was stretched out below, instantly lifted his head and remarked : —

" They are probably going after water. "

" It would be good sport to scare them with a

shot!" said Lukashka, laughing. "How it would make them scatter!"

"You couldn't shoot so far."

"Nonsense! mine would shoot clear over them! You just wait a bit! when their festival comes, I am going to visit Girer-khan, and drink beer¹ with him!" exclaimed Lukashka, testily, driving away the mosquitoes that insisted on paying him too close attention.

A rustling in the thicket attracted the Cossacks' attention. A spotted mongrel setter, with his nose to the ground, and wagging his hairless tail, came running up toward the post. Lukashka recognized the dog as belonging to Uncle Yéroshka, a huntsman of his neighborhood, and shortly after he caught sight of the man himself, making his way through the underbrush.

Uncle Yéroshka was a colossal Cossack with a wide, silver-white beard and tremendous, broad shoulders and chest, but so well proportioned withal that in the woods, where there was no one with whom to compare him, he did not seem huge.

He wore a ragged, half-buttoned peasant coat; his legs were wrapped up in buckskin *porshni*,²

¹ *Buza*, an appropriately named Tatar beverage, made of millet.

² *Porshni*, leggings made of undressed leather, that must be well soaked before they can be put on. — *Author's note.*

tied with twine; also a rumpled white lambskin cap. Across one shoulder he carried a decoy for pheasants and a bag with a chicken for alluring hawks; over his other shoulder a wild-cat that he had killed was slung by a cord; at the back of his belt were fastened a pouch with bullets, powder, and bread, a horsetail to flap away the gnats, a great dagger in a battered, blood-stained sheath, and a pair of pheasants.

When he saw the "post," he paused.

"Hey, Lyám!" he shouted to the dog, in such an exuberant voice that the woods far and near echoed with the sound. Then, shifting over his shoulder his clumsy percussion musket, called *flinta* by the Cossacks, he lifted up his cap.

"Here's to your health, good friends! Hey!" he shouted, addressing the Cossacks in his jovial, powerful voice, which, without any effort, sounded as loud as though he were trying to talk with some one across the river.

"How are you, uncle? How are you?" cheerily sounded the voices of the Cossacks, from all sides.

"What is the good word? Tell us the news?" shouted Uncle Yéroshka, wiping the sweat from his broad, red face with the sleeve of his *chetkeska*.

"See here, uncle! You don't know what a hawk lives up in yonder plane tree! As soon as evening comes, then he swoops down!" said Nazarka, with a wink, and a twitch of his leg and shoulder.

"What's that you say!" exclaimed the old man, incredulously.

"It's a fact, uncle! you just sit up and watch for him!" insisted Nazarka, with a laugh, in which the other Cossacks joined.

The jester had not seen any hawk, but it had long been the habit of the young Cossacks of the cordon to banter Uncle Yéroshka and play tricks on him every time that he came to see them.

"Oh, you fool! what do you want to tell such a lie for?" shouted Lukashka, from the watch-tower, to Nazarka.

Nazarka instantly relapsed into silence.

"If there's anything to be got by watching, why, then, I'll watch," rejoined the old man, to the great satisfaction of all the Cossacks. "But have you seen any wild-boars?"

"What does that amount to—looking after wild-boars!" exclaimed the sergant, very well content at the opportunity of having a little diversion. He turned over and scratched his long back with both hands. "Here we have abreks

to catch, and not such small game as wild-boars ! You haven't heard the news, hey, have you, uncle ?" he went on to say, for some reason or other blinking his eyes and showing a solid set of white teeth.

"Abreks, indeed ?" replied the old man. "Nay, I hadn't heard anything about them. But, say, have you got any red wine ? Give us a drink, my dear boy ! I'm fagged out ; that's a fact. Let me have a little time and I'll bring you some fresh pork ; I promise you I will ! Come, let me have some."

"So you want to watch for game here, do you ?" pursued the sergeant, as though he had not heard the other's request.

"I should like to watch for one night," replied Uncle Yéroshka. "Maybe I might shoot something for the festival ; whatever I get, I'll give it to you. Fact !"

"Uncle, say, uncle !" shouted Luká, from the watch-tower. All the Cossacks looked to see what he wanted. "Go to the upper brook ; there you'll find a great drove. I am not guying. Fact ! The other day one of our Cossacks shot one. I am telling you the honest truth," he added, setting his carbine behind him. His tone made it evident that he was not jesting.

"Ah, so Lukashka urvan is here?" said the old man, looking up. "Where did he shoot him?"

"And so it seems you did not see me, I am so small! — Right by the run, uncle," he continued, earnestly, shaking his head. "We were going along by the run, when we heard a crackling in the bushes, but my gun was in its case. Then Ilyaska let fly. . . . Yes, and I will show you the place, uncle. It isn't very far off. Just wait a spell! I tell you, brother, I know all their ways. Uncle Mosyef," he added, in a resolute and almost imperative tone, addressing the sergent, "it's time to relieve the guard," and, picking up his gun, without awaiting the word of command, he started to come down from the tower.

"Come down," said the sergent, although his command came too late. "It's your turn, isn't it, Gurka?" he asked, looking around. "Go on, then." Then, turning to the old huntsman, "Your Lukashka has become an expert. He is going to follow in your footsteps; you can't keep him at home; the other day he killed one!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE sun had now set, and the shades of night were swiftly sweeping over from the forest.

The Cossacks had finished their duties about the post and were collecting for supper. Only the old man, still in expectation of the hawk, sat under the tree, twitching the falcon attached to his foot. The hawk remained in the tree, and was not tempted down to the chicken.

Lukashka was taking his time in setting snares for pheasants in the bramble thicket, where the birds were wont to run, and singing song after song. In spite of his tall form and his big hands, it was plain to see that any sort of work, coarse or fine, prospered if he undertook it.

"Hé! Luka! the Cossacks have gone in to supper!" rang Nazarka's shrill voice from the thicket, a few steps away. It was Nazarka who with a live pheasant under his arm struggled out from amid the brambles and stood on the footpath.

"Oh!" cried Lukashka, ceasing his song, "where did you find the bird? It must have been in one of my snares."

"I don't know whose it was. I guess it was yours."

"Behind the well, near the chinar tree? Certainly it was mine! I set it yesterday evening."

Nazarka was of the same age as Lukashka, and had also been enrolled in the company that same spring. He was a little, ugly, lean, puny man, with a squeaking voice, which made one's ears ring. He was Luka's neighbor and chum.

Lukashka was sitting Tatar fashion on the grass and arranging his snare. He got up and looked at the captured pheasant. Smoothing with his hand the dark blue head, which the bird stretched out in terror, rolling its eyes, he took it into his hand.

"This time we'll have it made into pilaf; you kill it and pluck it."

"Say, shall we eat it ourselves, or give it to the sergeant?"

"There'll be enough for him, too."

"I don't like to kill it," said Nazarka.

"Give it to me."

Lukashka drew out the knife from under his dagger and quickly cut the bird's throat. The bird fluttered, but before it had time to spread its wings the bleeding head lay lifeless on the ground.

"That's the way to do it!" exclaimed Lukash-

ka, flinging down the bird. "It will make a fat pilaf."

Nazarka shuddered as he looked at it.

"Listen, Luka, that devil is going to send us out into ambush again," he remarked, as he picked up the pheasant. And by the term "that devil" he meant the sergeant. "He has sent Fomushkin after red wine. It was his turn. We shall have to go every night. He always picks us out."

Lukashka began to whistle and walked toward the post.

"Bring along the twine," he called back.

Nazarka did as he was told.

"I am going to tell him, I am going to fling the truth in his face," continued Nazarka. "Let us tell him that we won't go; that we are tired out, and that's the end of it! You tell him; it's a fact: he'll listen to you. If you don't, what will become of us?"

"Now, what has he found to growl about!" exclaimed Lukashka, who was evidently thinking of something else. "What rubbish! if we were at the village and he sent us off for the night, that would be hard luck! There we should be having a good time, but here what difference does it make whether we are at the post or in ambush? It's all one! What a lad you are!"

"And are you going to the village?"

"I am going for the festival."

"Gurka declares that your Dunarka has taken up with Fomushkin," said Nazarka, with a sudden burst of frankness.

"Let her go to the devil!" snarled Lukashka, displaying his solid white teeth, but not smiling. "Don't you suppose I can find another one?"

"Well, this is what Gurka tells. He went to her house, says he, and her husband was away. Fomushkin was sitting there, eating pirogi. He sat for a while and then took his leave; but he stopped and listened under the window, and heard her say, 'Has that devil gone? Why, my dear, don't you eat another little pirog?' And then said she, 'Don't go home to sleep.' And Gurka, under the window, said, 'Bravo!'"

"You lie!"

"It's a fact, by God!"

Lukashka made no reply. After a little, he said, "Well, if she has found another lover, the devil take her! There are plenty of girls, aren't there? Any way, I was getting tired of her."

"What a devil of a fellow you are!" said Nazarka. "You'd like to get in with the cornet's Maryanka! She isn't going about with any one yet, is she?"

Lukashka frowned. "What's Maryánka? It's all the same to me."

"Well, now, you'd better try it . . ."

"You think so, do you? Aren't there enough of them in the village?"

And Lukashka again began to whistle, and went to the "post," pulling the leaves from the twigs. As he passed by one bush he suddenly stopped short, drew out his knife and cut off a smooth stick that had caught his eye. "There, that will make a good ramrod," said he, making the stick whistle through the air.

The Cossacks were at supper in the plastered entry of the hut, sitting on the earth floor, around a low Tatar table, and talking about whose turn it was to go into the ambush. "Who is going to-night?" shouted one of the Cossacks, addressing the sergeant, who was at the opened door of the hut.

"Let's see! whose turn is it to go?" mused the sergeant. "Uncle Burlak is off, Fomushkin is off," he said, with some little hesitation. "Now, who among you will go? You and Nazár go," said he, addressing Luka. . . . "And let Yér-gushof go too; he will probably be awake by that time."

"You yourself wouldn't, if you were in his case!" said Nazarka, in an undertone.

The Cossacks laughed.

Yérgushof was the same Cossack who had been lying under the wall of the hut, in a drunken sleep. Just at that moment he made his appearance in the entry, rubbing his eyes.

Lukashka now got up and began to put his gun in order.

“And start as soon as you can; start right after supper!” said the sergeant, and, without waiting for any expression of opinion, he shut the door, having, evidently, little faith in the obedience of the Cossacks. “If it had not been especially ordered, I would not have sent them; but, then, you see, the captain may be here any minute, and, besides, they say that eight abreks are trying to cross the river,” he muttered to himself.

“Well, I suppose we must go,” says Yérgushof. “It’s the order! You must obey the authorities in such times. I say we must go.”

Lukashka, in the meantime, holding a great chunk of pheasant before his mouth, in both hands, and glancing, now at the sergeant, now at Nazarka, seemed to be perfectly indifferent to what was going on, and laughed at both.

Before the Cossacks had as yet started for their ambush, Uncle Yéroshka, who, since nightfall,

• had been vainly sitting under the plane tree, came into the dimly lighted entry.

• “Well, boys,” he said, in his deep voice, which rang through the low room, drowning the other voices, “I am going to join you. You may watch for Chechens, but I am going to watch for pigs !”

CHAPTER VIII.

It was already perfectly dark when Uncle Yéroshka and the three Cossacks, in felt cloaks and with their muskets over their shoulders, went down along the Terek to the place selected for the ambuscade.

Nazarka was very loath to go, but Luka called to him and they quickly got under way. After they had gone a few steps in silence, the Cossacks turned aside from the ditch and went down to the Terek by a scarcely noticeable footpath among the reeds. On the bank lay a big, black log that had been left by the falling waters, and the reeds around it were freshly pressed down.

"Well, shall we watch here?" asked Nazarka.

"Why shouldn't we?" replied Lukashka. "You wait here; I'll be right back, but I want to show uncle the way."

"This is the best place there is; no one can see us, but we get a good outlook," said Yérgushof. "So we'll stay here; we hit first time."

Nazarka and Yérgushof spread down their felt cloaks and made themselves comfortable behind

the log, while Lukashka went on with Uncle Yéroshka.

• “Not very far from here, uncle,” said he, noiselessly walking on in advance of the old man. “I will show you where they went. I am the only one who knows the place, brother!”

“Show it to me; you are a fine young fellow, Urvan,” replied the old man, also in a whisper.

After they had gone a few steps, Lukashka halted, bent over to a pool, and whistled.

“Here is where they came to drink; do you see?” said he, almost inaudibly, pointing to fresh tracks.

“Christ save you!” replied the old man. “The old boar has been scratching himself in this hole!” he continued. “You go back; I’ll watch here.”

Lukashka pulled up his felt burka and walked back alone along the bank, quickly glancing, now at the left at the wall of reeds, now at the Terek rolling by under the bank.

“Who knows? Perhaps *he* too is watching or slinking about somewhere near!” said Lukashka to himself, meaning by “he” the Circassian.

Suddenly a tremendous rushing and splashing in the river startled him and made him grasp his carbine. From the shore dashed a wild-boar,

panting, and the black form, for an instant parting the gleaming surface of the water, disappeared among the reeds. Luka quickly cocked his musket and aimed it, but, before he had time to shoot, the boar was out of range in the thicket. Spitting angrily, he continued his way. When he reached the place of ambuscade, he again halted and lightly whistled. The signal was returned, and he joined his comrades.

Nazarka, comfortably wrapped up, was already asleep. Yérgushof was sitting up, with his legs curled under him, and he hitched along a little so as to make room for Lukashka.

"It's jolly to sit here! Fact, this is a fine place!" said he. "Did you show him the way?"

"I found it for him," replied Lukashka, spreading out his burka. "But I just started up such a healthy boar from out of the river! It must have been the very same. Of course, you heard what a crashing he made."

"Yes, I heard the crashing of some wild beast, and I knew in a minute that it was a wild beast. And so I said to myself, 'Lukashka has been scaring him,'" said Yérgushof, wrapping himself up in his burka. "I'll get a little sleep now," he continued. "Wake me up after cock-crowing, because we must have some system. I will sleep,

• and then afterwards you may sleep and I will stand guard. That's the way we'll do it."

• "Thank you, I don't care to sleep," replied Lukashka.

• The night was dark, warm, and calm. Only in one quarter of the sky the stars were shining; the larger part was covered with one vast cloud that rested on the mountains. This black cloud, coalescing with the mountains, slowly moved farther and farther away, though there was no wind, and its curving edge was sharply outlined against the deep, starry sky.

In front of the Cossack only the Terek and the dim distance were to be seen; behind him and on both sides was the circular wall of the reeds. Occasionally these reeds, apparently without cause, would begin to bend and rustle against each other. Seen from below, the waving rushes seemed like downy branches of trees against the unclouded portion of the sky.

In front of him, at his very feet, was the bank under which the current was sweeping. Farther away the gleaming, rushing mass of cinnamon-colored water monotonously rippled along the sand banks and bars. Still farther, the same masses of water and banks and the cloud, all confused in indistinguishable darkness.

Over the surface of the water stretched black shadows, which the Cossack's experienced eyes made out to be logs floating down the stream. Once in a while the lightning, reflected in the water as in a black mirror, flashed forth the outline of the shelving shore on the other side.

The various sounds of the night, the murmuring of the reeds, the snoring of the Cossacks, the humming of mosquitoes, and the rippling of the stream, were now and again interrupted by some far distant musket-shot, the caving-in of the bank, undermined by the water, now by the leaping of a big fish, now by the crashing of some wild beast in the thick, wild forest.

Once an owl flew down the Terek, regularly between each two strokes of its wings flapping them together. Straight over the Cossacks' heads it turned toward the forest, and, circling round a tree, flapped its wings together more quickly and then for a long time scrambled about trying to get foothold on the old chinar.

At every such unwonted sound, the watchful Cossack listened with all his ears, strained his sight, and impatiently fingered his carbine.

The larger part of the night had passed. The black cloud, which had passed off toward the west, now disclosed above its broken edges the clear

- starry sky, and above the mountains brightly gleamed the canted horns of the golden moon.

It began to feel cool.

- Nazarka woke up, muttered a few words, and
- went to sleep again. Lukashka, finding it dull, got up, drew his knife from under his dagger, and began to whittle his stick into a ramrod. His mind was filled with thoughts of how the Chechens lived in the mountains; how their braves might cross to this side, how fearless of the Cossacks they were, and how it was possible that they would cross in some other place.

And he stretched himself and scanned the river, but nothing was to be seen. Afterwards paying less heed to the river and the distant bank, indistinctly rising above the water in the faint light of the moon, he ceased to think about the Chechens, and merely began to long for the hour to wake his comrades, and the day when he could visit the village. The thought of the village called up to mind Dunka, his *dúshenka*, darling, as the Cossacks call their mistresses, and his thought of her was mingled with bitterness.

There were now indications that morning was near: silvery mist began to rise over the river, and young eagles screamed and flapped their wings near him. At last the call of the first cock was

heard in the distant village, followed by a second, long and loud, and then answered by others in all directions.

"It's time to wake them," thought Lukashka, who had now finished his ramrod and felt a consciousness that his eyes were heavy. He turned to his comrades and was trying to make out which pair of legs belonged to which; but suddenly it seemed to him that something splashed on the other side of the Terek, and once more he scanned the brightening horizon of the mountains, over which still hung the horned crescent of the moon; he saw the outline of the bank, and the river, and the pieces of driftwood now clearly distinguishable as they floated down. It seemed to him that he was moving, while the Terek and the logs were stationary; but this illusion lasted only an instant.

Once more he began to gaze attentively.

One great black log, with a projecting limb, especially attracted his attention. Strangely enough, this log swam along the stream without rolling or swerving. It even seemed to him that it was not floating with the current, but was crossing the Terek along the shallows.

Lukashka craned his neck and followed its motions eagerly. The log ran aground on a sand-bank, stopped, and then moved in a peculiar way.

Lukashka became convinced that he saw an arm behind the log.

"Here's a chance for me to shoot an abrek on my own account!" he said to himself, grasping his musket and securely but hastily setting up a support and resting the barrel upon it. He noiselessly raised the hammer, and, holding his breath, began to take aim at the log.

"I won't wake them," he thought; but his heart throbbed so violently in his breast that he stopped and listened. The log suddenly rolled over, and again, causing a wake through the water, made its way toward our shore.

"Only that it don't miss!" was his thought, and lo! there in the pale light of the moon gleamed the head of a Tatar at the front end of the log. He aimed his musket straight at the head. It seemed to him very near, right at the muzzle! He glanced along the barrel. "Yes, it is indeed an abrek," was his joyful thought, and, suddenly dropping heavily on one knee, he again adjusted his musket and aimed at the foe, who was, apparently, almost within reach of his long barrel; then, in accordance with the Cossack usage, to which he had been accustomed since childhood, murmuring, "To the Father and the Son!" he pulled the trigger.

A blinding flash gleamed for a moment over the reeds and the river. A sharp, short report rang out, and the echo rumbled far away. The log no longer swam across the current, but floated down, swerving and swaying.

"Hold him, I say!" cried Yérgushof, grasping for his carbine, and coming out from behind the log.

"Hold your tongue, you devil!" whispered Luka, with set teeth. "Abreks!"

"Whom did you shoot?" asked Nazarka. "Whom did you shoot, Lukashka?"

Lukashka made no reply. He reloaded his gun, and watched the log as it floated down the river. Before it had gone far, it ran aground on a sandbank, and from under it a large body seemed to be moving in the water.

"What did you shoot? Why don't you tell?" insisted the Cossacks.

"Abreks! How many times do you need to be told!" snarled Luka.

"What's that nonsense you're giving us? Did your gun go off?"

"I have shot an abrek. Look there! That's what I shot!" rejoined Lukashka, his voice breaking in his excitement. He leaped to his feet. "A man was swimming across," said he,

pointing to the sandbar. — "I killed him. Look yonder!"

"What a story that is!" repeated Yérgushka, rubbing his eyes.

"Don't you believe it? Just you look! Look yonder!" cried Lukashka, seizing him by the shoulder, and drawing him so violently to himself that Yérgushka groaned.

He looked in the direction indicated by Luka, and, seeing the body, suddenly changed his tone.

"Ená! I assure you there must be more of them! I assure you!" he said, timidly, and began to look around for his musket. "That one swam over first; perhaps they are here already; perhaps they are up a little way along the shore; I tell you it must be so."

Lukashka unbuckled his belt and began to take off his cherkeska.

"Where are you going? you fool!" cried Yérgushka. "It's sheer foolhardiness! What do you want to throw away your life for? I assure you, if he's dead, he won't run away. Give us a little powder. Have you got any? Nazar! you make for the 'post' lively, but don't go along the shore; they would kill you, I am sure they would."

"What! Expect me to go alone? Go yourself!" said Nazarka, testily.

Lukashka, having taken off his *cherkeska*, had gone down to the water's edge.

"Don't run the risk, I tell you!" insisted Yérgushka, engaged in pouring powder into the pan of his gun. "You see he doesn't move, that's plain enough. By morning, he won't have got any farther; so let's send to the 'post.' Hurry up, Nazar! Eka! what a coward you are! Don't be a coward, I tell you!"

"But Luka, Luka!" cried Nazar. -- "Just tell us how you killed him."

Luka changed his mind about going instantly into the water.

"Hurry up to the station and I will wait here. Tell the Cossacks to send out the horse patrol. If they have crossed over to this side, we must take them. . . ."

"I tell you they must have crossed over," said Yérgushkof, getting up; "of course we must take them."

And Yérgushkof and Nazarka got up, and, crossing themselves, started for the cordon, not along the shore, but, taking the forest path, and breaking their way through the brambles.

"See here, Luka, don't you stir!" was Yérgushof's injunction, "or else they'll cut you off. Don't you go into the water, I warn you."

"Go on, I know what I am about," replied Luka, and took his place again behind the log, examining his gun.

He sat there alone, gazing at the sandbar, and listening for the sound of the Cossacks; but it was a long distance to the cordon, and he began to be tormented by impatience. It occurred to him that the abreks who had accompanied the dead one might make their escape. He felt the same feeling of vexation against the abreks who were escaping now as he had felt the evening before at the loss of the boar. He glanced restlessly now on this side, now on that, expecting to see some one appear, and, with his musket on the rest, he was ready to fire. It never entered his head that there was any chance of being killed himself.

CHAPTER IX.

It was now growing quite light. The abrek's whole body was now plainly in sight, as it rested on the sandbar, scarcely moving.

Suddenly, not far from the Cossack, the reeds crackled, steps were heard, and the tops of the reeds were bent. The Cossack cocked the second barrel, and muttered his "To the Father and the Son." As soon as the gun clicked the steps came to a stop.

"Hey! Cossacks! Don't shoot your uncle!" rang out the imperturbable bass, and Uncle Yéroshka, parting the reeds, came directly to him.

"By God! I nearly killed you," said Lukashka.

"What have you shot?" asked the old man.

The old man's sonorous voice, echoing in the woods and along the river, suddenly broke in upon the silence of the night and the mystery surrounding the Cossack. It seemed as though it grew suddenly lighter and brighter.

"You did not see anything at all, uncle, but I, — I killed a wild beast!" said Lukashka, uncock-

ing his gun and rising with assumed composure. The old man gazed steadily at the abrek's back, now plainly in sight, with the Terek rippling around it.

"He was swimming on his back with the log. I caught sight of him. . . . Just look there! Look! He's in blue drawers; he's dropped his musket. . . . Do you see? What?" exclaimed Lukashka.

"Do you think I'm blind?" growled the old man, and a strange mixture of seriousness and sternness appeared on his face. "You have killed a jigit!" he said, in a tone that seemed to express pity.

"I was sitting this way and looking and I saw something dark on the other side. And I looked again; it was just as though a man came down and made a splash. How strange! And then the log, a healthy-looking log, was swimming along, but didn't swim with the current, but struck across. I looked; a head was on the other side. How strange! I lay low, but couldn't see anything for the rushes; then I stood up, but the rascal—he must have heard, I think, for he crept up on a sandbar and looked around. 'You're mistaken,' thinks I, 'you don't escape me.' Well, he crept out and looked around. (Oh! it choked

me to see him!) I got my gun ready, didn't stir, and waited. Well, I stood and stood, and then he started off swimming again; and when he swam out into the moonlight, then I got a glimpse of his back. 'To the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost!' As soon as the smoke cleared up a little, I saw that he was floundering. He groaned, unless I am much mistaken. 'Well, thank the Lord,' thinks I, 'I have killed him.' And when he reached the sandbar I could see him plainly; he tried to get up, and hadn't strength enough. He staggered, staggered and fell. I could see it as plain as day. . . . There! he has stopped moving! he must be dead! The Cossacks have gone up to the cordon, so that the rest of the lot may not get away."

"And so you got him!" said the old man. "He's quite a distance, brother, even now. . . ." And again he shook his head sadly.

At this moment, loud talking and the crackling of dry branches were heard along the shore, and the Cossacks, mounted and on foot, made their appearance.

"Have you got a boat? Say!" shouted Luka.

"You're a hero, Luka; bring him to shore," cried one of the Cossacks.

Lukashka, without waiting for the boat, began

to undress, keeping his eyes all the time on his booty.

“Hold on! Nazárka is bringing the boat,” cried the sergeant.

“Fool! Maybe he is still alive! feigning! Take your dagger!” shouted another Cossack.

“Rubbish!” cried Luka, flinging down his drawers. It did not take him long to undress; then he crossed himself, and with a bound dashed into the water with a splash, wet himself all over, and then, making wide sweeps with his white arms and lifting his back high out of the water at every stroke, he struck out across the current and made for the sandbar where the abrek lay. The band of Cossacks stood on the bank loudly conversing in many voices. Three men on horseback started to ride along the trail. The boat heaved in sight around the bend. Lukashka climbed up on the bar, bent down to the body, rolled it over two or three times. “He’s dead, fast enough!” he cried, in a loud voice.

The Chechenets had been shot through the head. He wore a pair of blue drawers, a shirt, cherkeska, a gun and a dagger fastened to his back. . . . Above all was tied the big branch which had at first deceived Lukashka.

“That’s the way the carp was caught!” cried

one of the Cossacks standing round in a circle, as the body of the Chechenets, brought ashore in the boat, was laid down on the bank in the thick grass.

"How yellow he is!" exclaimed another.

"Where have our men gone to search for them? Probably they are all on the other side. If this one had not been their leader, he would not have swum over in that way. Why should one come over alone?" asked a third.

"He must have been a foxy one to try it before all the others. He is evidently a genuine jigit," said Lukashka, derisively, wringing the water out of his wet garments, and shivering with the cold as he stood on the shore. "His beard is dyed and clipped."

"And he has a coat in the bag on his back. He would have swum easier without it," said some one.

"Listen, Lukashka!" said the sergeant, holding in his hands the abrek's dagger and gun: "You keep the dagger and keep the coat, but, see here, let me have the gun; I will give you three silver rubles for it. See, the vent-hole is clear," he added, blowing down the muzzle. "I should like to have it as a memento."

Lukashka made no reply; evidently this re-

quest was not at all to his mind ; but he knew that there was no escape from it. "Just look, what devilish trash!" he said, frowning, and flinging the Circassian coat to the ground — "if only the zipún had been good for anything ; but it's such a beggarly rag !"

"It'll be useful in going after wood," remarked some one.

"Mosyef ! I'd like to go home," said Lukashka, evidently forgetting his vexation, and finding it a good chance to turn the superior's request to advantage.

"All right, go then !"

"Bring him up to the cordon, boys !" cried the sergeant to the Cossacks, examining the while his prize. "And we must have a shelter built over him, to keep the sun from him. Perhaps they will come down from the mountains to ransom him."

"It isn't hot yet," was the comment of one.

"But the jackals might get hold of him. That wouldn't be good, now, would it ?" replied one of the Cossacks.

"We will set a watch, and then they will come to ransom him ; it would be bad if anything should happen to him."

"Well, Lukashka, just as you please ; but you

must set up a bucketful for the boys," said the sergeant, gayly.

"Yes, that's the proper thing to do," assented the Cossacks. "See what luck God has sent him! he has killed an abrek without even seeing him!"

"Buy the dagger and the zipun. Let me have money for them. And I will throw in the drawers. God be with you," said Luka, "they won't fit me; he was a lean devil!"

One Cossack bought the zipun for a silver ruble, or monet as it is called in the Caucasus.

Another gave two buckets of vodka for the dagger.

"Now, boys, you can have a drink, I will set up a bucketful," said Luka; "I myself will bring it from the village."

"Say, why not cut up the drawers into kerchiefs for the girls?" cried Nazarka.

The Cossacks burst into a laugh.

"Quit your laughing!" said the sergeant, "and bring along the body. We must lay the carrion near the hut." . . .

"What are you waiting for? Carry him along, boys," cried Lukashka, peremptorily; and the Cossacks, though they did not relish touching the body, obeyed his word as though he had been their commander.

Having jugged the body a few steps, they laid him down with the legs collapsing lifelessly, and stood for some time in silence.

Nazarka went to the body, and lifted the head, which had fallen back, so as to see the round, gory bullet-hole in the man's very temple.

"It marked him well, didn't it? Went right through his brain," he observed. "No danger of his being lost, his folks will know him when they see him."

No one had anything to say, and again the angel of silence spread her wings over the Cossacks.

The sun had now risen, and its broken rays flecked the dewy green. The Terek murmured as it flowed not far away through the awakening forest. On all sides the pheasants cried to each other, greeting the morn.

The Cossacks, silent and motionless, stood around the dead man and looked at him. The cinnamon-colored body, in blue drawers alone, now made darker by the water, and belted tight about the hollow belly, was well proportioned and beautiful. . . . His muscular arms lay rigidly along his ribs. His livid, closely shaven, round head, with the clotted wound in the temple, was bent back. The smooth, sunburnt brow was sharply defined against the line where the shaven

hair began. . . . The glassy, open eyes, with deep-set pupils, gazed up, as if beyond them. A good-natured, shrewd smile seemed still to hover over the thin, curling lips, half covered by the red, clipped moustache. The small finger joints were covered with reddish hairs; the fingers were doubled in and the nails were tinged with red.

Lukashka was not yet dressed; he was dripping wet; his neck was redder and his eyes gleamed brighter than usual; his wide, broad cheeks trembled; from his fair, healthy body arose a scarcely perceptible vapor into the cool morning air.

"He also was a man," he observed, evidently admiring the abrek.

"Yes, if you had fallen into his hands, he wouldn't have shown you any mercy," replied one of the Cossacks. The angel of silence took her flight. The Cossacks started on their way, talking as they went. Two of them went to cut branches for the shelter. The others sauntered along toward the cordon. Luka and Nazarka hastened to prepare for their visit home.

Half an hour later, the two young Cossacks were on their way home, talking all the time and almost running through the thick forest, that separates the Terek from the village.

“Don't say a word that I sent you, but just go and find out if her husband is at home, will you?” said Luka, in a sharp voice.

“I am going to Yámka's, — we'll have a sprce, won't we?” asked the devoted Nazarka.

“When should we have a sprce if not to-day?” replied Luka.

As soon as they reached the village, the two Cossacks filled themselves with drink and flung themselves down to sleep till evening.

CHAPTER X.

ON the third day after the events above described, two companies of the Caucasus infantry regiment came to be stationed at Novo-Mlinsk.

The baggage wagons already stood unhitched in the middle of the square. The cooks had dug a trench, and dragged from various house yards any logs that they happened to find lying about, and were busy in preparing kasha gruel. The men were driving in stakes for fastening the horses.

The sergeants were calling the roll. The bil-leters, as though they were at home, sauntered through the streets and lanes, assigning quarters to officers and men. Here were green caissons set in martial array. Here were the company wagons and horses. . . . Here were kettles, in which the oatmeal was boiling. Here were the captain and the lieutenant, and Onísim Mikhálovitch, the sergeant-major.

And all this array found itself in the village, the very same village, where, according to report,

the companies had been ordered to encamp, hence the companies were at home.

“Why are they stationed here? What sort of men are these Cossacks? Are they pleased at the idea of having the men quartered on them? Are they dissenters or not?”

This is none of their concern. The soldiers, released from duty, tired and dusty, scatter in noisy disorder, like a swarm of bees, over the streets and squares, resolutely paying no heed to the unfriendly disposition of the Cossacks; in groups of twos and threes, with rollicking banter and clattering of muskets, they scatter about; they force their way into the houses; they hang up their trappings; they select places, and banter the women.

A great group is collected in the place so loved by the soldiers—around the kasha-kettle—and, with pipes between their teeth, they watch the smoke as it rises into the burning sky and floats away like white clouds, or at the camp-fires, quivering like melted glass in the clear air, or else they make witty remarks about the Cossack men and women because they differ in some respects from the Russians in their way of living.

In all the yards soldiers are to be seen; their laughter rings out and the sharp, angry cries of

the Cossack women trying to protect their homes, and refusing to give water or utensils.

The little boys and girls, clinging to their mothers or to each other, follow with affright and amazement all the movements of these men, whom they have never seen before, or tag after them at a respectful distance. The old Cossacks come forth from their huts, sit down on the embankments, and look in gloomy silence at the hubbub of the soldiers, — as it were, scorning it all and not understanding what is to be the result of it all.

Olyénin, who for the last three months had been enrolled as a yunker in the Caucasus regiment, was assigned quarters in one of the best houses of the village, with the Ensign Ilyá Vasilyévitch, in other words, at Dame Ulitka's.

“What do you think of this, Dmitri Andréyevitch?” asked the panting Ványusha of Olyénin, who, after a five-hour ride on his Kabarda horse, bought in Groznaya, joyfully galloped into the yard of his new home.

“What's the matter now, Iván Vasilyévitch?” he asked, in return, soothing his horse and glancing gayly at Ványusha, who, with hair in disorder and with the sweat pouring down his dejected

face, was unpacking the things brought on the baggage train with which he had come.

Olyénin appeared an entirely different man. Instead of smoothly shaven cheeks, he wore a moustache and a young beard. Instead of the pale, unhealthy complexion of one whose nights are spent in dissipation, he showed a fresh and ruddy tan over his cheeks, forehead, and ears. Instead of a perfectly new black coat, he wore a dirty white cherkeska, or Circassian coat, with wide lapels, and carried a rifle. Instead of a stiff, starched collar, his sunburned neck was clasped by the red circlet of a Persian beshmet. He was dressed in the Circassian style, but he did not wear it well; every one would have known that he was a Russian and not a jigit. It was all right and yet all wrong! But his whole person was radiant with health, happiness, and self-satisfaction.

"It may be very laughable to you here," exclaimed Vanyusha, "but just you try to talk with these people; they won't let you near them, and that's the end of it. You can't get a word out of them. They aren't any kind of Russians!" and Vanyusha angrily flung an iron pail on the threshold.

"Well, you should have complained to the head of the village."

"I don't know where to find him," replied Vanyusha, testily.

"Who has insulted you so here?" demanded Olyénin, looking around.

"The devil take them! Tfu! The actual owner isn't here; gone down to the *Kriga*,¹ they say, and the old woman is such a devil! The Lord preserve us!" ejaculated Vanyusha, grasping his head. "How we are going to live here is more than I can tell! Worse than Tatars, by God! The idea of calling them Christians! Why, in comparison to them, the Tatar is a gentleman! 'Gone down to the *Kriga*!' What do they mean by the *Kriga*, I should like to know?" cried Vanyusha, in conclusion, as he turned away.

"So they aren't like our people at home?" said Olyénin, bantering his man and not offering to dismount.

"Let me have the horse, please," said Vanyusha, who was wholly upset by this new order of things, but submissive to fate.

"So they are worse than Tatars? Hey, Vanyusha?" repeated Olyénin, slipping off from his horse and slapping the saddle with his hand.

¹ *Kriga* means the place on the river-bank where the nets are set for fish: the weirs. — *Author's note.*

"Yes, laugh as much as you like. You'll find enough to laugh at," said Vanyusha, in a tone of vexation.

"Just wait; don't lose your temper, Iván Vasflyitch," said Olyénin, still smiling. "Just let me go the people here; you wait; I will make everything all straight. You'll see how fine we will live here! Only don't get so stirred up!"

Ványusha made no reply, but, blinking his eyes, gazed contemptuously after his master and shook his head. Vanyusha looked upon Olyénin merely as upon a master. Olyénin looked upon Vanyusha only as upon a servant. And both of them would have been much surprised if any one had told them that they were friends. But they were friends, even though they did not know it.

Vanyusha had been taken into the house when he was a lad of eleven, and Olyénin was just about the same age. When Olyénin was fifteen, he at one time undertook to give Vanyusha some lessons and taught him to read French, and Vanyusha was very proud of this accomplishment. Even now, when he felt particularly well disposed, he made use of French words, and when he did so always laughed like a ninny.

Olyénin mounted the steps of the cottage and pushed open the door into the entry.

Maryana, in nothing but a pink shirt, such as the Cossack girls usually wear when at home, sprang back from the door in affright, and, crouching against the partition, hid the lower part of her face in the flowing sleeve of the Tatar garment.

When Olyénin opened the door still wider, he saw in the dim light the Cossack maiden's tall and well proportioned form. With the quick and eager curiosity of youth, he was irresistibly impelled to notice the full, virgin lines, in full relief under the thin chintz shirt, and the handsome black eyes fixed upon him with infantile terror and wild wonder.

"There she is!" said Olyénin to himself. "I wonder if there are many of them like her," was the next thought that occurred to him, and he opened the door and entered the cottage. . . . Old Dame Ulitka, likewise in a single garment, was bending over and sweeping the floor, with her back turned to him.

"Good afternoon, *mátushka*. Here I have become to arrange about my quarters . . ." he began.

bent the Cossack dame, without straightening up,

"When him her stern but still handsome eyes.
"What have you come for? Are you trying to

"turn us into ridicule? Hey? I'll teach you! The black pest take you!" she screamed, looking askance and frowning darkly at the new-comer.

Olyénin had thought hitherto that the toil-worn, heroic army of the Caucasus, to which he belonged, would be received with a warm welcome everywhere, especially by the Cossacks, their comrades in the war; and therefore such a reception as this puzzled him. Not allowing himself to be bluffed, however, he began to explain that it was his intention to pay for his accommodations, but the old dame did not give him a chance to speak.

"What have you come for? Who wants such scabs as you? A pox on your ugly mug! You just wait till my man comes! He'll show you your place. I don't want your cursed money. Do you suppose we've never seen any such thing? Stench up the house with tobacco smoke and expect to settle for it with money! Was there ever such impudence? Pity they didn't shoot your heart out!" screamed the old dame, in a piercing voice, utterly confounding Olyénin.

"It seems that Vanyushka was right," thought he. "The Tatar is better," and he went out of the cottage, followed by Dame Ulitka's billingsgate.

As he went, Maryana, still in nothing but her

pink shirt, but with her face, all except the eyes, wrapped up in a white kerchief, unexpectedly dashed by him out of the entry. Her bare feet pattered down the steps, and she darted away, then stopped suddenly, and, after looking with laughing eyes at the young man for a brief moment, disappeared around the corner of the house.

The beautiful maiden's firm, youthful bearing, the untamed look of her eyes gleaming out from the white kerchief, and the fine proportions of her lithe form made now an even more powerful impression on Olyénin.

"She is the one! It must be!" he said to himself, and, forgetting all about his trouble with the old dame, and still having Maryanka in mind, he went back to Vanyusha.

"Did you ever see such a wild girl!" said Vanyusha, still busy unpacking, but by this time in a better frame of mind. "She's a regular colt! *La fam,*" he added, in a loud, enthusiastic voice and a burst of laughter.

CHAPTER XI.

TOWARD evening the master of the house returned from his fishing, and, finding that he could get pay for his lodgings, he pacified his wife, and satisfied Vanyusha's demands.

Everything was soon in order in the new quarters. The man and his wife retired to their winter rooms, and allowed the yunker, for the consideration of three *moneta*, or silver rubles, a month, to instal himself in the cool cottage. Olyénin ate a little lunch and lay down for a nap. He awoke toward evening, washed himself, brushed his hair, ate his dinner, and, lighting a cigarette, sat down by the window facing the street. The heat had somewhat abated. The oblique shadow of the cottage, with its carved ridgepole, lay across the dusty street, and even broke on the lower part of the opposite house, the slanting roof of which, thatched with reeds, gleamed in the rays of the setting sun. The air was growing cool. The village was still. The soldiers had found their quarters and were on their good behavior.

The cattle had not yet been driven in, and the

people of the village were still out in the gardens at work.

Olyénin's lodgings were almost at the end of the village. Occasionally, in the distance beyond the Terek, in the very direction from which Olyénin had come, could be heard the sounds of shots — on the Chechnya heights or the Kunit-sky plain. Olyénin felt in good spirits after his three months of camp life; his face, soaped and rinsed, felt cool and fresh; his strong body was clean and comfortable after the dust and fatigue of the campaign; all his limbs felt rested and full of serenity and strength.

His mind was also clear and free from troubles. He recalled the incidents of the expedition, — the perils which he had undergone. He recollected that while he was in peril he had behaved well, that he had been as courageous as the others, and that he had been received into the good fellowship of the heroic *Kavkaztsui*.

His recollections of Moscow were — God knows where! His old life was wiped out and a new, a wholly new life had begun; in this there was as yet no error to be set down against him. Here, as a new man among new men, it was possible for him to win a new and good report. He experienced a youthful sensation of unreasonable

enjoyment of life, and, as he looked out of the window at the boys spinning their tops in the shadow near the house, or inspected the new lodgings which had been assigned to him, he thought how pleasantly he was situated in this new life in the village. . . . He gazed over toward the mountains and the sky, and there was mingled with all his recollections and dreams the stern realization of the majesty of nature.

His life here had not begun as he had expected when he first set out from Moscow, but far better than he had expected.

The mountains, the mountains, the mountains made the background of all his thoughts, of all his feelings !

"He's kissed his dog ! He has licked the jug ! Uncle Yéroshka ! He's kissed his dog !" suddenly cried the children, driving their tops under the window, and they ran to the corner of the street. "He has kissed his dog ! He has swapped his dagger for drink !" cried the urchins, crowding together and scampering about.

These cries were directed to Uncle Yéroshka, who, with his gun over his shoulders and a bunch of pheasants at his belt, was returning from the hunt.

"It's my sin, children ! it's my sin !" he

replied, wildly waving his arms and glancing at the windows of the cottages on both sides of the street. "I let the dog go for drink! It's my sin!" he reiterated, evidently angry, but pretending that it was all the same to him.

Olyénin was surprised at the way the urchins behaved toward the old huntsman, but he was still more astonished at the strong, intelligent face and powerful build of the man whom they called Uncle Yéroshka.

"Uncle! Cossack!" he called to him. "Come in here!"

The old man looked at the window and paused. "Good evening, my worthy friend!" said he, lifting his cap from his closely shaven head.

"Good evening, my worthy friend!" continued Olyénin. "What are those little rascals shouting at you for?"

Uncle Yéroshka came up to the window.

"They make sport of an old chap like me. That's nothing. I like 'em. Let 'em get their sport out of their old uncle," said he, with those decisive, harmonious tones in which dignified old people are wont to speak. "Are you the commander of the force? Hey?"

¹ *Dyddushka*, affectionate diminutive of *dyadya*, uncle.

"No, I am a yunker. But where did you kill those pheasants?" asked Olyénin.

"I killed the three hens in the woods," replied the old man, turning his broad back to the window. The three pheasants, which had stained his *cherkeska* with blood, were fastened by their heads to his belt.

"Haven't you seen any yet?" he asked. "If you like 'em, take a brace. Na!" and he thrust the two pheasants in through the window. "What? are you fond of hunting too?" he went on to inquire.

"Indeed I am. On the expedition I shot four."

"Four? That's a good many!" said the old man, ironically. "But do you drink? Do you like Caucasian wine?"¹

"What do you suppose? Of course, I enjoy drinking!"

"Hey! Yes, I see you are a fine young fellow! You and I must be chums," said Uncle Yéroshka.

"Come in," said Olyénin. "Here, we'll try some of your red wine."

"Well, I might come in," said the old man. "But here, take your pheasants."

¹ The red Caucasian wine, called *Chikhir*, which also means green wine.

It was plain to see by the old man's face that the yunker had got into his good graces, and he had instantly perceived that it would not cost him anything to get drunk at his expense, and therefore it would be good policy to give him the brace of pheasants.

In a moment Uncle Yéroshka's form appeared at the door of the cottage. Here Olyénin first realized the man's real size and powerful build, although his red, cinnamon-colored countenance, framed in a bushy beard perfectly white, was furrowed with the wrinkles of old age and of a laborious life.

The muscles of his legs, arms, and shoulders were as full and solid as would be expected only in a far younger man. Deep scars could be seen on his head, under his short hair. His thick, sinewy neck was covered with checkered folds like that of an ox. His freckled hands were bruised and scratched.

He stepped easily and lightly across the threshold, took off his gun, stood it up in the corner, cast a quick glance around, taking in the general aspect of things, and came into the middle of the room, making no noise with his feet, which were, as usual, wrapped up in buckskin *porshni*. He brought with him a strong but not disagreeable

• odor, compounded of wine, vodka, powder, and clotted blood.

• Uncle Yéroshka bowed toward the holy picture, smoothed his beard, and then, going straight up to Olyénin, gave him his black, stout hand.

“*Koshkildui!*” said he. This is a Tatar expression, which means, “Wishing you good health,” or, “Peace be with you.”

“*Koshkildui!* I know!” replied Olyénin, giving him his hand.

“É! you know nothing about it; you don't know our ways, you fool!” said Uncle Yéroshka, reproachfully, shaking his head. “If any one says, ‘*Koshkildui,*’ then you must reply, ‘*Allah razi bo sun!* God save you!’ That's the way, my father, and not, ‘*Koshkildui!*’ I will teach you all about it. That's the way with your Russian Ilyá Moseytch here; he and I were great chums. He was a fine young fellow. Tippler, thief, hunter! oh, what a hunter he was! I taught him all about it.”

“What will you teach me?” asked Olyénin, becoming more and more interested in the old man.

“I will take you out hunting; I will teach you to catch fish; I will show you the Chechens; and, if you want a *dúshenka*, I will get one for you.

That's the kind of a man I am—a regular⁴ joker!" And the old man laughed. "I will sit down, my father; I am tired. *Karga?*" he asked, with a questioning look.

"What does *karga* mean?" asked Olyénin.

"That means 'good,' in the Georgian speech. I am always saying that. It's a byword of mine; my favorite expression, — *karga*; when I say that, it means that I am joking. How is it, my father? will you send out and get some red wine? Do you keep a man? do you? his name Ivan?" cried the old huntsman. "All your men are named Ivan, aren't they? Is yours Ivan?"

"Certainly he's Ivan. . . . Vanyusha! please, get some red wine of Dame Ulitka and bring it here."

"Ivan and Vanyusha! It's all the same thing. Why are your body-men all called Ivan? Ivan!" said the old man, rolling the name over and over. . . . "Young man, be sure and get it from a cask that has been opened. Ah! they have the best red wine in the village. But don't give more than thirty kopeks a quart for it; the old hag, she'd like to . . . Our people are a cursed, stupid lot," continued Uncle Yéroshka, in a confidential tone, after Vanyusha had gone out.

⁴ *Bátiushka*.

• “They don’t call you people at all. In their eyes, you are worse than the Tatars. The Russians they hold to be low trash. But, in my opinion, though you are a soldier, still you are a man ; you’ve got a good soul in your body. That’s my idea, now. There was Ilyá Moséyitch ; he was a soldier, but what a golden fellow he was ! Isn’t that so, my father ? And that’s one reason why our people don’t like me. But it makes no difference to me. I’m a jolly fellow ; I like everybody that comes along ; my name’s Yéroshka ; that’s what it is, my father.”

And the old man caressingly slapped the young Russian on the shoulder.

CHAPTER XII.

VANYUSHA, meantime, who had succeeded in getting his housekeeping arrangements in running order, had been trimmed up by the regimental barber, and, as a sign that the company was in more commodious quarters, had pulled his trousers out of his boot legs, was now in the most amiable frame of mind. He gazed at Uncle Yéroshka attentively but not at all benevolently, as though he were some sort of strange wild beast, shook his head at the floor which he had tracked over, and, pulling out from under the bench two empty bottles, went off to the mistress of the house.

“Good evening, worthy people,” said he, determining to be particularly sweet. “The bárin sent me to buy some red wine. Be kind enough to fill these.”

The old dame made no reply. Maryana was standing before a little Tatar mirror and arranging her kerchief over her head. She said nothing, but gazed at Vanyusha.

“I will pay the money down, honored people,”

• said Vanyusha, rattling the coins in his pocket.

“You be polite and we will be polite too; that’s the best way,” he added.

• “How much you want?” demanded the old dame, curtly.

“A couple of quarts.”

“Go, dear, draw it for him,” said Dame Ulitka, turning to her daughter. “Draw it from the opened cask, darling.”

The maiden took the key and a jug, and, accompanied by Vanyusha, left the room.

“Tell me, please, what sort of a young woman that is,” asked the young officer, pointing to Maryanka, who just then passed by the window.

The old man winked and nudged Olyénin’s elbow.

“Wait a bit,” said he, and thrust his head out of the window. “K-khm! K-khm!” he coughed and roared. “Maryánushka, ah, sister Maryanka! Love me, dúshenka! . . . I am a joker!” he said, in a whisper, addressing Olyénin.

The girl, evenly and vigorously swinging her arms, passed by the window with the dashing, jaunty gait peculiar to the Cossack women. She did not turn her head, but merely gave the old man a deliberate glance from her dark eyes, from under their long lashes.

"Love me and you will be happy," cried Yéroshka, winking at the officer and looking at him questioningly. "I am a bravo; I am a joker," he went on to say. "She's a queenly girl, hey!"

"She's a beauty," exclaimed Olyénin. "Bring her in!"

"Nay, nay," replied the old man. "She's to be married to Lukashka, — Luka, a Cossack bravo, a jigit. He killed an abrek a day or two ago. I'll find you a better one. I'll get you one who dresses all in silks; yes, and in silver too. What I promise, I perform. I'll have a beauty for you."

"Old man, what are you saying?" demanded Olyénin. "Didn't you know that was a sin?"

"A sin? Where's the sin? Is it a sin to look at a pretty girl? Is it a sin to go about with one? Is it a sin to love one? Is it so with you there? No, my father, that isn't a sin, but a saving grace! God made you, and God made the wench. He made all things, my dear boy.¹ And so it's no sin to look at a pretty little wench. That's what she's made for, to be loved and to have a good time with! That's my idea of it, my good man."

Passing through the courtyard and coming into

¹ *Bátiuskka*, little father.

the dark, cool wine-cellar filled full of casks, Maryana, with the usual prayer, went to one of them and filled her dipper from it. Vanyusha, standing at the door, grinned as he looked at her. It seemed to him terribly ridiculous that she wore nothing but a shirt, fitting tightly behind and loosely in front, and still more ridiculous that she had a string of half-ruble pieces around her neck. His feeling was that this was un-Russian, and that the people at home would have had a hearty laugh could they have seen such a damsel. "*La fil kom sé tré byé,*¹ for a variety," he said to himself. "I shall have to tell the bárin about her."

"What are you standing there for, you devil?" suddenly cried the girl. "Here, give me the jug!"

Having filled the jug full of cool, red wine, Maryana handed it to Vanyusha.

"Give the money to mámuka," said she, pushing back the hand that held out the coins to her.

Vanyusha laughed outright.

"Why are you so touchy, my dear?" said he, good-naturedly, waiting while the girl shut up the cask.

She began to laugh.

¹ Meaning *La fille comme c'est très belle*, the girl is very pretty.

“But are you polite?”

“The master and I are very polite,” replied Vanyusha, with conviction. “We are so polite that wherever we have lived they have liked us. You see, he’s a nobleman.”

The girl stopped and listened.

“And is he married, your master there?” she asked.

“No! Our *bárin* is young and a bachelor. Because, of course, the nobility can’t get married, while they are young,” explained Vanyusha, didactically.

“You don’t say! A man gets to be a fat buffalo like that and yet too young to marry! Is he the captain of all of you?” she went on to ask.

“My gentleman is only a yunker; that means he isn’t a regular officer yet. But he’s of more consequence than a general — he’s a big man. Because not only our colonel but the Tsar himself knows him,” explained Vanyusha, proudly. “We aren’t like the rest of the poor trash in the army, but our *pápenka* is a senator himself; he has more than a thousand serfs, and he sends us thousands of rubles. And so they like us everywhere. And sometimes even a captain hasn’t any money. So what is the use? . . .”

• “Come, I am going to lock up,” said the girl, interrupting.

• Vanyusha brought in the wine and explained to Olyénin that “*la fil sé tré zhuli,*” and immediately went out with his silly laugh.

CHAPTER XIII

IN the meantime, they were beating the tattoo in the square. The people were returning from their labors. The herds were lowing in the gates, raising a cloud of dust that looked like gold, and the girls and women were bustling about through the streets and yards, getting their cattle home. The sun had entirely sunk behind the distant, snowy crests. A dove-colored shadow rested along the earth and sky. Over the darkening gardens the stars began faintly to glisten, and the village was slowly relapsing into silence. After they had housed their cattle, the Cossack women collected on the street corners or sat down on the terraces, cracking melon seeds. Maryanka, who had already milked the two cows and the buffalo, was to be found in one such group, composed of several women and girls and one old Cossack.

The talk ran on the killing of the abrek. The Cossack was telling the story; the women listened, occasionally asking questions.

"Well, his reward, I suppose, will be very large; won't it?" asked one Cossack girl.

"If it isn't it ought to be! They say they will send him a cross."

"And that Mosyef tried to insult him. He took away his gun, but the officers in Kizlyar have heard about it."

"He's a mean fellow, that Mosyef."

"They say Lukashka is in town," said one young girl.

"He and Nazarka are spreeing it at Yamka's. They say they have drunk a whole gallon."

Yamka was a dissolute, unmarried Cossack woman who kept a dramshop.

"That's just the Urvan's luck!" said some one. "Truly he's the Urvan! Fact! he's a fine young fellow! shrewd! Truly he's a fine lad! And so was his father before him, bátyaka Kiryák; he's just like his father. When he was killed, the whole village mourned for him. See! there they are coming now!" continued the speaker, pointing to three Cossacks who were walking toward them down the street. "Yér-gushof has been drinking with them. What a tipper he is!"

Lukashka, Nazarka, and Yergushof, all of whom had been drinking heavily, came up to the girls. Their faces were redder than usual, especially the old Cossack's. Yergushof was stagger-

ing along and, all the time laughing noisily, was punching Nazarka in the ribs.

"Say, you wenches, won't you sing us a song?" cried one of them to the girls. "I say, you sing, for we're having a spree!"

"How are you to-day? How are you to-day?" exclaimed the women, giving them welcome.

"The idea of singing! It isn't a holiday, is it?" asked one of the women. "You are full; sing yourself!"

Yergushof burst into a laugh and punched Nazarka. "You sing, will you? And I'll sing too. I'm a fine hand at singing, I tell you."

"Well, you pretty girls, are you all asleep?" exclaimed Nazarka. "We have come in from the cordon to have a celebration; we have been drinking to Lukashka's good luck!"

Lukashka, joining the group, slowly pushed back his Cossack cap and stood before the girls. His wide cheeks and his neck were red. He stood there talking in a low tone, gravely; but in the deliberation and gravity of his motions there was more life and strength than in Nazarka's chatter and bustle. He reminded one of a sportive stallion, which raises his tail and snorts, and then stands as though his feet were fastened to the ground. Lukashka stood quietly in front of the

girls ; his eyes were full of merriment ; he said little, but glanced now at his drunken comrades, now at the girls. When Maryana came to the corner, he raised his cap with a slow, deliberate motion, moved back a little, and stood in front of her, with one leg slightly advanced, thrusting his thumbs into his belt, and toying with his dagger. Maryana, in reply to his salutation, slowly bent her head, sat down on the terrace, and pulled some melon seeds out from the bosom of her shirt. Lukashka, not turning his eyes away, gazed at her, and, cracking a seed between his teeth, spit out the shell. No one was speaking when Maryana joined the group.

“Well, have you come for a long stay?” asked one of the women, breaking the silence.

“Till to-morrow,” replied Lukashka, gravely.

“Well, then, God grant you good fortune!” exclaimed the Cossack. “I am glad, as I was just saying.”

“And so say I,” replied the drunken Yergushof, laughing. “So we have some strangers here, have we?” he added, pointing to a soldier who was passing by. “Soldiers' vodka is good ; I like it!”

“They sent three of their devils to us,” said one of the Cossack women. “My old man went

to headquarters, but they say there's nothing to be done about it."

"Aha! it bothers you, does it?"

"Do they smoke everything up with their tobacco?" suggested another Cossack woman.

"Let 'em smoke as much in the yard as they please, but I won't have it in the house. Not even if the head of the village interfered would I allow it. And, then, they will steal."

"It's plain you don't like 'em," said Yergushof again.

"And, then, they say too that the order has been given for the girls to make the beds for the soldiers and give them red wine and honey!" said Nazarka, imitating Lukashka's attitude, and also in the same way pushing his hat back on the back of his head.

Yergushof, bursting into a loud laugh, seized and hugged the girl who stood nearest to him.

"I believe that's so."

"Now, none of your nonsense," shrieked the girl. "I will tell my ma!"

"Tell her!" cried the drunken fellow. "And, faith, Nazarka speaks the truth. It was in a note; he knows enough to read it. Fact!" And he tried to hug another of the maidens, in regular sequence.

"What are you trying to do, you rascal?" laughingly exclaimed the moon-faced, rosy Ústenka, giving him a push.

The Cossack staggered back and almost fell.

"There, they pretend that girls have no strength; she almost knocked me down!"

"There, now, you rascal! the devil brought you from the cordon," exclaimed Ustenka, and, as she turned away from him, she laughed like a colt. "So you were asleep when the abrek came. He might have cut you off, and it would have been good riddance."

"You'd have cried though!" exclaimed Nazarka.

"Yes, just as I should have cried for you!"

"There, you see she hasn't any heart! Would she have cried for you, Nazarka, hey?" exclaimed Yergushof.

Lukashka all this time was gazing silently at Maryanka. His steady gaze evidently confused the girl.

"Well, Maryanka, I hear they have quartered one of the officers with you," said he, moving nearer to her.

Maryanka, as usual, did not instantly reply, but slowly lifted her eyes to the Cossack. Lukashka's eyes had a gleam of a smile in them, as though

something out of the ordinary and apart from the others were passing between him and the maiden.

"Yes, it is all right for them, as they have two cottages," said an old woman, taking the word out of Maryanka's mouth. "But there at Fomushkin's they have had to take one of the officers, and they say he has taken their best room and they haven't any room left for their own family. Did you ever hear of such a thing!—quartering a whole horde of them in the village! What are you going to do about it?" said she. "And what a black plague they bring on us!"

"They say they are going to build a bridge across the Terek," said one of the girls.

"And I was told," interrupted Nazarka, going up to Ustenka, "that they are going to dig a well and bury you girls in it, because you won't love these young lads." And again he made his favorite bow and scrape, at which they all laughed, and Yergushof immediately began to hug the old Cossack woman, passing by Maryanka, though she was next in order.

"Why don't you take Maryanka? She would be the next," said Nazarka.

"Nay, my old woman is sweeter!" cried the Cossack, smacking the old dame, who struggled to escape.

"He's choking me!" cried she, with a laugh.

The measured tread of footsteps at the end of the street interrupted the laughter. Three soldiers, in overcoats, with rifles over their shoulders, were on their way to relieve the guard over the regimental chest. The corporal, an old cavalryman, looked sternly at the Cossacks, and led the soldiers in such a way as to oblige Lukashka and Nazarka to make room. Nazarka stepped aside, but Lukashka only blinked his eyes, turned his head and his broad back, and did not stir from the place.

"When people are standing, you can turn out," he muttered, shaking his head contemptuously toward the soldiers.

The soldiers silently marched by, keeping step along the dusty road.

Maryana laughed, and so did all the other girls. "Eki! what smart boys!" said Nazarka. "Just like long-skirted choir-singers!" and he started to march down the street, in imitation of their manner.

Once more the crowd burst into a laugh. Lukashka slowly walked up to Maryana.

"And where is your officer lodged?" he asked.

Maryana deliberated before she spoke.

"He has been put into the new room."

"Say, is he young or old?" demanded Lukashka, sitting down near the girl.

"Well, do you suppose I have asked him?" replied the girl. "I went to get some red wine for him, saw him sitting in the window talking with Uncle Yeroshka: a reddish-looking fellow. And he brought a whole cart-load of things."

And she dropped her eyes.

"How glad I am that I had a chance to come in from the cordon!" exclaimed Lukashka, moving nearer along the terrace toward the girl, and looking straight into her eyes.

"How long can you stay?" asked Maryanka, slightly smiling.

"Till to-morrow. Give me some seeds," he added, stretching out his hand

Maryana laughed outright and opened the fold of her shirt bosom.

"Only don't take them all," said she.

"Truly, I was very lonesome without you, by God!" said Luka, in a low, wary whisper, taking the seeds from the girl's bosom; and then, moving still closer to her, he began to whisper something in her ear, with smiling eyes.

"I will not come; that's the end of it," said Maryana, suddenly, aloud, turning from him. . . .

"Truly. . . . This is what I meant," whispered Lukashka. * "By God! Come, Máshenka."

Maryanka shook her head decisively, but still she smiled.

"Sister Maryanka! Hey, sister! Mámuka sends for you to come home to supper," cried Maryanka's younger brother, running up to the group of Cossacks.

"I'm coming," replied the maiden. "You go on, my boy;† I will follow; you go on by yourself."

Lukashka stood up and straightened his hat. "It's time for me to be going home; that's the better way," said he, pretending to be indifferent, but finding it hard to repress a smile; and he disappeared around the corner of the house.

Meantime, night had entirely settled down upon the village. The bright stars were scattered over the vault of heaven. The streets were dark and empty. Nazarka stood with the Cossack women on the terrace, and their laughter was still heard. Lukashka, going with a light step from the girls, turned like a cat, and, holding his rattling dagger, suddenly began to run noiselessly, not in the direction of his home, but toward the ensign's house. After he had run

* *Bátiushka.*

along two streets, he turned into a side street, and, gathering up his cherkeska, sat down on the ground in the shadow of the fence.

“What a girl the ensign’s daughter is!” he said to himself. “She isn’t willing to have a little fun! Well, the time will come!”

The steps of a woman approaching were heard. He listened and laughed to himself. Maryana, with her head bent, came straight toward him with quick and even steps, letting her switch clatter against the palings of the fence. Lukashka stood up. Maryanka was startled and stopped short.

“There, the cursed devil! He frightened me! So he did not go home after all,” said she, with a merry laugh.

Lukashka threw one arm around the girl and with the other hand clasped her face. “What was I going to say to you? . . . By God!”

His voice trembled and broke.

“What kind of talk is this for the night!” replied Maryana. “Mamuka is waiting; you go to your mistress!”

And, freeing herself from him, she ran a few steps away. When she reached the hedge that separated her own yard from the street, she paused and turned to the Cossack, who had run

alongside of her, still trying to persuade her to stay a little while with him.

"Well, what is it you want, you owl?" and again she laughed.

"Don't make sport of me, Maryana. By God! What if I have a mistress? The devil take her! Only say the word and I will love you so! I will do anything you wish. Do you hear?" (And he jingled the coins in his pocket.) "We will have a jolly life. Men enjoy themselves, and why shouldn't I? You don't give me any joy at all, Maryánushka!"

The girl made no reply, but stood in front of him, and, with quick-moving fingers, broke her switch into little fragments.

Lukashka suddenly doubled his fists and set his teeth.

"Yes, and why should we be always waiting and waiting? You can't imagine how I love you, márushka! Do with me what you please," said he, suddenly, frowning wrathfully and seizing both of her hands.

Maryana did not change the calm expression of her face and voice.

"Don't get excited, Lukashka, but hear what I have to say," she replied, not withdrawing her hands, but pushing the Cossack a little from her.

. . . "Of course, I am a girl, but you listen to me. It is not for me to say, but if you love me, then, this is what I will tell you. Let go of my hands and I will tell you. I am willing to marry you, but you must not expect any follies from me — never," said Maryanka, looking him straight in the face.

"What do you mean — get married? Marriage is not in my power. No, I want you to love me, Maryanushka," said Lukashka, his gloomy and excited mood, by an abrupt change, becoming sweet, complaisant, and affectionate, while he looked close into her eyes and smiled.

Maryana pressed close to him and gave him a loud kiss on the lips.

"Dear brother," she whispered, impetuously hugging him. Then, suddenly tearing herself away, she started to run, and, without looking around, darted into her own gate. Notwithstanding the Cossack's entreaties to wait just one minute more, and hear what he had to say, Maryana did not stop.

"Go away! We shall be seen!" she said, imperatively. "There is that devil of a lodger, I think, walking in the yard."

"The ensign's daughter," said Lukashka to

himself. "She likes the idea of marriage. Marriage is well enough, but only love me!"

He found Nazarka at Yamka's, and, after drinking awhile with him, he went to Dunyáshka and spent the night there in spite of her unfaithfulness.

CHAPTER XIV.

OLYENIN was really walking in the yard at the time when Maryanka came into the gate, and he had heard what she said about "that devil of a lodger."

All that evening he had spent with Uncle Yeroshka on the steps of his new domicile. He had ordered a table, the samovar, the wine, and a lighted candle to be brought out, and, over a glass of tea and his cigar, he had listened to the tales told by the old man, who was sitting at his feet, on one of the steps. Although the air was calm, the candle flickered and the flame bent this way and that, now lighting up the newel-post, now the table and the tea service, now the old man's white, closely cropped head.

Night moths fluttered about, scattering the dust from their wings as they dashed against the table and the glasses; some flew through the flame and disappeared in the blackness outside of the charmed circle of the light.

Olyenin and Yeroshka had drunk together five bottles of red wine. Every time that the old

• man filled his glass, he held it up to Olyenin, drank to his health, and talked without relaxation. He told about the former life of the Cossacks, about his father, "Broad-back," who carried, single-handed on his shoulders, the carcass of a wild-boar weighing three hundred and sixty pounds, and used to drink at one sitting more than twenty quarts of red wine. He told about the days of his prime, and about his friend Girchik, with whom, at the time of the plague, he had brought felt-saddled horses from the other side of the Terek. He told about his hunting, and how one morning he had killed two stags. He told about his dúshenka, who used to creep out at night to see him at the cordon. . . . And his whole narration was so eloquent and animated that Olyenin did not observe how time was passing.

"But you see, my father," said he, "you did not know me at my golden time; I'd have shown you everything. To-day Yeroshka 'has licked the pot,' but then Yeroshka's fame was spread throughout the whole army. Who had the best horse? Who had a genuine Gurda's sabre? Who used to be sought for drinking bouts? Who was

¹ The sabres and daggers prized above all others in the Caucasus are called after the name of the manufacturer, Gurda.—
Author's note.

sent to the mountains to kill Akhmet-Khan? Always Yeroshka! Whom did the girl like? Always and forever Yeroshka! Because I was a genuine jigit. Carouser, thief, skilful in driving the herds down from the mountains! a singer! I could turn my hand to anything. To-day there's nothing like me among the Cossacks. It makes me sick to see them. About so tall (Yeroshka raised his hand a yard or so above the ground); they wear fools' boots, and if they can get any one to look at them they are happy. Or if they get drunk, they feel all puffed up; and they don't drink like men, but like I don't know what. But who was I? I was Yeroshka, the thief; I was better known in the mountains than in the villages. The mountain princes came to see me as friends; I was *kunak*¹ with them all. Tatar or Armenian, soldier or officer,—it was all the same to me, provided only he could drink. 'You must keep yourself from contact with the world in general,' says he. 'Drink not with a soldier; eat not with a Tatar.'"

"Who said that?" asked Olyenin.

"Oh, it was our head men. But listen once to a Tatar mulla or a kadi. He will say, 'You unbelieving *giaours*, why do ye eat pork?' That means

¹ Guest-friend.

every one has his own customs. But, in my opinion, it's all one. God made everything for man's enjoyment. There's no sin in anything. Now, just take the wild beast, for instance. He lives in the Tatar reeds and in ours. Wherever he goes he is at home. Whatever God gives he devours. But our people say that we shall lick the frying-pan for that. I think that all that is false," he added, after a pause.

"What is false?"

"Why, what the head men say. My father, there used to be with us in the Cherovlenaya an army leader—he was my kunak. He was just the same sort of bravo that I was. He was killed on the Chechnya. He used to say that the priests get all such things out of their own heads. 'You will die,' he used to say, 'and the grass will grow over you, and that's all there is of it.'" (The old man laughed.) "He was a desperate fellow."

"How old are you?" asked Olyenin.

"Ah, but God knows that. Must be about seventy. We had a tsáritsa when I was a little lad. Now, you can reckon it up how much that makes me. Must be about seventy."

"That's so, and you're still a bravo."

"Well, thank God, I'm sound, sound all

through; only a woman, a witch, spoiled it all for me. . . .”

“How was that?”

“Yes, she spoiled it so that . . .”

“When you die the grass will grow over you?” asked Olyenin, repeating his words.

Yeroshka evidently could not express his thought clearly. He was silent for a little.

“Well, how do you suppose it was? Drink!” he cried, smiling and filling the glass.

CHAPTER XV.

“LET us see ; what were we talking about ?” he went on to say, trying to collect his thoughts. “This is the kind of a man that I am. I am a huntsman. There’s no one to be compared with me in the whole host. I will find and show you every sort of animal, every kind of bird, and how and where—I know it all. I have dogs and two fowling-pieces and nets and decoys and a falcon ; I have everything, thank the Lord. If you are a real huntsman and not a mere boaster, I will show you all about it. That’s the kind of man that I am. I will find the trail of a wild beast—I know it already. I know where he comes to his lair and where he comes to drink or to wallow. I make a ‘lopazik,’¹ and there I sit and watch the whole night long ; why should I stay at home ? There you fall into sin, you get drunk. The women are always buzzing around there, helter skelter ; the children are screeching. You are choked with charcoal smoke. It’s quite another

¹ Lopazik means the place where one sits in waiting on a scaffolding or a tree. — *Author’s note.*

thing to go and watch ; you select a nice little place, you stamp down the rushes, and there you sit and wait — good fellow that you are ! And you come to know everything that takes place in the woods. You look at the sky. The stars pass over ; you follow them and judge what time of the night it is. You gaze around you. The forest stirs, and, as you wait, you hear a crashing ; it's a boar come to roll in the mire ! You hear the young eagles scream, or the roosters in the village answering, or the geese. When you hear the geese, you know that it's midnight. And I know all about such things. And then a gun goes off somewhere in the distance, and that sets you to thinking. You ask yourself, ' Who fired that ? Was it a Cossack like me ? Was he waiting for a wild beast, and did he hit him, or did he merely wound him, and will the poor thing rush into the reeds to roll in his blood, and all for nothing ? I don't like it, oh ! I don't like it ! Why lame a poor beast ? Fool ! Fool ! ' Or you say to yourself, ' Can it be that an abrek has shot some stupid little Cossack ? ' All these thoughts go through your head. And then once I was watching down by the river, and I saw a cradle floating down stream, perfectly whole, only the rim a little injured. Then the thought came,

‘Whose cradle is that? Some of your devilish soldiers,’ I say to myself, ‘must have been at a Chechen aul, carried off the women, and some devil killed the baby: catch him by the leg, dash him into a corner! That’s the way they do it, isn’t it? Ekh! men have no souls.’ When such thoughts came to me I felt sorry. I say to myself, ‘The cradle thrown away and the mother carried off; the house burnt, but the jigit has his gun, and he will come over to our side to plunder.’ And so you sit and think. And then, as you are listening, a little drove of pigs breaks through the thicket, and something in you throbs and throbs. ‘Come on, my darlings! They will get scent of you,’ you say to yourself, and you sit and don’t stir, but your heart goes, ‘Dun, dun, dun.’ Then they come into sight. This very spring such a splendid drove came along, making a black line! ‘To the Father and the Son!’ I was just going to shoot. Then the old mother sow sniffed and called to her little pigs, ‘Children, look out! there’s danger; a man sits there on the watch!’ and the whole drove rushed off into the bushes. And so vexatious it was, when you felt as though you were already biting into one of them!”

“How did the sow tell her little pigs that a man was on the watch?” asked Olyenin.

“And how do you suppose? You have an idea that a wild beast is a fool. No, he is wiser than a man, even though he bears the name of pig. He knows everything. Take this for example. A man comes across a trail and does not notice it, but a hog, as soon as he stumbles on your track, snuffs, and makes off; that means that he’s got sense in him; he knows that you haven’t sensed him, but he has you. And that is equivalent to saying, ‘You want to kill him, but he prefers to go wandering about the forest alive.’ You have your laws and he has his as well. He’s a hog, but, for all that, he’s no worse than you are, is just as much one of God’s creatures. Ekh-má! Man is stupid, stupid! man is stupid!” reiterated the old huntsman, and, dropping his head, he sank into thought.

Olyenin also pondered, and, getting up from the steps, he went down from the steps, and began silently to walk up and down the yard, with his hands behind his back. Yeroshka suddenly came out of his brown study and raised his head and began attentively to look at the moths, which were attracted by the flickering candle flame and falling into it.

“Little fool! Fool!” he muttered. “Where did you fly from? Fool! Fool!” He got up, and,

with his huge fingers, began to drive away the moths. "You will burn yourself, you little fool; here, fly this way, there's room enough," he said, in his affectionate voice, trying to lift one tenderly by the wings in his clumsy fingers, and to let it go. "You are ruining yourself, and I am sorry for you."

He sat there long, chattering and taking an occasional drink from the bottle. And Olyenin walked back and forth through the yard. Suddenly his attention was attracted by a rustling on the other side of the fence. Involuntarily holding his breath, he caught the sound of a woman's laugh, a man's voice, and the sound of kisses. Purposely scuffling his feet on the grass, he went across to the other side of the yard. In a short time the gate creaked. A Cossack, in a dark cherkeska and with a white lambskin cap, went along by the fence (it was Luka), and a tall woman in a white shawl passed by Olyenin. Maryanka's deliberate pace seemed to say, "I have nothing to do with you and you have nothing to do with me." His eyes followed her to the steps of the Cossack cottage; through the window he saw how she took off her shawl and sat down upon the bench. And suddenly a feeling of painful loneliness, of indefinite longings and hopes,

and a certain degree of envy toward some one took hold of the young man's soul.

The last lights were extinguished in the cottages. The last sounds died away in the village. And the hedges and the dim forms of the cattle in the yards, and the roofs of the houses, and the graceful poplars, everything seemed to be asleep with the healthy, gentle sleep of weariness. Only the constant piping of the frogs came to the attentive ear from the distant swamps. In the east the stars were less abundant and seemed to be melting away in the advancing light. Overhead, however, they were more brilliant than ever and more abundantly scattered. The old Yeroshka, leaning his head on his hand, was beginning to doze. A cock crowed in some neighboring yard. But Olyenin still walked up and down, back and forth, busy with his thoughts. The sound of voices singing in chorus was borne to his ears. He went down to the fence and listened. Young Cossacks were troling a gay song, and one young voice was plainly distinguishable.

"Do you know who that is singing?" asked the old man, rousing from his nap. "That's the jiggit Lukashka. He has killed a Chechenets. And so he's having a sprec. But is that anything to rejoice over? Fool, fool!"

"But you have killed men?" asked Olyenin.

The old man suddenly lifted himself on both elbows and brought his face close to Olyenin's. "You devil!" he cried. "What are you asking? It must not be spoken of. It is strange, okh! strange to kill a human being! Good night, my father; I am full and contented," said he, getting up. "Shall I take you to hunt to-morrow?"

"Certainly."

"See that you are up early, for if you oversleep you will get punished!"

"Never you fear; I shall be up before you are," replied Olyenin.

The old man went off. The song had ceased. Footsteps and merry talking were heard. After a little the song broke forth again, but farther away and Yeroshka's big voice joined the other voices.

"What men! what a life!" thought Olyenin, sighing; and he went back alone to his cottage.

CHAPTER XVI.

UNCLE YEROSHKHA was not in active service, and he lived alone. Twenty years before, his wife had deserted him, and, after being baptized into the Orthodox communion, had married a Russian quartermaster. He had no children. It was no idle boast when he declared that in old times he had been the first bravo in the village. Among all the Cossacks he was famous for his old-fashioned bravery. The death of more than one Chechenets and of more than one Russian was on his soul. He used to make forays in the mountains, and he had also stolen from the Russians, and twice he had been put in the guard-house. The larger part of his life had been spent in the woods, hunting, where he often subsisted for whole days on a crust of bread, drinking nothing but water. But, when he came back to the village, he made up for it by tipping from morning till night.

After he went home from Olyenin's, he slept for a couple of hours, and then, waking some time before daylight, he lay on his bed and tried

to form a judgment about the man whose acquaintance he had made the evening before. He was much pleased with Olyenin's *simplicity*, but he understood by simplicity his generosity with the wine. And Olyenin himself pleased him. He wondered why the Russians were all *simple* and rich, and why they knew nothing at all and yet were all so learned. He thought over all these questions and wondered what he might get out of Olyenin.

Uncle Yeroshka's cottage was tolerably large and not old, but the absence of a woman's hand was very noticeable in it. The Cossacks are usually very scrupulous about neatness, but his whole apartment, on the contrary, was filthy and in the greatest disorder. On the table were flung his blood-stained coat, a half of a milk cake, and next to it a plucked and torn jackdaw. Scattered about on the benches lay his *porshni*, a gun, a dagger, a bag, wet garments, and rags. In the corner, in a tub full of dirty, ill-smelling water, another pair of *porshni* were soaking; there also stood a carbine and a pheasant-lure. On the dirty floor were thrown a net and a few dead pheasants, and a hen wandered about pecking, with its leg fastened to the table leg. In the cold oven stood a potsherd, filled with some sort of milk-like liquid. On the

oven screamed a falcon, trying to tear itself away from its cord, and on the edge quietly sat a moulting hawk, looking askance at the chicken and occasionally tipping his head to one side or the other.

Uncle Yeroshka himself, in a single shirt, lay on his back on his short bed, placed between the wall and the oven, so that he could brace his solid legs on the latter, and he was engaged in picking with his clumsy fingers the scabs on the scratches made on his hands by the hawk, which he had carried without gloves. The air of the whole room, and especially the corner where the old man lay, was filled with that strong but not disagreeable conglomeration of odors which the old man carried about him.

"*Uidyema, dyadya?*" (that is, "Are you at home, uncle?") he heard a clear voice saying through the window, and he instantly recognized it as the voice of his neighbor Lukashka.

"*Uidyem, uidyem, uidyem.* Yes, come in," cried the old man. "Neighbor Marka, Luka Marka, have you come to see your uncle? On your way to the cordon?"

The hawk was alarmed at the voices, shook its wings, and tugged at its leash.

The old man was fond of Lukashka; he was

• almost the only one whom he excepted from the general contempt in which he held all the younger generation of Cossacks. Moreover, Lukashka and his mother, who were neighbors of his, often gave him wine, curds, and other things from their larder, such as Yeroshka did not have. Uncle Yeroshka, who all his life long had followed his own inclinations, always explained his impulses in the most practical way. "Well, why not?" he would reason with himself. "They are well-to-do. I will bring them fresh pork or a fowl and they will not forget their uncle. A pie or milk cake they will give me occasionally."

"How are you, Marka? Glad to see you!" merrily shouted the old man, and, with a quick motion, set down his bare feet from the bed, leaped up, took a step or two over the creaking floor, glanced at his legs, and suddenly something seemed to amuse him in the sight of his crooked legs, so that he burst into a laugh, stamped with his bare toes once and then again, and made a shuffle. "Some skill, hey?" he demanded, making his little eyes flash.

• Lukashka barely smiled.

"Well, are you on your way to the cordon?"

"I've brought you the red wine, uncle, which I promised you."

"Christ be your salvation!" replied the old man; he picked up his leggings and beshmet from the floor, put them on, tightened his belt, poured a little water from a crock over his hands, rubbed them on his old leggings, ran a piece of a comb through his beard, and then presented himself before Lukashka.

"All ready!" said he.

Lukashka got a dipper, wiped it, filled it with wine, and, setting it on a stool, brought it to the old man.

"Here's to your health! To the Father and the Son!" said Uncle Yeroshka, taking the wine with triumphal solemnity. "May all your wishes be realized! may you be a bravo! may you get your cross!"

Lukashka also drank, using the same solemn formula, and set the wine on the table. The old man got up, fetched a dried fish, laid it on the threshold, beat it with a switch, so as to soften it, and then, taking it in his shrivelled hands, put it in his one blue plate, and set it on the table.

"I always have something for a bite, thank God!" he exclaimed proudly. "Well, how about Mosyef?" he asked, changing the subject.

Lukashka told him how the sergeant had

taken the gun from him, and evidently wanted the old man's opinion.

"Don't stand on the matter of the gun; if you don't give it up, you won't get your reward."

"Yes, but what difference does that make, uncle? They will say, 'What reward should we give to a green lad?'"¹ But the gun was splendid, a Crimean one, worth seventy-eight rubles."

"Eh! let it go! I had such a quarrel once with a captain; he asked me for my horse. 'Give me your horse,' says he, 'and I will make you an ensign.' I didn't let him have it, and so got nothing myself."

"But see here, uncle, I must buy me a horse, and they say that I can't get one on the other side of the river for less than fifty silver rubles. And mother hasn't sold the wine yet."

"Ekh! we didn't lay it to heart," exclaimed the old man. "When Uncle Yeroshka was your age he had already got a whole herd from the Nogai and driven them across the Terek. I'd always sell a good horse for three pints of vodka or for a felt cloak."

"What made you sell so cheap?"

"Fool, fool! Marka!" exclaimed the old man,

¹ Green lad: *malolyetka* means a Cossack not yet enrolled in the cavalry service. — *Author's note.*

contemptuously. "You couldn't help it; what made you steal horses unless to keep from growing stingy! But I reckon you never have seen how we steal horses. Why don't you speak?"

"What should I say, uncle?" exclaimed Lukashka. "It seems that we aren't such men as you were."

"Fool! fool! Marka! Not such men!" rejoined the old man, mimicking the young Cossack. "No, no such Cossack was I when I was of your age!"

"But how was it?" asked Lukashka.

The old man contemptuously shook his head.

"Uncle Yeroshka was simple; he wasted no time in regrets. And that was the reason all the Chechnya was 'hail fellow well met' with me. If any of my kunaki came to see me, we got drunk together on vodka; I'd make him happy, I'd give him a place to sleep, and, when I took him home, he'd give me always a gift: *peshkesh*, they called it. That's the way men do, but it's all different now; it's only childish fun, cracking seeds and spitting out the shells!" said the old man, scornfully, in conclusion, imitating the way the Cossacks of the present day crunch melon seeds and spit out the shells.

"Yes, I know it; that's so," said Lukashka.

“You want to be a bravo ; then be a jigit and not a muzhfk ! The peasant buys horses ; throw away your money and *get* a horse ! ”

They were both silent.

• “But it is so dull, uncle, in the village or at the cordon ; you can't go anywhere to have some sport. The whole people are timid ! Take Nazar for example. The other day we were at an aul. Girér-Khan invited us to go with him to the Nogař after horses ; but no one would go, and how could I go alone ? ”

“But here's your uncle : what's he for ? Do you think that I am dead wood ? No, I am not dried up ! Give me a horse and I will ride off to the Nogař.”

“Why this idle talk ? ” exclaimed Luka. “Tell me how to act with Girér-Khan. He says, ‘Only just bring one horse down to the Terek and if you go with me you shall have a whole stud ! ’ He's so wily-looking it's hard to have any confidence in him.”

“You can trust Girér-Khan ; all his family are good men ; his father was a faithful kunak of mine. Only heed your uncle, I won't give you any bad advice : make him take an oath, then you can trust him ; but if you go off with him, have your pistol ready, especially when you come

to divide the horses. Once a Chechenets came within an ace of killing me: I asked him ten rubles for a horse. Trust him certainly; but don't go to sleep without your gun!"

Lukashka listened attentively to what the old man said.

"Well, uncle, they say you have a magic herb. Is that so?" asked the young Cossack, after a pause.

"No such thing, but I will teach you how to get one; you're a fine young fellow, won't forget your uncle. Shall I tell you?"

"Tell me, uncle!"

"You know what a tortoise is? Well, she's a devil, the tortoise is!"

"Of course I know what a tortoise is!"

"Well, then, find her nest and plait a little hedge around it so that she can't get through it. Then she will come, will go round it and then back again; then she will find the magic herb, will bring it and will break the hedge. Then you must go the next morning and look round: where it was broken you'll find your magic herb lying. Take it and carry it wherever you please. No lock and no wall can keep you!"

"Did you ever try it, uncle?"

"No, never tried it myself, but good people say so. I only used to have a charm beginning 'all hañ,' which I used to repeat when I mounted my horse. No one ever killed me!"

"What was this 'all hail' charm, uncle?"

"Is it possible you don't know it? Ekh! what people! Only ask your uncle! Now, listen and repeat it after me:—

*" 'Zdravstvüitya zhivuchi v Sioni.
Se tsar tvoï.
Mui syadem na koni.
Sofoniye vuptye.
Zakhariye glagolye.
Otche Mandruiche.
Chelovyéko-vyéko-liubche.' "*¹

"Vyéko-vyéko-liubche," repeated the old man.
"Do you get it. Well, then, repeat it!"

Lukashka laughed.

"Do you mean to say, uncle, that that's the reason they didn't kill you? Is it possible?"

"Oh, you've cut your wisdom teeth! You just learn it and always repeat it. It won't do any harm. Well, now, then, sing 'Mandriche' and get along all right," and the old man himself laughed.
* But don't go to the Nogar, Luka; don't go, that's what I say."

¹ "All hail, ye inhabitants of Zion. Behold your tsar. We sit on horseback. The cries of Sophonius. The words of Zak-hár. Father Mandriche. The lover-over of man."

"Why not?"

"It isn't the time, and you aren't the people. You Cossacks are regular muckers. Then, besides, they have brought the Russians here. They would bring you into court. Truly, give it up. What do you want? Once Girchik and I . . ." and the old man went on to tell one of his never ending stories. But Lukashka glanced out of the window.

"It's broad daylight, uncle," he exclaimed, interrupting him. "I must go; come and see us sometime!"

"Christ save us! I must go to the army man; I promised to take him out hunting. He seems like a fine fellow."

CHAPTER XVII.

FROM Yeroshka's Lukashka went home. As he walked along, a damp misty vapor was rising from the ground and enveloping the whole village. The cattle, unseen, began to stir in the various yards. The cocks crowed noisily and more frequently. It grew lighter and the people were beginning to arise. As he came nearer, Lukashka saw the hedge of his own yard, wet with mist, and the steps leading up to the cottage, and the open gate. The sound of some one splitting wood was heard in the yard. Lukashka went into the cottage. His mother was already up and was standing in front of the oven, throwing kindling into it. His little sister was still asleep.

"Well, Lukasha, are you through with your spree?" asked his mother, gently. "Where were you last night?"

"I was in the village," replied Lukashka, reluctantly, while he took his carbine out of its case and examined it.

The mother shook her head.

After putting some powder on the pan, Lukashka got down a pouch, took out a number of empty shells, and began to fill cartridges, carefully ramming down the bullet wrapped in a rag. If there happened to be too much, he bit it off with his teeth, and, after examining his work, put up the pouch.

"Well, *mátushka*, I told you to mend my bag; have you done it?" said he.

"I reckon so. The dumb girl was mending something last evening. But must you go right back to the cordon? I have scarcely seen you at all."

"Well, I've only just come, but I must go back," replied Lukashka, tying up his powder. "Where is the dumb girl? Has she gone out?"

"Certainly; she's splitting wood. She has been greatly distressed about you. 'Here, I shall not have a chance to see him at all,' she said. Then she pointed with her hand to her face, clucked her tongue, and then pressed her hand against her heart; it was touching to see, indeed it was. Shall I go and fetch her, hey? And she understood all about the *abrek*."

"Fetch her," said Lukashka. "I must have

“some tallow there with me; bring me some. I want to grease my sabre.”

The old woman went out and in a few minutes came Lukashka's deaf and dumb sister over the creaking steps into the cottage. She was six years his elder and would have borne a remarkable resemblance to him, had it not been for the stupid and coarsely stolid expression of face characteristic of the deaf and dumb. Her dress consisted of a coarse, patched shirt; her feet were bare and dirty; she wore an old blue kerchief on her head. Her neck, hands, and face were as muscular as a man's. By her dress and all it was evident that she had always been used to hard manual labor. She lugged an armful of wood and threw it down by the oven. Then she went to her brother with a smile of joy, which wrinkled up her whole face, patted him on the shoulder, and began, with her hands, her face, and all her body, to make him rapid signs.

“Good, good! Fine girl, Stepka!” replied the brother, nodding his head. “You have done finely; you have mended it well. Here is something for you.” He drew out of his pocket two pieces of gingerbread and gave them to her.

Stepka's face flushed and she made a strange, wild noise expressive of her joy. Seizing the

gingerbread, she again began to make signs, even more rapidly than before, pointing frequently in one direction and drawing her stout finger over her brows and face. Lukashka understood what she meant and kept nodding his head, with a slight smile. She meant that her brother gave the girls good things to eat; she meant that the girls all liked him, and that one girl — Maryanka — was better than the rest, and that she loved him. She indicated Maryanka by pointing quickly in the direction of her house, then to her eyebrows and her face, smacking her lips and shaking her head. She signified "love" by pressing her hand to her bosom, kissing her hand, and pretending to hug some one. The mother came back into the room, and, perceiving what the dumb girl was trying to talk about, smiled and shook her head. Stepka showed her the gingerbread, and again she squealed with joy.

"I had a talk with Dame Ulitka the other day; I told her I was going to send the match-makers," said the mother. "She took my suggestion very kindly."

Lukashka looked at his mother without speaking.

"Well, *mátushka*, you must sell the wine; I need a horse."

"I will dispose of it when the time comes; I am mending the casks," said the mother, evidently resenting it that her son meddled with her domestic arrangements. "When you go away," she went on to say, "then take the bag that's in the entry. I have borrowed of friends, and looked out for your well-being at the cordon. Will you put it in your *sakvui*?"¹

"That's first-rate," rejoined Lukashka. "Now, if Girei-Khan should come across the river, send him to the 'post,' since they won't give me leave of absence for a long time to come. I have some business with him."

"I will send him, Lukashka, I will send him. What makes you always waste your time at Yamka's?" asked the old mother. "Last night, when I got up to go out to the cattle, I listened, and I thought I heard your voice singing a song."

Lukashka made no reply. He went into the entry, threw the saddle-bags over his shoulder, flung his coat over them, took his gun, and paused on the threshold.

"Good-bye, *mátushka*," said he to his mother, as he closed the gate behind him. "Send a little

¹ *Sakvui* means the double sack, or bag, which the Cossacks carry behind their saddles. — *Author's note.*

cask by Nazarka ; I promised some to the boys. He will come after it."

"Christ save you, Lukashka! God be with you! I will send it; I will send some from the new cask," replied the old mother, coming down to the hedge. "Oh, here's something I want to say to you," she added, leaning over the hedge.

The Cossack paused.

"You have had your spree here. Well, glory to God! Why shouldn't a young man enjoy himself? For it was God himself who gave you good luck. That is good. But still just see here, my dear son, don't, above all, carry it to excess; be obedient to your superior officer — one must! And I will send the wine and I will get you money enough for a horse and I will have the girl betrothed to you."

"Very good!" replied the son, scowling.

The dumb girl made a noise to attract his attention. She pointed to her head and her hand; that meant, "shaven head — Chechenets." Then, puckering up her eyebrows, she made believe aim with a gun, squealed, and ended in a queer noise, shaking her head.

She was telling Lukashka to kill more Circassians. Lukashka understood her, smiled, and, with quick, light steps, and carrying his musket

behind his back, under his felt, disappeared in the thick mist.

After standing silently for a moment at the door sill, the old mother went to her dairy and forthwith began her daily toil.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LUKASHKA started back to the cordon, and Uncle Yeroshka at the same time whistled to his dogs, and, crawling through the hedge, went by the back way to Olyenin's lodgings. When he was going on a hunting expedition he disliked to meet women. Olyenin was still asleep and Van-yusha, who had waked up, was still lying in bed, looking around and wondering if it were time or not, when Uncle Yeroshka, with his gun slung behind his back and with his hunting apparatus, opened the door.

"A switch! A cane!" he cried, in his bluff voice. "To arms! The Chechens have come! — Iván! Put on the samovár for your master! And get up! Lively!" he cried. "That's the way it is with us, my good man! Even the girls are up by this time. Look, look out of the window there; she's going after water, and here you are asleep!"

Olyenin woke up and leaped out of bed. And how pleasant and jolly it was to see the old man and to hear his voice!

"Lively! lively there, Vanyusha!" he cried.

"And this is the way you go hunting! People have had their breakfast, but you are asleep! Lyam! where are you?" he shouted to the dog.

"Is your gun all ready? Hey?" screamed the old man, making as much noise as if a whole troop were in the cottage.

"Well, I am to blame for not having done a single thing. Powder, Vanyusha! and the gun-wads!" exclaimed Olyenin.

"A fine!" cried the old man.

"*Du té voulezou ?*" asked Vanyusha, laughing.

"You aren't one of us; you don't talk in our language, you devil!" cried the old man, showing the roots of his teeth at Vanyusha.

"This is the first offence; you must let me off," laughed Olyenin, as he drew on his great boots.

"Excused the first time," replied Yeroshka, "but, if you sleep late a second time, you will have to pay a fine of a gallon of red wine. After the heat of the day begins, you won't see any more stags."

"And if you find one, even then he will be wiser than we men, I suppose," said Olyenin, quoting the old man's words of the evening before. "You won't get him by trickery."

"Oh, you're laughing at me. Kill one first and

then talk! Now, lively! Ah, see ^{here!} the master of the house is coming to see you," said Yeroshka, looking out of the window. "Ah, see! he's all dressed up, got on a new zipun, so as to show you that he is an officer! Ekh! what a people! what a people!"

At that moment Vanyusha came to report to his master that the ensign wanted to see him.

"L'arzhan!" said he, significantly, preparing Olyenin for the object of the ensign's visit. A moment after, the ensign himself, in a new cherkeska with an officer's shoulder-straps and in polished boots, — a rare thing among the Cossacks, — came into the room, smiling and swaggering, and offered them the salutations of the day.

Ilyá Vasflyevitch, the ensign, was a *cultivated* Cossack; that is, he had been in Russia, was a school-teacher, and, above all, was aristocratic. He was anxious to seem an aristocrat; but it was impossible to avoid the conclusion that, under the fictitious guise of his clumsy polish, his uneasy self-assurance, and his coarse speech, he felt himself just the same as Uncle Yeroshka. • It was evident, alike, in his sunburned face and his hands and his red nose.

Olyenin begged the ensign to be seated. He

was a lean, slender, handsome man, forty years of age, with a gray, wedge-shaped beard, and yet very hearty for his forty years. As he came into Olyenin's presence he was evidently apprehensive lest he should be mistaken for an ordinary Cossack, and was anxious to make his importance instantly appreciated.

"Good morning, Ilya Vasilyevitch," said Yeroshka, standing up and making what seemed to Olyenin an ironically low bow.

"How are you, uncle? You here already?" replied the ensign, giving him a careless nod. "This is our Egyptian Nimrod," he went on to say, turning to Olyenin with a self-satisfied smile and pointing to the old man. "*A mighty hunter before the Lord.* The first among us in everything. Have you got acquainted with him already?"

Uncle Yeroshka, looking at his leg wrapped up in wet porshni, thoughtfully shook his head, as though in amazement at the ensign's shrewdness and learning, and repeated to himself: " '*Gipskn Nimvrod*' — what does he mean by that?"

"Well, we are going off hunting," said Olyenin.

"That's very good," observed the ensign, "but I have a little business with you."

"What is your pleasure?"

"As you are a nobleman," the ensign began, "and, as I am able to understand it, we both have the rank of officer, and therefore we can gradually and always treat each other as noblemen." (He paused and glanced, with a smile, at the old man and the officer.) "Now, if you would only be good enough to talk things over with me, — for my wife is a little dull of comprehension and she could not quite make out at present what your words of yesterday's date meant. Because I could easily let my lodgings, without stable, for six silver rubles to the adjutant of the regiment; but, as a man of aristocratic birth, I can't think of such a thing as moving permanently out of my rooms. And, since you were very anxious about it, then, as a man having myself the rank of officer, I could very easily have a personal talk with you and come to some agreement, and, as a native of this district, though it is not in accordance with our usual custom, but still in all respects I can comply with the conditions . . ."

"Very clearly expressed," muttered the old man.

The ensign went on for some time to speak in the same strain. Olyenin not without some diffi-

culty was able to make out of it all that the ensign was anxious to obtain six silver rubles a month for his lodgings. He complied with his desire and begged his guest to take a glass of tea. The ensign declined.

"According to our stupid customs," he says, "we consider it a sin to use a *worldly* glass. Now, though I, owing to my having had some culture, might be able to understand this, yet my wife, owing to human weakness . . ."

"Well, will you send for some tea?"

"If you will permit me, I will bring my own glass, my *special* one?" replied the ensign, and he went to the steps. "My glass, bring my glass," he cried.

In a few moments the door opened and a sunburned young arm in a pink sleeve held the glass into the room. The ensign went to the door, took the glass, and whispered a word or two to his daughter. Olyenin filled his visitor's *special* glass; Yeroshka drank out of the *worldly* one.

"However, I do not wish to detain you," said the ensign, making haste to drain the glass, and burning his lips. "I have a great fondness for fishing and I am here just for a little, as a sort of vacation from my duties. So I have a sort of

desire to try my luck and see if some of the *Terek's gifts* will not fall to my lot. I hope that you will come and visit me some time and drink a 'brotherly cup,' as we Cossacks call it," he added.

Then he made a low bow, pressed Olyenin's hand, and went out.

While the young officer was getting ready, he heard the ensign's imperative voice giving directions to his family. Then, in a few minutes, Olyenin saw him dressed in trousers rolled up to the knees, and in a ragged beshmet, go past the window, with his net on his shoulder.

"The cheat!" exclaimed Uncle Yeroshka, drinking his tea from the *worldly* glass. "Tell me, are you going to pay six silver rubles? Who ever heard of such a thing? You can get the best room in the village for two moneta. The rascal! Why, I'll give you mine for three."

"No, I'll stay here where I am," said Olyenin.

"Six silver rubies! what a foolish waste of money! E-ekh!" grunted the old man. "Give me some wine, Ivan!"

After they had taken a bite of breakfast, and drunk some vodka for their journey, Olyenin and the old man went out together into the street. It was about eight o'clock in the morning. In

front of the gate they met an ox cart. Maryana, her face enveloped to the eyes in a white kerchief, wearing a beshmet over her shirt and boots, and with a long stick in her hand, was guiding the oxen by a cord attached to their horns.

"Ah, loveliest!"¹ exclaimed the old man, making believe hug her.

Maryanka raised her stick at him, and looked gayly at them both from her handsome eyes.

Olyenin's heart felt lighter than ever.

"Well, come on, come on," he cried, throwing his gun over his shoulder and feeling the girl's gaze resting on him.

Maryanka's voice, addressing the oxen, rang out behind them, and immediately after the two-wheeled arba went creaking on its way. Olyenin kept glancing back toward the ox cart, in which sat the girl, holding her switch and goading on the oxen.

The mist had partly lifted, disclosing the wet, thatched roofs, and had partly changed to dew, which stood in big drops on the paths and foliage around the fences. The smoke from all the chimneys hung low. The people were pouring out from the village; some to work, some on their way to the river, some to the cordon.

¹ *Mamushka*, little mother.

While their road lay along back of the houses in the village and across the pastures, Yeroshka chattered incessantly. He could not keep the ensign out of his thoughts, and kept abusing him.

"But why are you down on him?" asked Olyenin.

"Stingy! I don't like him!" exclaimed the old man. "When he dies, he will have to leave everything behind him. Whom is he hoarding for? He's built two houses already. He sued his brother and got away another garden from him. And then you know what a dog he is about writing all sorts of documents! They come to him from other villages to get him to write for them. And when he writes he finishes it right up and done with it. That's the way he always does. Who's he laying up for? He's only one boy and the girl; when she's married, there's no more."

"Perhaps he's hoarding for the dowry," suggested Olyenin.

"What dowry? They'll be glad enough to take the girl; she's a fine girl. Yes, and you see he's such a devil that he'll want to give her to a rich man. He'll want to skin him out of a lot of money. Now, Luka is a Cossack, he's a neighbor of mine, and my nephew, and a fine young fellow; he killed the Chechenets; he's been after her for a

long time, but he won't give her to him. This, that, and the other excuse he finds against it; the girl's too young, he says. But I know what his ideas are. He wants them to come with formal gifts. But it would be too bad as far as the girl is concerned. But they'll give her to Lukashka yet. Because he is the first Cossack in the village, a jigit; he killed the abrek, he's going to have a cross."

"But what does this mean? Last evening, as I was walking in the yard, I saw this same girl kissing a Cossack," said Olyenin.

"You're mistaken," screamed the old man, stopping short.

"As God lives!" said Olyenin.

"A woman's a devil," was Uncle Yeroshka's sententious answer. "But what Cossack was it?"

"I could not see."

"But what sort of stuff did he have on his cap? Was it white lambskin?"

"Yes."

"And a red zipun? Was he about your size?"

"No, taller."

"It was he," cried Yeroshka, laughing boisterously. "It was he, my Marka. It was Lukashka. I call him Marka, for I am a joker. He was the one! I love him. I used to be just like him, my

father. How I used to love the women! Well, my dushenka used to sleep with her mother and her sister, and still I got in where she was. She used to live upstairs. The mother was a witch, a perfect devil, and she hated me. I would go with Girchik, my *nydnnya* (that does not mean oldest sister, but friend). I'd come under the window, then climb up on his shoulders, open the window, and then grope my way in. And there she would be asleep on the bench. Once I woke her up that way. How she squealed! She didn't know me. 'Who's there?' and I hadn't the power to say a word. Her mother was beginning to stir. I took my cap and stuck it into her snout. Then she knew by the rim who it was. She jumped up. In those days I got anything I wanted. She used to bring me curds and grapes and everything," added Uncle Yeroshka, giving a practical turn to his anecdotes. "Yes, and there were others beside her! Life was life then!"

"But how is it now?"

"Ah! now we will follow the dog, we will tree a pheasant; then you shoot!"

"Wouldn't you like to court Maryana?"

"You watch the dog! I will show you before evening," said the old man, pointing to his beloved Lyam.

Both were silent. They proceeded a hundred paces, occasionally exchanging a word, and then the old man again paused and pointed to a dead limb that lay across their path.

"What think you that is?" he asked. "Do you suppose it is right? No. That stick lies in the wrong way."

"Why is it wrong?"

He smiled scornfully. "You don't know anything. Listen to me. When a stick lies that way you must not step over it, but go around it or fling it this way out of the road and repeat the prayer, 'To the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost,' and go with God's blessing. It won't do any harm then. So the old men have always told me."

"Now, what nonsense that is!" exclaimed Olyenin. "Tell me rather about Maryanka. So she goes round with Lukashka?"

"Sh! now keep quiet," and again the old man interrupted the conversation with a whisper. "Just listen. Now we come into the thick woods."

And the old man, stepping noiselessly in his porshni, went along over the narrow path which led into the thick, wild forest with its dense undergrowth. Occasionally he looked scowlingly at Olyenin, who tramped noisily along in his

heavy boots, and, as he carried his gun carelessly, oftentimes got it entangled in the overhanging branches of the trees.

“Don't make such a noise ; go softly, soldier !” said Yeroshka, in an angry whisper.

There was a feeling in the air that the sun was trying to break through the mist. It was thinner, but still concealed the tops of the trees. The forest seemed monstrously high. At each step forward the view changed. What seemed a tree proved to be a bush, a bunch of rushes had the aspect of a tree.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE two huntsmen went along together over the damp herb-grown path. The dogs, wagging their tails and occasionally glancing at their masters, trotted along by their side. Myriads of gnats darted about them and followed them, covering their backs, their faces, and their hands. The air was redolent of vegetation and the dampness of the woods. It was warm. The village noises, which they had heard before, now no longer reached the huntsmen, only the dogs made their way through the brambles, and occasionally the birds twittered. Olyenin knew that it was unsafe in these woods, that abreks were always apt to be lurking in such places. He also felt a strong reliance on the protection afforded by his gun. He was not exactly afraid, but he was conscious that another in his place might have been afraid, and, as he gazed with strained attention into the misty, damp forest and listened to the faint, distant sounds, he grasped his gun firmly and experienced a feeling that was new and at the same time agreeable to him.

Uncle Yeroshka, taking the lead, halted at each pool where double tracks were to be seen, examined them attentively and pointed them out to Olyenin. He scarcely spoke a word, only occasionally making his whispered observations. The path which they took had some time previously been traversed by an arba, but had been long overgrown by grass. The forest of cork elms and chinár trees was so dense on both sides and so overgrown that it was impossible for the eye to penetrate its depths. Almost every tree was draped from top to bottom with wild grapevines; the underbrush was a perfect thicket of blackthorn. Every smallest clearing was overgrown with blackberry vines, with rushes crowned with gray waving flowers. Here and there great paths made by animals and small ones like the tunnels of pheasants led off from the wood road into the depths of the thicket. Olyenin, who had never seen anything like it, was amazed at the exuberance of this virgin forest. The dense vegetation, the peril, the old man with his mysterious whispers, Maryanka with her strong superb figure, and the mountains, — all seemed to Olyenin like a dream.

“A pheasant has just alighted,” said the old man in a whisper, glancing around and drawing

his cap down over his face. "Hide your snout, it's a pheasant." He frowned sternly at Olyenin, and crept on almost on his hands and knees. "It doesn't like a man's face."

Olyenin was still in the rear when the old man suddenly rose to his full height and began to scrutinize a tree. A fowl was clucking down at the dog which was barking at him, at the foot of a tree, and Olyenin saw the pheasant. But, just as he was taking aim, Uncle Yeroshka's fowling-piece went off with a report like a cannon, and the bird, which had started to fly up, fell earthward, scattering its feathers as it fell. As he went toward the old man, Olyenin started up another. Putting his gun to his shoulder, he aimed and fired. The pheasant flew up, then fell like a stone into the thicket.

"Bravo!" cried Uncle Yeroshka, who was not a crack shot at a bird on the wing. Picking up the pheasants, they went on. Elated by the exertion and the praise, Olyenin kept talking with the old man.

"Hold on, we will go in here!" cried the old man, interrupting him. "Yesterday I saw the tracks of a stag there."

Turning off into the thicket and proceeding three hundred paces, they reached a clearing

overgrown with reeds, and in places overflowed with water. Olyenin followed the old huntsman, and was about twenty paces behind him when he saw him bend over, shake his head significantly, and beckon with his hand. Hastening to join him, Olyenin saw human footprints. Uncle Yeroshka called his attention to them:—

“Do you see?”

“Yes, I see; what of it?” replied Olyenin, trying to speak as calmly as possible. “A man has been here.”

The thought of Cooper’s “Pathfinder” and of abreks flashed through his mind, and, as he noticed the precaution with which the old man went on, he could not make up his mind to ask about it, and was therefore in doubt whether this air of mystery resulted from peril or the exigencies of sport.

“Nay, that’s my own track,” replied the old man, simply, and then pointed to the grass over which could be seen the almost obliterated tracks of a wild animal.

The old man went on. Olyenin kept now abreast of him. After they had gone twenty paces farther, they descended to a lower level and reached a thicket where there was a spreading pear tree, under which the grass did not grow,

and the fresh lessees of a wild animal could be plainly seen on the black soil. The place, all surrounded by wild grapevines, was like a snug covered arbor, dark and cool.

"He has been here this morning," said the old man, with a sigh. "See, the lair shows he has been lying here."

Suddenly a tremendous crashing was heard in the forest, not ten paces away. Both were startled, and grasped their muskets, but nothing was to be seen; only there was a sound of breaking twigs. The regular, swift beat of a gallop was heard for an instant, then the crashing changed into a dull rumble, ever farther and farther away, echoing through the still forest. Something seemed to give way in Olyenin's heart. With a dazed expression he gazed at the green depths of the wood, and at last turned and looked at the old man. Uncle Yeroshka, with his gun still at his shoulder, stood motionless; his hat was on the back of his head, his eyes gleamed with an unusual light, and his opened mouth, showing the stumps of his yellow teeth, had an angry expression; he seemed petrified in that position.

"A big horn!" he cried. And, throwing down his gun in despair, he began to tear his white beard. — "Here he was standing. In a moment

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"A big horn!" he cried. And, throwing down his gun in despair, he began to tear his white beard. — "Here he was standing. In a moment

we should have been on him. Fool! fool!" and he wrathfully clutched his beard. "Fool! Hog!" he repeated, still twitching his beard. Something seemed to be flying through the forest in the mist; farther and farther away, more and more dimly echoed the hoofs of the escaping stag.

It was growing dark when Olyenin returned with the old man, weary, famished, and full of vigor. Dinner was waiting for him. He ate and drank with the old huntsman, and his heart was full of warmth and joy when they went out on the steps. Again before his eyes arose the mountains against the sunset. Again the old man related his endless stories about the chase, about the abreks, about his mistresses, about his wild adventurous life. Again the superb maiden Maryana, the beauty, went by, in and out and across the yard.

CHAPTER XX.

On the following day Olyenin went alone to the place where they had started up the stag. Instead of taking the longer way through the village gates, he followed the example of all the others, and crept through the bramble hedge. And he had scarcely got loose from the thorns that caught in his cherkeska when his dog, which had run on ahead, started up two pheasants.

As soon as he had got fairly into the black-thorn thicket, the pheasants began to fly up at every step. The old huntsman had not showed him this place the day before, intending to keep it for hunting with the decoy. Olyenin shot five pheasants in twelve shots, and, in trying to crawl after them through the thicket, he exerted himself so vigorously that the sweat poured from him. He called back his dog, uncocked his gun, loaded it with a bullet instead of shot, and, driving away the gnats with the sleeves of his cherkeska, he noiselessly made his way to where they had been the day before. But it was impossible to restrain the dog, which kept finding fresh

trails, and he killed still another brace of pheasants, and the delay caused by this prevented him from reaching the place before it was noon.

The day was remarkably clear, calm, and hot. The morning coolness had entirely vanished from the forest, and myriads of midges literally covered his face, his back, and his hands. They settled down so upon the dog's back that they changed his color from black to gray, and the same with the cherkaska, through which they thrust their stings. Olyenin was ready to make his escape from his tormentors; it even seemed to him that it would be impossible for him to spend the summer in the village. He started to go home, but, remembering that men live through such things, he resolutely made up his mind to put up with it, and allowed the gnats to sting him as much as they pleased. And, strangely enough, toward noon, this sensation began to be agreeable to him. It even seemed to him that if this atmosphere of gnats surrounding him on all sides, this paste of gnats which rolled up as he passed his hand over his face, and this intolerable itching over his whole body, were absent, then the forest there would have lost for him its character and its charm. These myriads of insects were so appropriate to the wildness of the vege-

tation, luxuriant almost to ugliness, this wilderness of beasts and birds, this dark green forest, this fragrant heated air, these channels of muddy water everywhere oozing through from the Terek and bubbling up under the hanging leaves, that what had before seemed terrible and unendurable now began to be even agreeable.

Going to the spot where he had found the stag the day before, and finding nothing there, he felt an inclination to rest. The sun stood directly above the forest and scorched his head and neck whenever he came out into a clearing or went along a path. His seven pheasants dragged down upon his belt with a painful weight. He hunted for the trail of the stag, crept through the bushes to the thicket, to the very place where the stag had lain the day before, and stretched himself out in his retreat. He saw all around him the dark green wall of leaves, he saw the nest where he had been lying, the dried fumets, the impression of the stag's knees, the lumps of earth torn up by his hoofs, and his latest tracks. It seemed cool and comfortable; he had no anxieties, no desires.

And suddenly there came over him such a strange feeling of unreasonable joy and love

toward everything that he began to cross himself* and offered thanks, just as he used to do when he was a child. Suddenly this thought came into his mind with extraordinary clearness:—

“Here I, Dmitri Olyenin, an entity distinct from all others, am lying all alone, God knows where, in the very place where lives a stag, an old stag, a handsome fellow, which has perhaps never even seen the face of man, and in a place, likewise, where no human being has ever been before, or thought of being. Here I sit and around me rise old trees and young trees and each one of them is twined about by the tendrils of the wild grape; around me swarm the pheasants, chasing each other, and, perhaps, scenting their dead companions.”

He felt of his pheasants, examined them, and wiped his blood-stained hand on his *cherkeska*.

“Perhaps the jackals also smell them, and, with fierce faces, are sneaking about me on the other side. Around me, flying among the leaves, which must seem to them like vast islands, the gnats are hovering in the air, and buzzing: one, two, three, four, a hundred, a thousand, a million gnats, and each one of them is buzzing something for some special

reason around me, and each one of them is a Dmitri Olyenin, an entity distinct from all the others as much as I am."

He began to get a clear idea of what the gnats were thinking and buzzing about: "Here, this way, children. Here's something good to eat," they sing, as they settle down upon him.

And it became clear to him that he was not in the least a Russian nobleman, a member of high Moscow society, the friend and relative of this person and that, but a mere gnat, like these others, or a pheasant, or a stag, like those that now have their haunts in the woods around him.

"Just like them, just like Uncle Yeroshka, I live my little life and shall die like them. He was right when he said: 'Only grass will be the aftergrowth.'—And supposing it is only grass?" his thoughts ran on, "still I must live all the same, must be happy: because I have only one wish—happiness. It would be all the same, whatever I was: whether an animal, like all the rest, over which the grass will grow and nothing more, or a frame in which a part of all-embracing Godhead is set: still I must live in the best way possible. How, then, must I live so as to be happy, and why have I not been happy hitherto?"

And he began to review his past life, and it seemed to him disgusting. He seemed in his own eyes such an exacting egotist, even while in reality he had no real needs at all. And all the time he was gazing at the brilliant green of the foliage, at the descending sun and the clear sky, and he realized that his happiness still kept at the same high level.

“What makes me happy? And what has been the aim of my past life?” he asked himself. “How exacting I have been for my own interests, how whimsical I have been, and what have been the results of my actions?—only shame and suffering! And now how little I find is essential for happiness.”

And suddenly it seemed as though a new world were revealed to him. “This is what happiness is,” he said to himself. “Happiness consists in living for others. This also is clear. Man is endowed with a craving for happiness; therefore it must be legitimate. If he satisfies it egotistically—that is, if he bends his energies toward acquiring wealth, fame, physical comforts, love—it may happen that circumstances will make it impossible to satisfy this craving. In fact, these cravings are illegitimate, but the craving for happiness is not illegitimate. What cravings

can always be satisfied independently of external conditions? — Love, self-denial.”

The discovery of this, which seemed to him a new truth, so delighted and satisfied him that he sprang up and began impatiently to consider whom he might as quickly as possible sacrifice himself for, to whom he might do good, whom he might love.

“Since I need nothing for myself,” he kept thinking, “why should I not live for others?” He took his gun, and, with the intention of returning home as soon as possible so as to think this all over and find a chance to do good, he crept out of the thicket. When he came into the clearing he looked around: the sun was hidden behind the tree-tops; it had grown cooler, and the locality seemed to him perfectly unknown and unlike that surrounding the village. Everything had suddenly undergone a change, the weather and the character of the forest; the sky was covered with clouds, the wind souged through the tops of the trees; all around him were to be seen only the reeds and the decaying forest primeval. He started to call back his dog, which had run from him after some animal, and his voice reëchoed through the solitude. And suddenly a terrible dread came upon him. He began to be afraid. His memory called up the abreks, and their murderous deeds of

which he had been told, and he began to imagine that a Chechenet was hiding behind every bush, ready to leap out at him, and he saw himself defending his life, or dying or playing the coward. The thought of God and of the future life came to him with a vividness long unexperienced. But all around him was the same dusky, stern, wild nature.

“And is it any use,” he asked himself, “to have lived for self, when here you may die, and die not having accomplished any good, and die here, far away from all human eyes?”

He struck off in the direction where he supposed the village lay. He had entirely forgotten about his hunting; he felt desperately tired; he glanced with apprehension, almost with horror, at every clump of bushes and tree, expecting that his life might be required of him at any second. After making a pretty wide circuit, he struck a canal through which flowed the sandy, cold water from the Terek, and he resolved to keep along beside this so as not to get turned around. Even now he did not know where the canal would bring him out. Suddenly there was a crashing in the reeds behind him. He was startled and grasped his gun. It was only his heated and heavily panting dog jumping into the cold water of the ditch and beginning to lap it.

Olyenin felt a sense of shame.

He stooped down and drank with him, and then he followed in the direction of the canal, expecting that it would bring him to the village. But, in spite of the dog's companionship, it suddenly seemed to him more gloomy than ever. The forest was filled with shadows; the wind played more and more violently in the tops of the ancient, decaying trees. Great birds flew crying around their nests in these trees. The vegetation grew less luxuriant; he came more and more frequently upon clumps of murmuring rushes and bare, sandy reaches, marked by the tracks of wild animals. Mingled with the whispering of the wind came a melancholy, monotonous murmur. His whole soul was filled with gloom. He felt after his pheasants behind him and found that one was gone. The bird had been torn off and lost, and only the bloody neck and head stuck to his belt. It seemed to him that never before in his life had he felt so overwhelmed with terror. He tried to offer a prayer to God; his one fear was that he should be killed without having done any good in the world, and his desire was so strong to live, to live so as to accomplish some great exploit of self-renunciation!

CHAPTER XXI

SUDDENLY it seemed as though the sun shone into his heart. He heard the sounds of Russian talk; he heard the swift, regular rushing of the Terek, and, within two steps, there opened out before him the tawny, hurrying surface of the river, with its damp, brown sands along the shores and bars, the distant steppe, the roof of the "post" a short distance above the water, a saddled horse, with its feet hobbled, grazing, — and the mountains. The red sun peered for an instant from under the clouds, and its last rays shot cheerfully across the river, over the reeds, and gleamed on the roof and a group of Cossacks standing about. Among them Lukashka's vigorous form involuntarily attracted Olycnin's attention.

He felt himself again, and, without any apparent cause, perfectly happy. He had come to the Nizhni-Prototsky post on the Terck, and over against the pacific aul on the Chechen side. He greeted the Cossacks, but, finding as yet no chance to do any one good, he went into the

house. No opportunity offered in the house either. The Cossacks received him coldly. He looked about in the clay-plastered room and smoked his cigarette. The Cossacks paid no attention to him; in the first place, because he smoked cigarettes, and, secondly, because they had something else to distract them that evening.

Some hostile Chechens, relatives of Lukashka's abrek, had come down from the mountains, with a dragoman, to ransom the body. The Cossack commander was expected from the village.

The dead man's brother, a tall, finely proportioned man, with a beard trimmed and dyed red, was as dignified and haughty as a tsar, though he was dressed in a torn cherkeska and lambskin cap. His features bore a striking resemblance to the dead abrek. He did not deign to glance at any one; not once did he turn his eyes upon the dead man, but, squatting on his heels in the shade, he smoked his pipe, spat upon the ground, and, from time to time, gave imperious commands in a guttural tone, and his fellow listened deferentially and obeyed them. It was plain that this was a jigit, who had more than once seen the Russians in entirely different circumstances, and that he found nothing to surprise him or attract attention in them now.

Olyenin went near to the dead man and began to gaze at him, but the brother cast a calm, contemptuous glance at him and said something in an angry staccato. The dragoman hastened to cover the dead man's face with a cloak. Olyenin was dumfounded by the dignity and sternness of the jigit's face; he greeted him and asked from what aul he came, but the Chechenets barely glanced at him, spat contemptuously, and turned away.

Olyenin was so surprised at the mountaineer's indifference or lack of interest in him that he explained it to himself as due to stupidity or not understanding him.

He addressed himself to his comrade.

His comrade, the emissary and dragoman, was likewise ragged; he was not sandy, like the other, but dark and vivacious, and had exceedingly white teeth and flashing black eyes. He was not at all averse to conversation, and begged for a cigarette.

"There were five brothers of them," related the interpreter, in broken Russian; "now the Russians already shot three; there were only two left; he's a jigit, very jigit," said the interpreter, indicating the Chechenets. "When Akhmet-Khan—that was the name of the dead abrek—was killed, this one was on the other side, hiding

in the reeds; he saw the whole thing, and how they got Akhmet-Khan in a boat and how they brought him ashore. He sat there till night; he wanted to shoot the old man, but the others would not let him."

Lukashka came where Olyenin was and sat down.

"Well, what aul are you from?" he asked.

"Yonder in those mountains," replied the interpreter, pointing across the Terek toward a bluish, misty defile. "Do you know Suyuk-su? It's ten versts beyond that."

"Do you know Girei-Khan in Suyuk-su?" asked Lukashka, evidently proud of this acquaintance. "He's my kunak!"

"He's a neighbor of mine," replied the interpreter.

"He's a brave man," and Lukashka, evidently very much interested, began speaking in the Tatar tongue with the mountaineer.

Before long, the sotnik or captain and the village elder came riding up, followed by a suite of two Cossacks. The sotnik, one of the new officers, greeted the Cossacks, but there was no return greeting of, "We hope you are well, your Honor," as in the army, and a bow here and there was all that any one gave him. A few, and Lu-

kashka among the number, stood up and formed in line. The sergeant reported that all was satisfactory at the "post."

All this seemed ridiculous to Olyenin, like Cossacks playing soldier. But the formalities quickly assumed more simplicity, and the sotnik, who was a clever Cossack, like all the rest, was soon briskly talking Tatar with the delegate. A paper was drawn up and given to the delegate, and money taken in exchange, and then they approached the corpse.

"Gavrilof Luka, — which one of you is he?" asked the sotnik.

Lukashka took off his cap and advanced.

"I have sent a report about you to the colonel. What will come of it, I do not know; I have recommended you for a cross; we'll soon make you a sergeant. Can you read and write?"

"Not at all."

"But what a superb fellow!" exclaimed the sotnik, continuing to play commander. "Put on your cap. What family of Gavrilofs? Any relation to the 'Broad-back'?"

"His nephew," replied the sergeant.

"I know, I know. — Well, take it away; lend a hand there," said he, turning to the Cossacks.

Lukashka's face grew radiant with pleasure;

and seemed handsomer than usual. He turned from the sergeant, and, putting on his cap, again sat down near Olyenin.

After the body had been laid in the canoe, the Chechenets, the brother of Akhmet-Khan, went down to the shore. The Cossacks involuntarily made way for him. Giving a powerful spring from the shore, he leaped into the boat. Then, for the first time, as Olyenin noticed, he cast a fleeting glance over all the Cossacks, and again asked some abrupt question of his companion. The dragoman replied, and pointed to Lukashka. The Chechenets gazed at him, and then, slowly turning around, looked toward the other shore.

Not so much hatred as chilling scorn was expressed in his face. He said a few words more.

“What did he say?” asked Olyenin of the lively dragoman.

“Yours kill ours, ours will kill yours. Always the same coil!” said he, evidently answering at haphazard; then, laughing and showing his white teeth, he sprang into the canoe.

The dead man's brother sat motionless, and gazed steadily at the farther shore. He was so filled with hate and scorn that he found nothing worthy of his attention on this side. The dragoman, standing at the stern of the canoe, paddling

now on this side, now on that, skilfully drove it across, and talked incessantly. As the current bore them obliquely down stream, the canoe grew smaller and smaller, the sounds of the voices were almost lost, and at last they were seen to run on the farther shore, where their horses were in waiting. There they disembarked the body, and laid it across the saddle in spite of the restiveness of the horse; then mounting, they rode off slowly along the road, past the aul, from which a throng of people came forth to look at them.

But the Cossacks, on the Russian side, were thoroughly satisfied and happy. Laughter and raillery were heard all about. The sotnik and the village elder went into the clay-plastered room of the hut to have some refreshments. Lukashka, with a radiant face, which he vainly tried to sober down, took a seat near Olyenin, resting his elbows on his knees and peeling a stick.

“What makes you smoke?” he asked, as though out of curiosity. “Is it good?”

He evidently said this because he noticed that Olyenin felt ill at ease and was alone among the Cossacks.

“Yes, I am used to it,” replied Olyenin. “But why do you ask?”

“Hm! If any of us fellows here were to smoke,

it would go hard with him ! How near the mountains look !” said Lukashka, pointing to the defile. “And yet it would take some time to get there ! . . . How will you be able to get home alone ? it’s dark. I will go with you, if you like,” said Lukashka ; “you ask the sergeant.”

“What a splendid young fellow !” said Olyenin to himself, as he looked into the Cossack’s merry face. The thought of Maryanka occurred to him, and the kiss which he had overheard behind the gate ; and he began to feel sorry for Lukashka, for his lack of education. “What folly and confusion !” he thought, “a man has killed another and is happy and satisfied as though he had done some good deed. Can it be that nothing whispers to him that there is no reason for rejoicing on account of this ? That happiness consists not in killing others, but in self-sacrifice ?”

“Well, don’t fall into his hands now, brother !” exclaimed one of the Cossacks who had come down to see the boat off, addressing Lukashka. “Did you hear what he said about you ?”

Lukashka raised his head. “The one I christened ?” asked Lukashka, meaning by this the Chechenets.

“The one you christened will not rise again, but the sandy brother lives still.”

“Let him thank his stars that he got away whole,” said Lukashka, with a laugh.

“Why is it you feel glad?” asked Olyenia of Lukashka. “If your brother had been killed, should you feel glad?”

A look of fun came into the Cossack's eyes as he glanced at Olyenin. He evidently understood all the meaning that Olyenin intended to convey, but he stood on a higher ground than such considerations.

“Supposing it were so? It must be! Don't they kill our brothers?”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE sotnik and the village elder rode off ; and Olyenin, so as to confer a pleasure upon Lukashka, and so as not to travel alone through the dark forest, asked for Lukashka's company, and permission was granted. Olyenin supposed that he wanted to see Maryanka, and he was, moreover, glad of the company of such a pleasant-looking and garrulous Cossack. Lukashka and Maryanka were naturally united in his imagination, and he liked to think of them. "He loves Maryanka," said Olyenin to himself, "and I might love her." And a strange and novel feeling of affection overmastered him as they went home together through the dark forest. Lukashka was also particularly light-hearted. Something like love was experienced by both of these young men, who were in every way so absolutely dissimilar. Every time that their eyes met, they felt like smiling.

"Which is your gate?" asked Olyenin.

"The middle one ; I will go with you as far as the swamp. After that there is nothing more to be afraid of."

Olyenin laughed.

"Why should I be afraid? Go back. I am much obliged to you. I will go on alone."

"Not at all. What else have I got to do? Why shouldn't you be afraid; even we are," said Lukashka, also laughing, and soothing his companion's vanity.

"Then come in with me. We will have a talk, we will drink together, and you can go back tomorrow."

"Do you think that I should not find a place to spend the night," returned Lukashka, laughing. "But the sergeant ordered me to come back."

"I heard you last evening; you were singing a song, and besides I saw you."

"All men . . ." and Luka shook his head.

"Well, are you to be married? Is that so?" asked Olyenin.

"Matushka wants to have me marry. But I haven't any horse yet."

"Aren't you regularly enrolled?"

"How should I be? I've only just been taken on. I haven't any horse yet and no way to arrange for one. And that's why I don't get married."

"And how much does a horse cost?"

"One was bought the other day across the

river; it was less than sixty rubles, but it was a Nogai horse."

"Come and be my *drabant*.¹ I will manage it, and I will furnish you with a horse," said Olyenin, with a sudden impulse. — "Truly I will. I have two; I don't need them both."

"Why don't you need them?" asked Lukashka, with a laugh. "Why should you give me one? We shall get one in God's time."

"Truly I mean it! Or won't you come as my *drabant*?" asked Olyenin, pleased with the thought that had occurred to him of giving Lukashka a horse. He felt a little awkward, however, and his conscience pricked him. He tried to get out of his difficulty, but could not find words.

Lukashka was the first to break the silence.

"Say, have you a house of your own in Russia?"

Olyenin could not refrain from telling him that he had not one house, merely, but several houses.

"A handsome house? Larger than ours?" Lukashka asked, good-naturedly.

"Much larger! ten times as large; three stories high," explained Olyenin.

¹ During expeditions, officers are accompanied by a *drabant* (*trabant*), who serves somewhat in the capacity of a body-guard.
Author's note in text.

"But have you such horses as we have?"

"I have a hundred head of horses, worth three hundred — four hundred rubles apiece; but they aren't such horses as those you have here. Three hundred silver rubles! Trotters, you know . . . But I like those here much better."

"What made you come here? was it of your own free will or not?" asked Lukashka, still preserving a tone of raillery in his voice. "Here's where you missed your way," he added, pointing to a path by which they were passing; "you should have turned to the right."

"Yes, I came of my own free will," replied Olyenin; "I was anxious to see your country, to take part in expeditions."

"I should like to go right off on an expedition," exclaimed Luka. "Hark! hear the jackals howl," he added, listening.

"But wasn't it terrible to you to have killed a man?" asked Olyenin.

"What should I be afraid of? But I should like to go on an expedition!" repeated Lukashka. "How I long to! How I long to!"

"Perhaps we can go together. Our regiment will start before the holiday and our company also with it."

"But the idea of coming here of your own

accord! When you have a house, and horses and serfs. I would have had a good time, a good time! Yes, and I would never have come here. What is your rank?"

"I am a yunker, but already presented for promotion."

"Well, if you aren't bragging about the way you live at home, then I should not have come away. Do you like to live here with us?"

"Yes, very much," said Olyenin.

It was already quite dark when, talking thus confidentially, they reached the village. The thick blackness of the forest still surrounded them. The wind roared in the high tree-tops. The jackals seemed to be right at their heels, howling, laughing, and yelling. But in front of them, in the village, were already to be heard the voices of women talking, the barking of dogs, and they could clearly distinguish the outlines of the cottages; lights gleamed in the windows; the air was heavy, heavy with the peculiar odor of burning dung.

The feeling came over Olyenin, especially this evening, that here in this village was his home, his family, all his happiness, and that he had never lived, and never should live again, so happily as in this village.

What a strong affection he felt for them all, and especially for Lukashka, that evening!

When he got home, Olyenin, to Lukashka's great amazement, went himself into the stable and brought out the horse which he had bought in Groznaya, —not the one which he always rode himself, but another, by no means to be despised, though he was no longer young, —and presented it to Lukashka.

"Why should you give me that?" asked Lukashka. "I have never yet done you any service."

"Truly, it isn't worth anything to me," insisted Olyenin; "take it, and you will give me something sometime. . . . You see, sometime we will go on an expedition together."

Luka was bewildered.

"Well, now, what does this mean? Why isn't that horse worth anything?" said he, not glancing at the animal.

"Take it! take it! If you do not take it, you will offend me. Vanyusha, bring the gray to him."

Lukashka grasped the reins. •

"Well, I am obliged to you. Now, that's something I didn't expect, that I wouldn't have dreamed of."

Olyenin was as happy as a twelve-year-old child.

“Fasten it here. It is a good horse — I bought him in Groznaya — and a lively jumper. Vanyusha, give us some red wine. We will go in-doors.”

The wine was brought. Lukashka sat down and took the red wine. “If God allows I will also do something for you,” said he, as he drained the glass. “What — how shall I call you?”

“Dmitri Andreyitch.”

“Well, Mitri Andreyitch, God save you. We will be chums.¹ Now, come to us when you can. Though we are not rich, still we are always glad to entertain our chums. I will go and tell my mother; if you want anything, cheese or grapes, you shall have them. And if you come to the cordon, I will help you either in hunting, or across the river, or anything you want. Here, the other day, you have no idea what a splendid wild-boar I shot! I shared him among the Cossacks, but if I'd known I would have sent him to you!”

“All right: thanks! One thing, don't harness him; he won't be good for riding if you do.”

“The idea of harnessing a horse! And here I will tell you one thing,” said Lukashka, bending down his head, “if you'd like, I have a kunak,

¹ Kunaki.

Girex-Khan; he has invited me to hunt on the road that leads down from the mountains, and we will go there together. I wouldn't give you up, I would be your *murid*."¹

"Let us go; let us go sometime."

Lukashka seemed to be thoroughly at his ease, and to understand Olyenin's behavior toward him. The unaffected way in which he took it all for granted surprised Olyenin, and was not altogether agreeable to him. They sat at table for a long time, and it was late when Lukashka, not intoxicated, for he never entirely lost his head, but carrying a good deal of wine, pressed Olyenin's hand, and left him.

Olyenin looked out of the window to see what he would do. Lukashka went by softly, with his head bent down. Then, after leading the horse out of the gate, he suddenly shook his head, leaped on his back with the agility of a cat, gave him free rein, and dashed, with a wild cry, down the street. Olyenin supposed that he would go and share his happiness with Maryanka; he did not do so, still he felt happier than he had ever before felt in his life. He was as blithe as a child, and could not refrain from telling Vanyusha

¹ The *murid* is a fanatical sect among the Mahometans, whose special duty it is to exterminate Christians.

not only how he had given the horse to Lukashka, but also what induced him to do so, and from explaining to him all his new theory of happiness. Vanyusha did not approve of this theory, and explained that he had no money to throw away — *larzhan ilnyapa* — and therefore this was all foolishness.

Lukashka galloped home, sprang down from the horse, and turned it over to his mother, bidding her put him out to pasture with the other Cossack horses ; he himself was obliged to return that very night to the cordon. The dumb girl came out to lead away the horse, and made signs to show that she would throw herself at the feet of the man who gave him the horse, as soon as ever she saw him. The old mother only shook her head at her son's story, and in the bottom of her heart was convinced that Lukashka had stolen the animal, and therefore bade the dumb girl take him to pasture before it was daylight.

Lukashka went alone to the cordon, and his thoughts were all the time busy with the meaning of Olyenin's action. Although the horse was not a good one, in his judgment, still it was worth at least forty moneta, and he was very glad of the gift. But why the stranger had conferred this gift upon him he could not comprehend, and therefore

he did not feel the slightest sense of gratitude. On the contrary, his head was filled with obscure suspicions in regard to the yunker's intentions. He could not explain what these designs were, but it seemed impossible to admit the thought that a perfect stranger, out of mere kindness of heart, for no consideration in return, should present him with a horse worth forty rubles. If he had been drunk, then it would have been comprehensible; the desire to show off would have explained it. But the yunker was sober, and therefore it looked as though he wanted to bribe him to do some dirty work.

"Well, you're mistaken!" said Lukashka to himself. "I've got the horse and we shall see what will come of it. I am no fool. It takes some sharpness to outwit a fellow. We shall see."

In trying to persuade himself that he should have to be on his guard against Olyenin, he worked himself into a genuinely hostile feeling toward him. He told no one how he got his horse. To one he said he had bought him; he parried the questions of others with ambiguous answers. At the village, however, the truth was soon known. Lukashka's mother, Maryanka, Ilya Vasilyevitch, and other Cossacks, when they

learned about Olyenin's incomprehensible gift, were astonished and began to be afraid of the yunker. And yet this action of his aroused in them great respect for his *simplicity* and wealth.

"Did you know, that yunker who's staying at Ilya Vasilyevitch's has given Lukashka a horse worth fifty moneta," said one. "He must be rich!"

"I have heard about it," replied the other, significantly. "It must be for some favor though. We shall see, we shall see what will come of it. That's the Urvan's luck!"

"They're a sly set, those yunkers, curse 'em!" remarked a third. "He'll get him into some trouble."

CHAPTER XXIII.

OLYENIN'S life ran on smoothly, monotonously. He had little to do with his superiors or his comrades. The position of a wealthy yunker in the Caucasus is remarkably advantageous in this respect. He is not required to work and he is not required to drill. As a reward for his services during the expedition, he had been recommended for promotion as a regular officer, and he was left in peace until the promotion was ratified.

The officers looked upon him as an aristocrat, and therefore kept on their dignity towards him. The officers' card-playing, drinking bouts, and song-parties, in which he had taken part on the frontier, had no attraction for him, and he stood aloof from the officers' society and their life in the village.

The life of officers in the stanitsas, or Cossack villages, has for many years had its peculiar features. Just as every yunker or officer at the outposts regularly drinks porter, plays faro, and talks about rewards and expeditions. so, when they come down into the Cossack villages, they regu-

larly drink Caucasian wine with their landlords, treat the Cossack girls to sweetmeats and honey, flirt with them, and fall in love with them ; sometimes they go so far as to marry them.

Olyenin had always lived in his own way and had an involuntary aversion to beaten tracks. And here also he did not follow in the ruts laid down for the life of the officers in the Caucasus.

It came natural to him to wake with the sun. After drinking his tea and coming out on his porch to admire the mountains, the beauty of the morning, Maryanka, he would put on his ox-skin zipun, the well soaked footgear called porshni, belt on his dagger, take his gun and a pouch of powder and tobacco, call his dog, and, at six o'clock in the morning, be off into the forest back of the village.

Toward seven o'clock in the evening he would return weary, hungry, with five or six pheasants at his belt sometimes with larger game, and often with the lunch and cigarettes in his pouch untouched. If the thoughts in his brain had been disposed like the cigarettes in his pouch, it could have been readily seen that during all these fourteen hours of wandering not one thought had been disturbed. He would come back morally fresh, vigorous, and perfectly happy. It would

have been impossible for him to tell what he had been thinking about. It was not thoughts, it was not recollections, it was not fancies, that fermented in his brain,—it was snatches of each and all that he recalled when he asked himself what he had been thinking about all day. Now he would imagine himself a Cossack working in the gardens with his Cossack spouse, or an abrek in the mountains, or the wild-boar, even, now running from before him. And all the time he would be listening, waiting, watching for a pheasant, a boar, or a stag.

Evenings, Uncle Yeroshka invariably came and sat with him. Vanyusha would bring a gallon of red wine, and they would sit quietly chatting and drinking, and then separate with mutual satisfaction. The next day the chase once more, once more the wholesome weariness, once more the after-dinner tipple, and once more the feeling of content and happiness. Some holidays or days of rest he would spend the whole time at home. Then his principal pursuit would be watching Maryanka, whose every motion, without being aware of it himself, he would eagerly follow from his windows or the porch. He regarded Maryanka and loved her (at least, so he thought) just as he loved the beauty of the mountains and the sky, and he had

no thought of coming into closer relations with her. It seemed to him that it was out of the question for relations to exist between them such as were possible between her and the Cossack Lukashka, and still less such as existed between rich officers and Cossack maidens. It seemed to him that if he attempted to do what his comrades did he would exchange his perfect happiness and peace of mind for an abyss of torments, disenchantments, and regrets.

Besides, he felt that in behaving as he did toward this charming young woman he was accomplishing a sort of self-renunciation, which gave him an equal amount of pleasure, and, above all, because he stood in awe of Maryanka, and nothing would have induced him to speak a word of unworthy love.

One summer day Olyenin did not go hunting, and was staying at home. Most unexpectedly an acquaintance of his, a very young man, whom he had met in Moscow society, came to call upon him.

“Ah, *mon cher*, my dear fellow, how glad I am to find you here,” he began, in his Moscow mixture of Russian and French, and so he went on interlarding his talk with French expressions. “I heard some one talking about Olyenin. — What

Olyénin?—How glad I was to know that you were here. . . . Now, Fate must have brought us together. . . . Well, and how are you? What are you doing? What are you here for?"

· And Prince Byeletsky told his whole story: how he had been sent for a time to join this regiment, how the commander-in-chief had invited him to be on his staff, and how he was going to accept after the campaign was over, though he felt very little interest in it.

"If one serves here in this wilderness, he must at least make a career . . . get a cross . . . rank . . . get promoted to the Guards. All that is indispensable for me—if not for myself, at least for the sake of my relatives, of my friends. The prince received me very cordially. He's a thorough gentleman," said Byeletsky, all in a breath.

"I was presented for the Anna after the expedition. And now I am going to stay here till the campaign opens. It's splendid here. What women! Well, and how are you getting along? Our captain,—you know Startsef . . . he's a good-hearted stupid fellow . . . he told me that you were living here like a terrible savage, that you don't have anything to do with any one of them. I could very well understand that you would not care to have much intercourse with the

officers here. I am glad of it ; you and I will see a good deal of each other. I am lodging at the sergeant's. What a girl there is there, Ustenka ! I tell you, she is a beauty ! ”

And ever more and more frequently French and Russian words were bandied about from that world upon which Olyenin believed he had forever turned his back. The general impression of Byeletsky was that he was a pleasant, good-natured young man. Very likely he really was ; but the sight of him to Olyenin was decidedly disagreeable notwithstanding his handsome, kindly face ; and the reason was that he was redolent of all that detested life which he had renounced. It was still more vexatious to him to feel it utterly beyond his powers to give the cut direct to this man from that world, as though that old world to which he had formerly belonged had still some irresistible claim upon him. He was vexed with Byeletsky, and with himself, but still he interlarded his conversation with French phrases, assumed an interest in the commander-in-chief and his Moscow acquaintances, and as a result of the fact that both of them spoke in this French dialect he expressed himself contemptuously about his brother officers, about the Cossacks, and in the most friendly manner bade good-bye to Byelet-

sky, promising to come to see him and urging him to drop in often.

Olyenin, however, did not fulfil his promise, but Vanyusha approved of Byeletsky, declaring that he was a genuine barin.

Byeletsky immediately plunged into the usual life of a wealthy officer in a Cossack village in the Caucasus. To Olyenin's eyes, he appeared, in less than a month, like an old inhabitant of the village. He treated the old men, he had parties for the girls, and went in turn to their parties, boasted of his conquests, and, indeed, it came to this, that the village girls and women, for some reason, called him *dyédushka*, little grandfather, while the Cossacks, who have no trouble in settling the status of a man who likes wine and women, took to him, and even liked him better than Olyenin, who was an enigma to them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IT was five o'clock in the morning. Vanyusha on the doorstep of the cottage was fanning the samovar with his boot leg. Olyenin had already ridden down to the Terek for a bath. He had lately conceived the new amusement of swimming his horse in the river. Dame Ulitka was in her dairy, from the chimney of which arose the black, thick smoke of the just kindled oven; the maiden was in the shed, milking the cow buffalo. "Won't you stand quiet, curse you!" rang her impatient voice, and then followed the regular sound of the milking.

On the street, near the house, were heard the lively steps of a horse, and Olyenin, riding bare-back on a handsome dark gray horse, shining with wet, rode up to the gates. Maryana's handsome head, bound with a red kerchief (called sorotchka), looked out of the shed and was quickly drawn back. Olyenin wore a red silk Kanaus shirt, a white cherkeska, from the belt of which hung a dagger, and a high lambskin hat. He sat rather self-consciously on the wet back of his comforta-

ble-looking horse, and, with his gun over his shoulder, bent down to open the gate.

His hair was still wet, his face shone with youth and health. He felt that he was handsome, clever, and like a jigit ; but in this he was mistaken. Any experienced Cossack would have known at a glance that he was a soldier.

He noticed the girl's face peering out, and, having opened the plaited gate, he dashed into the yard, pulling on the bridle and cracking the whip.

"Tea ready, Vanyusha ?" he shouted, cheerily, not glancing at the door of the shed.

"Cé prêt," replied Vanyusha.

How satisfied he felt, as, quivering in every muscle, he reined in his beautiful steed, which, all ready to leap the hedge, pranced gayly on the dry clay of the courtyard. Olyenin imagined that Maryana's lovely eyes were still looking at him from the shed, but he did not turn to see. Leaping down from the horse, he caught his gun on the step, made an awkward attempt to regain his balance, and looked in alarm toward the shed, but no one was to be seen, and only the regular sound of the milking was to be heard.

He went into his room, and, in a few moments, came out again with a book and his pipe, and sat down, with his glass of tea, on the side of the

porch not yet reached by the oblique rays of the morning sun. He resolved not to go out before dinner, that day, and had counted on writing some long neglected letters. But for some reason he felt disinclined to leave his comfortable place on the porch, and to shut himself up in his room as in a prison. Dame Ulitka had finished building her fire; Maryanka had milked the cows, and had now come out and was collecting future fuel for the oven.

Olyenin had his book open before him, but he paid little heed to what was printed on its pages. He kept lifting his eyes from it and gazing at the powerful young woman working there before him. Whether she came into the moist morning shadows near the house, or went along through the yard, flooded with the cheerful brightness of the early sun, — her symmetrical form, clad in bright colors, shining in the light and casting a long shadow, — he was afraid of missing the least of her motions.

It was a pleasure to him to see with what freedom and grace she moved about; how her pink shirt, her only garment, fell in artistic lines over her bosom and along her shapely legs; how she bent over and drew up to her full height again, and how under the tightening garment the firm lines of

her heaving breast stood forth ; how her slender feet, shod in old red slippers of good form still, were planted on the ground ; how her strong arms, with sleeves tucked up and showing all the play of the muscles, moved the shovel, impatiently as it were, and how her deep black eyes sometimes gazed up at him. Even though the fine lines of the brows were contracted, still her eyes betrayed a conscious satisfaction of their beauty.

“Hollo, Olyenin. Have you been up long?” said Byeletsy, in the frock coat of the Caucasian officer, coming into the yard and joining Olyenin.

“Ah ! Byeletsy !” returned Olyenin, offering his hand. “How are you out so early ?”

“What could I do ? I was driven out. We are going to have a ball at my house to-night. Maryana, of course you’re coming to Ustenka’s,” he continued, turning to the girl.

Olyenin was amazed at the easy familiarity with which Byeletsy addressed this young woman. But Maryana, pretending not to hear, bent her head, and, throwing the shovel over her shoulder, went into the dairy with quick, strong steps.

“You’re bashful, sister, you’re bashful,” cried Byeletsy after her. “She’s afraid of you,” and, smiling gayly, he ran up the steps.

"What do you mean : You're 'going to have a ball' ?"

"At Ustenka's, where I live, a ball, and you are invited. A ball — that is, a collection of cakes and maidens !"

"Well, what should we do there ?"

Byeletsy smiled slyly, and with a wink nodded toward the dairy, where Maryanka had gone.

Olyenin shrugged his shoulders and reddened. "By God, you are a strange man!" said he. "Well, tell us about it."

He was frowning. Byeletsy noticed it ; a cunning smile hovered over his lips. "Why, it's natural," said he ; "here you are living in the same house with her ; and such a splendid girl, a glorious girl . . . a perfect beauty. . . ."

"She is a wonderful beauty. I never saw such women !" exclaimed Olyenin.

"Well, what of it ?" asked Byeletsy, absolutely failing to understand.

"It may be strange," replied Olyenin, "but why should I not tell things as they are ? Since I have been living here, women have, as it were, ceased to exist for me. And it is good and right so. For what on earth can there be in common between us and these women ? . . . Yeroshka ?

That is another thing ; he and I have a common passion — hunting."

"Just hear him ! What in common ? What is there in common between me and the Amalia Ivanovnas ? It's precisely the same thing. Admit they are rather dirty ; but that's a mere matter of taste. *À la guerre, comme à la guerre !*"

"Well, I have never known your Amalia Ivanovnas, and could never get along with them," replied Olyenin. "But it is impossible to respect them, but these here I do respect."

"All right, respect them ! what's to hinder ?"

Olyenin made no reply. He was evidently anxious to finish what he had begun to say. It lay too heavy a burden on his heart.

"I know that I am an exception," he went on, evidently somewhat embarrassed, "but my life has been so constituted that I not only see no necessity of changing my principles, but I could not—I do not say live as happily as I do now—live here at all, if I lived as you do. And so I look for something and find something quite different in them from what you do."

Byeletsy imperceptibly raised his eyebrows.

"All the same, come to my house this evening. Maryanka will be there too ; I will make you

acquainted. Come, please do. If you find it a bore, you can go home. Will you come?"

"I would come, but I tell you truly I am afraid of falling seriously in love."

"Oh! oh! oh!" screamed Byeletsky. "Come, all the same; I will look out for you. Will you come? Word of honor?"

"I would come, but truly I don't understand what we are going to do; what rôle are we going to play?"

"Please, I beg of you! Will you?"

"Yes, I will come, perhaps I will," said Olyenin.

"For Heaven's sake, the charmingest women in the world, and here you are living like a monk! What does hunting amount to? Why spoil your life and not get the good that there is? Have you heard our company is going to Vozdvizhenskaya?"

"It isn't very likely. I was told that the eighth company would go," said Olyenin.

"No, I have a letter from the adjutant. He writes that the prince himself will take part in the campaign. I am glad that we shall meet him. I am beginning to be bored here."

"They say that there will be an incursion very soon."

"I hadn't heard about that, but I have heard that the Anna has come to Krinovitsuin for his work on the last expedition. He expected to be made lieutenant," remarked Byeletsy, with a laugh. "There he was disappointed. He's gone on the staff. . . ."

When it began to grow dark, Olyenin's thoughts turned to the party. The invitation annoyed him. He wanted to go, but the idea of being present seemed strange, wild, and rather formidable to him. He knew that no Cossacks or elderly women would be there, but only marriageable girls. What would it be? How should he behave? What should he have to talk about? What would they say to him? What would be the relations between him and these wild Cossack maidens? Byeletsy had told him of such strange, cynical, and at the same time strict relations. . . . It was strange for him to think of being there in the same room with Maryana, and possibly of having a chance to talk with her. This seemed out of the question when he remembered her stately reserve. Byeletsy had told him that all this would come about of itself. "Is it possible that Byeletsy and Maryanka would keep company in that way?"

It would be interesting," he said to himself. "But no, it would be better not to go. The whole thing is disgusting, vile, and of no earthly use."

But once more he was tormented by the question: "What will it be like?" and his given promise, as it were, compelled him. He went out, still undecided, but he reached Byeletsky's quarters and went in.

The khata or Cossack cabin in which Byeletsky was lodged was just like Olyenin's. It stood on pillars about a yard and a half from the ground, and consisted of two rooms. The first, into which Olyenin entered by a steep staircase, was crowded with eider-down beds, rugs, quilts, and pillows, piled up in Cossack fashion in elegant and handsome arrangement along the wall. On the side walls hung copper pans and utensils. Under the bench lay watermelons and gourds.

In the other room was a monstrous oven, a table, benches, and the ikons of the Old Believers. Here Byeletsky was domiciled with his folding bed, his well packed trunks, a rug, on which hung his rifle, and various toilet articles and portraits scattered about. A silk dressing-gown was flung upon a bench. Byeletsky himself, handsome and clean, lay in his shirt sleeves on his couch, reading *Les Trois Mousquetaires*.

He jumped up.

"Now, you see how I am established. Isn't it elegant? Well, I'm glad that you have come. They have been carrying on tremendous preparations. Do you know how they make their *pirogi*? Out of dough, with pork and grapes! But that isn't the strong point. See what a bustle they are keeping up."

Indeed, as they looked in through the window they perceived that an extraordinary hubbub was going on in the landlady's apartment. Maidens were constantly running in and out from the entry, some with one thing, some with another.

"Will it be soon?" cried Byeletsky.

"Right away. Are you hungry, little grandfather?" and ringing laughter followed this sally.

Ustenka, plump, ruddy, pretty, with her sleeves rolled up, came running into Byeletsky's khata after plates.

"There, you! you'll make me break the plates," she squealed to Byeletsky. "There, you ought to come and help," she cried, with a laugh, addressing Olyenin. "Lay in some *zakuski* for the girls," and by *zakuski* she meant cakes and confectionery.

"Has Maryanka come?"

"Of course she has. She has brought the pastry."

"Do you know," said Byeletsky, "that if you dressed up this Ustenka, and got her clean and gave her some jewelry, she would be prettier than all our beauties! Have you seen the Cossack beauty Borshcheva? She married the colonel. She's a stunner! What *dignité*! Where she got it . . ."

"I never saw the Borshcheva, but in my opinion nothing could be more becoming than their costume."

"Ah!" said Byeletsky, sighing gayly, "I have such a faculty for getting along with any kind of life! I am going to see what they are up to." He threw on his dressing-gown and ran out. "You look out for the zakuski," he shouted back.

Olyenin sent his friend's man to buy cakes and honey, and then suddenly it seemed to him so disgusting to give him money, as though he were purchasing somebody, that he could give no decisive answer to the man's question—how many lozenges, how many cakes he should get.

"Use your own judgment."

"For all?" asked the old soldier, significantly. "Peppermints are more expensive. They sell for sixteen."

"For all, for all!" exclaimed Olyenin, and took his seat in the window, wondering why his heart throbbed as though he were on the eve of something serious and improper.

He listened to the shrieks and laughter that arose in the girls' room when Byeltsky went there, and in a few minutes he saw him hurrying out, followed by shrieks and shouts and laughter.

"They drove me out!" he exclaimed, as he came running up the steps and into the room.

In a little while Ustenka came into the khata, and, with great dignity, explained that all was ready, and asked her guests to honor them with their presence.

When they went into the other apartment, everything was indeed ready, and Ustenka was engaged in arranging cushions along the side of the room. On the table, decked with a disproportionately diminutive napkin, were set a decanter of red wine and a dried fish. The air of the room was redolent of pastry and grapes. Six young maidens in their best array, and without their kerchiefs, contrary to their usual custom, were huddled together in the corner behind the oven, whispering, giggling, and laughing.

"We humbly beg my angel to share our food," said Ustenka, urging her guests to draw up to the table.

Amid the throng of maidens, who, without exception, were pretty, Olyenin quickly observed Matyanka, and it seemed to him painful and vexatious to meet her in such wretched and awkward circumstances. He felt stupid and out of place, but he resolved to do as Byeletsky did. The young prince, with a certain solemnity, but at the same time with perfect ease and self-possession, went to the table, drank a glass of wine to Ustenka's health, and urged the others to follow his example. Ustenka explained that young girls did not drink wine.

"With honey we might," said a voice among the girls.

Byeletsky called in his servant, who had just returned from the shop with honey and sweetmeats. The man looked out of the corner of his eyes, not enviously, nor yet contemptuously, at his superiors, who in his opinion were *dissipating*, carefully handed over the morsel of honeycomb and the cakes wrapped up in gray paper, and began scrupulously to give an account of the cost of his purchases, but Byeletsky drove him out.

After the honey had been mixed with the wine with which the glasses were filled, and the three pounds of cakes had been poured out on the table, Byeletsky pulled the girls out from the corner by

main force, set them down at the table, and began to distribute the good things among them.

Olyenin could not help noticing how Maryańka held two round peppermints and a piece of gingerbread in her little sunburned hand, uncertain what to do with them. The party was constrained and unpleasant, in spite of the liveliness of Byeletsky and Ustenka, and their efforts to amuse the company. Olyenin was ill at ease, cudgelled his brains for something to say, was conscious that he was regarded with curiosity, perhaps with amusement, and that he communicated his constraint to the others. His face flushed, and it seemed to him that Maryanka especially felt the awkwardness of the situation.

“They are probably waiting for us to give them money,” he said to himself. “How can we give it to them? And how can we give it to them as soon as possible and go?”

CHAPTER XXV.

"How is it that you aren't acquainted with your lodger?" asked Byeletsky, turning to Maryanka.

"How can I get acquainted with him when he never comes to see us?" demanded Maryana, giving Olyenin a glance.

Olyenin was somewhat abashed at this, gave a start, and answered at haphazard: "I was afraid of your mother. She scolded me so the first time that I went to see you."

Maryanka burst into a laugh.

"And so you were afraid?" she asked, looking at him and then turning away.

Now, this was the first time that Olyenin had seen the beautiful girl's full face; hitherto it had been wrapped up to the eyes in her kerchief. It was not without reason that she was regarded as the belle of the village. Ustenka was a pretty little maiden, short, plump, rosy, with jolly hazel eyes, a perpetual smile on her ruddy lips, and ever gay and chattering. Maryanka, on

the contrary, could not be called merely *pretty* — she was *handsome*. Her features might have been considered rather too masculine, and almost coarse, had it not been for the harmonious proportions of her form and her powerful chest and shoulders, and chiefly the severe and yet affectionate expression of her wide black eyes, shining out from under the shadow of her dark brows, and the friendly expression of the smile that hovered over her lips. She rarely smiled, but when she did, for that very reason, her smile was always effective. Her whole being was instinct with strength and health.

All the maidens were pretty; but all of them and Byeletsky, and the servant, who came with the sweetmeats, were irresistibly drawn toward Maryana, and, when they addressed the girls, naturally turned to her.

She seemed like a proud and serene tsaritsa among the rest.

Byeletsky, in his endeavors to make the party a success, did not cease to chatter; he urged the maidens to pass round the wine, cracked jokes with them, and constantly made indecorous remarks in French to Olyenin about Maryanka's beauty, calling her "yours" — *la vôtre* — and urging him to follow his example.

But Olyenin found it more and more insupportable.

He was trying to devise some pretext for making his escape and running off, when Byeletsky proclaimed that Ustenka, whose name-day they were celebrating, must carry round the wine *with kisses*. She consented, but on this condition, that money should be put into her plate-tray, as the custom is at weddings.

"The devil himself brought me into this disgusting affair," said Olyenin to himself, and he got up with the intention of leaving.

"Where are you going?"

"I am going to get my tobacco," said he, with the intention of running away, but Byeletsky detained him by the arm.

"I have money," said he in French.

"It's impossible to get away, I must pay," thought Olyenin, and he felt much annoyed at his own lack of tact.

"Is it possible that I can't do as Byeletsky does? I ought not to have come, but, now that I am here, I have no right to spoil their fun. I must drink in the Cossack style," and, seizing a *chapura*, a wooden cup, containing about eight glasses, he filled it with wine and drained it at a draught. The maidens looked on with amazement,

and almost with terror, while he was drinking. This seemed to them strange and unseemly. Us-tenka brought him still more in a glass and kissed both him and Byeletsky.

"Now, girls, we can have a good time," said she, jingling on the plate the four moneta, which had been contributed.

Olyenin no longer felt any sense of constraint. His tongue was unloosed.

"Well, Maryanka, now it's your turn to pass the glass with kisses," said Byeletsky, catching her by the hand.

"I'll kiss you this way," said she, feigning to box his ears.

"You can kiss the *little grandfather* even without any money," suggested another maiden.

"Sensible girl!" cried Byeletsky, and he caught and kissed the struggling maiden.

"Come, but you must pass the wine," insisted Byeletsky, returning to Maryana; "pass it to your lodger!"

And, seizing her by the hand, he led her to the bench and made her sit down beside Olyenin.

"See, what a pretty girl!" said he, turning her head so as to show her profile.

Maryana made no resistance, but she smiled

proudly, and turned her big black eyes on Olyenin.

“A perfect beauty!” repeated Byeletsy.

“See what a beauty I am!” Maryana’s glance seemed also to say.

Olyenin, not realizing what he was doing, threw his arm around Maryana and tried to kiss her, but she suddenly tore herself away, nearly knocked Byeletsy over, pulled the cloth from the table, and darted behind the oven. Screams and laughter arose. Byeletsy whispered something to the girls, and suddenly they all rushed out of the room into the entry, and shut the door behind them.

“Why did you kiss Byeletsy and won’t kiss me?” asked Olyenin.

“Well, I don’t want to, and that’s the end of it,” said she, drawing up her under lip and frowning. “He’s the little grandfather,” she added, smiling. She went to the door and began to pound on it. “What did you lock the door for, you devils?”

“Come, let them be there, and we’ll stay here,” said Olyenin, drawing close to her.

She frowned again, and pushed him severely away from her. And again she seemed to him so magnificently beautiful that it recalled him to his

senses, and he felt ashamed of what he was doing. He went to the door and tried to pull it open.

"Byeletsky, open the door! what made you play such a stupid trick on us?"

Maryana again broke out into her fresh, happy laugh. "Ai! are you afraid of me?" said she.

"Yes, because you are cross, like your mother."

"Well, if you would only sit more with Yeroshka, then the girls would begin to like you better," said she, ironically, and smiled, looking him straight into the eyes.

He knew not what reply to make.

"But suppose I should come to see you?" said he, as though suddenly.

"That would be another thing," she returned, shaking her head.

At this instant Byeletsky gave a push to the door and opened it, and Maryana sprang away from Olyenin, in such a way that her hip struck against his leg.

"It's all rubbish, what I have been thinking; my ideas of love, and self-renunciation, and Lukashka. The one thing is happiness; the man who is happy is justified," flashed through Olyenin's head, and, with a strength that surprised even himself, he took the beautiful Maryanka in his arms and kissed her on her temple and cheek.

The girl was not angry, but only burst into a hearty laugh and ran off to the other girls.

This was the end of the party. Ustenka's mother came home from her work, and the old dame scolded the maidens and sent them home.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"YES," thought Olyenin, as he turned his steps homeward, "all I should need to do would be to give free rein, and I might fall foolishly in love with this Cossack girl."

He went to sleep with this thought, but imagined that this folly would pass and that he should return to his old life. The old life did not return, however. His relations to Maryanka were changed. The partition which had formerly separated them was broken down. Olyenin always exchanged greetings with her now, when they met.

The ensign came to collect his rent, and, having been informed of Olyenin's wealth and generosity, invited him to come in and see them.

The old dame gave him a flattering reception, and, from the day of the party, Olyenin used often to go over to his landlady's, and sit with them till late into the evening. To all outward appearances, he continued to live as of old in the village, but in the depths of his heart everything had undergone a change. He spent his days in the

woods, but at eight o'clock, when it was already dark, he would go over to the other house, alone or with Uncle Yeroshka. The people of the house had now become so accustomed to him that they wondered if he did not make his appearance.

He paid generously for his wine and was a peaceful man. Vanyusha would bring him his tea there, and he would sit in the corner by the oven; the old dame, undisturbed by his presence, went on with her work, and they would converse over their tea or their wine about the deeds of the Cossacks, about their neighbors, or Olyenin would tell them about Russia, or they would ask him questions. Sometimes he would bring his book and read to himself.

Maryana, drawing up her feet under her like a wild goat, would sit cross-legged on the oven or in the corner farthest from the light. She took no part in the conversation, but Olyenin saw her eyes and her face, heard when she moved or when she crunched seeds, and had the consciousness that she was listening with all her being whenever he spoke, and felt her presence even when he was silently reading.

Sometimes it seemed to him that her eyes were fixed upon him, and, when he caught her brilliant glance, he was involuntarily silent and

gazed at her. Then she would instantly turn them away, and he, while pretending to be deeply absorbed in conversation with the old dame, would listen for her breathing, for her every motion, and again wait till she looked at him.

In the presence of others, she treated him, for the most part, with a gay friendliness, but when they were alone she was wild and rude. Sometimes he went there before Maryana had returned from the street ; then suddenly he would hear her firm steps and her blue calico shirt would flash by the open door. As soon as she came into the room she would see him and her eyes would smile with evident tenderness ; then a mixed feeling of terror and joy would take hold of him.

He asked nothing and expected nothing of her, but every day her presence became more and more a necessity of his life.

Thus he grew so wonted to the village life that his past seemed to him like something perfectly foreign and the future, apart from the little world where he lived, had absolutely no existence for him. When he received a letter from home from his relatives or friends, he felt aggrieved because they mourned over him as though he were a ruined man, while he, in his Cossack village, regarded as ruined men all those who did

not lead such a life as he did. He was persuaded that he should never repent of having torn himself away from his former way of living and of having arranged his circumstances so simply and formally in the village. He found it pleasant at the outposts and on expeditions; but only here, under Uncle Yeroshka's wing, in his forest, in his tata at the edge of the village, and especially when he remembered Maryanka and Lukashka, did he realize with perfect clearness the falseness of his former life, which even then had disturbed his mind, and which now seemed to him inexpressibly disgusting and absurd.

He found himself each day more and more free, more and more a man. The Caucasus was entirely different from his dreams. He had found here absolutely nothing resembling his illusions or the descriptions which he had heard and read about the Caucasus.

"Here are no such steeds, no such cataracts as imagined, no Amalat-beks, no heroes, no vagabonds," he said to himself. "Men live as nature lives; they die, they are born, they marry, they are born again, they fight, they drink, they eat, they hold good cheer, and again they die, and there are no conditions except the immutable ones imposed by Nature herself on the sun, the grass,

the animal, the tree. They are subject to no other laws. . . .”

And consequently these people, in comparison with himself, seemed beautiful, strong, and free, and, as he looked at them, he grew ashamed and sorry for himself.

It often seriously came into his thoughts to give up everything, to have himself enrolled among the Cossacks, to buy a cabin and cattle, to marry a Cossack wife — only not Maryana, whom he renounced in favor of Lukashka — and to live with Uncle Yeroshka, to go hunting and fishing with him, and join the Cossacks on their expeditions.

“Why do I not do this?” he asked himself. “What am I waiting for?”

And he tortured himself, he covered himself with ridicule.

“Or is it that I am afraid to do this which I find to be reasonable and right? Is the desire to be a simple Cossack, to live close to nature, to do no harm to any one, but rather to do men good, — is the dream of doing this more stupid than to dream what I dreamt before, of being, for instance, a minister, of being commander of a regiment?”

But some voice seemed to bid him wait and not decide hastily. He was restrained by the con-

fused consciousness that he could not live exactly such a life as Yeroshka's or Lukashka's, because he had another ideal of happiness; he was restrained by the thought that happiness consisted in self-renunciation. His action toward Lukashka did not cease to rejoice him. He constantly sought an opportunity of sacrificing himself for others, but this opportunity did not come. Sometimes he would ~~forget~~ this newly discovered receipt for happiness, and feel himself free to take part in Uncle Yeroshka's life; but then he would suddenly remember it again and immediately cling to the thought of conscious self-denial, and consequently look calmly and proudly on all men and on the happiness of others.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BEFORE the grape-gathering, Lukashka rode in to see Olyenin. He had even more the appearance of a Cossack brave than usual.

"Well, how is it with you, are you to be married?" asked Olyenin, greeting him warmly.

Lukashka did not give a direct reply.

"See! I have swapped off your horse for one across the river; this is a horse. A Kabardinsky Lof-Tavro.¹ I'm a good judge."

They looked at the new horse, and made him go through his paces in the yard. He was indeed a marvellously fine animal, — a bay, stallion, broad and long, with a glossy skin, a flowing tail, and the soft, delicate mane and withers of a thoroughbred. He was so fat that, as Lukashka expressed it, one could go to sleep on his back. His hoofs, his eyes, his teeth, everything about him was admirable, and showed plainly that he was indeed a horse of the purest blood. Olyenin could not help admir-

¹ Tavro, a stock of Kabarda horses. The Lof or Lova is considered among the best in the Caucasus. — *Author's note.*

ing the horse. He had never seen such a beauty in the whole Caucasus.

"And he can go, too," said Lukashka, caressing his neck. "What a gait he has! And so intelligent. He will follow right after his master."

"Did you have to give much to boot?" asked Olyenin.

"Well, I did not ~~count~~ it," replied Lukashka, with a smile. "I got him from my kunak."

"He's a marvel, a beautiful horse! What would you take for him?" asked Olyenin.

"He's worth a hundred and fifty moneta, but you may have him, he's yours!" exclaimed Lukashka, gayly. "Only say the word, you may have him. Take off the saddle and lead him in. Give me some chance to serve you!"

"No, not on any consideration."

"Well, then, here's something that I have brought you as a present — *peshkesh*, as we say," and Lukashka opened his belt and drew out one of the daggers that hung on the strap. "I got it over the river."

"Thank you very much."

"And matushka has promised to bring you some grapes."

"She need not, we can settle up some time.

You see, I am not going to pay you for the dagger."

"How could you? We are chums.¹ Girex-Khan called me across the river to a hut and said: 'Take your choice.' And so I took this Circassian sabre. That's our custom."

They went into the cabin and drank to each other's health.

"Are you going to stay in the village, now?" asked Olyenin.

"No, I have come in to say good-bye. They are going to send me now from the cordon to the sotnya on the other side of the Terek. I am going to start to-day with my comrade Nazarka."

"And when will your wedding come off?"

"I shall be back before long; the matter will be arranged, then I shall go back to the service again," replied Luka, reluctantly.

"And aren't you going to see your bride?"

"What's the use? Why should I see her? Whenever you come on the frontier, ask at the sotnya for Lukashka Broad-back. And there are wild-boars there! I have killed two. I will take you out hunting!"

"Well, good-bye! Good luck to you!"

Lukashka mounted his horse, and, without going

¹ Kunaki, guest-friends.

in to see Maryanka, rode off jigit fashion up the street, where Nazarka was already waiting for him.

“Say! Sha’n’t we go in?” asked the latter, winking in the direction where Yamka lived.

“See here!” exclaimed Lukashka. “Suppose you take my horse over there, and, if I am gone long, give him some hay. By morning I must be at the *khunya* across the *terek*.”

“Say, didn’t the yunker give you anything else?”

“Nay! I had to give him my dagger for thanks; even then he was beginning to ask back the horse,” said Lukashka, dismounting, and handing the bridle to Nazarka.

He slipped into the yard under Olyenin’s very window and crept up to the window of Maryana’s *khata*. It was now perfectly dark. The young girl, in nothing but her shirt, was combing her braid, and getting ready to go to bed.

“It’s I,” whispered the Cossack.

Maryanka’s stern face expressed indifference, but it suddenly lighted up when she heard her name. She raised the sash and put her head out, full of terror and joy.

“What is it? What do you want?” she asked.

“Open the door,” demanded Lukashka. “Let

me in for just a minute. I have been so lonely without you! It was terrible!"

He drew her face to him and kissed her.

"Truly, let me in!"

"What idle talk! I have told you I would not let you in. Are you here for long?"

He answered her only with a kiss. And she made no further inquiries.

"You see, it's mighty awkward to hug any one through a window!" complained Lukashka.

"Maryanushka!" cried the voice of the old dame. "Who's with you?"

Lukashka took off his cap, so as not to be recognized, and crouched down under the window.

"Go quick!" whispered the girl.

"Lukashka was here," replied the girl to her mother's question. "He was asking after father."

"Send him here."

"He's gone; he said he had no time."

In fact, Lukashka, with swift strides, crouching down, hastened under the windows across the courtyard, and was on his way to Yamka's. Olyenin had been the only one who saw him.

After drinking two wooden bowls of red wine, he and Nazarka rode off together toward the post. The night was warm, dark, and calm. They rode in silence; the only sound was the

tramp of their horses' feet. Lukashka began to sing a song about the Cossack Mingal, but, before he had finished the first verse, he stopped and turned to Nazarka.

"You see, she would not let me in," said he.

"Oh!" exclaimed Nazarka. "I knew that she wouldn't. Yamka told me; the yunker has taken to going there. Uncle Yeroshka has bragged that he is going to have a rifle for getting him Maryanka."

"He lies! the devil!" said Lukashka, angrily. "I'll smash his ribs for the old devil!" and he began once more to troll his favorite song.

*From the little village Ismailovo,
From the lady's lovely garden,
Swiftly flew the keen-eyed falcon;
From the garden rode the youthful hunter;
To his hand he called the keen-eyed falcon:
But the keen-eyed falcon answered:
"Thou canst never keep me in thy golden bird-cage,
On thy hand thou canst no longer hold me!
Now I seek the far blue ocean,
I shall kill the white swan for my own amusement.
For the swan's sweet flesh is pleasant to me."*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ensign and Dame Ulitka were celebrating the betrothal. Lukashka had returned to the village, but he did not ~~come~~ to see Olyenin, and Olyenin did not attend the ~~celebration~~, though he was invited. His heart was sad within, more so than it had been since the day of the birthday party. He had seen Lukashka, in his best attire, go with his mother, just before evening, into the ensign's, and he was tormented by the question, Why was Lukashka so cool toward him?

Olyenin shut himself up in his khata and began to write in his diary.

"I have thought over many things and have experienced many changes in these later days," he wrote, "and I find that I have arrived at what is printed in the A B C book. In order to be happy, only one thing is essential—to love, and to love with self-sacrificing love, to love all men and all things, to stretch in all directions the spider-web of love, to attach it to whomever you meet. Thus I have taken Vanyusha, Uncle Yeroshka, Lukashka, Maryanka."

Just as Olyenin was writing this, Uncle Yeroshka came in to see him. Yeroshka was in the most jovial frame of mind. One evening a few days previous, Olyenin had found him with a proud, contented face, in his yard, engaged in skilfully flaying a wild-boar with a small knife. His dogs, and among them his favorite Lyam, were lying near him and wagging their tails as they looked up into his face. Some inquisitive urchins were watching him through the fence and refrained from their usual banter. Several women, his neighbors, as a general thing not over-patient with him, came in to greet him, one bringing him a little jug of red wine, another some cream curds, another flour cakes.

On the following morning Yeroshka was sitting in his shed, all covered with blood, and selling wild pork by the pound for money or for wine. On his face it was written, "God gave me good fortune; I have killed a wild-boar; now the old uncle is of some use!" In consequence of this, of course, he got drunk, and his spree had already lasted three days without his leaving the village. Moreover, he had been drinking at the betrothal party.

Uncle Yeroshka came away from the ensign's khata pretty drunk, with red face, tumbled beard,

but in a new red beshmet embroidered with galloons, and carrying a balalaika, or three-stringed guitar, which he had obtained on the other side of the Terck. He had long before promised Olyenin to give him this pleasure, and now he felt in the mood for it. . . . When he saw that Olyenin was writing, he looked disappointed.

"Write, write, my father," he said, in a whisper, as though suspecting that some spirits were sitting between him and the paper, and so, with the idea of not disturbing it, he crept by on tiptoe, and sat down on the floor noiselessly. This was Uncle Yeroshka's favorite position when he was drunk. Olyenin looked up at him, ordered wine to be furnished him, and went on with his writing. It was dull for the old man to drink all alone. He felt like talking.

"I have been to the betrothal party. But what do I care for the swine? I don't like it! And so I have come in to see you."

"Where did you get your balalaika?" asked Olyenin, still continuing to write.

"I was over the river, my father, and got the instrument there," said he, in a little louder voice. "I'm a master hand at playing it: Tatar, Cossack, gentlemen's, soldiers' songs, — anything you like!"

Olyenin once more glanced at him, smiled,

and proceeded with his writing. This smile encouraged the old man.

“Now, put it up, my father! Put it up!” said he, with sudden resolution. “They have affronted you, — throw them over, spit at them! Now, why are you writing, writing? What is the sense of it?”

And he mimicked Olyenin, scratching on the floor with his clumsy fingers, and screwing up his clumsy phiz into a contemptuous grimace. “Why do you want to write those charms for? Better tittle, then you would be a bravo!”

He had no other conception in his mind of writing than of some harmful jugglery.

Olyenin laughed heartily, and Uncle Yeroshka joined him. He sprang up from the floor and proceeded to exhibit his skill in playing on the balalarka and in singing Tatar songs.

“What makes you write, my good man! Here you’d better listen, for I will sing to you. If you should die, you would not hear such singing. Come, drink with me.”

He began with a song of his own composition, accompanied by a dance: —

*Ah! di-di-di-di-di-li,
When I saw him, where was he?
O'er the counter bending,
Pins and brooches vending.*

Then he sang a song which his former sergeant-major had taught him : —

*I fell in love on Monday,
All Tuesday I did sigh,
On Wednesday told my passion,
On Thursday no reply.
On Friday her decision came : —
Alas, no hope elysian came.
And so on Saturday I sought
To end a life so good for naught,
But soon a saner vision came
And so I laughed on Sunday.*

And again the refrain : —

*Ah ! di-di-di-di-di-li,
When I saw him, where was he ?*

Then, winking, shrugging his shoulders, and shuffling, he sang : —

*I will kiss thee, will enfold thee ;
Ribands in thy hair will twine.
Nadezhenka, I will hold thee,
For thou art my hope divine ;
Dost thou love me, sweetheart mine ?*

• And he became so enlivened that he began to dance about the room as though he were a young bravo again, all the time strumming on his instrument.

The song *di-di-li* and others like it, *gentlemen's* songs, as he called them, he sang only for Olyefin. But afterward, having taken three more glasses of wine, he recalled the days of yore and gave him specimens of genuine Cossack and Tatar songs. In the midst of one that he loved especially, his voice suddenly broke and he came to a stop, continuing to thrum on the strings of his *balalaika*.

"Ah! my dear friend!" he exclaimed.

The strange sound of his voice attracted Olyefin's attention; the old man was weeping. Tears stood in his eyes and one was trickling down his cheeks.

"Oh! days of my youth, you will never return again," he cried, sobbing, and then stopped. "Drink! why don't you drink!" he cried, suddenly, in his tremendous voice, not wiping away the tears.

Especially painful to him was one mountain song. Its words were few,—its whole charm consisted in its melancholy refrain:—

Aï! dai! dalalai!

Yeroslika translated the words of this song as follows:—

"The young man was driving his flock from the aul into the mountains; the Russians came,

they burned the aul, they killed all the men, they took all the women prisoners. The young man came back from the mountains; where the aul had been was a waste; his mother was gone; his brothers were gone; his home was gone; one tree was standing. The young man sat down beneath the tree and wept. 'Alone like thee, alone I am left,' and the young man began to sing his song of grief: " *Aï! dai! dalalai!*"

And this moaning, soul-clutching refrain the old man repeated again and again.

After he had finished singing this song, Yeroshka suddenly seized a musket down from the wall, rushed hastily out into the yard, and fired off both barrels at once into the air. And once more he trolled out the melancholy refrain: *Aï! dai! dalalai*, and relapsed into silence.

Olyenin hastened out after him upon the porch, and silently gazed at the dark, starry sky in the direction in which the old man had fired. At the ensign's, windows were opened, voices were heard. Over the court and around the porch and windows the maidens crowded and ran from the dairy to the entry. A few Cossacks sprang forth from the doorway, and, unable to restrain themselves, gave a wild shout, and answered Uncle Yeroshka's song and shot.

"Why are you not at the betrothal?" asked Olyenin.

"God be with them! God be with them!" replied the old man, who had evidently been in some way affronted. "I like them not, I like them not! Ekh! what people! come into the room. Let them have their own spree, and we'll have ours!"

Olyenin went back into the khata. "Well! and is Lukashka happy? Why didn't he come to see me?" he asked.

"Lukashka! They have been lying to him; they told him that I would get the girl for you," he said, in a whisper. "What about the girl? she will be ours if we want; give a little more money and she's ours! I will get her for you, truly I will."

"No, uncle. Money wouldn't do anything there, if she doesn't love. Better not speak about that!"

"You and I are out of favor there; we are orphans," said Uncle Yeroshka, suddenly, and again he burst into tears.

Olyenin drank more than usual while listening to the old man's tales.

"Well, now, my Lukashka is happy!" he said to himself; but his heart was heavy. The old

man drank so much that evening that he wallowed on the floor, and Vanyusha was obliged to get the aid of some soldiers to drag him out. He was so indignant at the old man's condition that he spat and did not even speak in French as usual.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE month of August had come. For several days in succession there had not been a cloud in the sky ; the sun was insufferable, and from morning till night a hot wind blew, raising clouds of burning sand from the dunes and roads, and whirling it through the air, over rushes, trees, and village.

The grass and foliage were covered with dust ; the roads and marshes were dry and hard, and rang to the step. The water of the Terek had been long falling, and the canals were dry. The edges of the pond near the village, trampled into mire by the cattle, were beginning to grow hard, and the splashing and shouts of the boys and girls in the water were heard all day long.

The rushes filling marshy hollows that extended out toward the steppe were withered, and the lowing herds wandered about the pastures. Wild beasts had retired into wilder reaches of reeds and into the mountain forests beyond the Terek. Swarms of gnats and mosquitoes hovered over the downs and towns. The snowy mountains were

wrapped in gray mist. The air was rare and malodorous.

There was a report that the abreks had ventured across the shoaling river and were wandering about on this side. The sun each evening set in a burning, fiery glow.

It was the time of the harvesting. The whole population of the village swarmed out into the melon fields and vineyards. The gardens had grown up with intertwining tendrils of luxuriant green and were full of delicious, dense shade. Everywhere, under the broad, transparent leaves, hung the heavy clusters of fruit, purple and ripe. Over the dusty roads leading out to the gardens crept the creaking, two-wheeled carts, loaded heavily with fruit. Where the wheels have passed over the dusty roads, here and there are seen great clusters that have fallen off and been left behind.

Boys and girls, with their little shirts stained with grape juice, with grapes in their hands and in their mouths, tag after their mothers. Everywhere along the road one meets ragged workmen, carrying on their strong shoulders baskets full of grapes. *Mámuki*,¹ as the girls are called in sport, with their faces swathed up to the eyes in ker-

¹ Corresponding curiously to the old English term, *mauther*.

chiefs, drive the oxen dragging the heavy-laden carts. Soldiers, meeting them, ask for some grapes, and the maiden would climb upon the cart and toss great handfuls down into the soldier's outstretched skirt.

Already, in some of the yards, the wine-pressing has begun. The air is fragrant with the odor of new wine. Troughs stained red as blood are seen under the sheds, and Nogaï workmen, with their trousers rolled up and their calves all discolored, can be seen about the courtyards. Swine, grunting, fatten themselves on the grape-skins and roll in them. The flat roofs of the dairies are thickly covered with dark, amber-colored bunches drying in the sun. Crows and magpies, filching seeds, collect around the roofs and fly from place to place.

The fruits of the year's labors are gayly gathered, and the harvest this year is unusually abundant and rich.

In the shady, green gardens, amidst this sea of vines, on all sides, laughter and songs and the gay voices of women are heard, and the bright-colored dresses of women give an added animation to the scene.

Just at noon, Maryana was in her garden, in the shade of a peach tree, and removing from the

unhitched arba the dinner for her family. In front of her, on a horse-blanket spread upon the ground, sat the ensign, who had leave of absence from his school, and was washing his hands in water poured from a pitcher. A young lad, her brother, who had just come up from the pond, was drying himself with his sleeves and gazing impatiently at his sister and mother, in expectation of his dinner, and breathing hard.

The old mother, with quick movements of her strong, sunburned hands, was disposing the grapes, the dried fish, the cheese and bread on a small, low, round Tatar table.

The ensign, having wiped his hands, took off his cap, crossed himself, and drew up to the table. The young lad took up the pitcher and drank eagerly. The mother and daughter, crossing their legs, sat down at the table. Even in the shade, it was unendurably hot. The air about the garden was rank and close. A fierce, hot wind, making its way between the branches, brought no comforting on its wings, and monotonously waved the tops of the pear trees, the peach trees, and the mulberries that lined the garden.

The ensign, again muttering a prayer, brought out from behind him a jug of red wine, protected by grape leaves, and, after drinking from the

mouth of it, handed it to his wife. The ensign was in a single shirt, unbuttoned at the neck and exposing his muscular, hairy chest. His keen, thin face was cheerful. Neither in his actions nor in his talk was there a gleam of his ordinary shrewdness. He was happy and natural.

"Well, shall we get through with it by evening?" he asked, wiping his wet beard.

"We shall have got it all in," replied the old dame, "if only the weather holds. The Demkins have only got half their harvest in," she added. "Ustenka is the only one of them that works; she nearly kills herself."

"What else could you expect?" exclaimed the old man, proudly.

"Come, Maryanushka, have a drink!" said Dame Ulitka, passing the jug to her daughter. "Here God has given; we shall have enough to make a fine wedding."

"There'll be time enough for that," said the ensign, with a slight contraction of the brows.

The girl dropped her head.

"Now, why won't you hear to reason?" demanded the old dame. "The business is already finished and the time is almost at hand."

"Don't try to be a fortune-teller," said the ensign. "Now it is harvest time."

"Have you seen Lukashka's new horse?" asked the old dame. "He did not keep the one that Mitri Andreyitch gave him; he has swapped it off."

"No, I have not seen him. But I was talking with our lodger's man to-day," said the ensign. "He says he has received another thousand rubles."

"A Croesus; that's the end of it," said the old dame, sententiously.

The whole family were cheerful and content.

The work was proceeding successfully. The wine harvest was larger and better than their most sanguine expectations.

Maryanka, after eating her own dinner, gave some grass to the oxen, then spread her beshmet out for a pillow, and lay down under the arba, on the soft, succulent grass. All she wore was a single red sorotchka, that is, a silk kerchief on her head, and a blue, faded calico shirt; but it seemed to her intolerably hot. Her face glowed, her limbs were restless, her eyes were heavy with sleep and weariness; her lips parted involuntarily, and her breast heaved with long, deep inspirations.

The harvest time had been in progress for a fortnight, and the hard, continuous labor had

occupied the young girl's whole life. Early in the morning, at the first glow of dawn, she sprang up, washed her face in cool water, muffled herself up in her kerchief, and ran off barefoot after the cattle. Then, after hastily getting on her shoes and her beshmet, she took some bread in her bundle, hitched up the oxen, and went off to the garden for the day's work. There she took only a brief hour for rest; she spent her time in cutting off the clusters of grapes and in lugging the baskets, and then, at eventide, cheerful and unwearied, pulling the oxen by a cord and guiding them by a long branch, she would return to the village.

At dusk, after the cattle were put in, she would fill the wide sleeve of her shirt with seeds and go out to the corner to laugh and chat with the other girls. But, as soon as the twilight had entirely faded from the sky, she always returned to the house, and, after eating supper in the dark dairy, with her father, mother, and little brother, she would go, in careless indolence and full of glowing life, into the khata, sit down on the oven, and, in a half dream, listen to the lodger's stories.

As soon as he had gone, she would throw herself down on her bed and sleep till morning, a calm and dreamless sleep. On the next day the

same story. Lukashka she had not seen since the day of the betrothal feast, and she waited without impatience for the day of the wedding. She had now become quite accustomed to the lodger, and it was with pleasure that she felt his glance resting upon her.

CHAPTER XXX.

IN spite of the fact that it was impossible to get out of reach of the heat, though the gnats swarmed in the pleasant shadow of the arba, and though the young brother, rolling about, kept hitting her, Maryana had protected her face with a handkerchief, and was sound asleep, when suddenly Ustenka, her neighbor, came running up, and, slipping under the cart, lay down by her side.

"Now, sleep, maiden, sleep!" exclaimed Ustenka, crawling under the arba. "Wait," said she, straightening up, "that isn't the way!"

And she jumped up, broke off some green boughs, and twined them into the two wheels of the cart, and then spread her beshmet over it all.

"Get out of there!" she cried to the young brother, as she again crept under the arba. "Cossacks aren't allowed in with the girls, are they? Go along!"

When she was alone under the arba with her friend, she suddenly clasped her in both arms, and, pressing close to her, began to kiss her on her cheeks and neck.

"My darling! my brother!" she exclaimed, breaking out into her dainty, rippling laughter.

"There! you learnt that of the little grandfather," replied Maryanka, trying to escape. "Come, let go of me!"

And they both broke into such a hearty laugh that the old dame had to speak sharply to them.

"Aren't you jealous?" whispered Ustenka.

"What nonsense! Let me have a nap. Now, what made you come?"

But Ustenka was irrepressible. "What do you suppose I have got to tell you?"

Maryana raised herself up on her elbow and straightened her disordered handkerchief. "Well, what is it?"

"I know something about your lodger."

"There is nothing to know," retorted Maryanka.

"Ah! you're a sly girl!" exclaimed Ustenka, nudging her with her elbow and giggling. "You won't tell me anything; but he comes to see you, doesn't he?"

"Well, suppose he does! what of it?" said Maryanka, and suddenly blushed.

"Well, you see, I'm a silly maiden; I am willing to tell every one. Why should I hide it?" demanded Ustenka, and her jolly, rosy face as

sumed a thoughtful expression. "Am I doing any harm to any one? If I love him, that's all there is of it."

"Who? the little grandfather?"

"Well, yes!"

"But it's wrong."

"Ah, Mashenka, when should one have a good time, if not in her girlhood? When I get married, then I shall have to have children, I shall be full of care. Now, here you are going to marry Lukashka, and, then, good-bye joy; that won't come, but children and work will."

"What is that? Others live well, even though they are married. It is all the same," replied Maryana, calmly.

"Come, now! just tell me once! how is it between you and Lukashka?"

"This is all there is of it. He wanted me. Father put it off a year, but it has just been decided to have the wedding this autumn."

"But what did he say to you?"

Maryanka laughed. "Of course, you know what he said! He said he loved me. He kept asking me to go into the garden with him."

"What a goose! and, of course, you didn't go! And yet what a bravo he is now! Our first jig! And how he carries on at the sotnya! Lately our

Kirka came back and told what a horse he had got. And you make him feel very bad. — And what else did he say ? ” pursued Ustenka.

“ Must you know the whole thing, then ? ” asked Maryanka, with a laugh. “ One evening he came riding up to the window ; he was tipsy. He wanted me to let him in.”

“ Well, didn’t you let him in ? ”

“ Why should I ? I gave my word once and I keep it. I am as firm as a rock,” replied Maryanka, seriously.

“ But he’s such a hero ! Wherever he goes, no maiden can refuse him anything.”

“ Let him go to others, then,” returned Maryanka, haughtily.

“ Aren’t you sorry for him ? ”

“ Yes, but I won’t do anything foolish. That is wrong.”

Ustenka suddenly hid her face in her friend’s bosom, clasped her in her arms, and shook all over with suppressed laughter.

“ You’re a stupid fool ! ” she exclaimed, all out of breath. “ You don’t know what happiness is,” and again she began to tickle Maryanka.

“ Ah, stop it ! ” cried Maryanka, screaming through her laughter. “ You have crushed Lazutka.”

"There, you devils! why can't you stop your nonsense? one can't get a nap," the old dame's sleepy voice again was heard near the cart.

"You don't know what happiness is," repeated Ustenka, in a whisper, and half sitting up. "But how lucky you are! God knows! How you are loved! You are pock-marked, but still they all fall in love with you! Ekh! if I were only in your place, how I would twist that lodger of yours round my little finger! I watched him when he was at my house, and saw how he devoured you with his eyes! The little grandfather is my friend, and what won't he give me! But yours, you know, is one of the richest of the Russians! His man has been telling that he has his own serfs!"

Maryana got up and smiled at the thoughts that came to her.

"What do you suppose our lodger said to me one time?" she continued, biting a grass blade. "He said, 'I wish I were the Cossack Lukashka or your brother Lazutka.' Why did he say that?"

"Oh! they are always saying whatever comes into their heads," replied Ustenka. "What doesn't mine get off! Perfectly crazy!"

Maryana laid her head on her beshmet, threw her arm around Ustenka's shoulder, and shut her eyes.

"To-day he wanted to come and work in the garden; father invited him to come," said she, after a little pause, and then she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE sun had now moved from behind the pear tree that shaded the arba, and the slanting rays, penetrating the screen of boughs that had been devised by Ustenka, scorched the faces of the sleeping maidens. Maryana awoke and began to arrange her kerchief. Glancing around, she saw, just beyond the pear tree, the lodger, with his gun over his shoulder, standing and talking with her father. She nudged Ustenka, and, without saying anything, smilingly drew her attention to him.

"I went yesterday, but had no luck at all," said Olyenin, uneasily looking around, but not seeing Maryana under her screen of branches.

"But you should go straight according to the compass to the very edge of the river; there, in the deserted garden which we call 'the waste,' you will always find hares," said the ensign, immediately changing his manner of speech.

"It's lazy business going after hares in working hours!" said the old dame, gayly. "You would much better come and help us. You would have

a nice time with the girls. . . . Come, girls, come out from there ! ” she cried.

Maryana and Ustenka were whispering and finding it hard to keep from laughing under the arba.

Ever since the ensign and his wife knew that Olyenin had given Lukashka a horse worth fifty moneta, they had become very obsequious to him; the ensign especially appeared to look with pleasure at his friendship with Maryana.

“ But I do not know how to work, ” said Olyenin, compelling himself not to look toward the arba, where, through the screen of boughs, he could catch a glimpse of a blue shirt and a red kerchief.

“ Come, and I will give you some peaches, ” said the dame Ulitka.

“ That's according to old Cossack hospitality, — a piece of old woman's stupidity, ” said the ensign, explaining and, as it were, correcting Dame Ulitka's words. “ In Russia, I believe, you don't eat peaches so much as you do pineapple preserves. ”

“ So there is shooting in the deserted garden ? ” inquired Olyenin. “ I will go there, ” and, throwing a fleeting glance toward the screen of boughs, he lifted his papakh, or Cossack cap, and was

soon lost to sight among the straight, green rows of the vineyard.

The sun was already sinking behind the enclosures, and its scattered rays were gleaming through the translucent leaves, when Olyenin returned to his hosts' garden. The wind had died down, and a delicious coolness began to be diffused about, over the vineyards. As by a sort of instinct, Olyenin recognized from afar Maryanka's blue shirt through the rows of vine stocks, and, picking off the grapes as he went, he walked toward her. His panting dog also occasionally snatched with his dripping mouth at some low-hanging cluster. All flushed with the heat, with her sleeves rolled up, and her kerchief dropping under her chin, Maryana was quickly cutting off the heavy clusters and laying them in her basket.

Not letting go of the vine branch which she had in her hand, she paused a moment, smiled affectionately, and resumed her work. Olyenin approached her and slung his gun over his shoulder, so as to free his hands. The words, "Well, where are your people? God help you! Are you alone?" were on his lips, but he said nothing, and merely lifted his cap. He felt awkward to be alone with Maryanka, but, as though to torment himself, he came close to her.

"You will be shooting some of the women with your gun that way," said Maryana.

"No, I won't shoot any one."

Then they both grew silent.

He drew out a little knife and began silently to cut off the clusters. Drawing down from under the leaves a heavy cluster, weighing at least three pounds, in which all the grapes were pressed so closely together that they actually flattened each other for lack of room, he showed it to Maryana.

"Do you cut them all? Isn't this one green?"

"Give it here."

Their hands met. Olyenin clasped her hand, and she looked at him with a smile.

"Well, are you to be married soon?" he asked.

She looked at him with her great, black eyes and turned away without answering.

"And do you love Lukashka?"

"What is that to you?"

"I am jealous."

"The idea!"

"Truly, I am; you are such a beauty!"

And suddenly he felt such a terrible sense of shame at what he had said! His words, he thought, had such a vulgar sound. His blood boiled; he knew not what he did, and seized her by both hands.

"Whatever I am, I am not for you! What are you joking for?" replied Maryanka, but her eyes declared how firmly she was assured that he was not making sport of her.

"Joking! If you only knew how I . . ."

His words sounded to him still more commonplace, still more incommensurate with what he really felt; but he continued:—

"I can't tell you, but I am ready . . . I don't know what I am not willing to do for you . . ."

"Let me go, you rascal!"

But her face, her gleaming eyes, her heaving breast, her shapely limbs all told him exactly the contrary. It seemed to him that she understood how commonplace was all that he said to her, but that she was superior to all such considerations; it seemed to him that she had long known all that he wanted to tell her and had not the courage to tell her, but that she wanted to hear how he would say it. And how should she not know, he thought, when all that he wished to tell her was merely that which she herself was? "But she does not wish to understand, does not wish to answer," he said to himself.

"Au!" suddenly was heard not far away among the vine stocks, and Ustenka's thin voice and her merry laugh rang out. "Come, Mitri Andreyitch,

come and help me! I am all alone!" she called to Olyenin, showing her round, innocent little face among the leaves.

Olyenin made no reply and did not stir from the spot.

Maryana went on with her work, but kept glancing at the lodger. He began to say something, but paused, shrugged his shoulders, and, adjusting his gun, hastened from the vineyard.

CHAPTER XXXII.

He stopped once or twice and listened to Maryana's and Ustenka's ringing laughter as they joined company and went on talking pretty loud.

The whole afternoon Olyenin wandered about the forest after game, but, when he came home at dusk, he had been entirely unsuccessful. As he went into the yard, he observed the dairy door open and a blue shirt moving about inside. He shouted out to Vanyusha rather loud, so as to let the family know that he had returned, and then sat down in his usual place on the porch. The family were already back from the garden; they came out of the dairy, went into their khata, but did not invite him to join them. Maryana twice went down to the gate. Once, though it was twilight, he thought that she was looking at him. He followed eagerly all of her motions, but could not make up his mind to go to her. When she went into the house, he stepped down from the porch and began to walk back and forth through the yard. But Maryana did not come out again. Olyenin spent the whole night in the yard, with-

out sleep, listening to every sound in the ensign's khata.

He heard them talking through the evening, eating their supper, bringing out the feather beds and preparing to retire; he heard Maryanka laughing at something; then he heard how gradually all relapsed into silence. The ensign was talking in a whisper with his wife, and there was the sound of some one breathing. He went into his own room; Vanyusha was asleep in his clothes. Olyenin envied him, and was again impelled to go out into the yard, all the time expecting some one, but no one appeared, no one moved; the only sound that he heard was the measured breathing of three people. He recognized Maryana's breathing, and he kept listening to it and to the beating of his own heart.

In the village all was still; the belated moon was rising, and the panting cattle, lying down or slowly struggling to their feet in the yards, became more discernible.

Olyenin asked himself, angrily, "What do I want?" and he could not tear himself away from his watching.

Suddenly he clearly distinguished steps and the creaking of the deal floor in the ensign's khata. He hastened to the door; but again nothing was

to be heard but measured breathing ; and then the cow buffalo, after a heavy sigh, got up on her knees, then on all four feet, switched her tail, and then followed the sound of something regularly dropping on the dry clay of the yard, and then the animal, with a sigh, lay down again in the misty moonlight. . . .

He asked himself, "What am I going to do?" determined resolutely to go to bed ; but again the same sounds were heard, and he imagined that he saw Maryanka's figure coming out into this translucent moonlight night, and again he went to the door, and again he heard steps. Just before dawn he went to the window and tapped on the pane. Then he ran to the door, and now he heard Maryanka's steps approaching. He took hold of the latch and shook it. Cautious bare feet, scarcely making the boards creak, approached the door. The latch was lifted, the door grated, there was a breath of sweet marjoram and melons, and then Maryanka's whole figure appeared on the threshold.

She clapped the door to, and, muttering something, ran back with light steps. Olyenin began to tap lightly, but there was no answer. He ran to the window again and listened.

Suddenly the sharp, shrill voice of a man brought him to his senses.

"Excellent!" cried a short, little Cossack, in a white lambskin cap, coming up close to Olyenin across the yard. "I saw it all; excellent!"

Olyenin recognized Nazarka and made no reply, not knowing what to do or say.

"Excellent! Now, I shall go to the village elder; I shall describe the whole thing; and I'll tell her father too. Fine girl, the ensign's daughter! One isn't enough for her."

"What do you want of me? what do you require?" asked Olyenin.

"Nothing, only I'm going to tell the village elder."

Nazarka spoke very loud, evidently on purpose.

"Here we have a crafty *yunkir*!"

Olyenin trembled and turned pale.

"Come here, come here!"

He seized him forcibly by the arm and pulled him into his khata.

"There was nothing at all; she would not let me in, and I got no. . . . She's honest. . . ."

"How can I tell?" said Nazarka.

"But I will give you something, all the same. . . . Here, just wait a minute! . . ."

Nazarka made no reply. Olyenin went in and handed the Cossack ten rubles.

"There was nothing at all; but, all the same, I

was to blame; here, I give you this. Only, for God's sake, don't tell any one. For there was nothing at all. . . ."

“Good-bye,” said Nazarka, with a laugh, and was gone.

Nazarka had come that evening to the village, at Lukashka's request, to bespeak a place for a horse that he had stolen, and, as he was passing through the village, he had heard the sound of steps. He returned the next morning to the sotnya, and told as a good joke how shrewdly he had got ten moneta.

Olyenin that morning saw the family, and they knew nothing of what had happened. He did not exchange any words with Maryana, and she merely looked at him and smiled. He spent another sleepless night, vainly wandering about the courtyard. The following day he went out hunting, and, when evening came, he called on Byeletsky, so as to escape from himself. He was alarmed about himself, and vowed not to visit the ensign's family any more.

○ The next night, Olyenin was aroused by an orderly, who brought word that his company were to start immediately on an expedition. He was overjoyed at this deliverance, and felt a presentiment that he should never return to the village.

The foray into the mountains lasted three days. The commander-in-chief desired to see Olyenin, who was a relative of his, and proposed to him to take a position on his staff. Olyenin refused. He could not live away from his village, and he asked leave to go back.

For the part which he had taken in the foray, he was presented with a military cross. But, though he had been so desirous of it before, now he felt absolutely indifferent, and still more so in regard to his promotion, which had not as yet come. Though there was no occasion for it, he took Vanyusha and rode down to the line, reaching the village some hours before the company. All the evening long he sat on his porch, gazing at Maryana, and again he spent the whole night wandering up and down the yard aimlessly and without a thought.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE next morning Olyenin awoke late. The family were off at their work. He did not go hunting, but now buried himself in his book, now went out on the porch; then he went into the house again and flung himself upon his bed. Vanyusha thought that he was ill. Before evening he sprang up with sudden resolution, sat down to write, and wrote till late into the night. He wrote a letter, but did not send it, because he felt that no one would comprehend what he meant, and there was no reason why any one beside himself should have understood.

This was what he wrote :—

“I have received letters of condolence from Russia; they are alarmed lest I am going to ruin by burying myself in this wilderness. They say of me, ‘He will grow rough, give up all his interests, take to drinking, and, worse than all, will marry a Cossack girl.’ They say Yermolof was quite right in declaring that, ‘any one who lives ten years in the Caucasus will either drink himself to death or marry a harlot.’

“How terrible! Indeed, I should not go to ruin, but great happiness would be mine, if I became the husband of the Countess B——, chamberlain or marshal of the nobility! How low and despicable you seem to me! You know not what happiness is, what life is! You ought once to experience life in all its artless beauty! You ought to see and to realize what I have each day before my eyes: the eternal, inaccessible snow of the mountains, and a majestic woman, endowed with the primitive beauty in which the first woman must have come from the hand of the Creator, and then you could answer the question, ‘Who is going to destruction? who is living truly or falsely — you or I?’

“If you only knew how mean and detestable you are in your self-delusions! The moment that, instead of my cottage, my forest, and my love, there come up before my imagination your parlors, your ladies with pomaded locks mixed in with false hair, all those unnaturally moving lips, those weak limbs hidden and useless, and that fashionable lisp, which pretends to be conversation and has no right to the name, — then it becomes insufferably painful to me. I am pained at the thought of those vacuous faces, those rich, marriageable girls, whose faces seem to say, ‘No

matter ; come, if you wish, though I am a rich maiden ; that sitting down and changing of places, and that insolent, brazen-faced pairing-off of men and women, and that eternal tittle-tattle, hypocrisy ; those rules and regulations — with whom you must shake hands, to whom you must bow, with whom chat, and, finally, that everlasting ennui, bred in the bone, that descends from generation to generation, and consciously too, with the conviction that it is inevitable.

“Accept one thing or believe in one thing. You must see and comprehend what truth and beauty are, and then all that you say and think will crumble into dust, and with it all your wishes of happiness for me and yourselves. Happiness is to be with nature, to see her, to hold converse with her.

“‘God preserve us! he is going to marry a mere Cossack girl and spoil all his prospects in life.’ I imagine they say this about me, and with genuine pity. But I desire only one thing, absolute ruin, as you mean it ; I desire to marry this mere Cossack maiden, and I hesitate to do this, because it would be a loftier happiness than I deserve.

“It is three months since I first saw the Cossack maiden Maryana. The ideas and prejudices

of that society from which I had come were still fresh in me. At that time I felt that it would be impossible for me to fall in love with that woman. I loved her just as I loved the beauty of the mountains and of the sky, and I could not help loving her, because she was beautiful, just as they were. Afterward, I became conscious that the contemplation of such beauty was becoming a necessity of my existence, and I began to ask myself, 'Am I not in love with her?' But I found in me nothing like such a feeling as I imagined that love must be. It was a feeling quite distinct from the pang of loneliness and the desire for wedlock, or from platonic affection, and, still more, from the carnal affection which I had experienced.

"I felt the necessity upon me to see her, to hear her, to feel that she was near me, and I was not happy, but content.

"After the birthday party, when I spent the evening with her and touched her, I felt the consciousness that between me and this woman existed an indissoluble though invisible bond, against which it was impossible to struggle.

"But still I struggled; I said to myself, 'Is it possible for me to love this woman, who could never appreciate the intellectual interests of my

life? Would it be possible to love a woman for her beauty alone, to love a statue?' This was what I asked myself, but I was already loving her, although I did not believe in my own feeling.

"After the evening of the party, at which I spoke to her for the first time, our relations were changed. Hitherto, she had been, for me, a strange but majestic object of external nature; after the party, she became a human being. I began to meet her, to talk with her, to see her working in the vineyard, to spend whole evenings at their house. And, on coming into these close relations with her, she still remained in my eyes, as ever, pure, unapproachable, majestic. She always and everywhere replied simply, calmly, proudly, and with gay indifference. Sometimes she was affectionate, but generally every glance, every word, every motion of hers were expressive of that — not contemptuous — but crushing and bewitching indifference.

"Every day, with a simulated smile on my lips, I strove to hide my real feelings, and, with the torment of passion and desire in my heart, I exchanged trifling remarks with her. She saw that I was dissembling, but her eyes looked simply, directly, and gayly into mine. This state of things began to grow unendurable. I desired to

be honest before her ; I desired to tell her all that I thought and felt. I was unusually stirred ; it was in the vineyard. I began to tell her about my love, in words which it makes me ashamed to recall — ashamed, because I ought not to have dared to speak of this with her, because she stood immeasurably above such words and the sentiment which I wished to express by means of them. I came to a halt, and, from that day, my position became insufferable. I did not wish to degrade myself by still keeping up my former trivial relations, and I was not qualified for simple and straightforward relations.

“I asked myself, in despair, ‘What am I to do?’ In foolish dreams, I imagined this woman now as my mistress, now as my wife, and I was seized with aversion at the idea of either. To make her my mistress would have been disgusting ; it would have been suicide. To make her my *báruinya*, a lady, the wife of Dmitri Andreyevitch Olyenin, as one of our officers here did, who married a Cossack girl, would have been still worse.

“Now, if I could only become a Cossack, like Lukashka, steal horses, get tipsy on red wine, shout ribald songs, shoot men down, and then, while drunk, creep in through the window where she

was, without a thought of what I was doing or why I did it, that would be another thing, then we should understand one another, then I might be happy. I proposed to give myself up to this sort of life and then I became still more conscious of my weakness, my inefficiency. I could not forget myself and my complicated, abnormal past. And my future appeared still more hopeless. Each day before me the far-off, snowy mountains and this majestic, light-hearted woman. And the only happiness in the world out of my reach, this woman, unattainable for me! Most terrible and sweetest to me was the thought that I could understand her and that she could never understand me. She fails to understand me, not because she is beneath me, not at all; it would be out of the nature of things for her to understand me. She is light-hearted; she is like nature, is calm, tranquil, and sufficient unto herself. But I, an incomplete, feeble creature, wish her to understand my ugliness and my anguish.

“I could not sleep nights and I wandered aimlessly under her windows, and yet I was not able to explain to myself what I was after.

“On the eighteenth our company went on a foray into the mountains. For three days I was away from the village. My heart was heavy, and

all things were the same to me. Songs, cards, carousals, chatter about promotions, which occupied the men on the frontier, were more than ever offensive to me. To-day I came back. I have seen her, have seen my khata, Uncle Yeroshka, the snowy mountains from my porch, and such a strong, novel sense of joy came over me because I knew it all! I love this woman with genuine love, I love for the first and only time in my life. I know what is in my heart. I have no fear of degrading myself by this feeling; I am not ashamed of my love; I am proud of it. . . .

"I am not to blame that I am in love. It was done against my will. I tried to escape from it by giving up to self-renunciation; I imagined that I was glad in the Cossack Lukashka's love for Maryanka, and I merely exasperated my love and my jealousy. This is not an ideal, a so-called *exalted* love, such as I have experienced before; neither is it the feeling of attraction, by which you are drawn toward your love, by which you find in your own heart the fountain of your affection, and have everything under your own control. I have experienced this also. It is still less a desire for bliss; it is something quite different.

"Perhaps in her I love nature, the personification of all that is beautiful in nature; but I have

lost my power of will and I am become the instrument by which she is loved by the elemental power, by the universe of God; all nature imprints this love into my soul, and says, 'Love!' I love her not with my intellect, not with my imagination, but with my whole being. In loving her, I feel that I am an inseparable part of all God's happy world.

"I wrote you before about my new convictions, which were the offspring of my lonely life; but no one can know how laboriously they were worked out by me, with what joy I fell under their sway, and recognized the new path of life opening out before me. Nothing could have been dearer to me than these convictions. . . . Well, . . . love came and where are they? Not even regrets for them remain. It is hard for me even to comprehend that I was able to prize such a one-sided, chilling, intellectual state of mind. Beauty came, and all the edifice which I had laboriously raised crumbled into dust. And I have no regrets at my disillusionment. Self-renunciation is all rubbish, fiddle-faddle. It is all pride, the refuge from deserved unhappiness, a salvation from jealousy at another's happiness. To live for others, to do good! Why? When my soul is filled with love for myself and one desire—to

love her and to live with her, to live her life. Not for others, not for Lukashka, do I now desire happiness. I do not now love these others. Before this I should have said that this was wrong. I should have tormented myself with questions: what will become of her, of me, of Lukashka? Now, it is of no consequence to me. I live not by my own self, but there is a stronger than I which directs me. I am tormented, but, whereas before I was dead, now I am alive. To-day I am going to her, and shall tell her all."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AFTER writing this letter, Olyenin, though it was late in the evening, went over to the ensign's khata. The old dame was sitting on a bench, behind the oven, spinning cocoons. Maryana, with uncovered head, was sewing by candle light. When she saw Olyenin, she jumped up, took her kerchief, and went to the oven.

"Come, stay with us, Maryanushka," said Dame Ulitka.

"Nay, I'm bare-headed."

And she climbed upon the oven.

Olyenin could not keep his eyes from her knee and her beautifully rounded leg hanging down. He treated Dame Ulitka to tea. She, in return, offered her guest cream cheese, sending Maryana to get it. But, after setting the plate on the table, she again climbed upon the oven, and Olyenin felt only her eyes. They chatted about farm management. Dame Ulitka came and went in the enthusiasm of a housekeeper. She brought Olyenin grape jelly, grape cakes, her best wine, and insisted on treating him with that rude and

proud hospitality peculiar to plebeians who earn their bread in the sweat of their brow.⁹ The old dame, who had at first so mortified Olyenin by her rudeness, now often touched him by her simple affectionate treatment of her daughter.

“Why fly in the face of Providence, *bátyushka*! We have everything, thank God! we’ve been pressing wine and storing it away, and we shall sell three barrels and still have enough to drink. Don’t go yet. We will drink some more together in honor of the coming wedding.”

“But when is the wedding?” asked Olyenin, feeling all his blood rush to his face and his heart beat irregularly and painfully.

There was heard a rustling behind the oven, and the cracking of seeds.

“Well, why should we put it off any longer? We are ready,” replied the old dame, simply and as calmly as though there were no such person as Olyenin in the world. “I have got everything all ready for *Marjanushka* — a whole store of things. We shall give her a good send-off. There’s only one little thing that’s not quite right. Our *Lekashka* has been very wild of late; he’s on a spree all the time. He is full of his pranks. The other day a Cossack came in from the *sotnya* and said that he had gone off to the *Nogai*.”

“He'd better look out !” said Olyenin.

“Well, I say to him, ‘Lukashka, don't run such risks ; you're a young man ; of course, you want to show off ; but you have time enough for everything. You've fought, and you've stolen horses, and you've killed an abrek ; you're a bravo ! But now you might live quietly.’ — But now he's acting abominably.”

“Yes, I saw him twice on the frontier ; he was tipsy all the time. He had just swapped another horse,” said Olyenin, looking toward the stove.

Two great, black eyes flashed a stern and unfriendly glance at him. He began to feel ashamed at what he had said.

“Well, he's never done any one any harm,” said Maryana, suddenly. “He spends his own money, any way,” and she leaped down from the oven and went out, slamming the door behind her.

Olyenin followed her motions with his eyes, and, after she had gone out, he gazed at the door and waited, not heeding what Dame Ulitka said to him. After a little while, some guests came in : an old man, Dame Ulitka's brother, and Uncle Yeroshka, and, behind them, Maryana and Ustenka.

“How do you do to-day ?” whined Ustenka.
“You're always having a good time.”

"Yes, I am having a good time," he replied, and, for some unaccountable reason, felt awkward and ashamed. He wanted to go and could not. It also seemed to him impossible for him to sit there and say nothing. The old man came to his aid by asking Olyenin to drink with him, and they did so. Then Olyenin drank with Uncle Yeroshka. Then again with the other Cossack. Then again with Yeroshka. And the more he drank the heavier became his heart. But the old men became lively. The two girls climbed on the oven and talked together in a whisper, looking at them while they drank.

Olyenin had nothing to say, but he drank more than all the rest. The two old Cossacks began to scream at each other. Dame Ulitka drove them out and refused to let them have any more red wine. The girls laughed at Uncle Yeroshka, and it was already ten o'clock when they all went out upon the porch. The old Cossacks invited themselves to go and make a night of it at Olyenin's. Ustenka went home. Yeroshka and Dame Ulitka's brother went to find Vanyusha, and the old dame herself disappeared in the dairy, to put things in order for the night.

Maryana was left alone in the khata. Ol-

yenin noticed it. He felt as fresh and sound as though he had just woke up. Escaping from the old men, he went back to the khata. Maryana had lain down to sleep. He went up to her and tried to say something, but his voice failed him. She sat down on the bed, drew up her feet under her, getting as far away from him as possible, and silently looked at him with a wild, frightened look. She was evidently afraid of him. Olyenin was conscious of it. He felt disgusted and ashamed of himself, and, at the same time, had a certain proud satisfaction at the thought that he had inspired even this feeling in her.

"Maryana," said he, "will you never have pity upon me? You don't know how I love you!"

She moved still farther away.

"It is the wine that is speaking and not you. You do not mean what you say."

"It is not the wine. Give up Lukashka. I will marry you." — "What is that I am saying?" he asked himself, at the same time that he said those words. "Should I say the same thing to-morrow?" — "Yes, now and forever!" some inner voice seemed to answer.

"Will you be mine?"

She looked at him earnestly, and her fear seemed to leave her.

"Maryana, I am beside myself! I am not my own master! Whatever you bid me do I will obey," and a stream of incoherent, tender words of love came of their own free will.

"Now, what nonsense!" she exclaimed, interrupting him and suddenly seizing the hand which he extended toward her. But she did not push away his hand; on the contrary, she pressed it firmly between her strong, hard fingers.

"Do gentlemen marry Cossack girls? Go away!"

"But will you be mine? I always . . ."

"But what shall we do with Lukashka?" said she, with a smile.

He snatched away the hand, which she was still holding, and firmly clasped her young body. But she sprang out of his arms like a deer, leaped down, and ran, in her bare feet, out on the porch. Then Olyenin came to his senses and was horrified at himself. Again it seemed to him that he was inexpressibly base compared to her. But, not for a moment regretting what he had said, he went home, and, without vouchsafing a glance at the old Cossacks carousing on his wine, he threw himself down on his couch and slept more soundly than he had for many nights.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE next day was a saint's day. In the afternoon all the population were in the street, their holiday attire making a braye show in the bright rays of the setting sun.

The wine harvest had been more generous than usual. The people were through with their labors. In a month the Cossacks would be on the march, and meantime many families were getting ready to celebrate weddings. On the village square, before the town house, the greater part of the people were collected near the two shops, the one devoted to candies and melon seeds, the other to calicoes and wearing apparel. On the terrace surrounding the town house sat and stood the old men, in sober gray and black zipuns without braid or decoration. Calmly, with measured voices, they chatted together about the crops and about "the boys," about communal matters and about the good old times, and gazed majestically and with cool indifference upon the rising generation.

The women and maidens, as they passed in

front of them, paused and bent their heads. The young Cossacks reverently slackened their steps, and, taking off their papakhi, or lambskin caps, lifted them up high above their heads. The old men stopped talking and looked, some sternly, some affectionately, at the young men, as they passed by, lifting their tall caps and putting them on again.

The Cossack maidens had not as yet begun to dance the khorovod, or popular choral dance, but, collecting in groups, dressed in variegated beshmets and with white kerchiefs wrapping their faces up to their eyes, they sat on the grass and the terraces of the cottages, out of the slanting rays of the sun, and laughed and chatted with merry voices.

Little boys and girls were playing lapta, or tennis, flinging the ball high into the cloudless sky and running about the square with shouts and cries. Girls in their teens were at one end of the square, practising the khorovod and piping up the song with their timid, shrill voices. The Cossack clerks and young lads, come home from the government school on leave of absence for the festival, dressed in clean linen and in new red cherkeskas embroidered with braid, wandered about, with festive faces, in groups of twos and threes,

hand in hand, from one group of women and girls to another, and, pausing, exchanged remarks and jests with them.

The Armenian shopkeeper, in a blue *cherkeska* of fine cloth edged with braid, was standing at the open door of his shop, where rows of brightly-colored kerchiefs were spread out in tempting array, and awaited purchasers, with the proud bearing of an oriental merchant and the consciousness of his own importance.

Two red-bearded, bare-footed Chechens, who had come from the other side of the Terek to witness the festival, squatted in the door of their acquaintance's house, and, as they carelessly smoked their short pipes and spat, exchanged observations in guttural tones.

Here and there a soldier, in ordinary dress, in his old cloak, would saunter amid the gay-colored groups across the square. Now and then already began to be heard the drunken songs of carousing Cossacks. All the cottages were shut up; the porches had been cleanly washed the evening before. Even the old women were out-of-doors. Everywhere on the dry, dusty streets were scattered the shells of melon and pumpkin seeds. The air was mild and calm; the cloudless sky, blue and transparent. The dull, white crests of

the mountains, rising above the roofs, seemed close at hand and were growing rosy in the rays of the setting sun. Occasionally, in the direction of the river, echoed the distant report of a cannon shot. But in the village were heard commingling only the varied sounds of a merry festival.

Olyenin had been all the morning out in the yard, hoping to see Maryana. But she had dressed and gone to the chapel to mass; then, after she had spent some time on the terrace with the other girls, cracking seeds, she had come home with some of her companions, and had given the lodger a gay and affectionate glance. Olyenin was afraid to speak jestingly with her, especially before the others. He wanted to talk with her about what had taken place the evening before, and to have a final answer from her. He waited for another such moment as he had experienced the evening before; but the moment did not come, and he felt that to remain in such a state of uncertainty was more than he could bear. She again went out into the street, and, after a little time, he followed her, not knowing where he was going. He passed the corner where she was standing, all radiant in her blue satin beshmet, and his heart was filled with a sweet pain when he heard her girlish laughter.

Byeletsky's khata was on the square. As Olyenin walked by it, he heard the young prince's voice calling him to come in, and he did so. While talking they both sat down in the window. They were soon joined by Uncle Yeroshka, in a new beshmet; he took his seat near them, on the floor.

"There is the aristocratic crowd," exclaimed Byeletsky, pointing with his cigarette to a gay-colored group on the corner, with a smile. "And there is my girl! do you see her? in red. It's a new dress. — Say, are you going to begin the dances?" shouted the young man, from the window. "Just wait till it grows dark and we will join them. Then we will take them round to Ustenka's; we must give them a ball."

"And I will go to Ustenka's too," said Olyenin, decisively. "Will Maryana be there?"

"Certainly! come, by all means," said Byeletsky, not in the least surprised. "And isn't that picturesque?" he added, pointing to the gayly dressed girls.

"Yes, very," assented Olyenin, trying to appear calm. "On such festivals," he added, "I always wonder why it is that in consequence of its being such a day of the month, say the fifteenth, as to-day, all the people become suddenly so gay and

content? Everything shows that it is a festival: eyes and faces and voices and motions and dresses, and the air and the sun."

"Yes!" said Byeletsky, who was not fond of such abstruse questions. — "But why don't you drink, old man?" said he, turning to Uncle Yeroshka.

Yeroshka winked to Olyenin, and said, referring to Byeletsky: —

"Truly, this kunak of yours is a fine fellow."

Byeletsky lifted his glass. "*Allah birdui!*"¹ said he, as he drained his glass.

"*Sau bul!*" ("To your health") exclaimed Uncle Yeroshka, with a smile, and draining his glass.

"You call this a festival," said he to Olyenin, standing up and glancing out of the window. "What sort of a festival is this! You should have seen how they celebrated them in old times. The women used to come out dressed in sarafans, all embroidered with galloon, and with a double row of gold coins around their breasts, and golden headdresses² on their heads. When they went

¹ *Allah birdui* means God has given, and is the ordinary greeting employed by the Cossacks when they drink together. — Author's note in text.

² The national headdress, called *kokoshnik*.

along, 'fr, fr!' what a rustle they made! Each woman was like a princess! They used to go along in whole swarms, singing songs till your heart would ache. They would carouse all night long. And the Cossacks would roll out whole barrels of wine in their yards, and they would sit down and keep it up till morning. And then, making a string, they would go along the street, hand in hand, to the very end of the village. Everybody they met they would make come along too. Yes, and they would go from one to another. Sometimes they would carouse three days running. My father used to come in, I remember, all red and puffed up, without his cap, all unstrung; he would come home, and how he would scold! Mother used to know how to manage him; she would give him cold caviare and red wine to sober off on, and then go out herself through the village in search of his cap. The idea of drinking two days and nights steady! What men they were then! But look at them now!"

"Well, how did the girls look in their sarafans? Did they carouse alone by themselves?" asked Byeletsy.

"Indeed, they did! The Cossacks would come in or dash up on their horses and try to break up

their dances, but the girls even would take their clubs. On Shrovetide once, some young bravo tried to break them up, but they fought; they beat his horse and they beat him. Then, the fellows would break down the fences, seize the girl they loved, and away with her! How they used to love them! Oh, what girls they were! Perfect queens!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

JUST at this time, two riders came into the square from a side street. One of them was Nazarka, the other Lukařhka. Lukashka sat somewhat sidewise on his fat bay Kabarda, which came lightly prancing along the hard street, and tossing its handsome head, with its shiny, silken forelock. The gun in its case, cleverly balanced on his back, and the pistol behind him, and the felt burka rolled up and fastened behind the saddle, made it evident that Lukashka had ridden down from some distant, warlike place. The showy manner in which he sat sidewise upon his horse, the careless motion of his hand as he almost audibly tapped his horse's belly with his whip, and, above all, his flashing, black eyes, glancing haughtily around, all gave evidence of conscious strength and the self-confidence of youth.

"Do you see what a bravo I am!" his eyes seemed to demand, as they glanced from side to side. The stately steed, with its silver-mounted trappings and weapons, and the hand-

some Cossack himself attracted the attention of all the populace gathered on the square. Nazarka, lank and short, was not dressed nearly as well as his friend. As they rode by the old men, Lukashka reined in his horse and lifted high above his smoothly shaven, black head his papakh, trimmed with curly, white lamb's-wool.

"Well, have you driven off many Nogai horses?" asked a withered little old man, with a dark, scowling face.

"Well, can't you count, grandsire, that you have to ask?" replied Lukashka, avoiding his question.

"It's no use taking that fellow along with you," muttered the little old man, with a still blacker scowl.

"Uncle Burlak seems to know all about it," muttered Lukashka, and his face assumed a troubled expression; but, glancing toward a group of Cossack girls, he spurred his horse toward them.

"Good evening girls," he cried, in his strong, exuberant voice, suddenly reining in his horse. "Without me, you were growing old, you hags you!" and he laughed at his own pleasantry.

"Hullo, Lukashka! how are you, my dear boy?" exclaimed many merry voices. "Have you plenty of money? . . . Will you get us girls

some candy? . . . Have you come for long? . . . It's an age since we have seen you!"

"Nazarka and I have come in on a flying visit, just for a spree," replied Lukashka, cracking his whip over the horse and riding him straight at the girls.

"And here's Maryanka forgotten you entirely," squealed Ustenka, nudging Maryana with her elbow, and bursting into a shrill laugh.

Maryana stepped out of the way of the horse, and, throwing her head back, looked straight at the Cossack with her big, flashing eyes.

"But it has been so long since you were here! Why are you trying to trample us with your horse?" she asked, dryly, and turned away.

Lukashka seemed perfectly gay. His face glowed with daring and pleasure. Maryana's cool answer evidently piqued him. He suddenly frowned.

"Climb up by the stirrup, and I will carry you off to the mountains, mámočka!" he suddenly cried, as though putting evil thoughts to flight; and he rode like a jigit among the girls. He bent down to Maryana. "I will have my kiss, I will have my kiss yet, so there!" Maryana's eyes met his, and she suddenly blushed. She slipped out of his way.

"Now, be careful! You will step on my feet!" she exclaimed, and, bending over, she glanced down at her neatly fitting, blue stockings with clocks, and her new red chuviaki, embroidered with narrow silver braid.

Lukashka turned to Ustenka, and Maryana sat down next a young Cossack woman, who held a baby in her arms. The child was attracted to the girl, and its chubby hands clutched after the string of the necklace which hung down over her blue beshmet. Maryana bent down to it and looked at Lukashka out of the corner of her eyes. At this moment, he was pulling from under his cherkeska, out of the pocket of his black beshmet, a package of sweetmeats and seeds.

"It's for all of you," he said, handing the package to Ustenka and glancing at Maryanka with a smile.

Again a look of perplexity came over the girl's face. Something like a cloud came into her eyes. She dropped her kerchief below her lips, and suddenly, putting her lips against the pale face of the child, which was still clutching her necklace, she began to kiss it passionately. The baby, pushing against the young girl's bosom, began to cry, opening its mouth and showing its toothless gums.

"Are you trying to choke the baby?" asked the mother, taking him to herself, and opening her beshmet to give the child the breast. "You'd better make up with the lad."

"I'll just go and put up the horse, and Nazarka and I will carouse the livelong night!" exclaimed Lukashka, hitting the animal with his whip and galloping away from the girls.

Returning to the side street, he and Nazarka went to two cottages that stood side by side.

"They have had supper, brother! Come back as soon as you can!" cried Lukashka to his friend, dismounting at his dooryard and warily leading the horse into the plaited gates of his own yard.

"Hullo, Stepka!" he said to the dumb girl, who, also dressed in festal array, came out to lead away the horse. And by signs he made her understand that she should put him in the shed, but not unsaddle him.

The dumb girl made a strange noise, clucked with her tongue, and kissed the horse on the nose. That signified that she liked the horse and thought him a fine one.

"How are you, mother? What! have you not gone out yet?" cried Lukashka, taking off his gun and mounting the steps.

His old mother opened the door for him.

"You see, I didn't expect you; I didn't have an idea of such a thing," said she, "for Kirka said you wouldn't come."

"Bring a little wine! come, mother. Nazarka will be here; we want to celebrate the festival!"

"Right away, Lukashka, right away!" said the old dame. "You see, the women have all gone out to celebrate. The dumb girl and I were just going to start."

And, taking the keys, she hurried out to the dairy.

Nazarka put up his horse, took off his gun, and went over to Lukashka's.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"To your health!" said Lukashka, taking from his mother's hand a brimming cup of red wine, and cautiously lifting it to his lips.

"There's something up," exclaimed Nazarka. "That old clown said, 'Have you stolen many horses?' He must know a thing or two."

"The wizard!" said Lukashka, curtly. "What of it?" he added, shaking his head, "They are across the river by this time. Be on the watch."

"It's all wrong."

"What's all wrong? Take some red wine to him to-morrow. That's the way to do; and nothing will come of it. Now, let us have a lark! Drink!" cried Lukashka, in just such a burly voice as Uncle Yeroshka would have uttered that word. "Come, let us go out in the street and have a good time with the girls. You go and get some honey, or I'll send the dumb girl. We'll spree it till morning."

Nazarka smiled.

"Shall we be here as long as that?" he asked.

"Only let us get at it! Skip round and get some vodka! Hold on, here's some money!"

Nazarka went obediently to Yamka's.

Uncle Yeroshka and Yergushof, like great birds of prey, scenting out where any drinking was going on, came, one after the other, to the cottage. Both were drunk.

"Give us another half-gallon," cried Luka to his mother, in answer to their greeting.

"Now, tell us, you devil you, where you stole them," cried the old man. "You're a hero! I like you!"

"Well, I don't like you," replied Lukashka, with a laugh. "You play pimp to the yunker! What an old man you are!"

"It's a lie! indeed, it's a lie! Hé, Marka!" (The old man burst into a hearty laugh.) "Yon devil tried to bribe me! 'Go,' says he, 'try to get her for me.' He gave me a gun. No, God be with him! I would have done it, but I took pity on you. Now, tell us, where have you been?" And the old man began to talk Tatar.

Lukashka replied vivaciously. Yergushof, whose knowledge of Tatar was limited, threw in Russian words.

"I tell you, you have been stealing horses. I am perfectly sure of it," insisted Yeroshka.

“Girerka and I went on a raid,” said Lukashka, calling Girer-Khan by this affectionate diminutive, which was a common usage among Cossacks who wished to make a show of their style. “He’s always boasting that he knows the whole steppe on the other side of the river and can go straight to the spot; and so we rode; it was dark night. My Girerka lost his way; he began to go cautiously and there was no sense in it. There was no aul anywhere about, and that was the end of it. Evidently we ought to have gone farther to the right. We hunted till almost midnight. Then, suddenly, we heard dogs bark.”

“Fools!” exclaimed Uncle Yeroshka. “That’s just the way we used to get lost at night-time in the steppe. The devil take it! Once I rode up to a little hill, and hid behind a clump of bushes; this is the way it was!” He put his hands to his mouth and howled like a pack of wolves, on one note. “The dogs instantly answered to it.—Now, finish your story! Well, what did you find?”

“We had a lively time of it. The Nogar women almost caught Nazarka, pra!”

“Yes, that they did,” exclaimed Nazarka, with a feeling of shame.

“Well, we rode on; again Girerka lost his way,

got entirely off the track in the sand hills. He supposed that we were down near the Terek, but we were quite the other way."

"You ought to have gone by the stars," said Uncle Yeroshka.

"That's what I think," put in Yergushof.

"Yes, that's very well, but it was perfectly cloudy. Well, I was beating about, beating about! I had got one mare, put the halter on her. Then I let my own horse take his own gait. I think to myself, 'He will get us out of it.' Then, what do you think? What a whinnying, whinnying — nose to the ground! . . . I gallop forward, straight into a village and out again. And unfortunately it became quite light; we had just time to drive the horses into the woods and hide them there. Nagim came up from the river and took them."

Yeroshka shook his head. "Sharp game! That's what I say! Many of them?"

"Got all there were," said Lukashka, slapping his pocket.

At this moment, the old mother came into the cottage. Lukashka ceased speaking. "Drink!" he cried.

"That's just the way Girchik and I did once," began Uncle Yeroshka.

“Now, we can't stop for that,” said Lukashka. “I am going,” and, having finished the wine in the bowl, and tightening his belt, he went out into the street.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It was already dark when Lukashka went into the street. The autumn night was cool and without wind. The golden orb of the full moon swam out from behind the dark poplars which stood on one side of the square. The smoke arose from the dairy chimneys, and, melting with the evening vapors, hovered above the village. The odor of burning kizyak or dried dung, of new wine, and of the dampness mingled in the atmosphere. Talking, laughing, singing, and the cracking of seeds made just as much of a Babel as during the day, but the sounds were more distinct. White kerchiefs and tall lambskin caps could be seen in crowds near the fences and houses.

On the square, in front of the opened and lighted shops, was gathered a motley throng of Cossack lads and maidens; loud songs, laughter, and chatter were heard. Taking hold of hands, the girls formed a circle, gracefully tripping around over the dusty square. A lean maiden, one of the ugliest of their number, sang :—

*Out of the forest, the little dark forest
 (Ai da liuli !),
 Out of the garden, the little green garden,
 Either came, forth came two young bravos,
 Two young bravos, both unmarried.
 Forth came, came they, stopped and quarrelled, —
 Stopped and quarrelled.
 By them passed a handsome maiden,
 Passed them and addressed them : —
 " Come, now, one of you shall have me !"
 Then she chose the fair-faced fellow, —
 Fair-faced fellow with the yellow ringlets.
 He took her, took her by her right hand.
 He led her, led her round the circle,
 Boasted of her to his comrades : —
 " Just behold my maiden, brothers !"*

The old women stood around, listening to the song, and watching the dance. The little boys and girls ran around in the darkness, chasing each other. The Cossacks stood about, pinching the maidens as they tripped by, and occasionally breaking into the circle to take a part in the dance. On the dark side of the door stood Byeletsky and Olyenin, dressed in full jigít costume, and talking French together, not aloud, but still distinctly, feeling that they were attracting attention. Hand in hand ran the plump Ustenka, in a red beshmet, and the majestic Maryana, in handsome new attire.

Olyenin and Byeletsky conferred together how they might entice the two girls away from the

chorovod. Byeletsky supposed that Olyenin wanted it merely for amusement's sake; his real desire, however, was to learn his fate from her lips. His overmastering desire was to see her as soon as possible alone, to tell her all, and to ask her if she could and would be his wife. Although this question had long before been decided by him in the negative, still he hoped that he should have strength enough to pour out his heart before her, and that she would understand him.

"Why didn't you tell me sooner?" said Byeletsky. "I could have arranged it all through Ustenka. You are so strange!"

"What's to be done? Sometime, very soon, I will tell you all. The only thing now is, get her to come to Ustenka's—for God's sake!"

"All right. That is easy. . . . So, Maryana, you choose the fair-faced fellow, hey? And not Lukashka?" exclaimed Byeletsky, for politeness' sake addressing Maryana first, and then, without waiting for her answer, he joined Ustenka, and began to urge her to bring Maryana home with her. He had no time to finish speaking when the homely girl struck up another song, and the maidens set the circle in motion again, and began to sing. This was their song:—

*Out behind the garden, garden,
 Did the brave youth wend,
 Up street to the end.
 Once, the first time that he came,
 His right hand he waved ;
 Then the second time he came,
 Waved his bonnet of beaver ;
 But the third time that he came
 The brave young man did stand,
 Stood, and then crossed over.
 " How I longed to come to thee !
 List ! while I upbraid !
 Why, oh why, my darling maid,
 Dost refuse to walk with me
 In the garden ? Tell me, darling !
 Dost thou scorn to talk with me ?
 By and by, my darling,
 Thou wilt curb thy pride :
 I shall send the wooers to thee,
 I shall send to woo thee ;
 Thou shalt be my bride !
 I will make thy tears to flow ! "*

*Though my answer I knew well,
 Still I dared not then to tell,
 Dared not tell him " Yes " or " No."
 To the garden then I go ;
 In the green garden meet my friend,
 Low before him bend.*

*" Here, oh, maiden ! here I stand,
 Take this kerchief from my hand !
 Prithee, maiden, deign to take,
 Take it in thy hand so white,
 Bear it in thy hand so white.
 Take and wear it for my sake !*

*Love me, maiden, love me well !
 What to do I cannot tell ; —
 To the maid whom I call mine
 Do I give this shawl so fine.
 For a large shawl such as this is
 I shall take at least five kisses !”*¹

Lukashka and Nazarka, breaking into the circle, began to whirl round with the maidens. Lukashka, joining in with a harsh, unmelodious voice, and waving his arms, dashed into the very centre of the ring. “Come on, one of you! take hold!” he cried. The girls gave Maryana a push, but she would not go. Over and above the singing were heard the sound of merry laughter, slaps, kisses, and whisperings.

As Lukashka passed by Olyenin, he nodded to him affectionately.

“Mitri Andreyitch! and have you come too to look on?” he asked.

“Certainly I have,” replied Olyenin, with decided curtness.

Byeletsy bent over to Ustenka’s ear and said

¹In this example of the popular khorovod beginning, —

*Kak za sadom, za sadom
 Khodil, gulyal molodets
 Vdol ulitsui f konets, —*

there is a certain approximation to trochaic metre and the rough attempt at rhyme peculiar to improvisation. The irregular verse, with its sharp staccato and frequent repetitions, is entirely characteristic of all Slavonic folk poetry. — N. H. D.

something to her. She had no time to reply ere the circle whirled her away ; but when it brought her back again she said :—

• “ All right, we’ll come.”

“ And Maryana, too ! ”

• Olyenin bent over to Maryana. “ Will you come ? Please do, if only for a moment. I must speak with you.”

“ If the girls come, I will.”

“ Will you tell me what I asked you about ? ” he inquired, a second time bending over to her. “ You are in good humor to-day.”

She was away from him by this time, but he followed after her. “ Will you tell me ? ”

“ Tell you what ? ”

“ What I asked you night before last,” said Olyenin, whispering in her ear. “ Will you marry me ? ”

Maryana hesitated for a moment.

“ I will tell you,” she said, “ I will tell you to-night ! ”

And in the darkness her eyes gave the young man a gay and affectionate look.

He still followed after her. It was a pleasure to him to get as near as possible to her.

But Lukashka, who had been drinking incessantly, seized her by main force and dragged her

by the hand from the ring into the centre. Olyenin had barely time to whisper, "Come to Ustenka's, do," and joined his companion. The song came to an end. Lukashka wiped his lips; Maryanka did the same, and they kissed each other. "No, five times," said he. Talking, jesting, scuffling were mingled in harmonious movement and harmonious sounds. Lukashka, who had now begun to grow rather mellow with drink, distributed among the girls confectionery in handfuls. "It's my treat for all of you," he cried, with a proud, comically half-pathetic self-consciousness.

"But let those that gad about with the soldiers get out of the circle," he suddenly added, giving Olyenin a wrathful look.

The maidens grabbed their candy from him, and, laughing, tried to snatch it from each other. Byeletsky and Olyenin retired to one side. Lukashka, as though ashamed of his generosity, took off his papakh, and, wiping his forehead with his sleeve, joined Maryanka and Ustenka.

"*Dost thou scorn to talk with me?*" he said, quoting a line of the song which they had just been singing, and applying it to Maryanka. "*By and by, my darling, thou wilt curb thy pride,*" he repeated, very significantly. "*Thou shalt be my bride; I will make thy tears to flow,*" he went

on, quoting, and hugged the two girls both at once.

Ustenka tore herself away, and, drawing back her arm, gave him such a blow in the back that she bruised her own hand.

"Say, are you going to have another dance?" he asked.

"Just as the girls wish," replied Ustenka. "But I am going home, and Maryanka wanted to come too."

The Cossack, still hugging Maryana, took her out of the crowd, behind the dark corner of the house.

"Don't go, Máshenka," said he. "Let us have one last good time. Go home and I will join you."

"What do I want to go home for? It's a festival, and I mean to make the best of it. I am going to Ustenka's," said Maryana.

"Well, I'll marry you, all the same."

"Very good!" said Maryana. "We'll see about that."

"Do you insist on going?" demanded Lukashka, and, pressing her to him, kissed her cheek.

"Now, let go of me! What are you bothering me for?"

And Maryana tore herself out of his arms and ran away.

"Ah, you girl! It's too bad!" cried Lukashka, in a tone of reproach, pausing and shaking his head. "*Thou wilt weep because of me,*" and, turning from her, he cried to the other girls, "Sing something, won't you?"

Maryana seemed somewhat frightened and at the same time annoyed by what he said.

She stopped.

"What's too bad?"

"What you're doing."

"But what?"

"I mean this: going around with that soldier lodger of yours and not caring anything for me."

"I'll do just as I please about loving you. You are not my father, nor my mother. What do you want? I'll love the one I want to love."

"All right!" said Lukashka. "Just remember."

He went to the shop. "Girls," he cried, "why are you standing? Give us another khorovod. Nazarka! hurry up and get some red wine."

"Well, are they coming?" asked Olyenin of Byeletsky.

"They will come in a minute," replied Byeletsky. "Come on; we must get ready for a ball."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

It was late in the evening when Olyenin left Byeletsky's cottage, and followed the two girls. Maryana's white kerchief gleamed in the shady street. The golden moon was sinking toward the steppes. A silvery mist hovered over the village. All was quiet, no lights were seen in the windows; the only sound was the footsteps of the hurrying girls.

Olyenin's heart beat violently. The misty air came with cooling freshness to his heated face. He glanced at the sky, he glanced at the cottage from which he had come. The candle had just been blown out, and once more he allowed his attention to be attracted by the young women hurrying along like shadows. The white kerchief was hidden in the mist. It was terrible for him to be left in the solitude; he was so happy. He sprang down from the steps and hastened after the girls.

"Oh, is it you? Some one will see you!" cried Ustenka.

"No matter."

Olyenin went to Maryana and threw his arms around her. She made no resistance.

"Don't kiss each other," said Ustenka; "marry first, then you can kiss, but now keep cool."

"Good-bye, Maryana. To-morrow I am going to your father; I will tell him. Don't you breathe a word."

"Why should I?" replied Maryana.

The two girls hurried away.

Olyenin walked on alone, and passed in review all that had taken place. He had spent the whole evening alone with her in one room, near the oven. Not once had Ustenka left the khata where Byeletsky and she with the other girls had been having boisterous fun. Olyenin and Maryana had been talking in whispers.

"Will you be mine?" he asked her.

"You are mistaken, you would not have me," she replied, in a bantering tone, but calmly.

"But do you love me? Tell me, for Heaven's sake!"

"Why shouldn't I love you? You are not crooked!" she rejoined, with a smile, and squeezing his hand between her rough hands. — "What whi-i-te, whi-i-te hands you have, just as soft as cheese," she said.

"I am not joking. Tell me, will you be mine?"

"Why not, if my father will let me?"

"Listen! I shall go beside myself if you are not telling me the truth. To-morrow I shall tell your father and mother, and go through all the formalities."

Maryana suddenly laughed heartily.

"What is it?"

"Oh, it's so funny!"

"Truly, I will buy a garden, a house; I will join the Cossacks . . ."

"Look here, then, don't you go courting other women! I should be angry if you did."

Olyenin now took a keen delight in recalling all this conversation. At the thought of it, sometimes his heart was filled with pain, and then again delight took possession of him. The pain arose from the fact that she was so calm all the time that she was talking with him, so calm and merry. It seemed as though she were not in the least affected by this new state of affairs. She scarcely believed his words, and she had no thought about the future. It seemed to him that she had only a passing affection for him, and that he was not associated with her thoughts of the future. But the delight arose from the fact that

all of her words seemed to him true, and she had agreed to be his.

"Yes," said he to himself, "only when she is wholly mine shall we understand each other. For such love no words are needed, but life is needed, and the whole of life. To-morrow all will be made clear. I cannot live longer this way; to-morrow I shall tell everything to her father, to Byeletsky, to the whole village . . ."

Lukashka, after two sleepless nights, had celebrated the festival so gloriously that, for the first time in his life, he was really drunk, and he slept it off at Yamka's.

CHAPTER XL.

ON the next day Olyenin woke earlier than usual, and his first waking thought was about what the future had in store for him; he recalled with delight her kiss, the pressure of her rough hands, and her words: "What white hands you have!"

He sprang up with the intention of going immediately to the ensign and Dame Ulitka, and proposing marriage to Maryana.

It was before sunrise, and it struck him that there was unusual commotion in the street, — running, riding, and shouting. He threw on his cherkeska and went out to the porch.

The ensign's family were not yet up.

Five mounted Cossacks were dashing up and down the street and talking in excited tones.

At the head of them rode Lukashka on his big Kabarda. The Cossacks were all talking and shouting at the top of their voices. It was impossible to make out what the trouble was.

"Strike for the upper station," cried one.

"Saddle your horses and join us lively!" said a second.

"It's the nearest way from this gate."

"Come this way," cried Lukashka. "We must start from the middle gate."

"And then it's nearer from here," said another Cossack, all covered with dust and riding a sweaty horse.

Lukashka's face was flushed and bloated from his evening's intoxication; his lambskin papakh was on the back of his head. He shouted imperative orders, as though he were the commander.

"What is it? Where are you going?" asked Olyenin, finding some difficulty in attracting the attention of the Cossacks.

"We are going to take some abreks; they are out there in the reeds. We are going right off, but there aren't many of us."

And the Cossacks, still shouting and gathering new forces, rode up the street.

It occurred to Olyenin that it would not look well for him to stay behind. However, he made up his mind to return early. He finished dressing, loaded his gun with ball, mounted his horse, which Vanyusha had managed to saddle, and rejoined the Cossacks just as they were riding out of the village. The Cossacks, though in such a

hurry, had dismounted and were standing in a circle, drinking red wine, which they poured out from a *caşk* they had brought, into the wooden chapura, or bowl. They handed it around and *prayed* for success in their expedition.

•Among them was a dandified young ensign, who happened to be in the village, and assumed command of the half-score of Cossacks who were gathered together. They were all privates, and, though the ensign put on all the airs of a leader, they looked to Lukashka for directions. They paid absolutely no attention to Olyenin. And, when all had mounted again and started on their way, Olyenin joined the young ensign and began to ask what the trouble was ; the would-be officer, with extraordinary obsequiousness, tried to make him feel how much he appreciated the honor of being with a man of such elevated rank. It was with the greatest difficulty that Olyenin could get from him any information in regard to the work before them.

It seemed that the scouts sent out to look for abreks had discovered a few of the mountaineers in the downs about eight versts from the village. The abreks were in ambush in a ditch and had fired off their guns and threatened that they would never surrender alive.

The sergeant, who with two men constituted the scouting party, had remained to watch them and had sent one of the Cossacks to the village for reënforcements.

The sun was just beginning to rise. When they had gone three versts from the village, the steppe was spread out in every direction, and nothing was to be seen except the monotonous, melancholy waste of sand, marked with the tracks of cattle and covered with withered grass and low rushes in the hollows, with occasional paths, scarcely traceable, and settlements of Nogai standing out against the horizon far, far away. There was a striking absence of shade everywhere; the whole region was bare and dry.

The sun always rises and sets on the steppe in a ruddy glow. When the wind blows, it carries with it whole mountains of sand. When it is calm, as it happened to be on this morning, then the stillness, undisturbed by a movement or a sound, is most striking. This morning it was calm and gloomy over the steppe, even after the sun had risen; there was a peculiar sense of emptiness and lassitude.

The air was not stirred by a breath; the only sound was the trampling and snorting of the horses, and even these sounds had no resonance

and quickly died away. The Cossacks rode most of the time in silence. The Cossack always carries his weapons in such a way that there is no rattling or clanking. A rattling weapon is the greatest disgrace for a Cossack. Two Cossacks from the village came galloping up, and two or three words were exchanged. Lukashka's horse either stumbled or got entangled in the grass, and started to dash on ahead.

That is considered a bad omen among the Cossacks.

They looked around and hurried on, trying not to call attention to this circumstance, which had such a peculiar significance at such a time. Lukashka jerked his reins, frowned haughtily, set his teeth together, and cracked his whip over his head. His beautiful Kabarda suddenly danced on his four legs, not knowing on which to step, and as though wishing he had wings to fly up into the air; but Lukashka hit him once with the whip under his fat belly, hit him a second time, and then a third, and the Kabarda, showing his teeth and whisking his tail and snorting, drew back on his haunches and then sprang forward in advance of the rest of the band.

"Ekh! fine horse!" said the young ensign,

employing the Russian word that signified in itself an especially good steed.

“A lion of a charger,” replied another of the older Cossacks.

The Cossacks rode in silence, sometimes at a walk, sometimes trotting, and this was the only thing that, for a moment, disturbed the silence and solemnity of their motions.

Over the whole extent of the steppe for a distance of eight versts the only living thing that they met was a Nogai kubitka, or nomad tent, which, set on a two-wheeled arba, was slowly crossing the steppe a verst away. It was a Nogayets, moving with his family from one settlement to another. They also met, in one hollow, two ragged Nogai women with high cheek-bones who, carrying wicker baskets on their backs, were collecting the manure of the steppe cattle for kizyak. The young ensign, who spoke their language brokenly, tried to gather some information from these women; but they could not understand him, and exchanged glances, evidently fearing some harm.

Lukashka rode up, reined in his horse, gave them their usual greeting in a cheerful voice; and the Nogai women made no secret of their pleasure, and talked freely with him as to their brother.

"*Ai, ai kop abrek!*" said they, mournfully, and pointed with their hands in the direction where the Cossacks had been riding. Olyenin knew enough to understand that they said, "Many abreks."

•Never having witnessed such an action, though he had an idea of it gotten from Uncle Yeroshka's yarns, he was anxious to keep with the Cossacks and see the whole thing. He admired the Cossacks, he had his eyes wide open, his ears were alert, and he made his observations. Though he had taken his sabre with him and his loaded gun, yet, as he noticed that the Cossacks held aloof from him, he resolved to take no part in the action, the more willingly because, in his opinion, he had already sufficiently proved his valor in the expedition on the frontier, and principally because now he was very happy.

Suddenly, in the distance, a shot was heard.

The young ensign grew excited and began to give his orders: how the Cossacks should divide their forces and on which side they should ride up.

But the men had evidently no intention of obeying those directions, and listened only to what Lukashka said, and looked only to him. Luka's face and whole figure were calm and

triumphant. He led the scouting party on his Kabarda, with which the other horses found it useless to keep up, and with blinking eyes he gazed ahead.

"There goes a horseman," said he, reining in his horse, and falling back into line with the others.

Olyenin strained his eyes, but he could not see anything. The Cossacks quickly made out two horsemen, and with undeviating pace they rode straight down upon them.

"Are they abreks?" asked Olyenin.

The Cossacks made no answer to his question, which was ridiculous in their opinion. Abreks would be fools to come over on this side with horses.

"That's batyaka Rodka beckoning, I declare," said Lukashka, pointing to the two horsemen, who were now in plain sight. "See, he is coming toward us."

In fact, in a few moments, it was evident that the horsemen were Cossack scouts, and the sergeant rode up to Luka.

"Much farther?" was Lukashka's monosyllabic question.

At this moment, not thirty paces distant, was heard a sharp report. The sergeant smiled

slightly. "Our Gurka is peppering them," said he, nodding his head in the direction of the shot.

Going a few steps farther, they caught sight of Gurka squatting behind a sand hill and loading his gun. Gurka, from sheer tedium, was firing at the abreks, who were hiding behind another sand hill.

A bullet from that direction whistled over them. The ensign grew pale and demoralized. Lukashka dismounted, gave the reins to a Cossack, and went to Gurka. Olyenin followed his example, and, stooping down, joined him. They had hardly got behind the sand hill with Gurka when a couple of bullets whispered over their heads. Lukashka glanced with a smile at Olyenin and bent low.

"They will shoot you yet, Andreyitch," said he. "You'd better go away! This is no place for you."

But still Olyenin was anxious to have a look at the abreks.

Behind a sand hill, two hundred paces away, he saw a cap and weapons. Suddenly a puff of smoke arose from it, and a bullet whistled by.

The abreks were at the foot of the hill, in a fen. Olyenin was surprised at the place that they had selected. It was like all the rest of the

steppe, but the fact that the abreks were ensconced there made it different from all the rest and gave it a peculiar distinction. It even seemed to him that it was precisely such a spot as ought to contain an ambush of abreks.

Lukashka returned to his horse, and Olyenin followed him.

"We must get an arba loaded with hay," said, Luka, "else we shall be killed. Yonder, behind that hillock, stands one already loaded by the Nogai."

The ensign listened to what he said, and the sergeant agreed with him. The hay cart was brought, and the Cossacks, taking shelter behind it, began to push it in front of them.

Olyenin rode off to a hillock, from the top of which he had a view of the whole scene. The hay cart moved forward. The Cossacks, crouching behind it, pushed it along toward the Chechens, nine of whom sat in a row, knee to knee, and waited the decisive moment for firing.

There was perfect silence. Suddenly from the Chechen side rang out the strange sounds of a melancholy song, something like Uncle Yeroshka's *Ai-dai-dalalai*. The mountaineers knew that there was no escape for them, and, in order to drive away all thoughts of escape, they had

fastened themselves together by a strap knee to knee, held their guns in readiness, and were singing their death-song.

The Cossacks, pushing the hay cart, came nearer and nearer, and Olyenin was momentarily expecting the crash of musketry; but the silence was broken only by the abrek's melancholy song. Suddenly the song was cut short; a quick, sharp report rang out; a bullet buried itself in the pole of the hay cart; there was an uproar of Chechen oaths and shrieks. Shot followed shot, and bullet after bullet was poured into the hay. The Cossacks had not yet returned the fire and were only five paces away from the mountaineers.

Another instant passed, and the Cossacks, with a yell, leaped out from both sides of the cart. Lukashka was at the head. Olyenin heard a confused sound of gunshots, yells, and groans. He saw smoke and blood, as it seemed to him. Leaving his horse, and quite beside himself, he ran toward the Cossacks. Horror seized his eyes. He could not make it all out, but it was evident to him that all was over. Lukashka, pale as a sheet, was holding a wounded Chechen's arms and was crying, "Don't kill him, don't kill him! I will take him alive."

It was the same red-headed Chechenets, the

brother of the abrek whom Lukashka had killed, and who had come down for his body.

Lukashka was twisting his arms.

Suddenly the Chechenets tore himself away and discharged his pistol. Lukashka fell. Blood spurted out on his side. He leaped up, but fell a second time, cursing in Russian and Tatar. More and more blood appeared on him and under him. The Cossacks hurried to his aid and began to take off his girdle. One of them, Nazarka, before giving him his attention, found some difficulty in sheathing his sabre. Its edge was dripping with blood.

The mountaineers, red-headed, with close-cropped moustaches, lay about, killed and cut in pieces. Only one of them, the very one who had shot Lukashka, though badly wounded, was alive. This one, like a disabled hawk, all blood (the blood was trickling down from under his right eye), gnashing his teeth, pale and desperate, glaring around him with great, angry eyes, squatted on his heels and held his sabre, ready still to defend himself to the last. The ensign went up to him, and, pretending to pass by him, with a quick motion fired his pistol into his ear. The Chechenets tried to spring forward, but it was too late and he fell.

The Cossacks, all out of breath, dragged out the dead bodies and rifled them. Each one of these red-headed mountaineers was a man, and each had his own individual expression. They carried Lukashka to the arba. He kept cursing in Russian and Tatar.

"You lie! I will choke you! You sha'n't get out of my hands! *Anna seni!*" he cried, still struggling. But it was not long ere he was compelled to silence by his weakness.

Olyenin galloped home. That evening he was told that Lukashka was dying, but that a Tatar from across the river had agreed to save him by means of herbs.

The bodies were carried to the town house. The women and children were hurrying there in crowds, to have a look at them.

Olyenin returned at dusk, and it was long before he could get a clear impression of what he had seen; but in the night the recollection of the previous evening came over him like a flood; he looked out of the window; Maryana was on her way from the house to the shed, attending to her chores. Her mother had gone to the vineyard. The father was at the town house. Olyenin did not wait until she had finished all her work, but went out to where she was. She was in the

khata, and was standing with her back to him. Olyenin had an idea that it was maiden modesty.

"Maryana!" said he, "say, Maryana! Can I come in?"

Suddenly she turned around. In her eyes there seemed to be the traces of tears. There was a lovely melancholy in her face. She looked at him, silent and superb.

Olyenin said :—

"Maryana! I have come . . ."

"Stop!" said she. Her face did not change, but tears sprang into her eyes.

"Why are you . . .? What is the matter?"

"Do you ask?" she exclaimed, in a broken, melancholy voice. "Some Cossacks have been killed, that is what the trouble is."

"Lukashka?" asked Olyenin.

"Go away! what do you want?"

"Maryana!" exclaimed Olyenin, approaching her.

"Never in this world will I have anything to do with you!"

"Maryana, don't say so!" entreated Olyenin.

"Get you gone! you shameless brute!" cried the girl, stamping her foot, and making a threatening gesture toward him. And such loathing, scorn, and anger were expressed in her face that

Olyenin suddenly realized that there was no hope for him, and that what he had thought in days gone by, of the distance between him and this woman, was indubitable truth.

He made no reply, but left her standing there.

CHAPTER XLI.

ON returning to his room, he lay on his bed motionless for two hours; then he went to his company commander, and asked leave to join the staff.

.

Without bidding good-bye to any one, and settling his account with the ensign through Van-yushka, he prepared to depart for the outpost where the regiment was stationed.

Uncle Yeroshka was the only person who came to see him off. They went in, drank together, and drank together again. Just the same as at his departure from Moscow, a hired troika stood waiting at the door. But Olyenin did not now, as then, make a mental summing-up of himself, nor did he tell himself that all that he had thought and done was not *the thing*. There now hovered before him no promise of a new life. He loved Maryana more than ever, but now he knew that it would never be possible for him to be loved by her.

"Well, good-bye, my father," said Uncle Ye-

roshka. "You are going to the front; be wise, listen to an old man's advice. If you happen to take part in a foray or anything of the sort — you see, I am an old wolf, I have seen it all — or if there is shooting going on, then do not go near a crowd where there are many people. It's always the way: if your men get scared, they huddle all together; they think it's safer where there's a crowd. But that's the worst way of all. They always aim at a crowd. I always used to get as far as possible from the rest, go off alone by myself; that's why I was never wounded by them. But what haven't I seen in my day?"

"Yes, but you carry a bullet in your back," insinuated Vanyusha, who was in the room, packing up.

"That was a little trick of the Cossacks," replied Yeroshka.

"How the Cossacks?"

"This was the way of it. We were drinking. Vanka Sitkin was a Cossack, he was quite drunk when suddenly he blazed away right at me with his pistol and hit me right there."

"Say, did it hurt?" asked Olyenin. — "Vanyusha, are we almost ready?" he added.

"Ekh! what are you in such a hurry for? Let me tell you. . . . Yes, when he hit me, the bullet

did not break the bone, and there it stayed. And says I: 'Here, you've killed me, my brother; did you know it? What are you going to do with me? I am not going to take leave of you in this way. Just bring me a gallon!'"

"Well, did it hurt?" asked Olyenin, for the second time, scarcely listening to this tale.

"Let me tell you. He gave me a gallon of wine. We drank it. And the blood kept flowing all the time. I bled the whole cabin full. Grandsire Burlak says: 'Well, it's all up with the young fellow. Give him another shtof¹ of sweet vodka and then we will settle your punishment.' They brought in still more. We drank and drank . . ."

"Well, was it painful for you?" asked Olyenin, for the third time.

"Who cares about that? Don't interrupt, I don't like it. Let me finish my story. We drank and drank . . . kept it up till morning, and then I fell asleep on the stove, dead-drunk. When I woke up the next day, I couldn't straighten up at all."

"Was it very painful?" insisted Olyenin, thinking that now at last he should get a reply to the question that he had asked so many times.

¹ Eight shtofs make a vedro, 2.70 gallons.

“What did I tell you about painful? No, it wasn't painful, but I could not straighten up and I couldn't walk.”

“Well, you lived through it, didn't you?” said Olyenin, without a trace of a smile, so heavy was his heart.

“Yes, I lived through it, but the bullet is there to this day. Just feel it,” and he turned down his shirt and showed his solid back and the scar where the bullet had gone in, near the spine.

“Do you see how it moves about?” said he, evidently finding amusement in this bullet, like a strange kind of toy. “Here it moves down toward my hind-quarters.”

“Well, do you think Lukashka will live?” asked Olyenin.

“Well, God knows him. There's no *dokhtor* yet. They've sent for one.”

“Where did they get him? From Groznaya?” asked Olyenin.

“Nay, my father. I should have hanged all your Russian ones long ago, if I had been tsar. All they know is how to hack. That's the way they made our Cossack Baklashef into less than a man:—they cut off his leg. They are fools. What's Baklashef good for now? Nothing, my

father. But in the mountains there are *dokhtors* that are *dokhtors*. That was the way with Eorchik, my nyanya. Once he was wounded here in the chest during an expedition; your *dokhtors* gave him up, but Saib came from the mountains and cured him. Herbs are the thing, my father."

"It's nonsense to talk that way," said Olyenin. "I had better send a surgeon from the staff."

"Nonsense?" repeated the old man, mimicking his tone. — "Fool! fool! nonsense! send a surgeon! Yes, if your surgeons ever cured, then the Cossacks and the Chechens, too, would go to you to get cured, but they don't, and your officers and your colonels send for *dokhtors* from the mountains. Your science is all false, everything is all false with you!"

Olyenin did not trouble to answer him. It coincided too much with his own opinion that all was false in that world in which he lived and to which he was returning.

"Well, how is Lukashka? You have seen him?" he asked.

"He lies like a dead man. He does not eat or drink; vodka is the only thing that he does not throw up. Well, if he can drink vodka it's nothing. But, then, I am sorry for the lad. He

was a fine young fellow, a jigit, just like me. Well, I came near dying that way once. The old women were all ready to lay me out. What a fever there was in my head! They put me under the holy pictures. And so I lay there, and it seemed to me as though a host of little drummers were beating the tattoo in my head. I yell at them, but they go it all the faster." (The old man laughed). "The women brought the head chorister to me; they wanted to bury me! they said of me: 'He's been *worldly*,¹ he has been about with women, he has ruined his soul, he has eaten meat in Lent, he has played on the balalaika. . . . Confess him,' said they. And I began to confess. 'I'm a sinner,' said I.

"The pope made no answer, and I said again: 'I'm a sinner.' He began to ask me about the balalaika. 'Where is the cursed instrument?' he asked. 'Tell me and have it broken up.' But I said: 'I hadn't one.' You see, I had hid it in the net in the dairy cabin. I knew that they wouldn't find it. And so they gave me up. And that was the end of it. How I used to scratch

¹ *Mirshchilsa*: this signifies, among the Old Believers, that a man has mingled freely with the world (*mir*), that is, with unbelievers.

on the balalarka! . . . But, as I was just saying," he went on, "you heed my words: go as far as you can from the crowd, or else they will be apt to hit you. I'm sorry for you, that's a fact." You are good at drinking, and I like you. And you fellows always like to ride out on the sand-dunes. And that was the way one lived here among us: he came from Russia, he was always riding out to the hills, as though a hill were anything wonderful to see. As soon as he sees a hillock, then he gallops up to the top of it. He galloped that way once too often. How happy he was! But a Chechenets saw, shot at him and killed him. Ekh! the Chechens are crack shots when they have a rest for their guns! Better than I am. It was too bad to kill him that mean way. I used to look at your men and be surprised. What stupidity!" exclaimed the old man, shaking his head. — "And so you just go to one side and stand by yourself. On my word, that's the way to do. You see, *he* won't take notice of you. . . . So be sure to do that way."

"Well, I am much obliged. Good-bye, uncle! If God grants, we may meet again," said Olyenin, getting up and going out into the entry.

The old man still continued to sit on the floor.

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