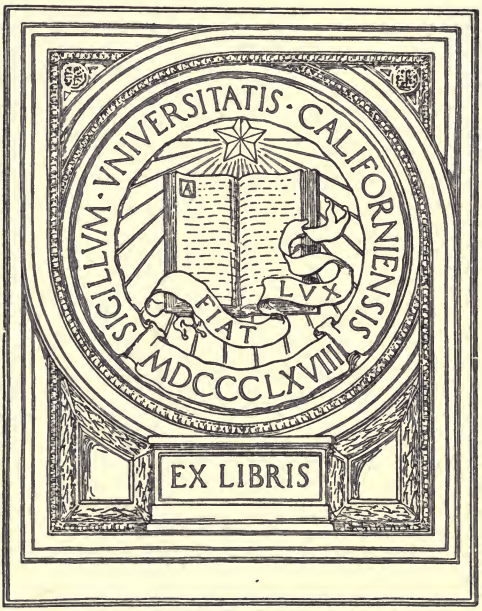
PALE HORSE

BY

"TROPSHIN"



THE PALE HORSE

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By "ROPSHIN"
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INTRODUCTION

THE soul of Russia is revealed even more in her literature than in the realities of her life. If her activities are handicapped in many ways, her spirit lives in a sort of Utopian Freeland, where it is concerned only with problems of spiritual law and spiritual obligations. Russian novels—certainly the best of them—express this spirit, and are for that reason 'human documents' of great intensity.

Each epoch of Russia's spiritual life is expressed in a few books of a highly imaginative character. Among those literary works which illuminate with a rare light the period just before the war, the problems which had to be faced by the heroic will and the mystic tendencies of a tragically unbalanced generation, Ropshin's *Pale Horse* ranks as one of the most characteristic. The Russian writer Dmitry Mereshkovsky has called it 'the most Russian book of

the period,' as it contains the tragedy of every individual conscience in Russia possessed by the necessity of violent political action and the equally strong religious objections to it. The problem of Ropshin's hero could be summed up in the words: 'I am bound in conscience to do it—yet my conscience imperatively prohibits me to do it.' The author's aim is to show the psychological consequences of this very Russian, this very modern problem. Nevertheless, the book is far from being an objective psychological study, but bears more the impress of a personal confession forced out by some urgent inner need. It is more than mere 'literature,'—it is life's tragedy interpreted by one who had lived every bit of what he writes about.

The Pale Horse is a story of a revolutionary plot, yet it contains nothing of the old conventional and romantic type of the 'Nihilist story,' as it used to be written—especially in England. The picturesque side of revolutionary life—its continual dangers, disguises, conspiracies—forms merely the background. The object is to show the changed spirit of a new generation of revolu-

tionaries, more fully aware of higher responsibilities than the former romantic fanatics of terrorism. As they appear in *The Pale Horse* the Russian revolutionaries remind one of the mystic heroes of Dostoevsky who seek for justification of their acts.

The book reveals the nature of the change that has taken place, and makes clear the fact that the ' Nihilists ' who deliberately had shaken off all religious and idealistic conceptions, in order to secure their immediate political aims, are a thing of the past. The new revolutionaries are more spiritualised, more close to the religious wants and sentiments of the Russian people. This has made their problems more complex, and *The Pale Horse* shows how distressing their dilemma has become. Yet, in spite of the story's pessimistic tone, there is a suggestion of hopefulness in the struggle for the establishment of idealistic values, in the attempt to make the will conform to the standards of enlightened thought.

Ropshin's heroes are men and women living in a period of transition, and as such they are

necessarily unbalanced, unsettled, more given to reflecting upon new spiritual values than to facing their problems with the determined and undivided will they need for their purpose. They are tragic in the absolute sincerity of their divided minds. In spite of their doubts and indecision, their way leads to future harmony—it is the way of high-strung idealism applied to the problems of real life. This is the hopeful prophecy of *The Pale Horse*. The vision of a new and regenerated Russia rises above the sad tale of shattered lives and cruel destinies.

No one is more entitled to reveal the new psychology of the Russian fighters for freedom than the author of *The Pale Horse*. Ropshin is his *nom de plume*. He played a conspicuous part in the revolutionary movement of about ten years ago. Since then his views underwent a marked change: *The Pale Horse* is confessional and autobiographical. He gave up party work, came into touch with a strong religious current in the Russian literature of recent years, and made his first appearance as an author with *The Pale Horse*. The book created a sensa-

tion when it was published, and passed through several editions. The author's personal experience gave special value to his revelations, and Ropshin is now considered one of the foremost writers of the younger generation.

His second book, *The Tale of What Was Not*, with its vivid scenes of the Moscow barricades in 1905, and its revelations about the revolutionary parties and their new spirit, was also a great literary success.

Ropshin has also written short stories, and is a brilliant journalist as well. His war correspondence from the western front is full of colour, and has a very personal touch.

The Pale Horse gives the keynote to Ropshin's art and attitude to life, and is certainly the best adapted of his works with which to introduce him to the Irish and English reader.

THE PALE HORSE

PART I

'. . . and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death. . . .'—REVELATION vi. 8.

'But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.'—1 JOHN ii. 11.

March 6.

I ARRIVED last night at N. It is the same as I last saw it. The crosses glitter on the churches, the sledges creak as they glide over the crisp snow. The mornings are frosty, there are ice-flowers on the window-panes, the bells of the monasteries are calling to Mass. I love the town. I was born here.

I have a passport bearing the red seal of the King of England and the signature of Lord Lansdowne. The passport certifies that I, George O'Brien, British subject, have undertaken a journey to Turkey and Russia. I am registered as 'tourist' by the Russian police.

The hotel bores me to weariness. I know so well its hall-porter in his blue tunic, its gilt mirrors, its carpets. There is a shabby sofa in my room and dusty curtains. I have placed three kilograms of dynamite under the table. I have brought it from abroad. The dynamite smells of a chemist's shop. I have headaches at night.

I am going out for a stroll presently. The boulevard is dark, a fine snow is falling; the clock is striking at a distance. I am quite alone. Before me lies the peaceful life of the town and its slothful people. In my soul resound the sacred words:

'And I will give thee the morning star.'

March 8.

Erna has blue eyes and heavy plaits of hair. She clung to me and entreated me:

'Will you love me a little?'

Some time ago she gave herself to me like a queen: she never asked for anything in return, and entertained no hopes. Now she implores me for love like a beggar. As I looked through the window on the square covered with snow I said to her:

'Look how immaculate the snow is.'

She dropped her head and did not answer.

I then said:

'I was out of town yesterday, and saw even a purer snow. It was quite rosy. And the shadows of the birch-trees were blue.'

I read in her eyes:

'Why didn't you take me with you?'

'Look here,' I began again, 'have you ever been deep in the country in Russia?'

She answered: 'No.'

'Well, in the early spring, when the new grass begins to show in the fields and the snowdrops bloom in the woods, the snow still lies in the ravines. And it looks so odd: the white snow and the white flowers. Have you ever seen that? No? Can you imagine what a strange sight it is?'

She whispered: 'No.'

And I was thinking of Elena.

March 9.

The governor lives in an old house, under a double guard of sentries and detectives.

We are a small group of five. Fedor, Vania, and Heinrich are disguised as sledge-drivers.

They watch all his movements and report their observations to me. Erna is an expert in chemistry. She will prepare the bombs.

I am sitting in my room and studying the plan of the town. I am mapping out the roads we must follow. I try to reconstruct his life, his daily habits. In my thoughts I am present at the receptions in his house; I take walks with him in the garden, behind the gate; I hide beside him at night, I say prayers with him as he goes to bed.

I caught a glimpse of him to-day. I was waiting for him in the street, and I walked up and down the frozen sidewalk for a long time. It was getting dark, and the cold was severe. I had already begun to give up hope, when suddenly the police-inspector at the corner brandished his glove. The policemen stood at attention, the detectives ran in all directions. A deathlike silence filled the street.

A carriage came swiftly past me. The horses were black. The driver had a red beard. I noticed the curved handles of the doors, the yellow spokes of the wheels. A sledge followed closely behind the carriage.

I could hardly discern his face as it rapidly

passed before my eyes. And he did not notice me. I was part of the street for him. I slowly turned home. I felt happy.

March 10.

I am not conscious of hate or anger when I think of him. At the same time I do not feel any pity for him. As a personality he leaves me indifferent. But I want him to die. Strength will break a straw. I don't believe in words. I do not want to be a slave myself, and do not want any one else to be one.

Why shouldn't one kill ? And why is murder justified in one case and not in another ? People do find reasons, but I don't know why one should not kill; and I cannot understand why to kill in the name of this or that is considered right, while to kill in the name of something else is wrong.

I remember the first time I went hunting. The white-crop fields were red, there were cobwebs everywhere, the wood was silent. I stood on the edge of the wood close to the road ravaged by the rain. The birches were whispering, the yellow leaves were flying up and down. I waited. Suddenly there was a con-

fused movement in the grass. A hare, looking like a small grey bundle, rushed out of the bushes and squatted down cautiously on his hind legs. He looked about him. I tremblingly lifted my gun. An echo resounded far in the wood, there was a puff of blue smoke among the birches. On the darkened grass, wet with blood, the wounded hare struggled and whimpered like a baby. I felt sorry for him. I fired a second shot. The wailing ceased.

At home I forgot all about him as if he had never existed, as if I had not taken from him that which was most precious to him—his life. And I ask myself why I suffered when I heard his outcry, while the fact that I killed him for my amusement did not arouse any emotion in me.

March 13.

Elena is married and lives here—that is all I know about her. Every morning, in my leisure, I go strolling on the boulevard to see her house. The white frost is soft like down. The snow creaks under my feet. I hear the slow strokes of the tower clock. It is ten

o'clock. I sit down on the bench and patiently count the minutes. I say to myself:

'I did not meet her yesterday, but I may to-day.'

I saw her for the first time a year ago. I passed through N. in the spring, and went one morning to the large park. The ground was damp, the tall oaks and the slim poplars loomed above it, lost in an all-pervading silence. Even the birds did not sing. There was only the low murmur of the brook. I watched its ripples. The sun gleamed on the water, which purled; I listened to the sound. When I lifted my eyes I saw a woman on the opposite side. She did not notice me. But I knew that we were listening to the same thing.

The woman was Elena.

March 14.

I am sitting in my room. Some one in the room above me is playing the piano. I can hear it but faintly. The sound of footsteps is lost in the soft carpet.

I am used to the uncertain life of a revolutionary and its loneliness. I do not think of

my future, and do not want to know it. I try to forget the past. I have no home, no name, no family. I say to myself:

Un grand sommeil noir
Tombe sur ma vie.
Dormez, tout espoir,
Dormez, toute envie.

But hope never dies. What hope? That of securing 'the morning star'? I know well: we had killed yesterday, we will kill to-day, and we shall go on killing to-morrow. 'And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters and they became blood.' You cannot quench blood with water, you cannot burn it out with fire. It will be blood all the way to the grave.

Je ne vois plus rien,
Je perds la mémoire
Du bien et du mal.
O, la triste histoire!

Happy is he who believes in the Resurrection of Christ, in the Resurrection of Lazarus. Happy is he who believes in socialism, in the coming paradise on earth. These old tales seem simply ridiculous to me: fifteen acres of apportioned land do not tempt me. I have

said to myself: I do not want to be a slave. Is this my freedom? It is indeed a poor freedom! Why am I pursuing it? In the name of what do I go out to kill? Is it only for the sake of blood, and more blood? . . .

Je suis un berceau
Qu'une main balance
Au creux d'un caveau.
Silence . . . Silence. . . .

There is a knock on the door. It must be Erna.

March 17.

I don't know why I have taken up the work. but I know the reasons that have brought others into it. Heinrich is convinced that it is our duty. Fedor joined us because his wife had been murdered. Erna says she is ashamed to live. Vania . . . but let Vania speak for himself.

Recently we spent all day about town together, he acting as my driver. I made an appointment with him in a tavern.

He came in high boots and in a blue tunic, such as are worn by men of the lower class. He has grown a beard and wears his hair cut round. He said:

'Now, tell me, have you ever thought of Christ?'

'Of whom?'

'Of Christ, of the God-Man Christ? Did you ever ask yourself what you ought to believe in and how you ought to live? In my lodgings, in the drivers' yard, I often read the Gospels, and I have come to the conclusion that only two ways are open to men, no more than two. One is to believe that everything is permissible. Please, understand me—everything, without exception. Now that leads to the making of such a character as Dostoyevsky's Smerdiakov,[1] provided a man has a mind to dare and not to shrink at any consideration. After all, there is logic in such an attitude: since God does not exist, since Christ is but a man, there is no love as well; there is nothing whatever to stop you. The other is the way of Christ which leads to Christ. Tell me, if there is love in a man's heart—I mean real, deep love—could he kill or not?'

I replied: 'He could, in any case.'

'No, not in any case. To kill is a great sin. Just remember: "Greater love hath no

[1] The man-servant in 'Brothers Karamazov.'

man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And he must lay down more than his life—his soul. He must ascend his own calvary and take no decision unless it is urged by love—by love alone. Any other motive would bring him back to Smerdiakov. Take my own life. What do I live for? Who knows but that my last hour may prove the one I had to live my whole life for. I pray to God: Lord, let me die for the sake of love. Now, is one likely to pray for the sake of murder? A man may kill, but he will not pray about it. . . . And yet I know: I have not enough love in my heart. I find my cross too hard to bear.'

'Don't you laugh,' he said a moment later; 'there is nothing to laugh at. I speak of God and His words, and you probably think I am raving. Now, do you really think I am? Tell me.'

I made no reply.

'You remember St. John in the Revelation: "And in those days shall men seek death and shall not find it, and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them." Can there be anything more ghastly than death fleeing from you when you are calling for her? You also

may seek death, and for that matter, all of us. How dare we shed blood? How dare we break the law? Yet we do one and the other. You don't recognise laws: blood is like water to you. But remember, the day will come when you shall recall my words. You will long for the end, and the end will not come. Death will flee from you. I believe in Christ; indeed I do. But I am not with Him. I am not worthy of Him, I am bespattered with mire and blood. Yet Christ in His mercy shall come to me.'

I looked intently into his eyes and replied:

'Why kill, then? You are free to leave us.'

His face grew quite pale.

'How dare you to speak like that? My soul suffers agonies. But I cannot . . . I love.'

'It's all simply rot, Vania. Don't think about it any more.'

He did not answer.

I left him, and, once in the street, I forgot all about the matter.

March 19.

Erna wept and said through her tears:

'You don't love me any more.'

She was sitting in my armchair and covering her face with her hands. How strange that I never noticed before how large her hands are.

I looked at her very intently and said :

'Don't cry, Erna.'

She lifted her eyes and looked at me. Her red nose and her drooping under-lip made her ugly. I turned away from her towards the window. She rose from her armchair and tugged timidly at my sleeve.

'I am sorry, dear,' she said, 'I won't cry any more.'

She cries rather frequently. First her eyes redden, then her cheeks begin to swell, until finally a few barely perceptible tears begin to roll down her cheeks. What silent tears they are !

I took her on my knees.

'Listen, Erna,' I said to her. 'Did I ever say I loved you ? '

'No.'

'Did I deceive you ? Did I not tell you that I loved another woman ? '

She did not answer. She only shivered from head to foot.

'Answer, please.'

'Yes, you did tell me that.'

'Now listen: I will tell you when I get tired of you. I promise not to hide it from you. You trust me, don't you?'

'Oh yes, I do.'

'Well, that settles it. And now stop your crying. I have no one but you.'

I kissed her. She looked happy as she said:

'Oh, how I love you!'

But I could not help noticing her large hands.

March 21.

I don't know a word of English. I speak a broken Russian in the hotel, in the restaurant, and in the street. This leads to occasional unpleasantness.

I went to the theatre last night. A stout business man with a red, perspiring face, sat next to me. He breathed heavily through his nose and was half asleep during the performance. Between the acts he turned to me with the question:

'What is your nationality?'

I did not reply.

'Don't you hear?' he asked again. 'I want to know what your nationality is.'

I answered without looking at him :

'I am a subject of His Majesty the King of England.'

This did not seem to satisfy him.

'Whose subject did you say?' he asked again.

'I am English.'

'Oh, English. . . . Are you? Then you belong to the worst nation on earth. They helped the Japs to sink our flagship at Tsushima, that's what they did. And now you just come over on a trip to Russia as if nothing had happened. I'd put a stop to that!'

People began to look at us.

'I must ask you to stop addressing your remarks to me,' I said in a low voice.

'I will hand you over to the police; that's what I am going to do,' he went on, raising his voice. 'Look at that man! He might be a Japanese spy for all I know, or a swindler of some sort or other. An Englishman, indeed! I wonder why the police don't keep a sharp look-out.'

I felt for the revolver in my pocket.

'I ask you once more to shut up,' I enjoined him.

'Shut up, you say! No, sir; let us go to the police station, you and me. There they will find out what's what. Spies are not allowed in our country, let me tell you! No, I say. Three cheers for Holy Russia!'

I got up and looked straight into his round, bloodshot eyes.

'I warn you for the third time: shut up!'

He shrugged his shoulders and sat down without a word.

I left the theatre.

March 24.

Heinrich is just twenty-two. As a student he used to speak at meetings. In those days he wore glasses and long hair. Now, he has become rather coarse, like Vania: he is lean and usually unshaven. His horse is also lean, the trappings show much wear, the sledge is a second-hand bargain. He is the usual sledge-driver from the poorest class.

The other day he took me and Erna out for a drive in his sledge. When we had passed out of the town gate, he turned round and said:

'I had some trouble with a priest a few days ago. He gave me an address in Round Square and arranged to pay fifteen kopecks

for the fare. Now I did not know where the place was, and simply drove him round and round the streets until finally he lost his temper and began to abuse me. "You scoundrel," he said, "you don't know your way. I will hand you over to the police." "A driver," he went on, "ought to know the town as well as if it were his own bag of oats. You surely have got your certificate by fraud: you must have bribed some one with a rouble or so, and they let you pass without an examination." I had the greatest difficulty in conciliating him. "I humbly beg your pardon, sir," I said to him. "Do forgive me for the sake of Christ!" And he was right. I had not passed the examination as required. I got the tramp Karpusha to pass it for me, and paid him fifty kopecks for his trouble.'

Erna hardly listened to him, but he went on with great volubility:

'I had another adventure quite lately. I was engaged as a driver by an old gentleman and his wife. They seemed to be decent people of the better class—quite an old pair. I drove them through Long Street just at the moment when the tramcar paused at the

stopping place. Without as much as looking at it, I darted across the rails. The old gentleman in the sledge jumped to his feet and kicked me violently on the back of my neck. "You villain!" he cried, "do you want to get us run over? What do you mean by driving like a madman, you dog!"

'"Your Highness need not be alarmed," I said. "It 's quite a simple matter to get across. There was plenty of time before the car moved on." Then I heard the woman say to him in French: "I wish, Jean, you didn't get into such fits of rage. It 's very bad for your health, and a driver is, after all, a human being." She actually said that: a driver is, after all, a human being. And he answered in Russian: "That may be true, but this fellow is a beast for all that. . . ." "O Jean," she said, "you ought to be ashamed to speak like that." Then I felt him tapping my shoulder. "I am sorry, my friend," he said; "I hope you won't mind." And he gave me a tip of twenty kopecks. . . . They must have been liberals. . . . Gee-up there, old girl!'

Heinrich lashed his poor, jagged horse. Erna drew stealthily near me.

'I say, Erna Jakovlevna, how do you like it here? Have you got used to the work?'

Heinrich asked the question rather shyly. Erna answered reluctantly:

'I am quite satisfied. Of course, I've got quite used to the work.'

To the right of us were the black skeletons of the bare trees, on the left the white cloth of the fields. The town stretched behind us. The churches gleamed in the sunlight.

Heinrich stopped talking: save for the creaking of the sledge, there was complete silence. Heinrich brought us back to town, and, as I stepped out of his sledge, I put fifty kopecks into his hand. He took off his cap covered with frost and for a long time his eyes followed us.

Erna whispered:

'May I come to you this evening, darling?'

March 28.

The governor evidently anticipates an attempt on his life. He suddenly left for Podgornoe last night. We followed him there. Vania, Fedor, and Heinrich took their posts of observation at different points. I strolled

about the streets, which was the duty assigned to me.

We know a good deal about him now. We cannot fail, and soon we shall be able to fix a day. Vania is the first to . . .

March 29.

Andrei Petrovich is here. He is a member of the Central Committee, and has to his credit long years of hard labour in the mines and of exile in Siberia; he has lived the life of an old revolutionary. He has melancholy eyes and a pointed grey beard.

We went together to a restaurant.

'You know, George,' he began in an embarrassed manner, 'there is some talk of suspending the work for some time. What do you think of it?'

'Waiter,' I called out, 'put on "The Bells of Corneville" on the gramophone.'

Andrei Petrovich lowered his eyes.

'You won't listen to me,' he said, 'yet it's a very grave matter. How can our present tactics be reconciled with parliamentary work? We must take a definite and consistent stand. One thing or another. We must either adopt

constitutional principles and try to get into Parliament, or frankly set up opposition, and then, of course . . . Well, what do you think ? '

' What do I think ? Nothing.'

' But, please, do make up your mind. Things may come to the point of dismissing you—I mean your organisation.'

' What ? ' I asked rather sharply.

' To dismiss is not the right word, but—well, how should I put it ? . . . Of course we know, George . . . We understand . . . We are aware of what a disappointment it would be to our comrades. We value so highly. . . . And, after all, nothing is yet settled.'

His face was a lemon yellow, and there were wrinkles round his eyes. He surely lived in poor suburban lodgings, subsisted on tea prepared on a spirit lamp, wore a thin overcoat all the winter, and spent all his time in planning and discussing. He was ' doing work.'

' Look here, Andrei Petrovich,' I said to him, ' just go on passing resolutions—you are quite entitled to that. Yet no matter what decisions you make we will go on doing our work all the same.'

'Do you mean it? You 'd refuse to submit to the decision of the Central Committee?'

'Yes.'

'But, I say, George . . .'

'It 's my last word, Andrei Petrovich.'

'And what about the party?' he urged me.

'What about the work?' I rejoined.

He heaved a sigh and stretched out his hand to me.

'I am not going to repeat to them what you have told me,' he said. 'I hope things will turn all right somehow. You are not provoked with me, are you?'

'No.'

'Good-bye, George.'

'Good-bye, Andrei Petrovich.'

The sky was thick with stars, a sign of approaching cold weather. The small, deserted streets had an uncanny look. Andrei Petrovich had to make haste to catch his train. Poor old man, poor grown-up child! . . . Yet theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

March 30.

I have resumed my strolls near Elena's house. It is a very large, grey, and massive

structure. The landlord is a merchant, Kuporossov. How can Elena live in such a house ?

I know it is stupid to stand in the frost, to walk again and again past closed doors, to wait for something that is not likely to happen. Suppose I should really meet her, would that make any difference ? Surely not.

I met Elena's husband yesterday in the main street. I saw him first at a distance, as he stopped at a shop window to look at some photographs. He had his back turned to me. I came nearer, and stood at his side. He is a tall, slim, fair-haired man of about twenty-five, an army officer.

He turned round and knew me at once. I saw malice and jealousy in his eyes which darkened at recognition. I don't know what he saw in mine.

I am neither jealous of him, nor do I hate him. But he stands in my way. There is something else. As I looked at him, the words came back to me :

> If a louse in your shirt
> Mocks you : 'you are a flea,'
> Then go out and kill !

It is thawing to-day, the rivulets are running down the slopes. The puddles are gleaming in the sunlight. The snow is melting, there is a smell of spring, of the invigorating dampness of the woods in the country air. The nights are still frosty, but in the middle of the day the ground becomes slippery and the roofs begin to drip.

I spent the last spring in the south. The nights were pitch dark but for the brightness of the Orion. In the mornings I used to walk down the gravel beach on my way to the sea. The heather was in full bloom in the woods, and the white lilies as well. I climbed the cliffs. The scorching sun shone above my head, and far below me I could see the transparent greenness of the sea. The lizards were darting on the stones, the mosquitoes buzzed in the air. I loved to lie on the hot stones and to listen to the waves. Time would pass and all would suddenly vanish out of my sight—the sea, the wood, the spring flowers. The whole universe became one vast body filled with the infinite bliss of life. . . .

And now ?

A friend of mine, a Belgian officer, has

described to me his life while on service in the Congo. He was alone there and had fifty black soldiers under his command. His cordon was quartered on the bank of a large river where the sun affords no warmth, and where there is a constant danger of yellow fever. Across the river lived a tribe of independent negroes who had their own king and their own laws. Day was followed by night, and then it was again day. And in the morning, at midday, and in the evening he saw the same turbid river with its sandy banks, the same bright green creepers, the same blacks who spoke an incomprehensible language. Sometimes, to while away the idle hours, he took his gun and aimed at some curly head in the foliage.

Whenever his black men succeeded in capturing a negro from across the river, they bound the prisoner to a post, and, to while away the time, they used him as a target for shooting. And *vice versa*: whenever one of the officer's men was caught on the opposite bank of the river, he had his legs and his arms cut off, and was placed in the river and left there all night with only his head sticking

out. The next morning he had his head cut off.

I wonder whether the white men differ from the black. What is the difference? A choice must be made: either 'Thou shalt not kill'—in which case we all are murderers, just as the blacks are; or 'eye for eye and tooth for tooth'—in which case there is hardly need for justification. Such is my desire, and I do what I like. Is not there an element of cowardice in the plea for justification and too much concern for other people's opinions? Why should one fear to be called a murderer and wish to be called a hero? After all, what do I care for what other people might say?

Raskolnikov killed an old woman and was himself choked by her blood. Yet Vania goes out to kill, and he will be happy and blessed. Will he, I wonder? He does it for the sake of love, he says. But does love exist? Did Christ actually rise from the dead on the third day? . . . That's all words and nothing more. . . . No:

> If a louse in your shirt
> Mocks you: 'you are a flea,'
> Then go out and kill!

April 6.

The holy week is over. The merry bells are ringing to-day. It is Easter Sunday. The night passed in joyous processions, in the praise of Christ. The streets have been thronged since morning; there is no room for an apple to fall. Peasant women with white kerchiefs on their heads, soldiers, beggars in rags, schoolboys in their uniforms, they all kiss, crack sunflower-seeds, chatter, laugh, and gossip. Red Easter eggs are sold on the stands, and gingerbreads, and 'American devils,' and coloured balloons fastened to ribbons. The crowd is buzzing like bees in their hive.

In my childhood we used to prepare for the sacrament during the sixth week of the Lent. We kept the fast the whole week, and on the day of the communion no food whatever was touched until after the administration of the sacrament. Then came the Passion week. . . . Oh, the fervour of our genuflexions; the passionate clinging to the Saviour's grave exposed in the church! 'Lord, forgive me my sins.' The Easter matins gave one the feeling of paradise: there was the bright glow of the

candles, the smell of the wax, the white robes of the clergy, the golden shrine. . . . The excitement took one's breath away. Shall Christ arise soon? Shall we soon go home with the consecrated Easter loaf?

At home everything was in festive array. Holiday was in the air during the whole Easter week.

To-day I feel quite out of touch with everything. The bells jar on my nerves, the laughing crowd annoys me. I wish I could go away, anywhere out of this, and never come back.

'Try your luck, sir.' A little girl pushed an envelope into my hands.

The girl is barefoot and in rags. There is nothing festive in her appearance. The piece of grey paper I buy from her contains this prophecy:

'If bad luck pursues you, do not lose hope and do not give way to despair. You will conquer the greatest difficulties and you will force Fortune to turn her wheel towards you. Your enterprise will be crowned with complete success, a greater one than you dare to anticipate.'

Now, is not this a nice Easter egg for me?

April 7.

Vania lives in the drivers' yard with the other men. He sleeps side by side with them on the sleeping benches. He eats out of the common kettle. He looks after his horse himself, and cleans his own carriage. He spends the whole day in the street driving his carriage. He does not complain. He is quite satisfied with his work.

He put on a new tunic to-day, his hair was freshly oiled, and his boots creaked smartly.

He said to me:

'Easter has come at last. It is good. . . . Christ is risen: that is true, George.'

'Well, what is the good of it?'

'Oh, you are . . . You 've no joy in you. You don't accept the universe as it is.'

'Do you?'

'I? That 's different altogether. But I am sorry for you, my dear George.'

'Sorry?'

'Yes. . . . You love no one, not even yourself. . . . We have a driver in the yard, Tikhon—such a dark-skinned, curly-haired peasant. He is as malicious as a devil. He was very rich in his time, but lost all he had in

a big fire. People had set fire to his house out of spite. He can't get over it, and he curses everybody and everything. He curses God, the students, the tradespeople, even the children. He hates them all. "They are dogs, the whole lot of them," he says. "They suck the blood out of Christians, and God enjoys the sight of it, as He looks down on them from Heaven." . . . One day I came into the yard after leaving the tea-house, and there was Tikhon right in the middle of the yard. He stood with his legs wide apart, with his sleeves rolled up. He held the reins in his big fist and was lashing his horse with them across the eyes. The miserable jade, with hardly any life left in her, tried to pull up her head to dodge the blows, but he went on lashing her eyes again and again. "You old carcass," he shouted in a hoarse voice, "you beast! I will give it to you; I will teach you . . ." "Why do you beat the poor beast, Tikhon?" I asked him. "Shut up, you dirty fool!" he answered, and only lashed the horse with increased fury.

'The yard was dirty, there was a foul smell of horse dung, and all the drivers came out in

a crowd and stood around laughing. They seemed to enjoy the performance. "Tikhon is having the time of his life," they said. . . . That is just what you are doing, George. You want to lash every one across the eyes with the reins, my poor friend.'

Vania bit off a small piece of sugar, and, lingering over his tea, proceeded:

'Don't be cross with me, George, and don't laugh. Do you know what I think? We are poor-spirited, all of us. What is our driving force in life? Hate, just bare hate. We don't love, we don't know what it is to love. We strangle, we kill, and we burn, and we are also strangled, hanged, and burned. In the name of what is it done? Tell me.'

I shrugged my shoulders.

'Ask Heinrich, Vania.'

'Oh, Heinrich! He believes in setting men free and in giving them all food. But that is Martha's part. But what of Maria's part? I quite agree that a man may be willing to die for the cause of liberty, and not for freedom alone, but for the sake of a single tear. I also pray to God: Let there be no slaves on earth, let no one go hungry. Yet that is

not everything, George. We know that the life of men is based on untruth. But where is truth? Tell me that, if you can.'

'What is truth? Is that what you mean?'

'Yes, what is truth? You remember: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."'

'Vania, Christ said: Thou shalt not kill.'

'I know, but don't yet speak of blood. Tell me something else. Europe has given the world two great words and has sealed them with her suffering. The first one is freedom, the second is socialism. But what word have we given the world? Much blood has been shed in the name of freedom. Yet who believes in freedom? Much blood has been shed for socialism. Yet do you really think socialism is heaven on earth? Who has gone to the stake for the sake of love, in the name of love? Did any one of us ever dare to say: It is not enough that men should be free, that children should not starve, that mothers should not cry out their eyes? Even more than this, they have need, great need,

to love one another. God must be with them, and in their hearts. Yet it is precisely God and love that they have forgotten. But Martha is only half the truth. The other half is Maria. Where is our Maria? A great cause is being fought now and I strongly believe in it. It is the cause of the peasants, of all Christians: more than that, it is the cause of Christ. It is being fought for the sake of God, for the sake of love. Men shall be free, they shall be fed, and a life of love will be theirs. And I also believe: our people is the people of God. It is inspired with love, and Christ dwells in its midst. Ours is the word of resurrection: Lord, come out! . . . Our faith is small, and we are weak like children. That is why we take up the sword. Not because of our strength do we wield the sword, but because of our weakness and of our fear. But wait for those who will come to-morrow: they will be pure. They shall not need the sword, they will be strong. Yet before they come we shall perish. And our children's grandchildren shall love God. They shall live in God and rejoice in Christ. The world will be revealed to them anew, and they will

discover in it all that we are unable to see at present. . . . And oh, George! To-day is Easter Sunday. Christ is arisen! So let us forget our injuries just for this one day, and let us stop slashing each other across the eyes . . .'

He stopped rather abruptly, as if a new thought suddenly struck him.

'What is the matter, Vania? You seemed about to say something?'

'I will tell you. It's impossible to break the chain. There is no way out for me, none whatever. I am out to kill, yet I believe in the Word, I adore Christ. Oh, the agony of it!'

The tavern was full of the din of drunken men who were celebrating the festive day. Vania bowed his head low over the table-cloth and waited. What could I do . . . but lash him across his eyes with the reins?

April 8.

The next time we met, Vania said:

'Shall I tell you when I knew Christ for the first time and became aware of God? I was an exile in Siberia at the time. One day

I went out hunting. The place was the Obj estuary, and at the point where it flows into the ocean the Obj is like the sea. The sky is low and grey, the turbulent river is also grey. The banks are out of sight, they don't seem to exist. A boat landed me on a small island: it was agreed that my friends should come back for me in the evening. I strolled about the island and shot at the ducks. The place was all swamps, decayed birches, tiny green mounds and moss. I walked on and on, until the bank was completely lost to view. The duck I shot fell somewhere, but I could not find it. While I was looking for it night came on: it grew dark, the fog crept up the river. I made up my mind to return to the bank, and took the direction of the wind to be sure of my way. But with my first step my feet began to sink into the ground. I tried to gain a footing on a mound, but no—it was impossible. I found myself sinking into the swamp. I sank very slowly, about half an inch a minute.

'It grew cold and began to rain. I pulled up one foot to drag it out, but I only sank an inch deeper. Then, in utter despair, I

took my gun and began firing in the air. I hoped some one would hear and come to my rescue. . . .

'Except for the hissing of the wind there was silence. And there I was standing in the swamp almost up to my knees. I thought: The swamp will suck me in, there will be bubbles bursting over my head, and just as before, there will be nothing left but the green mounds. I felt so sick at heart that I almost wept. Then I pulled up my foot again—and was the worse for it. I felt cold like ice, and was shivering like an aspen: so that was how I was going to die—at the world's end . . . in a swamp . . . like a fly. . . . And I felt as if my heart had suddenly become quite empty. Nothing mattered: I was going to die. I bit my lips until the blood came, and I pulled up one foot as hard as I could. This time I succeeded. One foot was free, and a great joy came over me. The boot remained sticking in the swamp and the foot was bleeding. I managed to obtain a footing on a mound; then, leaning on my gun, I began dragging the other foot out of the mire. When, finally, I stood up on both legs I did not dare to move:

I was afraid that my first step would draw me back again into the swamp. I remained standing the whole night on that spot, until the dawn came. And it was then, during that long night, as I stood in the middle of a swamp—with the rain falling, and the black sky, and the howling wind—that I realised in the very depth of my heart that God is above us and within us. And all fear was gone, there was nothing but joy in me; a great weight fell from my heart. The next morning my friends came and rescued me.'

'There are many who see God at the approach of death. It is fear that makes them see Him, Vania.'

'Fear, you say? That may be so. But do you think you could see God in this dirty place? The soul is exulted at the approach of death, when the border is in sight. That is why in most cases men see God in the hour of their death. I also saw Him when death came near.'

'I can tell you,' he went on after a pause, 'I can tell you—nothing can make you happier than to see God. As long as you don't know Him, He never enters your thoughts. You

think of all sorts of things, but never of Him. Some people have got the superman on their brains. Just think: the superman! And they actually think they have discovered the philosopher's stone, have solved the problem of life. In my eyes they all are like Smerdiakov. They say: I cannot love those who are nearest, so instead I love those who are furthest. . . . But how could you love those who are far from you since you are without love for those who are around you? It is easy to die for others, to give them your death. But how much harder is it to live for men. It means to live by love every single day, every minute of one's life; to love, as God loves, all men, all that is alive—to forget one's own existence, to create life not for oneself, and not for those distant. We have become harsh, we are like beasts. Is it not distressing to see how men flounder about? how they seek and cannot find? They believe in Chinese gods, in wooden logs, and they are unable to believe in God and to love Christ! We are corroded by that poison from our childhood. Take Heinrich. He can never call a flower simply a flower: he must always add: a flower of this or that family,

such and such species, with such petals, such corolla; these petty details make him overlook the flower itself. And that 's how we lose the sight of God because of worthless futilities. It 's all mathematics and reason with us. But when I stood on the little mound that night, in the midst of a swamp, and waited for death—it was then I realised that reason is not everything, that there is something above it: but we have blinkers on our eyes, we don't see, we don't know. Why do you laugh, George?'

'Well, you speak like a parson.'

'Never mind that. Tell me: can a man live without love?'

'Of course he can.'

'But how? How?'

'You simply have to spit at the whole world.'

'You don't say that in earnest, George?'

'I do indeed.'

'Oh, George! Oh, my dear friend!'

April 10.

I saw the governor to-day. He is a tall and rather good-looking old man, with a closely clipped moustache: he wears glasses. The square showed its wet pavements which were

only yesterday covered with snow. The ice has melted away, the river gleamed bright in the sun. The sparrows twittered.

A carriage stood at the door of the house. I recognised it at once—the black horses, the yellow spokes. I crossed the square and went up to the house. As I approached it, the door opened wide, the policeman on duty saluted. The governor came slowly down the steps. I stood rooted to the pavement and looked at him. I simply could not tear my eyes away from him. He lifted his head and looked at me. I took off my hat and bowed very low to him. He smiled, and acknowledged my bow by raising his hand to his military cap: I hated him at that moment.

I strolled away toward the park. My feet stuck in the soft clay of the paths. The daws flew about among the birches.

April 10.

I spend my leisure in the Public Library. Most of the readers in the large silent room are bearded students and college girls with short-cropped hair. I, with my shaven face and high collar, look radically different from

them. I read the ancient classics with great interest. They, in the old days, actually had no conscience; they did not seek for the truth. They simply lived—just as the grass grows and the birds sing. Sacred simplicity—is not that the only way to accept life, and not to revolt against it? They appealed to their gods to protect them . . . and the gods protected them. Ulysses had Pallas to stand by him in the fights against the plunderers of his property.

What god could I pray to not to abandon me? To whom could I appeal for help and protection? I am alone. But since there is no one to protect me, I must protect myself. Since I have no god, I shall be my own god.

What was it Vania told me? To think that everything is permissible leads to Smerdiakov. . . . But Smerdiakov is no worse than all the rest.

April 18.

Erna said to me:

'I feel as if I had lived only in order to meet you. I saw you in my dreams. All my prayers were for you.'

'You forget our cause, Erna.'

'We shall die together for it. . . . Oh, my love, when I am with you, I feel like a little girl, like a child. . . . I know I have nothing to offer you. . . . Nothing but my love. Take it. . . .'

And she burst into tears.

'Don't cry, Erna.'

'I am crying with joy. . . . But it's over. You see, I am not crying any more. And now listen: I have something to tell you. Heinrich . . .'

'What about him?'

'Please, don't take it unkindly. . . . Heinrich told me yesterday that he loved me.'

'Well?'

'Well—I don't love him. You know that. It's you alone I love. Are you jealous, darling? Tell me,' she whispered into my ear.

'Jealous? What an idea!'

'You must not. I do not care a bit for him. But he is so miserable, and I feel sorry for him. Yet I don't think I ought to have listened to him. I felt as if I were betraying you. . . .'

'Betraying me? But, Erna . . .'

'I love you so deeply, but I pity him never-

theless. I told him I would be his friend. You don't mind, do you ? '

' Of course not, Erna. I don't mind, and I am not jealous.'

She dropped her eyes. She was hurt.

' Oh, I see. You simply don't care.'

' Look here, Erna,' I said. ' Some women are faithful wives and passionate lovers and devoted friends. Yet they are not to be compared with that superior type of woman—the woman who is a born queen. She does not give her heart to any one. Her love is a splendid gift she bestows on the elect one.'

Erna listened with a terrified look in her eyes. Then she said : ' I see—you don't love me at all.'

I answered her with a kiss. She pressed her head to my breast and whispered :

' Shall we die together, love ? '

' Maybe we shall.'

She went to sleep in my arms.

April 15.

I went out for a drive in Heinrich's carriage.

' Well, how do you feel ? ' I asked him.

He shook his head.

'It is not a pleasant sort of job,' he said, 'to be all day out in the street in the rain, driving a cab.'

'I quite agree,' I said to him, 'and it is the more unpleasant when a man is in love.'

'What do you know?' He quickly turned round toward me.

'What do I know? I don't know anything, and I don't want to know.'

'You make fun of everything, George.'

'I don't.'

We passed through the park. Gleaming drops were falling on us from the wet branches. There were delicate green patches of new grass on the lawns.

'George!'

'Well?'

'George, is not there some danger of accidents in the preparation of explosives?'

'Of course there is. Accidents do happen now and then.'

'Then Erna might be blown up?'

'She might.'

'George!'

'What?'

'Why did you entrust the work to her?'

'She is an expert.'

'Oh, is she?'

'Yes.'

'Could not some one else do it?'

'I don't think so. But why are you so excited about it?'

'I am not. I simply wanted to know.'

On our way back he again turned to me.

'George,' he said.

'Well?'

'Is it going to be soon?'

'Yes.'

'When?'

'In about two or three weeks.'

'And you are sure you could not get some one to come here and take the place of Erna?'

'I am sure.'

He shrank within his blue driver's coat, but said nothing.

'Good day, Heinrich, and don't you fret. Cheer up!'

'I am in the best of spirits.'

'Don't let your thoughts be concerned with any one in particular. You will be much happier, I can tell you.'

'I know. You need not tell me. Good-bye.'

He drove away slowly. This time it was I who followed him with my eyes for a long while.

April 16.

I ask myself: Do I still love Elena? Do I not love only a shadow, only my former love for her? Who knows but that Vania is right, and I do not love any one—cannot love? And why should one love, after all?

Heinrich loves Erna, and will love her, only her, all his life. But his love does not make him happy. On the contrary, it makes him miserable, while my love is all joy.

I am sitting again in my room, in the dull room of the dull hotel. Hundreds of people live under the same roof with me. I am a stranger to them. I am a stranger within the stone walls of the town. I am a stranger everywhere. Erna has given all her being to me without leaving a thought for herself, but I don't care for her, and I repay her devotion —with what? With friendship? Or perhaps with a false pretence of friendship? How stupid to think of Elena and to kiss Erna—

and yet that 's what I am doing. But after all, what does it matter ?

April 18.

The governor is back in town. All our plans are ruined again. Once more we must begin to watch his movements. This is much more difficult here. The house is under the constant guard of sentries : detectives are posted in the square and at the house gate. They keep a close watch on every one passing in the street. They suspect every cab-driver.

Of course they don't know where we are and who we are. Yet rumours are already circulating in the town.

Last night, in a tavern, I heard a conversation between two men. . . . One looked like a shopman, and the other, a boy of about eighteen, might have been his assistant.

' There is the will of God in everything,' said the elder man in a positive voice, ' and no one can escape his fate. Now that 's how they say it all happened. A young woman came to see him, and she had a written petition which she wanted to present to him. She was admitted into his office, and while he was

reading her petition she suddenly produced a revolver out of her pocket and fired at him. She actually planted four bullets in him.'

The boy threw up his hands in excitement.

'Well, well! . . . He was killed on the spot, I suppose.'

'He was not—that 's the strange thing.'

'And then, what happened?'

'Why, they hanged her—naturally. But afterward another young woman requested an interview with him—and she also brought a petition to give him.'

'Did they admit her into his presence?'

'Certainly not. She insisted, and gave all sorts of reasons. But they searched her in the hall—and what do you think? They actually found a revolver hidden in her hair. God saved his life that time.'

'What did they do to her?'

'They sent her to the gallows—what else was there to do? But now comes the most extraordinary part of it.' He emphasised with a broad gesture his amazement at the workings of fate. 'A short time afterward he was taking a walk in his garden, which, as always, was carefully guarded by the police, when a

sudden shot was fired at him from ambush. The bullet went right through his heart. He had hardly time to scream.'

'Oh, what devils they are. . . . Just imagine!'

'Ye—es. The murderer was hanged—of course—but the other died, all the same. No one can escape his fate. . . .'

I met Elena yesterday . . . at last! I had not been thinking of her for some time. I had almost forgotten that she lived in the same town. I was walking in the street when I suddenly heard some one call me. I looked around—and I saw Elena. I saw her large grey eyes, her black hair. As we walked side by side, she said to me with a smile:

'You have forgotten me.'

A shaft of bright light shone into our faces. The street was ablaze with light of the sunset, the pavement shone like gold. I blushed like a poppy flower and said to her:

'No, I have not.'

She took my arm and asked in a low voice:

'Are you here for long?'

'I can't tell.'

'What are you doing here?'

'I don't know.'

'Oh, don't you?'

'No.'

She blushed deeply and said:

'But I know. I will tell you.'

'Do, please.'

'You . . .'

'Well, perhaps.'

The evening light was now gone. The air became chilly and grey. I had so much to tell her, but no words came to me. I only said:

'Why do you live here?'

'This is where my husband is stationed.'

'Your husband?'

I suddenly remembered all about that husband of hers. Of course, she had a husband. Haven't I met him?

'Good-bye,' I said, and stretched out my hand awkwardly.

'Must you go?' she asked.

'I must.'

'Don't go yet.'

I looked into her eyes. There was a spark of love in them. But I remembered her husband.

'*Au revoir*,' I said.

Everything seemed dark and deserted. I

went to the Tivoli. I listened to the noisy orchestra, and to the shameless laughing of the women. . . . I felt very lonely.

April 25.

The governor left for X. I followed him there. I felt happy in seeing the broad river, the glittering domes. The spring is very lovely in these parts: it is as virginal and as bright as a child of sixteen.

The governor went by train to a near-by suburb. I also went there in a first-class car by the same train. A smartly dressed lady entered my compartment. She dropped her handkerchief. I picked it up.

'You are not a Russian, are you?' she asked in French, and looked intently at me.

'I am English.'

'English? May I ask your name? I think we have met before.'

After a moment's hesitation I took out my visiting card, which bore the inscription: 'George O'Brien, Engineer, London.'

'So you are an engineer. I am very pleased to have met you. I hope you will call on me. I will look forward to seeing you.'

At the station, in the refreshment-room, I saw her having tea with a Jew. He looked very much like a spy. I came up to her and said :

' I am glad to see you again.'

She laughed.

I walked up and down the platform with her.

Once more in the train the guard came to collect the tickets. She handed him a grey envelope, and I could read plainly at the bottom of it : ' Secret Police Department.'

' You have a season ticket, I see,' I said to her.

She blushed violently.

' Oh no,' she answered. . . . ' Not exactly, I mean. I had it given to me by a friend. . . . How happy I am to have met you. I do like the English.'

A whistle—the train stopped. We arrived. I took my leave of her, but followed her stealthily at a distance.

I saw her enter the office of the gendarmerie.

' Oh, so that 's how things stand,' I thought.

Once in the hotel again, I decided that I must act. Either I am watched—and then,

of course, I am lost. Or else my meeting with the woman in the train was simply an accident, a foolish coincidence. In any case, I thought, I must know the truth, and so I decided to challenge fate. I put on my top-hat, took a smart carriage and drove to her address. I pulled at the entrance bell.

'Is madam at home?'

'Yes, please, come in.'

The room into which I was admitted looked like a pretty box of sweets. There was a large bouquet of yellow roses on a table in the corner —obviously the gift of an admirer. Many portraits of the lady of the house in different poses were standing upon the tables and hanging upon the walls.

'Oh, that's you. . . . How kind to have called. Be seated, please.' We dropped again into French. I lit a cigar, and put my hat on my knees.

'Do you like the Russian women?' she asked.

'I think them the most charming in the world.'

Then came a knock at the door.

'Come in.'

Two men entered: they had very dark hair and thick moustaches. They looked like cardsharpers or men who lived on women.

We shook hands.

The woman went with them to the window.

'Who is he?' I heard one of them ask in a whisper.

'Oh, an engineer—an Englishman. Very rich. You may speak freely—don't mind him. He doesn't know a word of Russian.'

I rose from my seat.

'I am sorry, I must go. Good day, madam.'

I again shook hands with all of them. Once in the street, I felt very amused. Thank God, they think me an Englishman.

April 26.

The governor is going back to N. I have still an hour to myself before the train starts. I stroll aimlessly about the town. It is getting dark. There is a glowing red sunset across the river, where a well-defined spire can be seen piercing the sky. There is a three-coloured sentry-box at the oak posts of the prison gate—the dark mouth of the corridor is behind the white walls. The echo of the

footsteps resounds on the stone slabs. . . . Then the darkness, the barred windows . . . the trembling melody of the tower-clock chimes. . . . There is vast melancholy upon the whole earth.

I can see the low bastions, the grey walls. We are too weak . . . too weak! Yet the day of the great wrath will come. . . . Who will be able to withstand it?

April 28.

It is still cold in the park. The linden trees are yet bare, but the shrubs are green with foliage. The birds are singing in the young bushes.

Elena stooped to pick flowers. She turned to me and laughed: 'Isn't it lovely out here?' she said. 'I feel so happy and gay. And you?'

I also felt happy and gay. I looked into her eyes and wanted to tell her that she was the joy and the bright light of the day. . . . I joined unwittingly in her laughter.

'I have not seen you for so long,' she said. 'Where have you been all this time? Where have you lived? What have you seen, what have you learned? What did you think of me?'

Without waiting for an answer she added with a deep blush :

' I felt very anxious for you.'

Surely there never was such a morning. The lilies-of-the-valley were in full bloom, there was a fragrance of spring in the air. Fluffy clouds melted away in the sky as they chased one another. My heart was full of joy : she had shown a deep concern for me.

' Do you know, I seem to live without noticing life,' said Elena. ' I look at you now, and I have a feeling as if you were not actually yourself, but a stranger . . . and yet some one who is dear to me. . . . After all, you *are* a stranger. Do I know you ? Do you know me ? But we need not know each other ? We are happy without it, aren't we ? '

After a pause she added smilingly :

' Well, do tell me what you have been doing ; what you are living for.'

' You know what I am living for.'

She dropped her eyes.

' Oh, then it *is* true ? '

Her face became clouded. She took my hand and was silent for a while.

' Look here,' she began at last. ' Of course,

I don't understand anything about it. . . . But tell me, why do you want it? Why? Isn't it just lovely here? The spring has come. The birds are singing. But what are you thinking of? What do you live for? Why, dearest?'

I had so much to say to her. . . . But somehow I could not find words. I knew that they would be mere words to her, that she would be unable to grasp their meaning.

And she repeated insistingly:

'Why, dearest?'

There was dew on the leaves. I touched a branch with my shoulder—and down came a shower of glistening drops. I was silent.

'Why not live simply for life's sake? Or, perhaps I misunderstood you? Or else, you are right and it must be done? . . . No, no,' she answered her own question, 'I am sure you are wrong. . . .'

I asked timidly, like a boy:

'What is right, Elena?'

'I don't know; how could I know? Why do you ask *me*? I know nothing . . . and I don't want to know. . . . But we are happy to-day. . . .'

There she was again laughing and picking flowers, and I thought how lonely I would feel presently after her departure, and that childlike laugh of hers would sound not for me but for another.

The blood rushed to my face, and I said in a barely audible voice :

' Elena ! '

' What, dearest ? '

' You have asked me what I was doing ? . . . I was thinking of you.'

' Of me ? '

' Yes. . . . Don't you see . . . I love you.'

She dropped her eyes.

' Don't say that to me.'

' Why not ? '

' O God. . . . Please, don't. Good-bye.'

She walked away quickly. And for some time her black dress glimmered among the white birches.

April 29.

I wrote Elena a letter :

' I feel as if I had not seen you for years. I am conscious every hour, every minute that you are not with me. I see your dear eyes before me day and night, everywhere, always.

'I believe in love, in my right to love. At the very bottom of my heart I feel so tranquilly confident—it is a foreboding of what must be. And it shall be.

'I love you and I am happy. Love and be happy as I am.'

I received a brief answer:

'To-morrow in the park, at six.'

April 30.

Elena said to me:

'I am so happy because you are with me now. . . . But don't speak to me of love.'

I was silent.

'No, you must promise not to speak about your love. . . . And don't be sad; don't think about anything.'

'I was thinking of you.'

'Of me? Don't. . . .'

'Why?'

And before she could say a word I went on:

'Is it because you are married? Because of your husband? The duty of a faithful wife? Oh, of course. . . . Forgive me. . . . I had dared to speak of my love, and I had dared to ask for yours! Virtuous wives prize only

their peaceful home, the clean chambers of their heart. . . . Forgive me.'

'Aren't you ashamed of yourself?'

'I am not. Oh, I know: the tragedy of love and duty; the tragedy of love and the wedding gown, of legal marriage and of legal kisses exchanged by husband and wife. . . . No, Elena; it 's not I who am ashamed—but you.'

'Be silent!'

We walked for some moments along the narrow path in the park without saying a word. Her face was still angry.

'I wonder,' she said, turning round to me, 'whether you recognise a single law?'

'Not for me, but for you.'

'No. . . . But surely . . . What is your aim in life? Why do you live like this?'

'I don't know.'

'You don't know?'

'No.'

'Then I can tell you that 's your law. You said to yourself: "It is necessary."'

'No. I said to myself: "I desire it."'

'So you desire it?'

She looked straight into my eyes in astonishment.

'You desire it?'

'Well, yes.'

Suddenly she put her hands on my shoulders.

'George, dearest!'

With a swift graceful movement she kissed my lips. It was a long, burning kiss. When I opened my eyes she was gone. Where was she? Or was it not all a dream?

May 1.

It is the first of May—a festive day. I love this day—it has so much light and joy. To-day of all days. . . . But I have not seen the governor to-day.

He has been on his guard of late. He remains at home and we shadow him in vain. We see only detectives and soldiers. And they see us. It seems better to stop our surveillance for the present. I have found out that he is to visit the theatre on the thirteenth. We will guard all the gates. Vania will take his post at one gate, Fedor at the other, Heinrich at the third. And we will patiently wait. . . .

I am anticipating the joy of our triumph. I can see the dark vaults of the church, the

lighted candles. . . . I can hear the chant of the prayers, the stifling smell of the incense. . . .

May 2.

I am in a kind of fever these days. My whole will is concentrated on one desire. I look out very carefully every day whether I am not being watched. I am so afraid we shall not reap what we have sown. But I will not surrender alive. I am staying now in the 'Edinburgh Hotel.' I had my passport registered and brought back to my room last night. The man who brought it remained standing at the door, and said after some hesitation:

'I beg your pardon, sir, but the police inspector wants to know what your religion is?'

A very strange question. It is stated in my passport that I am a Protestant. I asked without turning my head:

'What?'

'Your religion, sir—what is it?'

I took my passport from the table, and began to read aloud the title of Lord Lansdowne:

We, Henry Charles Keith Petty Fitz-Maurice, Marquess of Lansdowne, Earl Wycombe, etc.

As I don't know English, I pronounced the syllables slowly one after another.

The man listened with much attention.

'Do you understand?'

'Yes, sir.'

I said with a strong foreign accent:

'Go, tell the police inspector: I'm going to telegraph immediately to the ambassador. Do you understand?'

'Yes, sir.'

I stood with my back to him, and I said in a loud voice, looking out of the window:

'You may go now.'

He bowed and went out. I was alone. Is it possible that I am being watched?

May 6.

We met out of the town, close to the railway line—I, Vania, Heinrich and Fedor. They were in high boots and in caps—like peasants.

I said to them:

'The governor is going to the theatre on the thirteenth. We must settle our posts now. Who is going to be first?'

Heinrich became very agitated.

'I want to be the first,' he said.

Vania has fair hair, grey eyes, and a pale forehead. I looked questioningly at him.

'I insist on being given the first place,' repeated Heinrich.

Vania smiled affectionately.

'No, Heinrich,' he said, 'I have been waiting for the chance ever so long. It is my turn. I must be first. I hope you won't mind.' Fedor went on smoking his cigarette indifferently.

'And you, Fedor, what have you to say?' I asked him.

'Well, you know, I am always ready.'

Then there was silence.

The narrow rails of the line stretched into the distance, where the telegraph poles were gradually lost to view. It was quiet. Only the buzz of the telegraph wires was audible.

'Look here,' said Vania. 'I was just thinking that I might miss him very easily. In throwing a bomb like that one can't always be sure to hit. I might, for example, only strike the back wheel of the carriage.'

Heinrich looked up, very agitated.

'That 's true. . . . What shall we do?'

Fedor listened very attentively.

'I know,' said Vania; 'the best plan is to throw oneself right in front of the horses.'

'Why?'

'That would mean certain death for him.'

'And for you too.'

'Yes, and for me.'

Fedor shrugged his shoulders with contempt.

'There is no need whatever for that,' he said. 'Run up simply to the window and throw the bomb at the glass pane. That's all.'

I looked at them. Fedor was lying on his back on the grass and the sun scorched his dark cheeks. He was blinking; the spring made him feel happy. Vania, pale, looked pensively into the distance. Heinrich walked up and down and smoked in nervous puffs. Above us was the blue sky.

'I will tell you when to sell your horses and carriages. Fedor will dress up like an officer; you, Vania, will disguise yourself as a hall-porter; while you, Heinrich, will remain a peasant in a peasant's coat.'

Fedor turned to me and laughed with satisfaction.

'Am I to be promoted to an officer's rank?'

he said. 'That 's fine. . . . Nice to be a gentleman again.'

I shook hands with them all and left them. Heinrich overtook me on my way home.

'George,' he said.

'Well?'

'George. . . . Just think. . . . Is Vania going to do it?'

'Of course he is.'

'That means, he is lost.'

He looked down under his feet: our footprints showed clearly on the young grass.

'I can't stand that,' he said in a hoarse voice.

'What is it you can't stand?'

'Well, his going to his death. . . .'

He stopped and went on talking very fast:

'Let me be the first. It is much better that I should perish—not he. He . . .'

'Yes, certainly.'

'No, George, listen. . . . Can you imagine Vania gone? We calmly decide a thing, and it means the certain death of Vania. . . . The certainty of it is so ghastly. No, for God's sake, no! . . .'

He plucked his beard. His hands were trembling.

'Look here, Heinrich,' I said to him. 'It must be one or the other. Either you stick to it, and in that case stop your tedious discussions, or else go on discussing; go back—to your university.'

He was silent. I took him under the arm.

'Remember,' I said, 'General Togo said to his Japanese: "I only regret that I have no sons who might share your lot." Well, we also should regret but one thing—that we cannot share Vania's lot. And there is nothing to shed tears about.'

We were now close to the town. Window-panes were glittering in the sun at a distance. Heinrich raised his eyes.

'You are right, George,' he said.

I laughed.

'You just wait,' I said. 'Suum cuique.'

May 7.

Erna came into my room, sat down in a corner and began to smoke. I don't like to see women smoking, and am always on the point of telling her.

'Is it going to be soon, Georgie dear?' she asked.

'Very soon.'

'When?'

'On the thirteenth.'

She wrapped herself up in her warm shawl. Only her blue eyes were visible.

'Who will throw the first bomb?'

'Vania.'

'Vania?'

'Yes, Vania.'

Her large hands, her affectionate voice, her red cheeks irritated me. I turned away from her.

She went on smoking for some time. Afterward she rose and walked about the room in silence. I looked at her hair. It was flaxen and curled at the temples and on her forehead. How could I have kissed her?

She stopped and looked timidly into my eyes.

'Do you believe in the success of the venture?'

'Of course.'

She sighed.

'May God help us.'

'Don't you believe in it, Erna?'

'Oh yes, I do.'

'If you don't, you had better part with us,' I said.

'But, Georgie darling, why do you speak like that? I do believe.'

And I repeated:

'Yes, leave us.'

'What is the matter with you, George?'

'Oh, nothing! Do leave me in peace.'

She returned to her corner and wrapped herself up in her shawl. I hate those shawls. I said nothing.

The clock was ticking on the mantelpiece. I felt nervous. I waited for reproaches and tears.

'Georgie!'

'What is it, Erna?'

'Nothing.'

'Well, good-night. I feel tired.'

At the door she whispered sadly:

'Good-bye, love.'

She let her shoulders droop. Her lips quivered.

I pitied her.

May 8.

People say that where there is no law there is no crime. If that is true, where is the wrong in my kissing Elena? And why am I to blame in not caring any longer for Erna? I ask myself this and I can find no answer.

If I acknowledged a law I probably would not kill; I would not have made love to Erna, and would not be seeking the love of Elena. But what is my law?

They also say: love your fellow-man. But suppose there is no love in my heart? They say: respect him. But suppose there is no respect for others in me? I am on the border of life and death. Words about sin mean nothing to me. I may say about myself: 'I looked up and I saw the pale horse and the rider whose name is death.' Wherever that horse stamps its feet there the grass withers: and where the grass withers there is no life and consequently no law. For Death recognises no law.

May 9.

Fedor sold his horse and carriage in the horse market. He is an officer now, a cornet in the dragoons. His spurs clash, his sword clangs on the pavement. He looks taller in his uniform and walks with more self-assurance.

I sat with him at a table in an open-air café. The violins were singing in the orchestra. Military uniforms passed quickly before our

eyes, as well as the women's white dresses. The soldiers saluted Fedor.

He turned to me.

'How much do you suppose,' he said, 'that dress cost?'

He pointed to a smartly dressed woman at the next table.

I shrugged my shoulders.

'I don't know. I should think about two hundred roubles.'

'Two hundred, you say?'

'Yes, I should think so.'

He gave no answer.

'Look here,' he said after a while.

'Well?'

'When I worked I had a rouble a day.'

'Well?'

'Well, nothing.'

The electric lights were turned on. A white globe shone quite low over our heads. Blue shadows streaked the white cloth.

'I say . . .'

'What, Fedor?'

'Well, why not do it . . . to these?'

'Do what?'

'You know yourself.'

'But why?'

'Let them know . . .'

'What?'

'That the working people die like flies.'

'But, Fedor. . . . We are not anarchists.'

He asked: 'What?'

'That is anarchism, Fedor.'

'Anarchism? . . . What a word! . . . All I know is that the costume over there cost two hundred roubles, and that there are children begging pennies in the street. . . . What do you call that?'

It was strange to look at his silver shoulder-straps, his white uniform, the white brim of his cap, and to listen to such talk.

'What makes you so bitter, Fedor?' I asked.

'There is no justice in life,' he answered. 'We toil all day in the factories, our mothers weep, our sisters walk the streets. . . . And these creatures. . . . Two hundred roubles! . . . Oh, they ought to be wiped out, all of them. . . . No doubt about that.'

The bushes were becoming lost in the darkness, the wood began to look depressingly dark. Fedor sat leaning on the table with his elbows

and did not speak. There was a look of hate in his eyes.

'They all ought to be wiped out—no doubt about that!'

May 10.

Two days more. . . . In two days . . .

Elena's image appeared before me dimly. I shut my eyes and I tried to resurrect it. I knew that she had black eyebrows and slender hands, but I really did not see her. I saw only a dead mask. And yet a secret hope was alive in my soul: she will be mine.

Everything is the same to me now. There was a thunderstorm yesterday. I heard the season's first thunder. To-day the grass looks fresh as from a bath, the lilacs are in bloom. There is the cry of the cuckoo at sunset. But I hardly notice the spring. I have almost forgotten about Elena. Well, let her love her husband, let her not be mine. I am alone, I will remain alone. That 's what I am saying to myself now. But I know: a few days will pass, and my thoughts will be with her again. My life will move in an iron circle as before. That is, if these days will pass and . . .

I walked along the boulevard to-day. There was still the smell of rain in the air, but the birds were already twittering. I suddenly noticed a man who walked at my right on the wet path. He was a Jew in a bowler hat, in a long yellow overcoat. He stopped at the corner and followed me with his eyes for a long while.

I asked myself again : am I being watched ?

May 11.

Vania is still a cab-driver. He came to meet me in his holiday dress. We sat down on a bench in the square, opposite the cathedral.

'Well, Georgie, the end has come.'

'Yes, Vania, it has come.'

'I am so happy. My whole life is like a dream to me now. I feel as if I were born just in order to die, and . . .'

The spires of the white temple seemed to pierce the sky. Down below the river was glittering in the sun. Vania was quite composed.

'It is hard to believe in a miracle,' he said. 'But once you believe, all problems cease to exist. No need of violence, no need of the

sword. No need of blood. No need of the commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." But that's the trouble—we have no faith. A miracle, we say, is just a story for children. Now you listen and tell me whether it's just a story or something more.'

'Perhaps it is not at all a story but the truth.'

He took out of his pocket a Bible bound in black leather with a gilded cross on the cover.

'Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days.

'Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God?

'Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

'And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

'And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.

'And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him and let him go. . . .'

Vania shut the Bible. I did not speak. He repeated, absorbed in his thoughts:

'Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he has been dead four days.' The swallows were circling in the blue air. In the monastery across the river the bells were ringing for vespers. Vania said in a whisper:

'You hear, Georgie: four days. . . .'

'Well?'

'It is a great miracle.'

'And is the saint Seraphim of Sarov[1] also a miracle?'

Vania did not hear me.

'George,' he said.

'Yes, Vania.'

'Listen':

'But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and, as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre.

'And seeth two angels in white sitting,

[1] A Russian saint, canonised under Alexander III.

the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

'And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

'And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not it was Jesus.

'Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

'Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.'

Vania stopped reading. There was silence around us.

'Did you hear, George?' he asked.

'Yes, I heard it all.'

'Is it merely a story? Tell me.'

'But you, Vania, do you believe it?'

He went on, quoting the text by heart:

'But Thomas, one of the twelve, called

Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

'The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

'And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

'Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.

'And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

'Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'

'Yes, George, "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."'

Evening was approaching with its fresh coolness. Vania shook his curly head vigorously.

'Good-bye, George, for all time. And be happy.'

There was sadness in his honest eyes.

'What about "thou shalt not kill," Vania?' I asked.

'No, George, no. . . .'

'You say that?'

'I do. We have to kill in order that no one should kill after that; that men should live for ever according to the divine law, and that love should for ever brighten men's lot.'

'This is sacrilege, Vania.'

'I know. And, "thou shalt not kill"?'

He stretched out to me both his hands and smiled with an expansive bright smile. Then he kissed me like a brother.

'Be happy, George!'

I also kissed him.

May 11.

I had an appointment to-day with Fedor in a tea-shop. We discussed our plans in detail.

I left the place first. Once in the street, I noticed three detectives at a neighbouring gate. I knew them by their furtive eyes and fixed glances. I stopped at a shop window and stood without moving. I became a detec-

tive myself and watched them. I wondered whether they were on our track.

In a short while Fedor came out of the tea-shop, and walked tranquilly down the street. One of the detectives, a tall, red-haired man in a white apron and a soiled cap, rushed immediately into a cab. The other two ran after him. But a 'likhách'[1] drove empty up the street and Fedor hired him. The whole pack rushed after him—the pack of hare hounds. I thought him lost.

I myself did not remain unobserved. I saw very queer people near me. There was a man in an overcoat which was obviously not his own. He stood with his head bent low, and his red hands folded behind his back. Then I saw a lame man in tatters, a beggar from the market-place. Presently I noticed also my recent acquaintance, the Jew. He was in a top-hat with a black clipped beard. I realised that I was about to be arrested.

The clock struck twelve. At one o'clock I had an appointment with Vania in a lane. Vania had not yet sold his horse. He was

[1] Superior class of cab-drivers, provided with fast-running horses and smart carriages.

still a cab-driver. I secretly hoped that he would manage to drive me quickly away.

I turned into the main street, where I hoped to get lost in the crowd. But there was again the same figure in front of me with its hands folded behind, and its legs tangled in the tails of the too long overcoat. And the Jew in the top-hat walked persistently at my side. I noticed that he did not turn his eyes from me for a moment. I turned into the lane. Vania was not there. I walked the whole length of it and turned sharply round. Some one's eyes penetrated me like nails. Some one was watching with sharp eyes, some one was quick to follow every step I made.

I returned to the main street. I calculated that at the next turning there was a passage with a door leading into the lane. I rushed into the passage and took refuge behind the entrance gate. I pressed my back to the wall and remained motionless. The minutes passed slowly like hours. I knew that the black Jew was close by. He was watching and waiting for me. He was the cat and I the mouse. The door could be reached in four steps. With a sudden spring I was in the lane. I saw

Vania driving slowly in front of me. I rushed towards him.

'Drive as fast as you can, Vania!'

The wheels rattled on the pavement, the springs creaked at the turnings. We turned round a corner. Vania lashed his poor horse. I looked back; the street was empty at the turning. No one was following us. We were safe.

But we are being watched; there is no doubt about that. But I am not losing hope. Perhaps we had attracted the notice of the detectives merely by accident? They may not know who we are. And we may still carry out our plan before they catch us.

But I suddenly recalled Fedor. What has become of him? Has he been arrested?

May 12.

I went to the restaurant where Fedor was to meet me. I had to make sure as to what had happened to him. If he was captured, our project was doomed. If he managed to escape safely, we might by to-morrow execute our plan, and then . . .

I sat down at a table by the window. I

could see the street, the policeman in his wet cloak, the driver on the seat of the closed carriage, the umbrella of an occasional passer-by. The rain was beating on the window-panes and streaming depressingly down the roofs. It was altogether grey and dull.

Fedor entered with his spurs clanking. He shook hands with me. The familiar figures loomed in the street, in the rain. Two men, hiding their wet faces in their collars, were watching the entrance door. Two more were standing with the policeman at the corner. One of them was the lame beggar I saw yesterday. My eyes sought the Jew: there he was in the gateway.

'Fedor,' I said, 'we are being watched.'

'No?'

'Well, we are.'

'Impossible!'

I took him by his sleeve.

'Look,' I said.

He looked intently out of the window.

'Oh, that lame man . . . wet like a dog. . . . Yes, indeed. . . . Damn it! . . . What are we to do, George?'

The house was surrounded. We had little

chance of escaping. We would be stopped in the street.

'Is your revolver ready, Fedor?'

'Eight cartridges.'

'Let us go, then.'

We came down the stairs. The hall-porter in his braided livery respectfully opened the front door for us.

We walked out shoulder to shoulder. Fedor's sword trailed after him with a clang. I knew: Fedor was ready for anything, and so was I.

Suddenly Fedor nudged me with his elbow and whispered hurriedly: 'Look, George, look.'

A single 'likhách' was standing at the corner.

'Here is a quick horse for you, sir. . . .'

'Be quick, run. . . . There will be five roubles for your tip.'

The prize trotter went at a quick trot. Clods of mud flew in our faces. A net of rain stretched across the sky. A voice shouted from behind: 'Stop!'

The horse was steaming heavily. I shook the driver by his shoulder.

'Go on, driver! You will have another five roubles!'

Once in the park, we jumped into the bushes. The grass was wet, the trees were heavy with rain. The rain made hollows in the roads. We ran across the puddles.

'Good-bye, Fedor. Leave town this evening.'

His uniform showed for an instant among the green bushes and disappeared. I returned to town in the evening, but did not go back to the hotel. Our plan was completely ruined. And what has become of Vania, of Heinrich, and of Erna ?

I had no lodging to go to, and I spent the long night walking the streets. The time dragged on slowly. I felt tired and chilled, and my feet were aching. But I was not disheartened. My hope remained within me.

May 13.

I sent a note to Elena, and made an appointment with her. She came to meet me in the park. She had sparkling eyes and black curls. 'The great waters cannot quench love,' I said to her, 'nor can the streams drown it: love is strong like death. . . . Say one word, Elena, and I will give up everything to be your slave.'

She looked at me and smiled. Then she said musingly, 'No.'

I bent closely to her and said in a whisper:

'Do you love him, Elena? . . . Do you?'

She was silent.

'You don't love me, Elena?'

With a rapid movement she suddenly stretched out her long, slender arms and embraced me. She whispered:

'I love you, I love you, I love you.'

I heard her words and felt the contact of her body. A fierce joy flamed up within me, and I said with an effort:

'I am going away, Elena.'

She grew pale. I looked straight into her eyes.

'Listen, Elena,' I said. 'You don't love me. You don't know me. If you loved me you would be worried about me. I am being shadowed; my life hangs by a thread. But it is all the same to me since you do not love me.'

'What?' she asked in agitation. 'Did you say they are shadowing you?'

The evening wind was rustling dryly, there

was a smell of rain in the air. No one was to be seen in the park: we were alone.

'Yes, I am being shadowed,' I said in a loud voice.

'George dear, get away quickly! . . . quickly! . . .'

I laughed.

'Not to return,' I said. 'Is that what you mean?'

'Oh no,' she said. 'I love you, George.'

'Don't mock at me. How dare you speak of love? Is that love? You are living with your husband; how can you love a stranger at the same time?'

'I love you, George.'

'You love me? . . . But there is your husband.'

'Oh, my husband. . . . Don't speak about him, please.'

'But you do love him. Don't you?'

Again she did not reply, and I went on:

'I love you, Elena,' I said. 'I will come back and you shall be mine. You shall.'

'I am with you, dearest; I am yours. . . .'

'And his as well. Do you mean that? and his?'

I left her. The evening was passing. The lanterns showed a yellow light. Anger was stifling me. I went on repeating to myself: his and mine, mine and his. And his, and his, and his.

May 15.

To-day's papers announce that preparations have been discovered for an attempt on the governor's life; that, in consequence of timely measures, the criminal gang did not succeed in its devilish plot, but that the plotters have managed to escape and are not yet arrested. Measures have been taken to find them.

'Measures have been taken.' But have not we taken our measures as well? We have not scored a victory, yet that does not mean a defeat. Fedor, Erna, and Heinrich have already left; Vania and I are leaving to-day. We will come back.

PART II

July 4.

Six weeks have elapsed, and I am back in N. I have spent these weeks on an old estate belonging to a family of nobles. A streak of road was visible outside the white gates, the old green wood was bordered with young birches on the outskirts. The fields to both sides of the road shone yellow. The corn was whispering, the oats were drooping their heavy heads. In the midday heat I used to stretch myself out on the soft ground; the ears of corn stood up like an army, the poppies shone red. A smell of clover, of sweet peas, filled the air. The clouds melted away languidly. A vulture soared leisurely in the clouds. It flapped its wings gracefully and paused motionless in the air. And all Nature seemed to pause motionless with it: there was only the heat and the black dot above.

My eyes followed it intently. . . .

But in the town the air is foul and full of

corrosive dust. Long rows of carts drag along the dusty streets. The wheels rumble heavily. Heavy exertions are made by the heavy horses. The carriages go on ceaselessly. Then there are the street organs, the loud clank of the tram-bells. Human voices scold and shout.

I am waiting for night. At night the city will go to sleep, human spite will subside. In the deep of the night hope will again shine forth.

'I will give thee the morning star.'

July 6.

I am no more an Englishman. I am a merchant's son: Frol Semenov Titov, timber merchant from the Ural. I live in cheap apartments; I go to Mass to the parish church on Sunday. The most experienced eye would not recognise me as George O'Brien. The table in my room has a dirty tablecloth, and near it stands a lame chair. A bouquet of faded geraniums is on the window-sill: portraits of the Tsars are hanging on the wall. The dirty samovar hums in the morning, there is the slamming of doors in the corridor. I am alone in my cage.

Our first failure has embittered me, and I am full of hate. All my thoughts are concentrated on him, on the governor. I can't sleep at night—I whisper his name all the time ; and in the morning my first thought is of him. I can see him before me, the grey old man with the pale smile on his bloodless lips. He has an utter contempt for us.

I hate his white house, his coachmen, his guard, his horses. I hate his gold spectacles, his steel eyes, his sunken cheeks, his stature, his idle life, his clean, well-fed children. I hate his selfish assurance, his hatred for us. I hate him.

Erna and Heinrich are already back here. I am expecting Vania and Fedor. The town is calm; they have forgotten us. On the fifteenth the governor will drive to the theatre. We will catch him on the way.

July 10.

Andrei Petrovich has come again. I saw his lemon-coloured face, his wedge-shaped beard. He had an embarrassed look as he stirred his tea.

' Have you read it, George ? '

'Yes.'

'Well. . . . That 's the sort of thing. . . .'

He wore an old-fashioned suit, a black tie, and held a cheap cigar in his mouth.

'How are things getting on, George ? '

'What things ? '

'Well, you know . . .'

'Things are getting on well.'

'But rather slowly. . . . You should strike just now. . . . Most convenient moment. . . .'

'If we are slow, Andrei Petrovich, do it more quickly yourself.'

He looked very embarrassed, and drummed with his fingers on the table.

'Listen, George.'

'Well ? '

'The committee has decided to act vigorously.'

'Well ? '

'I say that in view of present circumstances it has been decided to act vigorously.'

I gave no answer. We were sitting in a dirty tavern, the 'Progress.' The gramophone was rumbling hoarsely. The aprons of the waiters showed white through the blue smoke. Andrei Petrovich went on friendlily :

'Are you satisfied, George ? '

'Why should I be satisfied, Andrei Petrovich?'

'Well, because of the decision to act vigorously?'

'What?'

'Oh, God . . . but I've just told you.'

He was sincerely pleased to have given me pleasure. I laughed.

'Oh, you have decided to act vigorously? . . . Very well.'

'But what do you think about it?'

'I? Nothing.'

'What do you mean?'

I rose from my chair.

'I am very pleased, Andrei Petrovich, with the decision of the committee, but I don't mean to act more vigorously than I am acting now.'

'But why, George? Why?'

'Try it yourself.'

In sheer amazement he let his hands fall on the table. He had yellow hands, and his fingers were stained with tobacco.

'Is that a joke, George?'

'No, I am not joking.'

I left him. He probably sat a long time

there, sipping his glass of tea, pondering over the question as to whether I had not made fun of him, and whether he had not offended me. And again I said to myself: poor old man, poor grown-up child!

July 12.

Vania and Fedor are already here. I have settled all the details with them. Our plan remains the same. In three days, on July 15, the governor is going to the theatre.

At seven o'clock Erna will hand me the bombs. She will make them in the hotel, in her room. She will dry the mercury on the spirit-lamp, solder the glass tubes, put in the fuse. She knows her work well. I don't anticipate any accidents.

At eight o'clock I will distribute the bombs. Vania will take his post at one gate, Fedor at the second, Heinrich at the third. We are no longer under observation. I am sure of that. That gives us power—a sharp sword.

July 14.

I remember the time I was in the north, beyond the polar circle, in a Norwegian fishing village. There was not a tree in the place,

not a bush, not even grass. There was nothing but the bare cliffs, the grey sky, the grey, gloomy ocean. The fishermen in leather jackets were drawing in the wet nets. There was a smell of fish and blubber. I felt such a complete stranger to all the sights—to the sky, the sea, the cliffs, the blubber, to those sombre people and their unfamiliar talk. I lost myself. I was a stranger to myself.

And to-day again I felt out of touch with everything. I went to the Tivoli gardens and took a seat in front of the open-air stage. The bald-headed conductor was swinging his bow: the flutes in the orchestra emitted dismal sounds. Rope-dancers in pink tights appeared on the well-lit platform. They climbed up the posts, like cats, and leapt downwards; they turned round in the air, jumped over each other, and, bright in the night darkness, caught hold of the trapezes with firm hands. I looked indifferently at their strong, elastic bodies. What am I to them and they to me? . . . The dull crowd was passing by, the dry sand was crunching under their feet. Shop assistants with frizzed hair and fat tradesmen were walking lazily up and down the garden.

They drank their brandy in a bored way, and abused each other and laughed. The women sought something greedily with their eyes.

The evening sky grew dark, the night mist obscured the sky. To-morrow is our day. A clear, distinct thought, as sharp as steel, came to me. There is no love, no world, no life. There is only death. Death is the crown—the crown of thorns.

July 16.

The heat was stifling all day yesterday. The trees in the park were sullenly silent. There were signs of an approaching thunderstorm. The first peal of thunder came from behind a white cloud. A black shadow fell upon the earth. The tops of the firs began to murmur, the yellow dust rose in the air. The rain fell among the leaves noisily. The first lightning flashed restrainedly with a blue flame.

At seven o'clock Erna came to the appointed place to meet me. She was dressed like a woman of the lower class; she wore a green skirt and a knitted shawl. Her disobedient curls showed from under the shawl. She carried a basket with linen.

I cautiously took from her what she brought me and put it in my portfolio. It made my hand ache with its weight.

Erna heaved a sigh.

'Are you tired?' I asked.

'No, George, I am all right.'

'Well, what is the matter with you?'

'Georgie, may I go with you?'

'No, Erna.'

'O George, please.'

'No; impossible.'

I saw a timid entreaty in her eyes.

'Go home,' I said to her, 'and come back to this very place at midnight.'

'George . . .'

'The time is up, Erna.'

It was still wet; the birches were trembling, but the glow of the sunset already appeared in the sky. I left Erna sitting alone on the bench. She would be alone until midnight.

At eight o'clock sharp all were standing at their posts. I walked about near the governor's house. I waited for his carriage to drive up.

The lanterns of the carriage suddenly flashed in the darkness. I heard the glass door slam. A grey shadow appeared on the white steps.

The black horses turned slowly round the entrance and drove on at a slow trot. . . .

The governor had already reached the third gate. . . .

I waited.

The minutes passed slowly like days, like long years.

I waited.

The darkness became denser, the square blacker, the towers higher, the silence deeper.

I waited.

The tower clock struck again.

. . . . . .

I strolled slowly to the third gate and saw Heinrich standing there motionlessly, in his blue peasant coat and his cap.

'Heinrich!'

'Is that you, George?'

'Heinrich, the governor has passed by.'

'Where? Who has passed by?'

'The governor. He drove past you.'

'Past me?'

He grew pale. His dilated eyes gleamed feverishly.

'Past me?'

'Where were you? Yes, where were you?'

'Where? . . . I was here . . . at the gate.'

'And didn't you see?'

'No. . . .'

We stood under the dim light of the street lamp. The flame burned evenly.

'George,' said Fedor.

'Well?'

'I can't. . . . I'll drop it. Take it quickly.'

We stood under the gaslight and looked into each other's eyes. We did not speak. The clock struck a third time.

'I'll see you to-morrow.'

He waved his hand in despair.

'To-morrow. . . .'

I went back to my room. There was noise in the corridor, drunken voices were heard. At last I was alone in the darkness.

July 17.

Heinrich spoke excitedly:

'I stood in the gateway at first,' he said. 'I stood there for about ten minutes. . . . Then I noticed that I had been seen. I walked up the street . . . then I returned and stood again. There was no sign of the governor. I walked away. . . . And that was probably the time he drove past. . . .'

He covered his face with his hands.

'What shame . . . what shame!'

He had not slept that night. He had blue shadows under his eyes and red spots on his cheeks.

'George, do you believe me?' he asked.

'Yes.'

We were silent for a moment, and then I said:

'Look here, Heinrich, why are you engaged at this? If I were in your place, I should do peaceful work.'

'I can't.'

'Why?'

'Oh, why? . . . Has this to be done or not? You know it 's needed.'

'Well, what of that?'

'Then how can I be out of it? What right have I not to do it? How could I accept it in principle and shrink from carrying it out. . . . How could I?'

'Why not?'

'Why not? . . . I can't say. Other people might be like that. . . . I am not. . . . I can't. . . .'

And again he buried his face in his hands; again he whispered as in a dream:

'O God! O God! . . .'

A silence followed.

'George,' he said at last, 'be frank with me; do you believe me or not?'

'I told you I do.'

'And will you give me another chance?'

I was silent.

He insisted.

'Yes; you must let me . . .' he said slowly.

I was again silent.

'Oh, if that is so . . . then . . . then . . .'

There was terror in his voice.

'Calm yourself, Heinrich,' I said, 'you shall have all you want.'

'Thank you,' he whispered.

Once at home, I asked myself: Why is he here? And whose fault is it? Mine?

July 18.

Erna complained:

'When will it all end, George?' she asked. 'When?'

'What will end, Erna?'

'I can't live for murder. I can't.'

The four of us were sitting in a private room of a dingy restaurant. The dirty mirrors had

names traced on them; a piano put out of tune stood at the window. Behind the thin partition some one was playing 'Matchiche.'

Although it was hot in the room, Erna wrapped herself in a shawl. Fedor was drinking beer. Vania put his pale hands on the table and rested his head on them. All were silent. At last Fedor spat on the floor and said:

'That 's what comes from too much haste—we made fools of ourselves. . . . That beast Heinrich spoiled our game. . . .'

Vania raised his eyes and looked at him.

'How can you, Fedor?' he said. 'Why do you say that? We must not blame Heinrich. All of us are to blame.'

'Why all of us? . . . What I say is: if a man calls himself a terrorist he ought to know what it means and take the consequences.'

There was a pause. Then Erna said in a whisper:

'O God! . . . What does it matter who is right and who is wrong? I can't bear it. I can't.'

Vania tenderly kissed her hand.

'You are suffering, Erna dear,' he said.

'But think of Heinrich. How hard it is for him. . . .'

The 'Matchiche' went on behind the partition. Drunken voices were singing music-hall songs.

'Oh, Vania, it is not only Heinrich. . . . I too can't endure this life. . . .'

She began to sob.

Fedor frowned; Vania said nothing. And I wondered: why suffer, why seek consolation?

July 20.

I am lying with closed eyes. The noise of the street comes in through the open window; the stone city breathes heavily. In a sort of half-dream I see Erna before me.

She is locking the door, and I can hear the sharp click of the lock. She slowly walks to the table and slowly lights the spirit-lamp. A greyish powder is spread on the cast-iron board—it is oxyhydrogen mercury. The blue tongues of flame—like serpents' fangs—lick the iron. The explosive powder is drying. The little grains glitter and crackle. The small leaden load moves along the glass. This load is to break the vent tube. One of my com-

rades perished in doing similar work. His corpse, or, rather, pieces of it, was found in the room: the splashed brains, the blood-covered chest, the lacerated legs and arms. All this was heaped into a cart and carried away to the police station. Erna runs the same risk.

What if she should actually be blown up? If, instead of flaxen hair and wondering blue eyes, there should remain only a red heap of flesh? . . . Then Vania would have to do the work in her place. He is also a chemist, and can do the work well.

I open my eyes. A ray of sunlight has pierced the curtain, and is shining on the floor. I fall again into reverie. And the same thoughts come back to me. Why Heinrich? Heinrich is not a coward. Yet a blunder is worse than fear. Or is it only chance? His majesty, Chance?

It is all the same to me. All the same to me. Suppose I am responsible for Heinrich being with us. Suppose it is his fault that the governor is still alive. Suppose Erna is blown up. Suppose Vania and Fedor are hanged. But the governor shall be killed. Such is my will.

I rise. The people are bustling in the square under my window like black ants, each intent on his personal cares, on petty everyday interests. I despise them.

July 21.

Chance brought me to-day near Elena's house. Huge and dirty, it looks sullenly on the square. Force of habit impelled me to look for the bench on the boulevard. Force of habit also made me count the minutes, as I whispered: I shall see her to-day. When I think of her I am somehow reminded of a strange southern flower, a plant of the tropics—of the burning sun and the scorched cliffs. I see the hard leaf of the cactus, the zigzags of the stems, and in the centre of the pointed thorns a full scarlet flower. One might think a drop of red blood had spurted forth and coagulated into purple. I had seen such a flower in the south, in a strange luxuriant garden, among palms and orange-trees. I had stroked its leaves; its thorns pricked my hands; I breathed in its poignant, penetrating, and intoxicating perfume. The sea glittered, the sun was at its height, a mysterious spell was at work. The red flower bewitched me and tortured my soul.

But I have no desire for Elena now. I don't want to think of her. I don't want to remember her. I am possessed by my strange passion for vengeance. And I ask myself no longer: Is vengeance worth while?

July 22.

He drives in his carriage to his office twice a week, between three and five. He never takes the same route or goes on the same days. We will mark his departure, and in a day or two we will post our men at all the roads. Vania will wait for him on Post Street, Fedor in the Crooked Lane, Heinrich will be posted in reserve on a street further off. We can hardly fail this time.

What would I be doing if I had not taken up this work? I don't know. It is hard to tell. But I am certain of one thing: I don't want a peaceful life.

The opium smokers have blissful dreams; they see the serene groves of paradise. I don't smoke opium, and I have not blissful dreams. But what would my life be worth without the struggle and the joyous feeling that the laws of life are non-existent for me? And I may even say: 'Thrust in thy sickle and reap: for the

time is come for thee to reap'—it is time to get rid of those who are not with us.

July 25.

'You, Fedor, take up your post in Crooked Lane. The governor is more likely to take the way held by Vania. But you must be also ready to strike. And remember: I depend on you absolutely.'

He had given up long ago his uniform of the dragoons, and now wears the regulation cap of an official in the Ministry of Justice. He is clean shaven and his black moustaches are turned up.

'They shall get it this time, George.'

'Are you sure?'

'Quite. He can't escape.'

We were on the outskirts of the town, in the park.

'Fedor!'

'Well?'

'If you are going to be tried, you mustn't forget to have a counsel for your defence.'

'A counsel?'

'Yes.'

'You mean, some lawyer?'

'Yes, certainly.'

'I don't want one. I hate those lawyers.'

'Well, do as you like.'

'And there will be no trial. . . . What do I want a trial for? I will reserve the last shot for myself . . . that will settle it.'

And I knew by his voice: his last shot would be for himself.

July 27.

I sometimes think of Vania, of his love, of his deep faith. I don't believe in his words. I don't understand how a man can believe in love, love God, and live for the sake of love. If it were not Vania who said these words, I would have laughed. But I don't laugh at him. Vania could apply to himself the lines of Pushkin's *Prophet*:

'Tormented by a spiritual thirst, I wearily passed across the bleak desert. And a six-winged seraph appeared before me at the crossing of the roads.'

And these lines also:

'And he struck my breast with his sword, and took out my trembling heart—and a coal, aflame with fire, he put into the open breast.'

Vania will die. He will cease to exist. 'The coal aflame with fire' will become extinguished. And I ask myself: Is there a difference between

him and, say, Fedor? Both will kill. Both will die. Both will be forgotten. The difference is not in their actions, but in their words.

And when I think like that, I laugh.

July 29.

'You don't love me at all,' said Erna. 'You have forgotten me. . . . I am a stranger to you now.'

'Yes, you are a stranger to me,' I answered reluctantly.

'George. . . .'

'What, Erna?'

'Don't speak like that.'

She was not crying to-day. She was calm. So I said:

'What can you be thinking of, Erna—at such a moment? Don't you see? We are having failure after failure.'

She repeated in a whisper:

'Failure after failure!'

'And you ask for love. There is no love in me now.'

'You love another woman.'

'Perhaps.'

'Tell me the truth.'

'I told it you long ago: yes, I love another.'

Her whole body was drawing towards me.

'I don't care,' she said. 'Love whomsoever you will. I can't live without you. I will love for ever.'

I looked into her sad blue eyes.

'Erna!'

'George dear. . . .'

'Erna, you had better go.'

She kissed me.

'Oh, George, I want nothing; I ask for nothing. I only want you to be with me now and then.'

The night fell slowly upon us.

July 31.

I said: I don't want to remember Elena. Yet all my thoughts are with her. I cannot forget her eyes: they hold the midday light. I cannot forget her hands, her long, transparently rosy fingers. The eyes and the hands reflect the soul. How can there be an ugly soul in a beautiful body? . . . But suppose she is not free and proud, but a slave. What does it matter? I want her, and there is none superior to her; none stronger or more joyous than she. My love for her gives her beauty and strength.

There are summer nights dim with mist. A turbid milk-white fog rises from the soil saturated with dew. The bushes, the dim outlines of the wood, are submerged in its warm waves. The stars gleam faintly. The air is thick and damp, and smells of new-mown hay. These are the nights when the meadow-spirit hovers over the swamps and casts its spells.

Am I not bewitched now? Why should I be concerned with Elena, her thoughtless life, her military husband, her future as wife and mother? And yet I am fettered to her with an iron chain. And I have not the strength to break the chain. Why should I, after all?

August 3.

To-morrow is our day. It will be again Erna, again Fedor, Vania, and Heinrich. I don't want to think of to-morrow. Is it because I am afraid to think? Yet I am full of anticipation, and I believe in to-morrow.

August 5.

This is what happened yesterday:

At two o'clock I took the bombs from Erna. I said good-bye to her and went to meet Heinrich, Vania, and Fedor on the boulevard.

Fedor took up his post in Crooked Lane, Vania in Post Street, Heinrich in a distant small street.

I entered a tea-room, ordered a glass of tea, and sat down at the window. The air was stifling. The wheels were rattling on the pavement, the roofs of the houses were exhaling heat. I had not long to wait, hardly more than five minutes. I remember quite distinctly: the clear noise of the street was suddenly interrupted by a heavy, strange, loud noise. It was as if some one had struck a ponderous blow with a cast-iron hammer on a cast-iron bar. This was followed immediately by a crash of broken glass. Then all was silent again. The people in the street rushed in a noisy crowd in the direction of Crooked Lane. A ragged boy shouted something in a loud voice. A woman with a basket in her hand threatened some one with her fist and spoke violently. The house-porters came running out of the gateways. The Cossacks galloped down the street. Some one said:

'The governor has been killed.'

I made my way through the crowd with great difficulty. The crowd swarmed in the lane. The smell of hot smoke still lingered in the air. Bits

of glass were scattered on the pavement, the broken wheels were lying in a black heap. I could see that the carriage had been smashed to pieces. A tall workman in a blue shirt stood in front of me. He was swinging his bony arms and saying something quickly and excitedly. I was about to push him aside in order to come nearer the carriage, when suddenly I heard sharp shots coming in quick succession from another street on the right. I rushed in that direction. I knew that it was Fedor who fired. The crowd pressed me hard, almost crushed me in its embrace. The reports of firing sounded again, but further away, and they were shorter and fainter. Then there was silence. The workman turned his consumptive face to me and said :

'I say, doesn't he fire! . . .'

I gripped his hand and pushed him violently aside. But the crowd closed in tighter in front of me. I could see nothing but necks and beards and broad backs. And suddenly I heard the words :

'But the governor is safe. . . .'

'And have *they* been caught ?'

'Not that I know of.'

'They certainly will be. . . . They must. . . .'

'Y—yes. . . . They are a great many nowadays . . . these . . .'

I returned home very late that evening. All I remembered was: 'The governor is safe.'

August 6.

It was published in to-day's papers that, 'as the governor's carriage turned into Crooked Lane, a young man, wearing the uniform of an official in the Ministry of Justice, stepped from the sidewalk on the pavement. He carried in one hand a box tied with a ribbon.

'As he approached the carriage he took the box in both hands and threw it under the wheels. A terrible explosion followed. Fortunately, the governor was unhurt. He rose to his feet unaided and walked to the nearest house porch, where he remained until the arrival of his escort, which had been ordered by telephone. The governor's coachman was badly wounded in the head. He died after he had arrived at the hospital. The assassin, after having accomplished his deed, began to run. The policeman on duty and a detective ran after him. The assassin fired two successful shots while running,

and killed both his pursuers. Another policeman made an attempt to stop him, but was severely wounded in the stomach. In Post Street the assassin was stopped by the inspector of the first police district and the house-porters. He killed two house-porters with two shots, and took refuge in the courtyard of the house No. 3. The house was immediately surrounded by foot and horse police, and a battalion of the N. regiment summoned by telephone. The premises of the house were searched and the criminal was discovered hiding in a back corner of the yard, behind piles of firewood. He responded to the invitations to surrender with more shots, one of which killed the colonel. A running fire was directed at him after that. Hiding behind the woodpiles, the assassin fired several more shots. He slightly wounded two soldiers and a non-commissioned officer. When the firing ceased the grenadiers, penetrating behind the woodpiles, discovered the dead body of the criminal; it contained four wounds, two of which were fatal. The assassin is a young man of about twenty-six, with dark hair, tall and strongly built. No documents were found on him. In the pockets of his trousers he had two

revolvers of the Browning patent and a box of cartridges.

'Measures are being taken to ascertain his identity.'

August 7.

I am lying with my face buried in the hot pillows. The day is breaking.

Again a failure! Worse than a failure—a catastrophe. We are absolutely beaten. Fedor certainly did all he could. At any rate he did not miss the carriage.

I don't feel sorry for Fedor. I am not even sorry that I was unable to come to his rescue. Well, I might have killed another five house-porters and policemen. That is far from my purpose. . . . But I regret that I did not know the governor was only a few steps from me, in a house porch. I would have watched for him.

We will not leave town. We will not surrender. If we cannot waylay him in the street, we will go to his house. He is calm now: he is enjoying his triumph. He has no cares, no fears. But our day must come. Then it will be done.

August 8.

'Everything is lost, George,' said Heinrich to me.

All my blood rushed to my face.

'Shut up!'

He stepped back, frightened.

'George, what is the matter with you?'

'Stop that nonsense! Nothing is lost. You ought to be ashamed to speak like that.'

'But Fedor . . .'

'Don't talk to me of Fedor. . . . Fedor is dead.'

'Oh, George. . . . But that means . . . that . . .'

'Well, go on.'

'No. . . . Just think. . . . No. . . . But I thought . . . What are we to do now?'

'What do you mean by "what are we to do"?'

'They are after us.'

'They always are.'

The rain was drizzling. The sullen sky was weeping. Heinrich was soaked all through, and the water was dripping from his worn cap. He had grown thinner and had sunken eyes.

'George!'

'Well?'

'Believe me. . . . I . . . What I want to

say is this . . . We are two now, Vania and myself. Two are not enough.'

'We are three.'

'Who is the third?'

'I am. You forget that.'

'You?'

'Why, of course.'

A silence followed.

'It 's very difficult to do it in the street, George.'

'What 's difficult?'

'Difficult to do it in the street, I say.'

'We will go to his house.'

'To his house?'

'Yes. Why are you so astonished?'

'You still have hope, George?'

'I am certain. . . . You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Heinrich.'

He took my hand with an embarrassed air.

'Forgive me, George.'

'Yes, certainly. But remember: now that Fedor has been killed, it is our turn. Do you understand?'

He answered in an agitated whisper: 'Yes.'

But at that instant I regretted that Fedor was no more at my side.

August 9.

I forgot to light the candles. In the grey twilight I could see Erna's vacillating silhouette in the corner. She came stealthily to my room to-day and did not speak. She did not even smoke.

'George,' she said at last.

'What is it, Erna?'

'It is—it is my fault.'

'What is your fault?'

'That Fedor . . .'

She spoke slowly, and this time there were no tears in her voice.

'Nonsense, Erna. Don't you torment yourself.'

'Oh, it was I; it was I who . . .'

I took her hand.

'It is not your fault, Erna. Take my word for it.'

'He might have remained alive . . .'

'Don't, Erna. You simply bore me.'

She got up from her chair, walked a few steps, and again sat down heavily. I said:

'Heinrich thinks we had better give it up.'

'Who thinks that?'

'Heinrich.'

'Give up? Why?'

'Ask him, Erna.'

'Should we really give up our efforts, George?'

'You think so too, don't you, Erna?'

'I wish you would say first.'

'Well, of course not. We must go on.'

Then she asked with anxiety:

'Who is going to be the third?'

'I, Erna.'

'You?'

'Well, yes.'

She dropped her head and, pressing her face to the window, looked out on the dark square. Then she suddenly rose and walked over to me, and kissed my lips passionately.

'George dear. . . . Shall we die together? . . . George?'

Again the night fell silently upon us.

August 11.

There are two alternatives left to us: the first is to let a few days pass, and to waylay him again in the street; the second to go to his house. I know that we are being sought for. We will find it very difficult to stay another week in town. And even more difficult to take up the

same posts. Well, let us say, I will take Fedor's place; Vania will return to his previous post, and Heinrich will again remain in reserve.

But the police are on the alert. The streets are full of detectives. They are watching for us. They may surround us and seize us by surprise. And will the governor drive through the same streets? He could easily choose some roundabout way. . . . But what if we go to his house? Of course, I don't care who dies in the explosion—whether his family, his detectives, or his escort. But the risk is great. The house is a large one and has many rooms. . . . I have great doubts after carefully considering all the 'pros' and 'cons.' I am not sure whether we ought to go there. How hard it is to decide. Yet we must decide.

August 13.

Vania is a gentleman now: he wears a soft hat, a light-coloured tie, a grey jacket. His hair is curly as before, and his pensive eyes sparkle.

'How sad that we have lost Fedor,' he said to me.

'Very sad indeed.'

He smiled a melancholy smile.

'It is not Fedor you miss,' he said.

'What do you mean, Vania?'

'You are sorry you lost a fellow-worker? Isn't that so?'

'Certainly.'

'You see yourself. There was a worker, a genuine, fearless worker. And now he is no longer here. And you say to yourself: How shall we get on without him?'

'It 's quite true.'

'There, you see. . . . As for Fedor personally, you have forgotten him. You don't miss him.'

A military band was playing on the boulevard. It was Sunday. The working-men were strolling in red shirts, with concertinas in their hands. They were chatting and laughing.

'Listen—I can't help thinking of Fedor,' said Vania. 'To me he was not merely a fellow-worker, not merely a revolutionary. . . . Just think what he felt hiding behind the piles of firewood. He was firing, and he knew all the time, he knew with every drop of his blood, that his death was coming. How long did he look into the face of death?'

'Vania, Fedor was not afraid.'

'I don't mean that, Georgie. I know he was not. . . . But can you actually realise his agony?

Can you imagine how he suffered after he had been wounded—when his eyes grew dim and his life was going from him? Have you thought of that?'

'No, Vania, I have not.'

'Then you never loved him,' he said in a whisper.

'Fedor is dead,' I said. . . . 'It would be better if you told me now whether we ought to go to . . . there, his house?'

'To his house?'

'Yes.'

'What do you mean?'

'I mean whether we should blow up the whole house.'

'And the people?'

'What people?'

'His family, the children?'

'Is that what you are thinking of? . . . Nonsense. . . .'

Vania was silent for a while.

'George,' he said at last.

'What?'

'I can't agree to that.'

'Agree to what?'

'To go there.'

'Nonsense. . . . Why?'

'I can't . . . because of the children. . . . No, George,' he went on in great agitation, 'don't do it. How can you take such a responsibility? Who gave you the right? Who has permitted you to do it?'

I answered coldly:

'I myself.'

'You yourself?'

'Yes, I.'

He was trembling all over.

'George, the children . . .'

'The children don't matter.'

'George, and what about Christ?'

'What has Christ to do with it?'

'George, don't you remember? "I am come in my Father's name and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive."'

'What is the use of quoting texts, Vania?'

He shook his head.

'You are right; what is the use? . . .'

We were silent for a long time. At last I said:

'Very well. . . . Let us watch for him in the street.'

His face brightened up in a smile. Then I asked him :

' Perhaps you think I changed my mind because of the texts ? '

' Certainly not, George. What an idea ! '

' I have simply decided that in the street there is less chance of failure.'

' Of course, much less. . . . And you shall see : we will succeed. God will hear our prayers.'

I left him. I was vexed with myself. After all, would it not be better to go to the governor's house ?

August 15.

My thoughts are again with Elena. Where is she ? I ask myself. Why doesn't she try to find me ? How can she live without knowing what has become of me ? That means she does not love me. She has forgotten me. Her kisses were lies. But eyes like hers do not lie.

I don't know. I don't want to know anything. I have seen the joy of her love ; I have heard words which spoke of joy. I want her, and I will come and take her. Perhaps this is not love. Perhaps to-morrow her eyes shall grow dim, and the laugh so dear to me shall bore

me. But to-day I love her, and I have no care about to-morrow. Just now, at this moment, she stands before my eyes as if she were actually here. I can see her plaited black hair, the severe outline of her face, the bashful rosiness of her cheeks. I call her, I repeat her name to myself. Our day will soon arrive—it will be the last, sure to be the last. . . . Shall I ever see her or not?

August 17.

To-morrow we will wait again for the governor on his drive. I would pray if I could.

August 18.

Erna prepared the explosives for the third time. At three o'clock sharp we took up our posts. I had a box in my hands. Its contents shook rhythmically with every step I made. I walked on the left side of the street. There was a smell of autumn in the warm air. In the morning I already observed a few yellow leaves on the birches. Heavy clouds were creeping along the sky. A few drops of rain came down now and then.

I was very careful lest any one should push me. . . . There were many eyes watching on

the sidewalks and at the crossings. I pretended not to see any one.

I turned round. The street was very quiet. I was afraid the governor would drive past me just at that moment. I was not sure I would recognise his carriage. And what if I were not quick enough? . . .

I walked up and down for about half an hour. When, for the third time, I reached the corner of the square and the clock pavilion, I suddenly saw a narrow spout rising up from the ground next to Surikov's house. A column of greyish-yellow smoke, almost completely black on the edges, was broadening out into a funnel shape and filling the whole street. And at the same moment I heard the familiar odd cast-iron rumble. A cab-driver's horse rose on its hind legs startled by the noise. A lady in a large black hat, who was walking in front of me, shrieked and sat down on the sidewalk. A policeman stood still with a pale face for a moment, then rushed in the direction of the sound.

I ran to the Surikov house. Again there was the crash of glass and the smell of smoke. I forgot all about my box, the contents of which beat against its sides with quick measured

knocks. I heard cries, and I knew for certain: this time he *was* killed.

. . . . . .

An hour later extra editions announcing the news were sold in the streets.

I held the paper in my hands, and my eyes were dim with excitement.

August 20.

Vania has managed to send us a letter from prison:

'Contrary to my desire,' he wrote, 'I was not killed. I threw the bomb from a distance of three paces right into the window of the carriage. I saw the governor's face. He leaned hastily back when he saw me and threw up his hands to protect himself. I saw how the carriage was smashed to pieces: the smoke and the splinters flew in my face. I fell down. When I got up I looked round and saw bits of clothing and the dead body lying a few steps away. I was not wounded, although blood was streaming from my face and the sleeves of my coat were burned away. I walked on, but the next moment some one seized me from behind with strong hands. I made no resistance. They took me away.

'I have done my duty. I am waiting for the trial and shall meet the sentence calmly. I think that even if I had managed to escape I should not, in any case, be able to go on living after what I have done. I embrace you, my dear friends and companions, and I thank you with all my heart for your love and your friendship.

'In bidding you farewell, I should like to remind you of the words: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."'

Vania addressed a special postscript to me. He wrote:

'You may wonder how I, who had always spoken of love, made up my mind to kill, and committed the greatest sin against God and men.

'I had no choice. If I had the pure and innocent faith of true disciples it would surely have been different. I know: the world shall be saved not by the sword—but by love, and love will rule it. But I did not feel in me the strength *to live* for the sake of love, and I understood that I could and ought *to die* for the sake of it.

'I do not repent, but neither do I rejoice in what I have done. My blood torments me and I KNOW: death alone is not redemption. But I also know: "I am the Truth, the Way, and the Life." Men will judge me, and I pity them. But I must face this—I firmly believe—divine judgment. My sin is infinitely great, but the mercy of Christ is also boundless.

'I kiss you. May you be happy, very happy. . . .

'But remember: "He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love."'

I read these leaves of cigarette paper, and I ask myself: who knows but that Vania is right? . . . Oh no; the sun is shining hot to-day, the falling leaves are rustling. . . . I am strolling on the familiar paths, and a great radiant joy flames in my soul. I pluck the autumn flowers. I breathe in their vanishing scent and I kiss their pale petals.

I feel as if it were Easter. Like the solemn words of Resurrection sound the prophetic words:

'And there came a great voice of the temple of heaven from the throne, saying: "It is done."'

I am happy: it is done.

PART III

August 22.

I AM still hiding here, still unable to leave. The police are trying hard to lay hands on us. I have given up my room in the hotel and have changed my mask for the third time. I am no more Frol Semenov Titov—nor the Englishman O'Brien. I live like one invisible. I have no name and no home. In the daytime I stroll in the streets, in the evening I seek lodgings for the night. I sleep where I can: in a hotel one day, in the street the next; then in the houses of people who are perfect strangers to me, such as merchants, officials, and priests. I laugh sometimes maliciously: my hosts look at me apprehensively, and treat me with a shy respect.

The autumn is advanced. The old park gleams golden, the leaves rustle underfoot. The pools, covered over with a thin crust of brittle ice, glisten in the early morning sun. I love the sad autumn. I like to sit down on a bench in the open and to listen to the wood's rustling. I

am enveloped in an atmosphere of serene peace. I feel as if there were no death, no blood—but only the earth sacred to all, and the sacred heaven above it.

The recent events are already forgotten. Only the authorities remember—and we too, it goes without saying. Vania is to be tried. There will be the usual proceedings and speeches, the sentence will be passed and carried out. . . . Life will come again to a standstill.

August 28.

I wrote a note to Elena asking her to meet me. She came, and I felt at once happy and serene.

I felt as though I had not lived through long days of anxiety and expectation; as though I had not been possessed by a passionate desire of vengeance, had not planned murder in cold blood. Such a state of joy and inner peace overcomes one sometimes on summer nights, when the stars come out and the garden is filled with the warm, strong scent of flowers.

Elena was in a white dress; she radiated freshness and health. She is twenty years old. Her eyes were not smiling. She asked shyly:

'Have you been here all this time?'

'Yes, of course, I've been here.'

'Then you . . .'

And she dropped her eyes.

I had the greatest desire to take her in my arms, to lift her up and to kiss her like a child. At that moment, looking at her and into her shining eyes, I knew I loved her childish laugh, the simple beauty of her life, and I listened enraptured to her voice:

'Oh, God, if you knew how anxious I was.'

And she added in a whisper:

'How awful! . . .'

She blushed, and then suddenly, as she did the other day, she put her arms softly and caressingly on my shoulders.

Her breath was burning my face, and our lips met in unutterable anguish.

When I recovered my senses she was sitting in the armchair. I still felt her kiss on my lips, and she seemed so near to me and yet so distant.

'George, dear George, don't be sad.'

And she drew towards me—so bashfully and so passionately. I kissed her. I kissed her hair and her eyes, her pale fingers, her dear lips.

I could think of nothing else. I only knew that I held her palpitating young body in my arms.

The glow of the sunset came in through the window. A red ray wandered on the ceiling. She lay white in my arms, and there was no more remorse for the blood that had been spilt.

Everything ceased to exist.

August 24.

Erna leaves town to-day. She looked somehow suddenly faded when she came to see me. The red of her cheeks was gone, and only her hair was helplessly entangled as before—imploring as it were for pity. I took a long farewell of her.

She stood before me—so fragile and with such a sad face. Her dropped eyelids were trembling. She spoke in a low voice :

' Well, Georgie, it is done.'

' Are you glad ? '

' And you ? '

I wanted to tell her that I felt happy and proud, but there was no exultation in my soul at that moment. I remained gloomily silent. She sighed. Her breast heaved nervously and heavily under the lace of her dress. She obvi-

ously wanted to say something, but felt flustered, had not the courage to speak. I asked :

' At what time does your train start ? '

She shuddered.

' At nine.'

I looked indifferently at my watch.

' You will be late, Erna.'

' George . . .'

Her courage failed her again. I knew she would speak of love, ask for pity. But I had no love for her and could not help her.

' George . . . must it be ? '

' What must it be ? '

' That we must part ? '

' Oh, Erna, we are not parting for ever.'

' Yes, for ever.'

I could hardly hear her, she spoke in a low whisper.

I answered in a loud voice :

' You are tired, Erna. You must rest and forget.'

And I heard her whisper :

' I shall never forget.'

And the next moment her eyes became red, and many profuse tears streamed down her face, like water. She shook her head ungrate-

fully. Her locks of hair were wet with tears and dropped helplessly on her neck. She sobbed, and whispered incoherent words, as though she were swallowing them :

'George dear, don't leave me . . . darling, don't leave me.'

A picture of Elena rose up before me. I seemed to hear her clear, happy laugh, and to see her sparkling eyes. And I said coldly to Erna :

'Don't cry.'

She stopped instantly, wiped her tears, and looked sadly out of the window. Then she rose and approached me with unsteady steps.

'Good-bye, George, good-bye!'

I repeated like an echo :

'Good-bye!'

She stopped at the door before she opened it, and waited. And then still she kept on whispering in distress :

'You will come to me. . . . Will you, George?'

August 28.

Erna is gone. Only Heinrich remains with me here, but he will follow Erna. I know he loves her, and he, of course, believes in love. It seems so ridiculous, and it irritates me.

I remember the time I was in prison and expected to be executed. There was a smell of cheap tobacco and of prison soup in the corridor. The sentry was passing up and down under my window. Now and then bits of life and fragments of conversations reached me from the street. And it seemed strange: outside were the sea, the sun and life—and in my cell were solitude and inevitable death. . . .

In the daytime I used to lie on my iron couch and to read an old literary magazine. In the evening the lamps twinkled dimly. I sometimes climbed stealthily on the table and looked out of the window, while gripping the iron bars with my hands. I saw the dark sky, the southern stars. Venus was shining bright. I used to say to myself: There are still many days before me; there will be more mornings and days and nights for me. I will see the sun, I will hear human voices.

I somehow could not believe in death. It seemed unnecessary and therefore impossible. I did not even feel joy or calm pride at the thought that I was dying for my cause. I felt strangely indifferent. I did not care to live, but did not care to die either. I did not question

myself as to my past life, nor as to what there might be beyond the dark boundary. I remember I was much more concerned as to whether the rope would cut my neck, whether there would be pain in suffocation. And often in the evening, after the roll-call, when the drum ceased beating in the courtyard, I used to look intently at the yellow light of the lamp, standing on the prison table, among the bread-crumbs. I asked myself: Do I fear or not? And my answer was: I do not. I was not afraid—I was only indifferent.

And then I escaped. During the first days there was the same dead indifference in my heart. I did mechanically all that was necessary to avoid being recaptured. But why I did it, why I fled from the prison—that I could not tell. While in the prison I thought at times that the world was beautiful, and I longed for the open air, for the hot sun. But once free I felt a weariness again. But a day came when I was walking alone in the evening. The sky was already dark in the east, and the early stars made their appearance. The mountains were veiled with a rose-blue mist. The night breeze blew from the river below. There was

a strong smell of grass. The grasshoppers made a loud noise. The air was sweet and creamy.

And I suddenly realised at that moment that I was alive, that death was far off, that life was before me, that I was young and strong and in perfect health. . . .

I have the same feeling now. I am young, strong, and in perfect health. I have escaped from death once more. And I ask myself for the hundredth time: Was it wrong on my part to kiss Erna? But it might have been worse to have ignored her, to have repulsed her. A woman came to me and brought me love and affection. Why does affection create sorrow? Why does not love give joy, but pain? Love. . . . Love. . . . Vania used also to speak of love, but of what kind of love? Do I know love of any kind? I do not know, cannot know, and do not try to. Vania knows, but he is no more with me.

September 1.

Andrei Petrovich has come again. He had the greatest difficulty in finding me, and when we met at last he shook my hand a long time and with great joy. His old face was beaming.

He was happy. The wrinkles round his eyes relaxed into a smile.

'I congratulate you, George,' he said.

'What about, Andrei Petrovich?'

He screwed up his eyes with a cunning air, and shook his bald head.

'For achieving a triumph in your undertaking.'

His presence bored me, and I had a desire to leave him. His words and silly congratulations annoyed me. But he went on with a candid smile:

'Yes, George,' he said, 'we had lost all hope —to tell you the truth. After all those continual failures. And I can tell you'—he stooped and whispered in my ear—'we even thought of dismissing you.'

'Dismissing me? . . . What do you mean?'

'It is now a thing of the past, and I don't mind telling you. We did not believe anything would come off. It took such a long time, and nothing whatever was done. . . . So we thought: would it not be better to dismiss you altogether? It seemed all so hopeless. . . . Are we not old fools? . . . Eh?'

I looked at him in sheer amazement. He was

the same grey, decrepit old man. His fingers were stained with tobacco as before.

'And you . . . you thought of dismissing us?'

'There, George, you are cross!'

'I am not. . . . But tell me, do you really think it possible to dismiss us?'

He patted me affectionately on my shoulder.

'Oh, you are . . . It's impossible to joke with you.'

Then he added in a businesslike tone:

'Well, and what do you intend to do now? Tell me.'

'Nothing, as far as I can see.'

'Nothing? . . . The committee has decided . . .'

'The committee may decide whatever it likes. But as for me . . .'

'Oh, George! . . .'

I laughed.

'Well, why are you so upset, Andrei Petrovich? I only say: Give me time.'

He lapsed into thought, and kept on munching with his lips in the manner of an old man.

'Do you remain here, George?' he asked at last.

'Yes.'

'You had better go.'

'I have some business to attend to.'

'Some business?'

He looked grieved: what sort of business could I have? But he did not dare to ask me.

'Well, George, we will talk things over when you come.'

And he shook hands with me with renewed good spirits.

Andrei Petrovich acted like a judge: he approved and disapproved. I did not contradict him. He was so sincerely convinced that I appreciated his approval. Poor old man!

September 5.

Vania's trial took place to-day. I am lying on the couch in chance lodgings, my head buried in the hot pillows. It is night. I can see the sky through the window frame. A necklace of stars glimmers in the sky: the Great Bear.

I know: Vania was lying the whole day on his prison couch, got up now and then, went to the table and wrote. And at present the Great Bear shines to him as it does to me. And he is awake as I am.

I also know: a man in a red shirt will come to him to-morrow with a rope and a whip in his hands. He will tie Vania's hands behind his back, and the rope will penetrate deep into his flesh. The spurs will clank under the vaults; the sentries, with dull expressions on their faces, will present arms. The gates will swing wide open. . . . A warm vapour is curling upward on the sandbank, the feet sink into the wet sand. The sky assumes a rosy hue in the east. A hooked pole stands out against the pale-rose sky. That is the law. Vania ascends the platform. He looks quite grey in the morning mist; his eyes and his hair are of the same colour. It is cold and he shrinks, draws in his neck into the upturned collar. And then the hangman puts on the shroud, draws the string. The shroud is white, and close by stands the red hangman. The stool is pushed back with a sudden noise. The body hangs in the air. Vania has been hanged.

The pillows burn my face. The bedcover slips to the floor. I feel so uncomfortable. I see Vania before me; I see his enthusiastic eyes, his brown hair. And I timidly ask myself: Why? Why? Why?

September 5.

I say to myself: There is no Vania. The words are simple, yet I cannot believe them. I cannot believe that he is actually dead. I feel as if there might be a knock at the door, and that he will enter quietly, and I will hear him saying again:

'He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love.'

Vania believed in Christ. I don't. Yet what difference does it make? I lie, I spy, and I kill. Vania also lied, spied, and killed. We all live by deceit and blood. Is it all done for the sake of love?

Christ ascended Golgotha. He did not kill. He gave life to men. He did not lie. He taught men the truth. He betrayed none—He was betrayed by His disciple. Then it must be one or the other. Either there is the way up to Christ, or . . . or, as Vania said, the way down to Smerdiakov. In that case I too am Smerdiakov.

I know: there was sanctity in Vania: his truth was in his sufferings. But sanctity and truth are inaccessible, incomprehensible to me.

I will die as he died, but my death will be dark: there is wormwood in the bitter waters.

September 6.

Elena said to me:

'I felt so afraid for you. . . . I did not dare to think of you. . . . You are . . . so strange.'

We were in the park as before. There were signs of autumn here, the withered leaves swirled in the wind. It was cold, and there was a smell of earth in the air.

'How happy I am, dearest. . . .'

I took her hands and kissed her slender fingers, and my lips whispered:

'My love, my love, my love! . . .'

She laughed.

'Don't be sad,' she said. 'Be happy.'

But I answered:

'Listen, Elena. I love you. Come with me.'

'Why?'

'I love you.'

She pressed her graceful body close to me and whispered:

'I also love you. You do know that?'

'But your husband . . .'

'What about my husband?'

'You are with him.'

'Oh, dearest. . . . What does it matter? Now I am with you.'

'Stay with me always.'

She laughed her clear, sonorous laugh.

'I can't say, I can't say,' she answered.

'Don't laugh and don't joke, Elena.'

'I am not joking.'

And again she embraced me.

'Must one love for ever? Is it possible to love for ever? You want me to love only you and no one else. . . . I can't. . . . I am going . . .'

'To your husband?'

She nodded without saying a word.

'Then you love him?'

'George dear, the sunset is ablaze, the wind blows, the grass whispers. We love each other. What more do you want? Why think of the past? Why should we know of what will be in the future? Don't torment me. I don't want to be miserable. Let us be happy. Let us live. I hate sorrow and tears. . . .'

I answered:

'You said—you are his and mine. Is that so—tell me? Is that true?'

'Yes, it is true.'

A shadow passed over her face. Her eyes grew sad and dark. The white dress was becoming lost in the growing darkness.

'Why?'

'Oh, why?'

I bent low to her.

'But if . . . If you had not your husband?'

'I don't know. . . . I don't know anything. . . . Does love last for ever? Don't ask me, dear. . . . And, please, stop thinking about it.'

She kissed me passionately. I was silent. Jealousy crept slowly into my soul: I don't want to share her with any one, and I shan't.

September 10.

Elena visits me secretly, and the hours and the weeks flow on rapidly like fast waters. The whole world is now centred for me only in my love for her. The roll of memories is sealed, the mirror of life is dimmed. I have before my eyes Elena, her lips, her dear hands, all her youth and her love. I hear her laugh, her joyous voice. I play with her hair, and kiss greedily her happy, passionate body. The night descends upon us.

Her eyes become more radiant in the night, her laughter sounds louder, her kisses sting sharper. And the old vision comes back like a spell—the strange southern flower, the blood-red cactus, enchanting and passionate. What do I care for terrorism, the revolution, the gallows and death, since she is with me? . . .

She enters shyly with downcast eyes, and then suddenly her cheeks are ablaze and I hear her sonorous laugh. She sings in a happy, clear voice as she sits on my knees. What are her songs about? I don't know. I don't hear. I feel her entire being acting upon me. Her joy resounds in my heart, and there is no sadness left in me. She kisses me and whispers:

'I don't care. . . . You may be gone to-morrow, but to-day you are mine. . . . I love you, dearest.'

I can't understand her. I know that women love those who love them; that it is love they love. But her husband to-day, I the next day, and the husband's kisses the day after. . . . Once I said to her:

'How can you kiss two men?'

She raised her fine eyebrows.

'Why not, dearest?'

I didn't know what to answer. I said violently:

'I don't want you to kiss him.'

She laughed.

'And he doesn't want me to kiss you.'

'Elena!'

'What, dearest?'

'Don't speak to me like that.'

'Oh, dearest. . . . What does it matter to you whom I kiss and when? Do I know whom you kissed before me? I want to know, but can I, really? To-day I love you. . . . Aren't you glad? Aren't you happy?'

I wanted to tell her: You have no shame, no love. . . . But I said nothing. Was there any shame left in my own soul?

'Listen,' said Elena laughingly: 'why do you speak like that? Why do you say this is permissible and that is not? Have the courage to live, to be happy, to get love out of life! All resentment is idle, and there is no need to think of death. The world is big, and there is plenty of joy and love for every one. There is no sin in joy, no deceit in kisses. . . . So give up thinking, and kiss. . . .'

Then she added:

'You, dearest, you don't know what it is to be happy. . . . Your whole life is centred on death. You are of iron; the sun is not for you. . . . Why think of death? You would do better to live in joy. . . . Don't you think I am right?'

I made no reply.

September 12.

I am thinking again of Elena. It may be that she loves neither me nor her husband. I think she only loves love. Her radiant life is only in her love; she was born for love and she will die for it. And when my thoughts take that turn, I feel a grim satisfaction. What is the good of Elena's coming to me, of my kissing her beautiful body, and looking into her eyes resplendent with love? . . . She leaves me to return smilingly to her husband, to share lovingly his life. . . . I am painfully obsessed by the thought of him—of that slim, fair-haired youth. Sometimes, in the silence, I catch myself nursing deep and secret desires. And it seems to me then that it is not he I am thinking of, but the one who is no more and whom I once hated. I have then the feeling that the governor is still alive. I walk on a thorny road. He—her husband—

stands on my narrow way and obstructs it: she loves him.

I watch the weary decline of autumn in the gardens. The asters are glowing red, the dry leaves are falling, the grass is crisp with the morning frost. The old familiar thought assumes an increased distinctness in my mind during these days of decay. I recall the old words:

> If a louse in your shirt
> Mocks you: 'you are a flea,'
> Then go out and kill!

September 18.

Heinrich has been staying here all this time. His family lives in the district across the river. He is leaving to-day to join Erna.

He looks stronger and fuller: his rest has done him good. His eyes sparkle, and he does not speak in the dejected way that he got into of late. This was our first meeting for some days.

We went to a tavern—the same where Vania used to join us. He asked me over his meal:

'Have you read, George, what they say in the *News*?'

'What about?'

'Why, about the governor.'

'No, I haven't.'

He was indignant at my indifference, and produced a thin sheet of printed matter.

'There it is. Read it, George.'

I had no desire to listen to him, or to read the paper. I pushed it away and said in a bored voice:

'Take it away. I don't care to read.'

'You don't care? How can you take it like that? That 's what we did it for.'

'For a paragraph in the papers?'

'You make fun of it. . . . But the printed word has a great importance.'

I felt extremely bored, and I said:

'Don't let us discuss that question. Look here, Heinrich: you love Erna, don't you?'

He dropped his spoon into the plate and blushed violently. Then he asked in a trembling voice:

'How do you know?'

'I know.'

He was silent in his confusion.

'Well, take care of her,' I said. 'I wish you happiness.'

He rose, and for a long time walked up and down the filthy private room we were in. At last he said in a low voice :

' George, I trust you. Tell me the truth.'

' What do you want to know ? '

' Don't you love Erna ? '

His gloomy face, with the two red spots on it, amused me. I laughed outright.

' I—love Erna ? What an idea ! '

' And you never—never loved her ? '

I answered clearly and distinctly :

' No, I never loved her.'

His face beamed with happiness. He shook my hand warmly.

' Well, I am off,' he said. ' Good-bye.'

He left me. I remained for a long time at the untidy table with the greasy plates before me. And suddenly it all became so utterly ridiculous to me.

I love, he loves, she loves. . . . What a tedious tale !

September 14.

I have not seen Elena to-day. I went to the Tivoli in the evening. As usual, the orchestra rattled provokingly, the gipsies sang. As always, women walked about between the tables, rust-

ling their silken dresses. And I felt bored—as usual.

A naval officer was sitting at the next table: he was drunk. Wine sparkled in the glasses, the women's jewels glittered. Sounds of laughing and incoherent talk came to me from all sides. The hands of the clock moved slowly.

Suddenly I heard:

'You look lonely.'

The officer, tottering on his feet, came to my table, and stretched his wine-glass to touch mine. He had purple cheeks and short-clipped moustaches—the governor had the same sort of moustaches.

'Aren't you ashamed of being bored?' he said. 'Let me introduce myself: my name is Berg. Come to our table. . . . The ladies would like to have the pleasure of your company. . . .'

I rose and gave my name:

'Engineer Malinovsky.'

I did not care where I sat, so I sat down lazily at their table. The party laughed gaily. All touched glasses with me. The violins were wailing; through the window I could see the grey dawn breaking.

And then I heard some one ask:

'Where is Ivanov?'

'What Ivanov?'

'Why, Colonel Ivanov. What has become of him?'

I instantly thought of Ivanov, the head of the secret police department. Was it he they were expecting at their table? I bent down my head to my neighbour:

'Do you mean the gendarmerie Colonel Ivanov?' I asked him.

'Yes, of course—the very same—a dear friend of mine. . . .'

A great temptation stirred within me. Oh no, I was not going to get up and leave them at once. I knew: that man Ivanov must have my photograph with him. I waited.

Ivanov came in. He looked like a man of the merchant class. He was stout and had a red beard. He sat down heavily and helped himself to a glass of vodka. The party introduced us to each other:

'Malinovsky.'

'Ivanov.'

He had come to drink, and I felt bored again. Yet the temptation was great to go near him, and to whisper into his ear:

'I am George O'Brien, colonel.'

But I did not do that. I rose from the table without saying anything. The rain was weeping outside, the stone city was asleep. I was alone. I felt cold and darkness within me.

September **15.**

I ask myself: Why do I remain here? What can I attain? Elena is only my mistress. She never will be my wife. I know that, and yet I cannot go. I also know that every day increases my danger; that I am risking my life. But such is my desire.

At Versailles, in the park, the lakes are visible from the terrace. Their borders are stretching in clear outlines along the graceful groves and the dainty flower-beds. The fountains are enveloped in vapour, the mirror-like waters are motionless. A drowsy restfulness hovers over them.

I shut my eyes and imagine myself back at Versailles. I want to forget Elena, to be at rest to-day. The stream of life flows on, the day comes and goes—but I am with my love, like a slave in chains.

Somewhere, very far, there is ice on the

mountain tops. The mountains gleam blue, covered with the virginal snow. Men live peacefully at the foot of the mountains; they live in peace and they die in peace. The sun shines over them, love warms their hearts. But in order to live as they do neither anger nor the sword is wanted. . . . And I recall Vania. Perhaps he was right; but the white robes are not for me: Christ is not with me.

September 16.

'Why are you always sad?' asked Elena. 'Do I not love you? Look here, I will make you a present of a pearl.'

She took off a ring from her finger; a large pearl glittered like a tear in the gold ring.

'Take care of it. . . . It is my love.'

And she embraced me confidingly.

'You are sad because I am not your wife? But I know: marriage is love made a habit, a dull love without a bright spark. And I want to love you. . . . I long for beauty and love. . . .'

She added pensively:

'Why do people put down letters, make words out of letters and laws out of words? There are libraries full of those laws. Don't live, don't

love, don't think. There is a don't for every single day. . . . Isn't it ridiculous and silly? Why must I love only one man? Say, why?'

And again I was without an answer.

'Well, you have nothing to reply, George. You don't know either. Can you say you loved no one before me?'

I felt disturbed. I certainly loved more than one woman, and I never believed in the use of laws. She was repeating my own words. But now I felt they were a lie. And I wanted to tell her that, but I did not dare.

Her heavy, black plaits of hair came down on her shoulders, and her face looked more pale and thin in the dark frame of her loosened hair. Her eyes were waiting for my answer.

I silently kissed her. I kissed her innocent hands, her strong young body. To kiss her was a torture to me: my mind was again hypnotised by the recurring thought of him who was kissing her as I did, and whom she loved. And I said:

'No, Elena, it cannot go on: it must be he or I. . . .'

She laughed.

'There you are. I must be the slave, you her

master. And what if I don't want to choose? Why should I? Tell me.'

The rain came down noisily outside the window. I saw her outline in the dim light; her large eyes gleamed dark in the night. I said, growing pale:

'Such is my wish, Elena.'

She was silent. Her face grew sad.

'Choose!' I said.

'Dearest, I can't. . . .'

'I ask you to choose.'

She rose quickly from her chair, and said firmly and quietly: 'I love you, George. You know that. But I will never be your wife.'

She was gone. I remained alone—with only her pearl in my possession.

September 17.

Elena loves her beautiful body, her young life. There might be freedom in such a love—people say there is. But I don't care: let Elena be a slave and I the master; let me be a slave and she free. . . . All I know with certainty is that I will not share her love with any one. I cannot kiss her if another kisses her. Vania sought for Christ, Elena seeks for freedom. As for me, I am not seeking anything: let it be Christ, or

the Antichrist, or Dionysus—I don't care. I desire to possess her. And my desire is my right.

The thought of the scarlet flower is intoxicating me again. The mysterious spell is at work once more. I am like a stone in the desert, but I have a sharp sickle in my hand.

September 18.

Something happened yesterday which I anticipated, and yet secretly hoped would not happen. It was a day of sorrow and shame. I was walking in the main street. A milky fog was creeping up and melting in waves of darkness.

I walked on without any aim, without any thoughts, like a ship drifting after it had lost its rudder. Suddenly a spot thickened in the fog, a dim shadow moved unsteadily forward. An officer walked impetuously toward me. He looked at me and stopped. It was Elena's husband. I looked fixedly into his eyes and I could see anger in the dark pupils. I took his arm softly and said :

' I have looked for you for a long time.'

We walked up the street in silence. We walked a long time in the dark mist, but we both

knew our way. And we felt as near to one another as brothers. We entered the park.

Autumn had set in. The branches were bare —like prison bars. The fog was dispersing, the grass was drenched with the mist. There was a smell of decay and of moss.

Deep in the park, in the thicket, I chose a path. I sat down on a stump of a felled tree and said coldly :

' You know who I am ? '

He nodded silently.

' You know why I am here ? '

He nodded again.

' But I also must tell you that I don't intend to leave.'

He said with a contemptuous smile :

' Are you sure of that ? '

Was I sure ? I didn't know. Could any one be sure whom it was that Elena loved ? But I only said :

' And you ? '

There was a silence. Then I said :

' Look here. *You* are to go. Is that clear ? You.'

He flushed in an outburst of anger. But he said coolly :

'You are mad.'

Then I silently produced my revolver. I measured eight paces on the grass, and marked the barriers with wet rods. He watched me attentively. When I finished he said with a smile:

'You intend to fight, I see?'

'I insist on your departure.'

Fair-haired and slim, he looked straight into my eyes and repeated sarcastically:

'You are mad.'

I asked, after a silence:

'Will you fight?'

He unfastened his revolver case, and reluctantly took out his revolver. After some hesitation he said:

'Very well. . . . I am at your service.'

A moment later he stood at his appointed place. I knew I could hit an ace from a distance of ten paces. I could not possibly miss my mark this time.

I raised my revolver and fixed the black mark: a button of his overcoat. I waited. After a pause I said in a loud voice: 'One. . . .'

He was silent.

'Two and three.'

He stood motionless, pushing his breast forward, and holding his revolver downward. He would not raise it—he obviously mocked at me. . . . A hot and hard lump suddenly clutched my throat. I shouted furiously :

' Fire, I say ! '

Not a sound came from him. Then, with a sudden joy, I pressed slowly the trigger. There was a flash of yellow, a white smoke crept along. . . .

. . . . . .

I walked across the wet grass, and stooped over the body. He was lying on the path face downwards in the cold, soft mud. His arm was awkwardly bent, the legs were stretched widely apart. A thin rain was falling. It was misty. I turned into the thick of the wood. The night was coming on. It was pitch dark under the trees. I walked on aimlessly, like a ship without a rudder.

September 20.

Men were falling in the Tsushima battle. The night was dark, the sea wrapped in a fog, the waves rose high. The battleship was hiding like a monstrously big wounded animal. The black funnels were hardly visible, the guns were silent.

They fought in the daytime, at night they fled from possible attacks. Hundreds of eyes were searching the darkness. And suddenly there came a wail—like the scream of a frightened sea-gull: 'Torpedo-boat along the side. . . .' The searchlights flared up, blinding the night with the white glare. And then . . . Whoever was on deck jumped into the sea. Those who were within, behind the steel armour, were dashing against the hatchway. The boat gradually began to sink, going down with its nose into the water. The machinists in the engine-room dropped down like sacks, the iron chains striking them, the wheels mangling them, the smoke stifling them, the vapour scorching them. So they perished, all of them. And the waves went on beating against the sides with a rocking movement. . . . A senseless, nameless death

And then there is another kind of death. Imagine a northern sea, a northern gale. The wind strains the sails, lashes the sea into white foam. A fishing boat is tossing on the grey waves. The grey day dissolves in a pale sunset. The flash of a lighthouse appears from a distance—first red, then white, then again red. The men are motionless on the foredeck, they

clutch tightly on the ropes. The waves roar, the rain splashes. . . .

Then suddenly a bell is heard to toll slowly through the wailing of the wind. A bell is beating in the water against the low sides of the boat, causing it to ring. It is the can-buoy. They have struck a sandbank. It means death. . . . Then again there is the wind, the sky, and the waves. But the men are no longer to be seen. . . .

Here is still another death. I have killed a man. . . . Earlier I had an excuse: I was killing for the sake of an ideal, for a cause. Those who sank the Japanese reasoned as I did: Russia needed their death. But now I have killed *for my own sake.* I wanted to kill, and I killed. Who is the judge? Who will judge me guilty? Who will justify me? I have scorn for my judges and their hard sentences. Who will come to me and say with genuine faith: Thou shalt not kill. Who will dare to throw a stone at me? There is no definite distinction, no difference. Why is it right to kill for the sake of an ideal, for one's country, and not for one's own sake? Who will answer me?

I look out of my window. I can see the gleaming stars, the brilliant Bear, the silvery stream

of the Milky Way, the timid brightness of the Pleiades. What is behind them? . . . Vania had faith. He knew. But I am standing alone, the night is incomprehensibly silent. The earth breathes with mystery, the stars shine enigmatically. I have walked a hard road. Where is the end? Where is my well-deserved rest? Blood begets blood, and vengeance lives by vengeance. . . . It is not him alone that I have killed. . . . Where shall I go? where shall I fly?

September 22.

It has rained since morning—a drizzly autumn rain. I look into its spider-like net, and weary thoughts disturb me lazily, like falling drops.

Vania had lived and died. Fedor had lived and was killed. The governor, too, had lived and is gone. . . . Men live and die, and new men are born. They live and die. . . . The sky is gloomy, the rain pours in streams.

I do not repent. Yes, I did kill. . . . I feel no yearning for Elena. . . . My murderous shot seems to have burnt my love out of me. I am indifferent to her grief. I don't know where she is and what she is doing. Does she mourn her loss, her own life, or has she already forgotten?

He and I? Again he! We are chained to one another even now.

The rain is coming down rapidly, and is making a noise on the iron roofs. Vania said: How can one live without love? It was Vania who said that, not I. . . . Oh no—I have made a business of blood. . . . I will take up my trade again. I will watch and spy day after day, one weary hour after another. I will live by death, and a day will come with its intoxicating joy: I will have accomplished my purpose—scored a victory. And such will be my life until I go to the gallows, until I go into my grave.

But men will praise me, will rejoice loudly in my victory. What is their anger, their pitiful joy, to me? . . .

A milk-white fog has enveloped the town again. The chimneys rise sullenly, a long-drawn whistle comes from the factory. The cold darkness is creeping up. The rain is still falling.

September 23.

Christ said: 'Do not kill,' and His disciple Peter unsheathed the sword in order to kill. Christ said: 'Love one another,' and Judas betrayed Him. Christ said: 'I came not to

judge the world, but to save the world,' and sentence was passed upon Him. Two thousand years ago, perspiring with blood, He prayed, and His disciples were asleep. Two thousand years ago the people dressed Him in a purple robe: 'Take Him and crucify Him.' And Pilate said: 'Shall I crucify your king?' But the chief priests answered: 'We have no king but Cæsar.'

And now Peter continues to unsheathe his sword; Annas to judge together with Caiaphas; Judas, son of Simon, to betray. And we go on crucifying Jesus as of old.

But if that is so, then He is not the vine, we are not the branches. Then His word is but an earthen vessel. Then Vania was not right. . . . Poor, loving Vania! . . . He sought a justification of life. Why need it be justified?

The Huns have passed over the fields, and trampled down the young sprouts. The pale horse stepped on the grass and the grass withered. Men have heard the word—and the word has been defiled.

Vania wrote with faith: 'The world shall be saved not by the sword but by love—and love will rule.' Yet Vania did kill. He 'has com-

mitted the greatest sin against men and God.' If I had had his faith I should not have been able to kill. And, as I have killed, I am unable to think as he thought.

As for Heinrich, he does not trouble about riddles. The world to him is simple as an alphabet. There are slaves on one side, masters on the other. The slaves revolt against the masters. It is right that a slave should kill. It is wrong that a slave should be killed. A day will come when the slaves shall conquer. Then there will be a paradise on earth. All men will be equal; all will be well fed, and all will be free. Excellent, indeed. I don't believe in a paradise on earth, and don't believe in a paradise in heaven. I don't want to be a slave, not even a free slave. All my life has been a clash. I can't exist without it. But what is the purpose of my clashing? That I don't know. Such is my desire. I drink my wine undiluted.

September 24.

I live again in lodgings: I am Engineer Malinovsky. I live as I choose. Nothing matters to me now: let them find me, let them arrest me.

It is a cold evening. An illusive moon shines

above the bare factory chimney. The moonlight streams down on the roofs, the shadow stretches sleepily. The town is asleep. But I cannot sleep.

I am thinking of Elena. It seems strange to me now that I could have loved her, that I could have killed for the sake of love. I want to resuscitate her kisses in my memory. But memory is false: it gives no joy, no exultation. The words sound weary, the caressing hands are languid. Love has gone out like an evening flame. Once more twilight, once more dulness.

I ask myself: Why did I kill? Have I gained anything through death? Oh yes; I believed that it was permissible to kill. But now I am sad: I killed not only him, but love as well. And the autumn seems mournful: the dead leaves are falling—the dead leaves of my lost days.

September 25.

I took a paper to-day by chance, and came across a paragraph in small print: 'The police visited last night the Grand Hotel, with an order to arrest Madam Petrova, a lady residing there. In answer to the demand for her to open the door, a shot was heard. When the

police broke open the door they found the still warm body of the suicide. An inquest is being held.'

It was Erna who stayed at the hotel under the assumed name of Petrova.

September 26.

I can see how it all happened. In the night, towards daybreak, there was a knock on the door—not a loud knock. It was dark and quiet in the room. She slept lightly, and was at once awake. Then came another knock—this time louder and more persistent. She quickly adjusted her hair and rose from her bed. Without turning on the light she went barefoot to the large table on the right, near the piano. She felt her way with her hands and noiselessly took her revolver out of a drawer. I know the revolver: it was I who made her a present of it. Then she began to dress—still in the dark, still feeling her way. A third knock came—the last. Half dressed she rushed into a corner, near the window. She drew aside the dark curtain and saw the narrow, paved courtyard, wet with rain. There were no stars—only the dim light of the lamp below. The police were already breaking in.

She turned to the door, and, with a quick, determined movement, pressed the revolver to her breast, to the naked flesh, to the very heart. They found her lying on her back in the corner. The revolver outlined itself black on the carpet. And then again all was dark and quiet.

And now, at this very moment, I can see her standing at my door as if she were alive. Her hair is in disorder, her blue eyes are dim. Her frail body is trembling as she whispers:

'You will come to me, George. . . . Won't you? . . .

. . . . . .

I walked in the streets to-day. The crosses on the churches were gleaming. The bells were ringing gloomily for vespers. The streets were full of noise and bustle. All seemed so familiar and yet so distant. That was the place where Vania had killed the governor. There, in the lane below, Fedor died. . . . This was where I met Elena. . . . In the park Erna cried. . . . All that is gone. There had been a flame, now the last smoke is vanishing.

September 27.

I am tired of life. To-day is just like yesterday, and yesterday was like to-day. The same

milky fog, the same grey everyday life. The same love, the same death. Life is like a narrow street with old low houses, flat roofs and factory chimneys. A black wood of stone chimneys.

Or is it not all a puppet show? The curtain is up, we are on the stage. The pale Pierrot loves Pierrette. He swears eternal love to her. Pierrette has a lover. A toy pistol cracks, blood flows—it is only cranberry juice. A street organ squeaks. Curtain.

Then the second number: the pursuit of a man. He has a hat with a cock-feather stuck in it. He is an admiral in the Swiss fleet. We have red mantles and masks. Rinaldo di Rinaldini is with us. The carabineers pursue us but cannot catch us. The pistol cracks again; the street organ squeaks. Curtain.

Number three: Athos, Porthos, Aramis, the three musketeers, are on the stage. Their jackets are splashed with wine. They have pasteboard swords in their hands. They drink, kiss and sing. Now and then they kill. Who can surpass Athos in courage? Or Porthos in strength? Or Aramis in cunning? The finale. The street organ drones an elaborate march tune.

Bravo! The gallery and the stalls are pleased. The actors have done their jobs. They are being dragged by their three-cornered hats, by their cock-feathers, and thrown into a box. The strings get entangled. Which is the admiral Rinaldo, which the enamoured Pierrot? Who can make head or tail of it? Good-night until to-morrow.

To-day I am on the stage with Vania, Fedor, and the governor. Blood is flowing. To-morrow I will be dragged on again. Carabineers are on the scene. Blood is flowing. In a week it will be again the admiral, Pierrette, Pierrot. Blood is flowing—that is, cranberry juice.

Will men find sense in that? And am I searching for the links of the chain? And does Vania believe in God? And does Heinrich believe in freedom? . . . Oh no, the world is certainly simpler than that. The tedious merry-go-round goes on turning: men fly at the light like moths. They perish in the flame. And really, is it not all the same?

I am weary. Days come and go. The street organ will continue to squeak behind the scene. Pierrot will make his escape. Come to the show—it is open to the public.

I recall one night on the seashore, in the late autumn. The sea was sighing languidly; it crept slowly upon the beach and immersed it. There was a fog. All boundaries became obliterated in the white mist. The waves merged with the sky, the beach with the water. The wet watery mist enveloped me. I breathed in the salt moisture. I heard the noise of the water. There was not a single star, not a glimpse of light. A transparent darkness surrounded me.

It is just like that now. There is no visible outline, no end and no beginning. Is it vaudeville or is it drama? Cranberry juice or blood? Puppet show or life? I don't know. Who knows?

October 1.

I have left town. Last night I went to the station, and mechanically seated myself in the train. The buffers were clanging noisily, the springs were bending. The engine whistled. Lights gleamed hurriedly by. The wheels rattled on speedily. There is autumn mud here. The morning is gloomy. The water in the river is like lead. And across the river there is a shadow in the fog. It is that of a sharp spire.

At three o'clock the daylight is gone, the street lamps are lit. A howling wind comes from the sea; the river rises turbulently against the granite banks; an inundation is threatening.

I am weary. There are the crosses—here are the soldiers. Monasteries and barracks. . . . I am waiting for night. My hour comes at night—the hour of oblivion and peace.

October 3.

I came across Andrei Petrovich yesterday. He was pleased to see me: his eyes smiled. He did not stop me, but cautiously followed me.

I did not care to see him. I did not want to talk to him about business matters. I knew all he was going to say—all his common-sense sermons. I increased my pace and turned into a lane. He overtook me.

'You are back, George?' he said. 'Thank God.'

And he vigorously shook my hand.

'Let us go to a tavern.'

As always, the damaged gramophone rattled on hoarsely. The waiters were running back and forth. The tobacco smoke, the strong smell of alcohol, victuals, and beer irritated me,

'We wanted you badly. Listen, George.'

'Well?'

He whispered mysteriously:

'The work must be organised again. We have decided it.'

His grey beard trembled; his eyes twinkled, as is often the case with old men. He waited for my answer.

There was a pause. Then he said:

'We have decided to entrust it to you. It will be hard work. But you are the man for it, George.'

I listened to him, but did not take in what he said. It was as if a stranger were speaking words which had nothing to do with me. He was calling me somewhere. But I do not wish to kill. Why should I?

And I said: 'Why?'

'What do you mean, George?'

'Why kill?'

He did not understand what I meant. He poured out a glass of cold water.

'Have some water. You are tired.'

'I am not.'

'George. . . . What is the matter with you?'

He looked anxiously at me and stroked my

hand affectionately, like a father. But I knew for certain : I was not with him, nor with Vania, nor with Erna. I was *with no one.*

I took my hat.

' Good-bye, Andrei Petrovich.'

' George . . .'

' Well ? '

' George, you are ill ; you must rest.'

There was another pause. I said slowly :

' I am not tired, and I am quite well. But I won't do anything more. Good-bye.'

There was the same mud in the street, and the same spire was visible across the river. It was grey, damp, and miserable.

October 4.

Now I know : I am tired of life. I am tired of my words, my thoughts, my desires—tired of all men and their life. There is a bar between them and me. There are sacred boundaries. My boundary is the red-stained sword.

I used to look at the sun when I was a child. It blinded me, it scorched me with its radiant light. I knew love when I was a child—the tender affections of my mother. I loved all men innocently, I loved the joy of life. Now I do

not love any one. I do not want to love, and I cannot love. Life has become an accursed and empty thing to me in a single hour: all is a lie and all is vanity.

October 5.

There was the desire, and I accomplished my task. Now the desire is gone. Why should I do anything? For the stage? For the puppet show?

I recall: 'He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love.' I do not love, and I do not know God. Vania knew. Did he really know?

Furthermore: 'Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.' To believe—in what? To pray—to whom? . . . I don't want the prayers of slaves. . . . Suppose Christ has set the world alight with the Word. I don't want serene light. Suppose love can save the world. I don't want love. I am alone. I will leave the dull puppet show. And should a temple open to me in heaven—I would still say: All is vanity and all is a lie.

It is a clear and pensive day. The river glitters in the sun. I love its majestic smoothness, the bed of deep and still waters. The

melancholy sunset dies in the sea, the purple skies are aflame. There is sadness in the splash of waters. The tops of the firs are bending. There is a smell of resin. When the stars come out and the autumn night falls, I will say my last word : my revolver is with me.

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