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SONIA

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

HENRY GRÉVILLE,

BY MARY NEAL SHERWOOD.

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SONIA.

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Alice Fleury Durand

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
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Henry Gréville's last and greatest novel, "SONIA," is charming and refined, and is a powerful Russian story of a poor little Russian girl, "SONIA," (a serf, of course,) knocked about and abused by the brutal aristocrats whom she served. The great value of the romance consists in the delicacy and originality with which the really beautiful character of the girl, "SONIA," is developed. "SONIA" is a graceful, domestic story, displaying the author's imaginative style and play of fancy, is careful in construction, and charmingly told—giving one a very distinct idea of every-day home life in Russia. Henry Gréville is a brilliant French woman, but has resided for many years in Russia, where she has thoroughly mastered Russian character.

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[1878]

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Henry Gréville's new novel, "SONIA," is charming and refined, and is a powerful Russian story of a poor little Russian slave girl (a serf, of course), knocked about and abused by the brutal aristocrats whom she served, until a young tutor who had come to give lessons at the château took her under his protection. The great value of this romance consists in the delicacy and originality with which the really beautiful character of the girl, "SONIA," is developed. "SONIA" is a graceful, domestic story, displaying the author's imaginative style and play of fancy, is careful in construction, and charmingly told—giving one a very distinct idea of every-day home life in Russia. Madame Henry Gréville is a brilliant French woman, but has resided for many years in Russia, where she has thoroughly mastered all phases of Russian character.

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SONIA.

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CHAPTER I.

AN EXPERIMENT.

"WANTED—A Tutor for the summer months, by a family in the country. For particulars, address Madame La Générale Goréline, at the *Tverskaïa*, Maison Mialof, Moscow."

"Why not?" said Boris Grébof to himself, as he folded the journal in which he had just read this advertisement. "Why not this as well as another? And since there must always be a first time, why not to-day as well as to-morrow?" He rose, put on his light spring overcoat, and went out to try his fate.

He certainly could not have been accused of too much eagerness in this act; he walked on with an indifferent air. La Tverskaïa was a long distance off; to reach it, he was compelled to pass through the Chinese district—that most picturesque bazar of Moscow—resem-

bling more a Byzantine town of the middle ages than a portion of a nineteenth century capital. The young man lingered at every corner, using the slightest possible excuse for delay; but destiny furnished none of sufficient consequence, and he reached Général Goréline's without having found any pretext for turning back.

As the outer door swung open, a Swiss in a green uniform, considerably the worse for wear, profusely trimmed with tarnished gold lace, emerged from a small niche in the vestibule. A strong odor of soup, a mixture of cabbage and dried mushrooms, exhaled from this apparition.

"What do you want?" he asked, in a tone of impertinent familiarity, as he examined the young man from head to foot.

"What do I want?" replied Grébof, in a tone that was a precise repetition of the man's. "I want to see Madame La Générale Goréline?"

"Ah! you come for the place then? You are a tutor, I suppose. Very well, you may go up."

"Where is 'up,' if you please?"

"The fourth floor. A good many young students have been here these last two days, but they have not suited!"

"This is certainly encouraging and agreeable," murmured Grébof, as he climbed, not without some difficulty, the last two flight of stairs—stairs as steep as a ladder in a granary—particularly in comparison with the lower ones, which were as comfortable as if they had been built for an archbishop. "A Swiss who meddles with the business of the family, and stairs that are as difficult to climb as the

masts of a ship at sea are not pleasant things to begin with! Pshaw! I shall not suit either, but the first step will have been taken at all events."

He stopped, for he was on the upper floor, and stood before a door that was draped with faded hangings, and was decorated with a copper plate on which was engraved the name of *Stépane Pétrovitch Goréline*, and rang the bell. No one came. After waiting a considerable length of time, he, in an atrocious humor, was about to sound another and more vigorous peal, when he heard the hurried steps of a servant, who stopped evidently to fasten the last buttons of his livery coat, then threw open the door, and Boris found himself before a little man of a half frightened aspect.

"Madame La Générale Goréline?" asked Grébof, glancing at the shabby clothes of the servant, which were white on every seam and ragged at every button-hole.

The establishment had no attractions for our hero, and he was sorely tempted to turn his back upon it.

"Madame is at home," replied the little man, in a flurried tone. "You came for the place I suppose, sir!"

"Yes, for the place," said Boris, half angrily. "It seems to me that all of you know my business better than I do myself!"

The little man, frightened half out of his senses, drew back hastily, and answered in an apologetic tone:

"Madame gave orders that any one who came for the place should be admitted. Walk in, sir."

Boris found himself in a salon furnished in wine-colored velvet. The hangings had suffered cruelly from the

ravages of moths, the paper was soiled and torn in spots, the wood of the sofas and arm-chairs were scratched and had long since parted with its varnish, and the worn and shabby carpet, which covered only a portion of the parquet, showed by its irregularity of pattern that it had been repaired, and the oldest pieces cut out.

A full-length portrait of Général Goréline, with all his decorations, and with cannons in the background, ornamented the wall on the left. On the right, half barricaded by a table covered with albums, hung another portrait, also full-length, and equally worthless in point of execution, but of which the original must have been possessed of remarkable beauty.

The regular features looked as if they were carved from ivory, and the delicate coloring of the complexion was like that of a Bengal rose that has paled under a summer sun. The expression of this portrait was like that of most portraits—a smile of utter vacancy.

"If that is Madame Goréline," said Boris to himself, as he examined it, "she has certainly been in her day a very beautiful woman, and ought to retain some traces of beauty."

A rustle of silk was heard. Boris turned; Madame Goréline had entered the room. She bowed slightly to the young man, and took a seat just under her own portrait.

This habit, adopted in her youth to demonstrate that "the likeness was not a flattered one," had become fatal with the lapse of time. The teeth were discolored, the nose had grown red and pointed, and a mechanical, bitter sort of smile had taken the place of the commonplace sweetness of the picture.

"There is not much beauty left there!" thought Boris, while Madame Goréline pointed to a chair, and uttered, in French, the conventional, "Be seated, sir."

"You wish to pass the summer with us?" said the lady, very sweetly.

Boris bowed in acquiescence.

"Let me tell you how matters are," she continued. "You would be required to teach my little boy, Eugène. He is eleven, and is really a very nice lad. I do not say this, I assure you, merely because I am his mother, but every one says the same; all our neighbors in the country simply worship him. I wish to send him to school in the autumn, and the summer must be spent in preparing him for his examination in sciences and languages—you speak French?"

"Yes, madame."

"And German?"

"Not very well; but I can teach it perfectly."

"And Latin and Greek?"

"Those are not necessary, madame, for the primary class in our schools," answered Boris, repressing a smile; for the interview was becoming amusing; "but I am equally at home in those two languages. I have devoted much time to them for the three past years at the university."

Madame Goréline thawed more and more. "You see," she said, "a teacher must be well founded on every subject if he is to be subjected to the incessant questions of children—intelligent children, I mean, of course. It is literally true, sir, that even I am sometimes nonplussed by the questions asked by my son. I always answer them,

to be sure, for it is essential to preserve one's prestige; but, however, you know yourself what children are."

"Indeed I do not!" answered Boris, somewhat curtly.

"Ah, indeed! I conclude, then, this is the first time that you have sought a tutor's place for the summer?"

"Yes, madame, this is the first time."

"Ah! and yet you have been for three years at the university?"

"Yes, madame."

"It is very singular—"

She stopped as she encountered the somewhat haughty eyes of the young man, and dared not continue her cross-examination.

"It is most singular," she resumed, after a second of silence, "that you have never cared to pass a summer in a family; still, so far as I am concerned, this would prove no obstacle—in fact, quite the contrary; you would be for my son more of a companion than a master, and that is what I desire."

"I shall remember these words," said Boris to himself.

"We pass our summer near Smolensk, where I have an estate. We leave town on the 14th of May—that is to say, a week from Tuesday. You can accompany us if you choose, or can follow a day or two later; there is a diligence which brings you within ten versts of us. You will have much leisure, for Eugène is still so young that four hours of study are enough for him. You can ride and drive. We have a river, where there is good bathing in warm weather. Of course you will be regarded as a member of the family," continued the lady with a beaming

smile, the effect of which was, however, rendered less charming by the teeth it displayed.

"How delightful! and how extremely convenient it all appears!" said Boris, continuing his soliloquy; but he was amused, nevertheless.

"As to the salary," resumed Madame La Générale, becoming more austere in manner, "I give twenty roubles per month for three months—that is to say, sixty roubles for the summer."

These last words seemed to distress her, for she stopped short and examined her cambric handkerchief, which was sadly torn near the embroidered cipher.

"I cannot accept less than a hundred roubles, madame, for the three months," answered Boris, in a polite but very firm tone.

"A hundred silver roubles to prepare a small boy for school! Really, sir, the duties demanded of you are so trivial, and your time will be nearly all at your own disposal."

"I care not if my duties are trivial or not, madame," interrupted Boris, calmly, "but I assure you that it is impossible for me to accept less than the hundred roubles!"

The lady was silent, and evidently embarrassed. Boris pleased her; his modesty and dignified bearing impressed her most favorably; while a certain vague sense of his superiority which would permit her to say to her friends, "I have with me a man of the most extraordinary talents," tempted her to yield; "but one hundred roubles," she said to herself, "one hundred roubles are a great deal of money."

"I regret, madame," said Boris, rising, "that we cannot come to an understanding."

He said this in French, with an accent that had so little of the Muscovite intonation that the lady placed her hand on his arm to detain him.

"This is really your final decision?" she said.

"I never bargain, madame," he answered, with some little disgust.

"Really, but it is an enormous sum! Since you insist upon it, I must yield, I presume." (She had had a happy thought.) "As you will have so many unoccupied hours, you would, I imagine, be willing to give my daughter some lessons in French. She left school last year, and I am afraid is losing much of what she learned. Lydie!" she called.

"Mamma!" replied a fresh young voice.

"Come here!"

The door opened, and Boris saw the original of the portrait that had once resembled Madame La Générale; but this was a brilliant, smiling original: a little haughty in bearing, proud of her beauty, and sure of her empire. It was Mademoiselle Lydie Goréline.

"Lydie, my child," said her mother, "this is—I beg your pardon, sir, but I do not yet know your name?—"

"Grébof—Boris Ivanovitch."

"This is Boris Ivanovitch, who will pass the summer with us in the country, and who will help you with your French."

The young girl cast a half-pouting, half-pleased look at Grébof—pleased, without doubt, at having such a good-

looking preceptor (for Boris was a very handsome fellow), and pouting at the idea of resuming her studies.

"Come and dine with us Sunday, Boris Ivanovitch; you will then make my husband's acquaintance, and can see my Eugène. He is out walking just now: it is a pity, I should have liked you to see him; but Sunday will do."

Boris now rose, notwithstanding the entreaties of Madame La Générale to prolong his stay, and with a profound bow left the room. The little frightened servant helped him on with his overcoat; and, as he stood in the anteroom, the young man heard Lydie say to her mother, in the most decided tones:

"I will not, mamma—I will not! I hate French, and loathe a French grammar, and I will never touch one again!"

"Listen, dear," said Madame Goréline: "this young man has made most exorbitant terms, and he must be thoroughly utilized."

"I won't utilize him, then!" replied Miss Lydie.

The door closed, and Grébof heard no more. As he went out, the Swiss in the shabby livery appeared again.

"Well, sir, is that you?"

"Yes, my good fellow, it is I!" answered Boris, laughing good-naturedly; "and everything is settled."

"The Général will be thankful enough," said the Swiss; "all this commotion did not suit him."

"The Général? Ah! yes, I understand; in fact, I had forgotten that there was such a person," muttered Boris, in a low voice. "Everything is for the best, to be sure; but these are droll servants, upon my word!"

CHAPTER II.

A MOTHER'S SACRIFICE.

AS Boris walked through the streets on his way to his rooms, he was conscious of a feeling of unaccountable depression.

"It is because I have sold myself into bondage!" he muttered, and this thought disturbed him more than he would have believed possible. "The chains do not threaten to be very heavy; and after all," he continued, "three months is no time at all—and then one hundred roubles means to me, that I shall not be compelled to give lessons next winter, but shall have plenty of leisure to prepare myself for my future career."

In order to get rid of this melancholy impression, he went into the Kremlin gardens, and climbed the hill. He panted for fresh air: the walls of the wine-colored salon still seemed to stifle and weigh him down.

Arriving on the esplanade covered with churches, which crowns the Kremlin, he put his arms on the parapet and looked at the superb panorama that was spread out before him. Countless domes and towers, of every form and color, were seen above thick masses of trees and roofs of houses. A bright ray of sunshine rested on the enormous gilded cupola of the Saint Sauveur. At his feet the river glittered like a narrow steel ribbon, and further off lay a mass of green hills, one lapping over the other, and nearer were

the various monasteries, amid newly planted fields and woods of the tenderest, freshest spring foliage.

The swallows uttered joyous cries as they flew around the old towers, and hope revived in the heart of the young man. A gust of wind stole his hat; he caught it with a laugh, and like all conquerors, all poets, and many another beside, whose names are unknown to fame, cried aloud:

"I shall make a place for myself yet in this world—the future is mine!"

Saluting with a triumphant gesture the city, which was as yet ignorant of his existence, he turned away, and with a rapid step sought his rooms, where he at once seated himself, and wrote as follows to his mother:

"DEAREST MOTHER:—I told you that I had decided to take a situation for the summer, that I might lay aside sufficient money to enable me to work without hindrance next winter. I have found a family where I shall have a certain portion of the day to myself, and at the same time earn a hundred roubles with much ease. I am sure that you, in thinking how useful this sum will be to me, will agree in thinking my step a wise one; nevertheless, as you very well know, I should have infinitely preferred to pass the summer with you in my native village——"

Here Boris stopped writing. This native village, with its peasants' homes, the great swing on the green, that always caught in the branches of the birch trees, if it was pushed too high, and which then scattered on the turf and in the clear brook showers of their perfumed petals: the

songs of the children in their red skirts on fête-days, and the old blind horse that was always pulled to the left if he was wanted to go to the right, and the superannuated *Drozhki*, in which his mother visited the remote corners of their estate; all these beloved familiar scenes and things, passed before his eyes in a moment, and Boris laid his head on his folded arms while an unwonted moisture filled his eyes.

For the first time for twenty years he would not this summer see that dear home. And who could tell what was in store for him in this other dwelling-place where he had promised to take up his abode, and where he should feel, in all probability, like a chained and imprisoned animal.

He started to his feet, and took two steps toward the door, ready to give up his engagement. But battling bravely against this weakness, he returned to the table, and again resumed his pen—

"—with you in my native village, where I fear the days will be long for you without me. But, you know, my beloved mother, that our modest means entails certain sacrifices upon both of us. You have deprived yourself of many things for me, and it is my part now to take care of myself—as many a college student of my years has done without a thought of hardship. Nevertheless, the sacrifice would be I fear, impossible for me to make, did I not intend to see you before the Christmas vacation. I shall visit you, rest assured, before the beginning of the university term. Write to me, dearest and best of mothers

—tell me that you approve of my resolution, for if my absence grieves you too much, I will renounce the project."

Having added a few words more, he sealed his letter and addressed it to Varvara Pétrovna, in the town of Grébova, District of Kostroma.

The following Sunday came the reply. This most excellent of women loved her son too tenderly to throw any obstacle in his path. She had wept much on reading his letter, but not a tear had stained the paper. The Holy Saints, before whose Images she knelt morning and night, alone knew the pangs her resolution had cost her.

"But try and come to me this autumn," she said, "for I am growing old, my son; and I have not yet grown accustomed to seeing so little of you!"

Boris read between the lines and well knew all that was concealed in this simple request. He pressed the letter to his lips, and went to dine with Madame Goréline.

CHAPTER III.

LYDIE.

MADEMOISELLE LYDIE had probably taken a violent dislike to the student on account of the French grammar, for she did not make her appearance at the family dinner. She had chosen this day to pay a visit to one of her friends, and at four o'clock sent word that she should remain to dinner. Madame Goréline was highly displeased, and her husband, as usual, was the chosen victim of her ill-humor.

It would be difficult to imagine a smaller being, or a more active and philosophic a person than Général Goréline.

Accustomed to the impossibility of opening his lips in the presence of his better half, he had adopted early in his married life the part of silence when with her. But he made amends for this when he found a good listener.

Intolerant toward others—in words be it understood—almost as much so as his wife was toward him, he announced his opinions, solid and full-grown—almost as if they were of bronze, like his cannons; but these opinions were forgotten by himself as soon as uttered, and if his own arguments were presented the next day, he demolished them to powder with the ease and directness of a shell thrown into a fort.

This "charming child" of Madame Goréline's—her

Eugène—was a boy much like other boys, neither more nor less intelligent, but deliciously impertinent toward his father; as any one who heard the manner in which Madame Goréline addressed her husband, in the presence of her children, might easily suppose would be the case.

The dinner, scanty and pretentious, was precisely that indicated by the wine-colored salon. There was one fish, delicate and well-cooked, but insufficient in quantity for the number of guests, of whom two or three had but a crumb or two floating in the mayonnaise dressing. The salad was made of rancid oil and watery vinegar, a domestic fabrication, and so on to the end.

The mistress of the house overwhelmed Boris with attentions and dainty morsels. Eugène, somewhat intimidated by the presence of the new-comer, behaved in the most satisfactory manner; and the Général was so much absorbed that he did not open his mouth after the first and only four words.

"Delighted to see you!"

The other guests—four or five—dull and uninteresting, had begun a discussion on the respective merits of different races of cows.

Boris was bored to death. His face told this perhaps, for Madame Goréline cut short a very elaborate description of their summer home.

They went back to the salon to take their coffee. Boris was thinking how he should escape without appearing to be guilty of a rudeness, when suddenly the door was thrown widely open, Lydie appeared, rosy and smiling, dressed in white, with wide blue ribbons, and

carrying in her hand a bunch of white lilacs. Boris, struck with the radiant beauty of the girl, examined her with more attention than he had previously done. This she at once detected, and rewarded him with a most gracious bow and smile, wherein a close observer might have read far more than met the eye.

"How early you have returned!" exclaimed her mother. "At what hour, pray, did you dine?"

"I am sure I don't know," answered Lydie, seating herself just opposite Boris; "but I was tired, and I left as soon as we rose from the table."

"I am glad you were away!" cried Eugène, "for we had more cake!"

Madame Goréline cast reproving glances at this terrible Eugène; but they were quite thrown away, for he began again:

"If you had been at the table, there would not have been enough cake to go round, for father took two pieces!"

Madame Goréline concealed her anger under an explosion of forced laughter. But Lydie, evidently annoyed at the turn taken by the conversation, addressed herself to Boris in her sweetest tone:

"Shall you go with us next Tuesday, sir?" she asked.

"I cannot yet say."

"But you must decide at once, Boris Ivanovitch," said Madame Goréline. "If you come we shall take the carriage and the calèche; if not, I shall take the carriage alone, and send my maid by the diligence—"

"And we four go in the carriage?" interrupted Lydie. "No, indeed, mamma, I will not go in the carriage with

papa, who smokes all day, and with Eugène, who kicks everybody in the most persistent fashion."

"Which do you prefer that I should do?" asked Boris of his hostess.

"Why, if you come, I can put you and Eugène in the calèche, and take my maid in with us."

Lydie made a slight indefinable gesture.

"Come! Mr. Boris," she said, "it is delightful to travel in a caravan, and besides we shall pass the night at one of the stations—"

"No," interrupted her mother, "this time we shall not stop."

"Ah! well—that is better still. I delight in travelling at night, when the dew is falling and the ground is fresh and damp."

Boris thought of the thick woods, musical with the songs of nightingales, that he passed through on his way to his mother's house, and his heart ached.

"You will come with us, will you not? Besides," the girl added, dropping her voice, "it is by no means certain that Eugène will be your companion all the journey."

Boris looked at her in some doubt, not quite sure of what she meant.

"You shall have papa for a portion of the day," she continued, with a gay little laugh. "Mamma, it is all settled; Mr. Boris will go with us!"

As indeed he did. And the cunning Lydie, who being a thoroughly spoiled child, always compassed her own ends, arranged matters so well, that she was his companion in the large calèche, sometimes alone and sometimes with her little brother, for the greater part of the journey

CHAPTER IV.

LESSONS.

THE window was open; the flickering shadow of the lindens played over the copy-book lying on the table; the hum and whirr of insects filled the garden; and the wide lake sent golden arrows of light into the eyes of Boris as he dictated to his charming pupil, who had really become wonderfully submissive. The great room in which he gave his lessons was cool and almost damp, notwithstanding the warmth of the June weather. Mademoiselle Lydie had placed that day a white rose in her chestnut hair, whose rippling, capricious waves took a golden tint in the light. One rebellious curl almost concealed the flower which peeped out occasionally at some dainty movement of the pretty head bowed over the copy-book.

"The flowers that we have gathered to-day," dictated the young man, "will be faded to-morrow—from the verb *faner*—now how will you write the past participle, mademoiselle?"

As he mechanically asked this question, Boris looked at the white rose which was so near his hand.

It was a month since he left Moscow, and he was no longer his own master. An irresistible force had swept away all his outposts and left him without protection.

Until then love had seemed to him like a glorious dream,

the realization of which was afar off in the future; and now he had learned that there was neither light nor warmth, hope nor joy, save in the eyes of this young girl.

He loved her with all his soul—as only a youth of his years can love—with a love that perhaps was not of any great depth or lasting duration, but by which Boris was now completely absorbed.

"Lydie, you are writing with your nose!" cried Madame Goréline, who at this moment passed the open door.

Lydie started, and then went to close the door with an air of ill-humor, but returned laughing. Boris was very pale. The voice of Madame Goréline was heard in the distance scolding the gardener. Lydie had reseated herself, taken her pen, and prepared to write. She repeated the last words, "faded to-morrow!"

"Give me your book," said Boris, in a constrained tone.

"Not yet: dictate some verses as you did the other day," answered Lydie, clasping her book in both hands.

Boris drew toward him a volume of selections.

"No, not that: it is stupid. Dictate to me that poem —'Spring Time in the Alps,' you know!"

Still silent, Boris took the small yellow volume and opened it at hap-hazard. Lydie drew it away and chose a page.

"Here!" she said, pushing the volume toward the young man.

He began to read. He sought to impart to his voice a

tone of indifference; but the impassioned melody of the poem, which is absolutely intoxicating, took him entirely off his feet. He suddenly stopped, for he felt that he was conquered.

"Your book?" he said, and he could not utter one other syllable.

Lydie, without lifting her eyes, laid the book before him. He was dizzy; for a month he had seen her, coquettish and gay, indifferent and cruel by turns, but so completely and adorably beautiful, that he found each day his lesson more difficult to give. Gathering all his courage he drew the copy-book nearer.

"I beg your pardon," said Lydie, in a tone so low that he heard it with difficulty; and she laid her hand on the page.

Their hands met. Boris grasped the slender fingers, which fluttered a little in his hold, but were not withdrawn. He endeavored to meet her eyes, but her face was turned aside, and he could see only her throat and one rosy ear suffused with blushes. He felt as if he were no longer on earth as he lifted the girl's hand to his lips. She started and made a futile attempt to take it away.

"Lydie, I love you! I love you more than life itself!"

She made no reply; a low, quivering sigh alone indicated that she heard him, and seemed to ask, "And then?"

"Lydie, if you have finished your lesson, come and pick some strawberries!" said her mother, as she hastily passed the window.

"I am coming!" answered Lydie, rising in haste. Boris stood transfixed as if struck by lightning. The girl

glided to the door, then turning on the threshold took the white rose from her hair, and with a burning blush threw it lightly to the young man, and disappeared.

A moment later Lydie passed under his window; he could not see her from the place where he still stood; but he heard her singing in a low voice the well-known song of the Princess Kotchouby,

> "Oh! say to my beloved that I love him,
> As the angels worship God!"

After the first two lines he heard no more: she was too far away. Boris buried his face in his hands. "What have I done?" he said, bitterly; "I love her, and if she loves me, what then?" Nevertheless this last idea restored all his energy. He went out to the garden, there to pace up and down the long alleys buried in thought. Here he finally came across Général Goréline.

The society of this gallant soldier Boris always enjoyed, and with the exception of the hours spent with Lydie, and those passed in solitude thinking of her, he had no such agreeable moments as those with the Général, when they discussed some knotty points in politics, or found fault with the administration.

The reasoning of the Général was not especially forcible or close; he said nothing particularly new or interesting; but he warmed up in his arguments in a most amusing fashion. When he fancied that he had uttered what he called "a poser," he dropped the pipe that he held in his mouth, stopped short in his rapid strides, and watched the result of his words as he would have done the discharge of his cannons on the battle-field.

There was nothing to be said in refutation of the reasons he advanced, or rather he would listen to no replies, and be convinced by no reasoning.

"You do not understand me!" he would say, sadly shaking his head, and drawing two or three long whiffs from his pipe. "It is not that! Oh, no; you are all wrong!"

But what was it then, and what did he mean to say? No one ever knew.

But no matter what it was or was not, Boris had learned to love this kindly-hearted man for his own sake as well as because he was Lydie's father. On his side, Goréline—treated almost contemptuously by all the other inmates of the house, including the servants—became much attached to this young man, whose manner toward him was invariably polite.

At this moment, with his arms behind him, he was stooping over some Spanish beans, which ought by this time to have covered the trellis, but as yet had not emerged from the ground.

"It is certainly most extraordinary," he muttered. "I water them every day with my shaving water just as the Major told me—and yet—I declare it is most extraordinary."

As he caught sight of Boris he straightened himself up, and called out gayly:

"Come here, young man, come here! I have heard great news this morning. Prince Armianof has returned to his estates after three years of absence. His coachman came to see our cook."

"What is that to me?" said Boris to himself; but he

answered aloud: "If it brings you any pleasure, I am very glad to hear it!"

"What do you say? If it brings me any pleasure? The return of an old friend certainly ought to be most gratifying. To be sure, it was his deceased father who was my friend, but his son is a nice fellow and immensely wealthy—a great match for any young woman," he added, lowering his voice to a mysterious whisper.

"A great match?" repeated Boris, mechanically.

"Of course; all mothers like to see their daughters princesses, and rolling in money beside! As to myself, I care very little for rank. A general of artillery, who had won his brevet by a gallant act, stands higher, in my estimation, than a prince, who has merely taken the trouble to be born!"

"You have no aristocratic prejudices then?" asked Boris, as if such a question ever elicited an intelligible reply.

"I? None at all, I do assure you! Julie Alexeïevna" —his wife be it understood—"has enough for both of us. And you see—"

"Then," interrupted Boris, courageously, "you would permit your son to marry a young girl of modest birth, if his heart so dictated?"

"Parbleu!" said the Général, in French—this, with *merci* and *bonjour*, forming his entire philological luggage.

At this moment a small figure appeared at the end of the terrace. It was a little ragged peasant girl, trotting along with bare feet, and holding in her hand one of the Général's pipes, which was nearly as tall as her slender self.

"See here, Stépane Pétrovitch! I found this at the foot of the garden."

"In the summer-house?"

"No, Stépane Pétrovitch—standing up against the hedge."

"Ah! yes, I remember. I was mending the fence, and I left it there. I missed another, still, this morning."

"I know; I found that one, too. It is the small white one. I found it on the white bench!"

"No, not that, another! I must have left it somewhere among the stables—go and look for it!"

The little girl nodded and set off on a run. Her heels struck regularly against her torn woollen skirt, and her hands hung at her side; they were small and delicately made, but roughened and browned by working in the fields.

"That is my pipe-hunter!" said Stépane Pétrovitch. "She is entirely devoted to me; but she must have taken a fancy to you, for she asked Douania to let her put your room in order. She is an extraordinary little person, who likes very few people. For example," he continued, in a whisper, "she can't endure my wife!"

"And why, pray?"

"How can I tell! But my wife dislikes her quite as much. But she is my servant, and it is I who pay her," continued the good man, laughing heartily, as if, in the idea of his paying a servant's wages, there was something unnatural and fantastic.

"And how much do you pay her?" asked Boris, smiling also—moved by the contagious laugh of his companion.

"Thirty copecks a month," replied the Général, still laughing; "she is an orphan, and has never known a father, while her mother died nine or ten years ago."

"But how old is she?" asked Boris, in surprise. "I should not think her more than ten!"

"She is eleven or twelve. She has not been brought up very tenderly, you see. I like her very much; and she lives in the kitchen with the other servants."

Little Sophie, who was called *Sonia*, for the Russians have a passion for pet names and abbreviations, now appeared, holding the missing pipe, which she presented to its owner.

Stépane Pétrovitch spent his days sowing his pipes in every corner of his domain, and the duties of this child were therefore no sinecure.

"Well done, Sonia! I thank you very much," said Goréline, as he smoothed the little girl's glossy head.

Her dark gray eyes sparkled with joy; she snatched the great paw-like hand of her friend, and pressed her lips upon it.

"She is a nice little thing!" said Boris, without thinking that she could hear him.

The child turned her frank, honest face toward him.

"You put my room in order, Sonia, I hear," said the young man, kindly; "and I am much pleased with you. You do your work as well as a grown woman."

With a characteristic Russian gesture, Sonia placed her folded arm across her eyes, and from behind this shelter looked at Boris. Her face grew scarlet, and she hastily turned and fled.

Lydie now appeared on the terrace, holding in the skirt

of her dress a quantity of flowers. A pretty slender foot peeped out from her embroidered petticoats, as she hurried toward her father.

"Good-morning, papa!" she cried, with a vivid blush. And she embraced the old man, who was much astonished at this unwonted display of affection.

"Come to breakfast," she said, gently. And she hung on his arm without vouchsafing a glance at Boris, who followed them in an ecstasy of delight. Already the soft folds of that violet skirt bounded his horizon.

CHAPTER V.

WHITE ROSES.

HOW unending seemed that day to Boris! He longed to be alone, and think over the occurrences of the morning; but, by a series of circumstances which are never lacking in similar cases, the house was crowded with visitors all day long. It was impossible to speak to Lydie—almost impossible to look at her—for he felt that for her sake, as well as his, their mutual secret must not be betrayed.

She was as calm and self-possessed as if nothing in particular had occurred; the color in her cheeks was possibly more brilliant than usual, and her eyes were brighter, but she was thoroughly herself; while the innermost soul of the young man was disturbed, and he had no thought save for the morrow, when he should once more meet her face to face, and when, perhaps, he might again touch her hand. He might not be able to say one word to her, for they were constantly interrupted by the comings and goings of the servants, and by Madame Goréline herself. But he should see her, and his heart stood still at the mere thought.

At last the visitors departed. Their carriages disappeared in a turn of the road, and Boris bent toward Madame La Générale to say good-night. The lady extended her hand as usual, as did the Général. The

young man did not venture to cast a glance at Lydie, who had retreated a few steps.

"Good-night, Lydie Stépanovna," he said, as he passed her.

"Good-night," she answered, in a low voice, but did not lift her eyes. And he entered the house without having exchanged a look with her.

As he opened the door of his room, he was infinitely astonished at its appearance; his candle, already lighted, stood on the table near the bed, and the book that he had been reading the evening before had been taken from the shelf and placed in readiness for him. The shade on the window had been carefully lowered to keep the light from his eyes in the early morning. A sweet, fresh perfume filled this carefully arranged room, where nothing was left of the day's disorder. He took the light in his hand to examine more closely the unwonted appearance; and on his bureau was an enormous bouquet of full-blown, white roses standing in a glass of water.

"She brought them!" was his first thought. "That is impossible!" was his second, as quick and much less consoling. "She sent the roses," was his next idea, and filled with joy and gratitude he dropped into the narrow arm-chair, where he usually sat, and dreamed of Lydie until, startled at the lateness of the hour, and overwhelmed with sleep, he staggered to his bed and slept soundly until morning.

Master Eugène had prepared the day before an agreeable surprise for his tutor. Blowing a trumpet that he held to his lips with one hand, and striking with the

other terrific blows on a drum—which during the whole of their journey from Moscow, had rolled under the feet of every one, and yet had unfortunately survived—the engaging lad came with a series of kicks to the door of poor Boris.

He, poor fellow, started up, thinking that he was at least assisting at the siege of Jericho; then, collecting himself, addressed to Master Eugène a sermon, the sole result of which was to make the boy sulky and unmanageable for the remainder of the day.

Boris, however, cared little for the vagaries of his pupil; he waited the coming of that one hour of the twenty-four; all the others were encumbrances; dim and misty clouds through which floated a series of impressions more or less disagreeable.

"Lydie," said Madame Goréline, suddenly, in the room next the one where the girl came for her lessons. "Lydie, suppose we go and dine with the Antropofs?"

"And why, mamma?" asked Lydie, reluctantly.

"Because the thing would be done then; and it has been hanging over us long enough. Go and dress at once, and we can go in an hour, and return before dark."

Boris, who was at the blackboard doing an example in division, stood still with the crayon in his fingers.

"Ah, well! why don't you go on?" grumbled the gentle Eugène, in the sulkiest of tones. "It is not so very amusing to sit here and wait for you."

While the imp was speaking, Lydie had answered her mother, and Boris had not heard what she said.

A profound sadness at once seized him. Another twenty-

four hours without speaking to her. He looked through the half-open door into the next room. It was empty.

Master Eugène finished his lesson in arithmetic. Just as the child, overjoyed at his escape, was about to rush out into the garden, Boris stopped him.

"Go ask your sister," he said, in a voice that he struggled to make indifferent, "if she means to take her lesson to-day."

Eugène disappeared.

"Lydia, go to your lesson!" the boy shouted, at the top of his voice, all through the house; fancying that he thus accomplished the errand on which he was sent.

Boris listened with all his ears. Not a sound in reply.

"Lydie!" repeated Eugène's voice, still further off. "Lydie! I say, Lydie! where on earth are you?"

Boris heard no more. The house became profoundly still. He leaned from the window.

The wind rustled the leaves gently; a bird, with bits of wool or a feather in his beak, with which he was building his nest on a dead branch among the green leaves, uttered an occasional joyous chirp. The young man thought of the simple white house which, with two or three acres of land, was his only patrimony.

"It is a nest, to be sure; but a very humble one!" And he sighed sadly. "She will not go there with me," he said at last, half aloud. And he took up the book they had read together, and listlessly turned over its leaves; but he did not read it. The goldfinch fluttered to and fro past the window, and seemed with its busy little cries to be mocking the young man.

Suddenly the door opened softly, and Lydie entered with her arms full of books. She pushed the door behind her ; and as it closed she came toward Boris with her face covered with blushes.

"Good-morning, Boris Ivanovitch," she said. "I am late, and I ask your pardon."

She wore her ordinary morning dress.

"You are not going out, then?" stammered the young man.

"No, not just yet. We shall go and take tea with our neighbor to-night."

She seated herself at a desk, opened her grammar, and placed it in front of Boris. He looked at it, and at her, but could not speak.

"Will you begin by a *dictée*?" she said, seeing that he was still silent.

Mechanically he cast his eyes on the page before him; then he lifted them again; and as he did so met a swift glance from the young girl; a glance which, brief as it was, was yet so full of sweetness and half-concealed tenderness, that all his vague reveries assumed a tangible shape and hue.

He took the girl's hand and pressed his burning lips upon it, while his eager eyes devoured her burning face.

"I love you, and you are not angry?" he said, after a few moments of silent intoxication.

"No, I am not angry!" she whispered. "I told mamma that I did not wish to lose my lesson," and her hand was not withdrawn from his loving clasp. "But begin your *dictée*," she continued, "for she may come at any moment."

With a desperate effort Boris read to the end of a sentence, pronouncing with difficulty words that conveyed no meaning to his own ears or eyes.

The girl's irregular handwriting betrayed her agitation, but she did not once meet her teacher's eyes. At the end of five minutes, still writing, she said, almost in a whisper:

"Come with us to-night to take tea with our neighbor?"

"If you wish it," answered Boris.

She lifted her eyes then, and smiled with that little triumphant air that so entirely suited her style of beauty.

"No," she said; "you must stay here, and think of me!"

"You love me, then," he whispered, as he leaned over her.

"I don't know—perhaps!" she answered, turning away. "Go on—quick!"

He resumed his *dictée* once more, but still held Lydie's left hand imprisoned in his own. He did not understand a word of all he read. At intervals Madame Goréline's voice or that of the small Eugène was heard, and Lydie hurriedly snatched her hand away; but that peril over, our lovers exchanged a smile, and the hands were again clasped as if by magic.

"Oh, I have so many things to tell you!" murmured Boris, taking the exercise to correct its faults. "This hour has fled like a dream!"

"Not now—nor here. After dinner, when papa and mamma will take their nap—in the garden, near the spring. Will you be there?"

Boris had only time to nod in acquiescence, and Madame Goréline entered, looking for some trifle she had lost. After having searched every corner, she turned to her daughter.

"You have finished, Lydie, have you not?" she asked.

"Yes, mamma," answered the girl, picking her books and papers up hastily. "Thank you, sir," she said, with a respectful courtesy to Boris, and she left the room with her mother.

CHAPTER VI.

AT THE SPRING.

TOWARD five o'clock, he repaired to the place she had designated; but Lydie had not yet arrived. He waited for her coming a long time, and just as he had given up all hope, he saw her approach, wearing her visiting costume and carrying her parasol.

"I am ready," she said, "and mamma is still asleep. When she wakes, I have told her maid to say that I am ready. We are thus secure while she makes her toilette; and when the carriage is at the door, little Sonia will come and call me."

Arranging the folds of her dress with the greatest care, lest she should tumble and crease it, she seated herself on a broad stone, at a short distance from Boris. The spring itself was at the mouth of a picturesque ravine, and the hand of man had not marred its wonderful beauty by any attempt at improvements. The cool water fell in a clear crystal stream into a broad, shallow basin, and then overflowed the brim with a silvery tinkle on a bed of round, shining pebbles. Forget-me-nots and sweet-scented mints grew in profusion, and tall reeds bent over the brook as if to catch a glimpse of themselves in the limpid current. Nothing could be less pretentious than this simple spring, which supplied the prosaic inhabitants of the Général's mansion with all the water that was needed. The flowers

grouped about it, formed an appropriate framework for its picturesque loveliness, while the flickering shadow of the alder-bushes playing over the brown depths of the stream added another charm to the spot.

Lydie was not dressed for this place. Her rustling silk robe, profusely trimmed, was not in harmony with the rural scene, and with the intensely Russian aspect of the place. Boris did not notice this, however—his whole energies being concentrated on the words he was about to utter.

"Lydie Stépanovna," he said, after a long silence, "I have told you already that I love you. I am only twenty-one, of noble, but not distinguished birth. My father was a poor country gentleman. I have nothing, or next to nothing; but I am energetic and brave. I have studied conscientiously, and am willing to spend the rest of my life in work, and I am sure that I shall some day achieve something; but my happiness depends entirely on yourself. You know now all the facts of my position—are you willing to take me as I am? Will you become my wife?"

This was what in good Russ is called coming to the point. For the first time Lydie's hand was asked in marriage, and her heart beat high. This handsome youth stood before her, very pale, and so agitated that he could hardly speak. She was seventeen, and life seemed to her one long holiday. She answered without hesitation:

"Yes, I will."

Boris drew her close to his heart, and tears filled his eyes.

"Ah, Lydie," he stammered, as he covered her pretty

hands with kisses, "now I have a heart to work! You will be proud of me some day, I assure you!"

The first moment of ecstasy over, and he remembered, with a sinking heart, that long, weary months and years must elapse before he could claim his fiancée.

"Your parents will never give their consent!"

"I fear not," murmured Lydie, with heightened color. "But never mind—the day will come when you are rich and distinguished, and then they will ask nothing better for their daughter!"

"My beloved!—and you will wait with patience?"

"Most certainly!" she answered, with all the smiling security of youth—the youth that knows nothing of the realities of life, its weariness, disappointments, and temptations.

"How many years will you wait?"

"Years!" cried the girl, "not years, for then I should be an old woman."

"You old, Lydie?" and Boris laughed as if the finger of Time would never be daring enough to mar the beauty of that fair face.

"But you do not really mean years, do you?" she persisted.

"Who knows, child? If I could be sent abroad at the expense of the government, two or three years alone, would suffice to give me a reputation and a position. Ah, dearest, I would toil night and day to make you rich and happy," and mutual oaths of fidelity were thereupon exchanged.

Boris meant all that he said; his soul was filled with

the ardor of a neophyte. But she—she did not understand very clearly what she was promising. The future was so far off that the chains she assumed seemed as yet very light. In the meantime, Boris loved her. She had a slave, and she was a queen!

The rays of the sun pierced obliquely the heavy foliage overhanging the ravine. Sonia's voice was heard afar off.

"Mademoiselle! mademoiselle!" she cried, "your mother is waiting for you."

Lydie left Boris abruptly, with a last hurried caress, and quickly disappeared from his sight.

Boris was alone; he followed her slowly for a few steps, and then hesitated, went toward the spring and gathered a spray of the wild mint, rubbed it between his fingers and inhaled its perfume; then he seated himself and listened to the running water. A pebble rolled down at his feet. He looked up and saw against the blue sky the delicately chiselled profile of little Sonia.

"What are you doing there?" asked Boris, uneasily; a little disturbed at the thought of how long she might have been ensconced in her elevated position.

"I am looking at you!" the child answered, as she ran down the rocky path.

And in fact she was gazing at him rather than at where she was going. She stepped on a rolling stone, her foot turned, she uttered a cry of pain as she fell. Boris flew to help her. She was already standing up, but a stream of bright blood was running from her ankle on the yellow sand.

"You have hurt yourself badly, I fear," said Boris, kindly.

"No. It is nothing," answered the girl, biting her lips to retain a childish sob.

She took a step or two and then stopped. The blood continued to flow profusely.

"Wait; I am going to see the extent of the wound," said the young man.

"No, no; Boris Ivanovitch," she answered, hastily, "it is not worth the trouble."

Without listening to her, he lifted her and placed her on a grassy hillock near the basin. She made no more resistance; he then gently lifted the poor little wounded foot on his knee. A large gash was cut under the ankle just where the skin is most delicate. The blood poured out so profusely that Boris at first feared some dangerous lesion. Bringing some water in his hand, he carefully bathed the wound, removing several grains of gravel, and then bandaged it with his handkerchief.

"You must go to the house at once," he said, "and put on a plaster."

"Why?" answered Sonia, who was by no means timid by nature. "It will cure itself after a while. But I am very tired."

She stretched herself out a little on the turf, and supported her head on her arm. She was very pale; the wound had bled long enough to weaken her sadly. She closed her eyes, and Boris thought she had fainted. He bent over her; she lifted the lids slowly and painfully, but the grateful look in their blue depths went to the very heart of the young man.

"You are very good," she said, softly. "No one ever took care of me before."

"But you have never been ill?"

"Oh, yes; last year I had a bad fever."

"And no one nursed you?"

"No; I lay near the stove, and old Martha gave me a drink sometimes."

"And you recovered under such treatment?"

"Yes—"

"Did no one come to see you?"

"The family were not here. But that would not have made any difference. They never trouble themselves about us." She closed her eyes.

"But the Général?"

"Oh! he is kind. But what can he do? I love him so very much! He does not scold me very often, and he never beats me. I love you, too!"

"Why?" said Boris, amused and interested by the quaintness of the child.

"Because you are good, too. You like white roses—"

"Yes, to be sure," answered the young man, somewhat astonished, "I do like white roses; but how did you find it out?"

"Because yesterday I saw you looking for a long time at a white rose that was half-withered, and that night I carried you a bunch of lovely fresh ones."

"So it was you, then?"

"Yes, it was I! but that was not anything. There is a great bush at the end of the garden close by the servants' quarters."

"I thank you very much," said Boris, half sadly.

She tried to rise, but her foot afforded her a very

uncertain support. She would have fallen had he not caught her.

"You cannot walk," he said, "and I shall carry you up the hill."

She said not a word, but lay quietly in the young man's arms until they reached the top of the gentle ascent. When he put her down, she took his hand and kissed it with passionate ardor.

"Will you stop?" said Boris, impatiently, little disposed to accept this mark of gratitude and submission in which he saw only the traces of the old servitude.

She dropped his hand, and limped along at his side toward the house.

As they reached the terrace, Lydie, with her mother, in gorgeous attire, were about entering the carriage.

"Here is a little lame creature," said Boris, without addressing either one of the two in particular. "She has hurt her foot quite seriously, and the wound should be at once dressed."

"Ah! yes; I dare say," said Madame Goréline, buttoning her glove. "If you listened to all their stories, there would always be something to be done for them. Wash it with fresh water, Sonia, and to-morrow it will be all right again. Good-night, Boris Ivanovitch; you have made a great mistake not to come with us."

The carriage drove off. Lydie had said nothing. Shielded by her parasol, she cast a tender glance at her friend. When the door of the court-yard closed behind the equipage, Boris looked at the little girl, who still lingered at his side.

"Come, Sonia," he said, "I will dress your wound myself. I am not very experienced in such matters, but still it is better than nothing."

He took the child to his room; made her take a seat on the foot of his bed; made bandages of a pocket-handkerchief or two which he deliberately tore in strips, to the great distress of Sonia, and made the poor, wounded foot very comfortable.

"Now you may go," he said, when he had finished, pushing her gently toward the door.

"Oh! Boris Ivanovitch," she said, with tears in her voice, "you seem like my mother!"

She left the room with these words, while Boris laughed heartily at the originality of the idea.

The day, however, had been a very happy one for him.

CHAPTER VII.

NEEDLES AND THREAD!

FOR the next two weeks, Boris was in the seventh heaven.

Nothing that was going on in the outside world could penetrate the blissful calm by which he was surrounded. He vaguely accepted the fact that certain individuals of the family, beside Lydie, existed. He continued to be busy with Eugène; but after study hours were over, had any one asked the subject of his lessons, Boris could have given no satisfactory reply.

His manner was much the same as usual, but he himself was altogether changed, and realized little of what was passing about him.

Fortunately Lydie had preserved her common sense. Love in her life was but one element the more, while in the young man it had transformed his whole existence. She was as gay as usual; she sang, not always in tune, romances to which Boris listened with a thrill of delight, and to please him paid especial attention to her toilette that was always careful and fresh.

To another person still, life had assumed a new aspect. Little Sonia herself had entered into a new world. Until then forgotten or ill-treated, she had never heard a kind word from any one, save from Stépane Pétrovitch, who had simply treated her with the indifferent good-nature of

a kindly-hearted man, while Boris had remembered that she had feelings and a heart. To him she was an intelligent creature, suffering and friendless, with whom he could talk—whom he could pity and console. The man who had spoken thus to her became a god in her eyes. In this little girl's heart, under the coarse chemise that covered her sunburnt shoulders, suddenly a superb flower burst into bloom—she learned and understood goodness and generosity.

Boris was her only thought. She could do very little for him—merely arrange his chamber morning and evening—filling his vases with fresh flowers—these were the merest trifles, to be sure; but this was all that she could do.

Until now her gypsy-like nature had rebelled against any sedentary or indoor toil; but one day perceiving a large rip in the vest of the young man, she carried the garment to Madame Goréline's maid, begging her to repair it.

This soubrette, with high-cheeked bones, hated Boris: first, because he was a Tutor; next, because he had never looked at her, and she piqued herself on being very pretty, notwithstanding her pronounced Tartar type. She dismissed little Sonia in great disgust.

"Do you think," she said, "that I have nothing better to do than to spend my time mending a Tutor's coat?"

"But it is torn!" cried Sonia, ready to weep.

"Mend it yourself, then, if you love this Tutor so much."

"But I do not know how to sew."

"Learn, then!" said the woman, with a sneer.

"Lend me a needle and thread?"

"Not at all; go and buy them with the wages your dear Général gives you!"

No needles could be purchased in the village, and it was not time for the peddler to make his monthly visit. With a swelling heart, Sonia, with the vest on her arm, went to beg a needle of old Martha, the cook, the woman who had nursed her in a careless sort of way through her illness, and who, without loving her, treated her less badly than did the other servants.

"Martha Nicolaïevna, lend me a needle and thread?"

"What to do?" grumbled the cook.

"To mend this vest of Boris Ivanovitch."

"Go to the devil with your Boris Ivanovitch! Let him mend his own vests! There was no need of his coming here to bother us. Yesterday he wore two pair of boots, and I have to polish them. He told me to do it just as if he was master here."

"Give them to me, Martha Nicolaïevna! I will do them!" cried Sonia, in a state of great delight.

"Very well! There they are. You can do them every day. I was a great fool not to think of it before!"

From that day forth the young man's boots were always immaculate and shining, and were always ready for him, standing in a corner of his room.

Still Sonia had no needle, and it was torture to her to see him wear the vest in which the rip was sure to grow larger under the hand of the laundress. She looked through every crack in the wooden floors of the house until she found the much-coveted needle. To procure the thread with which to sew was a more difficult matter.

Selecting a moment, when the chambermaid was carrying on an absorbing flirtation with her master's valet, Sonia took possession of some bits of black and white cotton, which she wound on a card and bore off in triumph. Alas! then only, to her profound dismay, did she discover that she was utterly ignorant of the science of mending.

With resolute determination, she went to a secluded corner of the garden; she tore out a piece from the hem of her poor little skirt, and tried to sew it in again. Her work was utterly hideous. Discouraged, she burst into tears—but weeping was of little avail. She made new efforts, and by degrees, in the course of several days, without the assistance of any one, she could mend a tear in a presentable manner.

Triumphant then, she took advantage of a day that Boris was away to devote herself to the precious vest. Alas! he did not even notice what had happened to it; but every time that Sonia saw him wearing the vest her heart leaped high with joy.

"I must learn to sew," she said to herself over and over again. When the peddler arrived, she bought from him all that she needed; and from that day forth the child was to be seen crouched near the window sewing and ripping, hemming and stitching, receiving a word of good advice from one, a jest from another—and kicks and thumps from all, but happy throughout it all; happy in being useful to her "master"—for Boris was her chosen master.

The servants soon discovered this predilection. The child and her protector were held equally in contempt by all these worthy persons. It was especially the hours for

meals that were consecrated to these charming jests—so much so that Sonia often preferred a bit of plain bread, eaten with a raw onion, in a sheltered corner of the garden. She was the happiest child in the world, when to this rough fare she could add a cup of milk from the dairy.

Boris, of course, knew nothing of all this; but he unconsciously became more and more attached to this innocent little creature, whose deep-blue eyes were always searching for him. He grew accustomed to seeing her come into his room every evening, to bring him a glass of water and to ask his orders for the morning.

He had acquired a habit of drinking milk in the morning, and as soon as he awoke he had but to utter her name aloud, when he saw her come in, with a sweet smile upon her lips and a tender solicitude in her eyes, bearing most carefully a brimming cup. More serious in his character than the Général, his affection for the child was more profound. He pitied her for the lonely, desolate life that he felt was hers, although he knew little or nothing of its details.

One morning, however, he penetrated in some degree the secrets of this sad and monotonous existence. When Sonia handed him his milk, he saw on her arm some purplish livid marks.

"How did you do that?" he asked, compassionately.

"I did not do it," she said, dropping her lids over her eyes swelling with tears.

"Who then?"

She was silent. He took her hand to draw her toward him; she uttered a sharp cry of pain. He rose abruptly,

and, with the greatest care, turned her sleeve of coarse gray linen up to her shoulder, and beheld her arm bleeding and bruised. The shoulder was also injured, so much so that the child could not bear the slightest touch of his compassionate hand.

"Who did this?" he asked, with some austerity. "Tell me at once—I must know!"

"Do not speak of it to my mistress. She will beat me!"

"Good heavens!" cried Boris, in horror. "Your mistress would beat you, do you say? Who did this, I ask?"

"The cook."

"And for what?" demanded Boris, with compressed lips.

All his generous blood seethed and boiled; and had the miserable wretch been there, his life would not have been worth sixpence.

But the child was inflexible until Boris said to her, touching the right chord at last: "If you do not tell me, I will never love you again!"

Her tongue was then untied. She told her friend and protector that the evening before she had been to a place far down the river—a small inlet—where white water-lilies bloomed, whose great satiny, fragrant flowers she dearly loved. She came home laden with them, having secured them with great difficulty, and by wading knee-deep into the water; on entering the kitchen—the long stems trailing after her—one of them caught in the handle of an earthen jar which contained the cook's favorite soup. He flew at her in a violent rage, and tore her flowers from her, stamping upon them and ruining them beyond redemp-

tion. Through her tears and sobs she called him some name, in her half-childish language. The brute snatched a quantity of the long flexible lily stems—solid as if they were of caoutchouc—and with them severely beat the girl.

"But I did not utter a sound, Boris Ivanovitch," she said, her breast swelling with pride at this recital of her wrongs. "You were close by—it was just before tea, and I was afraid that you would hear me."

"You should have called me to come, my child."

"Oh, no! had you seen him, you would have killed him outright."

The child said this with such enthusiasm, and with a faith so profound, that the young man snatched her in his arms. She shuddered with the pain that his embrace gave her, but she was radiant with happiness, and the tears that the torture she had endured had failed to draw from her eyes, now fell in torrents on her thin cheeks.

"Ah! master," she whispered, "I am ready to die for you! How can I serve you?"

Boris was no less moved than she; he released her, and looked at her while she dried her eyes with her coarse linen sleeve.

"She is a human being," he said to himself; "and, thank God, there are no longer any serfs in Russia. If she has been thus treated now, what would have become of her in those old days!"

His thoughts then turned toward Lydie. For him Lydie was as good as she was beautiful. Of this he had not the smallest doubt—she would take the child under her powerful protection—it would be only necessary to say one word to her. This idea restored his serenity.

"Be at ease," he said to the child; "this will never happen again."

"But do not speak to madame, dear master, for she will never forgive me for having complained to you." This word "master" from the orphan's lips sounded like a caress. "She will beat me again!"

"Has she ever whipped you?" asked Boris, who suddenly felt his intuitive antipathy for Madame Goréline assume gigantic proportions.

"Did she ever whip me, do you ask? Ah! many, many times."

"Very well; I will say nothing to madame."

"To whom then?"

"To Miss Lydie."

Sonia shook her head sadly.

"Beg her, at least, to say nothing to her mother."

"Do not be afraid, my child; she will say nothing, I am quite sure, if I beg her not."

"That will do no good, dear master; it would be much better to say nothing."

"But the cook will treat you ill again, I fear."

"Ah! well, what difference will that make?"

Boris was astonished at this stoical indifference—the indifference of a true Russian. The poor child continued:

"It will not hurt me very long, and I can endure the pain, now that you have made me so happy—so very happy. But why, dear master, do you not drink your milk?"

"I do not care for it; drink it yourself."

She emptied the glass with avidity; her unfortunate

encounter with the cook had deprived her of her appetite at the time when her supper was ready for her in the kitchen.

"Do you have plenty to eat generally?" asked Boris, struck by a sudden thought.

He then learned all that Sonia had so long endured in silence. Burning with indignation, he listened to the story of her wrongs; and the recollection of his mother came to him like a breath of fresh air in a fiery furnace.

Far from this cruel, brutal house was a modest kingdom, governed with a firm and gentle hand by his wise mother. The peasant women who performed the out-door duties of this simple home, and the old cook, who was half deaf, might quarrel among themselves; but, under the rule of the kindly-hearted Varvara Pétrovna, the cook, no one of them would have dared to ill-treat a defenceless child.

The excellent old creature, who never had been known to be in a passion, might possibly have turned upon a criminal, and then expiated her offence by long and sincere prayers poured from an honest and fervent heart.

When Sonia ceased to speak, Boris, until then silent, said gently:

"This shall be all changed, I promise you; and if there is no other way—"

"What then?" asked the child, anxiously, when he hesitated.

"I will take you to my mother," he answered, resolutely.

The child fell at his feet without a word of thanks,

and prostrate before him, with her face in the dust, wept and prayed from the depths of her heart to the God of whom she knew nothing save the name. No syllable escaped her lips, for she knew of none which could express her intense gratitude and joy. But this hour marked an era in her life.

She lay at the feet of Boris a slave still, notwithstanding her disfranchisement; but when he raised her, she was free. Her liberated soul had thrown off its shackles. In the eyes of him whom she called "master" she saw the fair light of freedom—freedom from misery and tyranny!

CHAPTER VIII.

PRINCE ARMIANOF.

PREOCCUPIED with thoughts of his protégée, Boris expedited the lessons of his pupil that he might the sooner be in readiness to receive Lydie, and awaken her sympathies for the sorrows of the little peasant girl.

Lydie finally appeared; her books in her hand, as was her custom. But on the first words spoken by the young man, she interrupted him with an air of annoyance.

"I have nothing to do with the quarrels of our servants," she said; "and mamma has forbidden me to interfere with them in any way."

"And do you never do anything that your mother forbids?" said Boris, in a low voice, with a smile.

Lydie was charming when she pouted like a spoiled child.

"That has nothing to do with it!" she answered, with a deep blush. Then turning her eyes full on Boris, who had snatched her hand and was covering it with kisses, she laughed, as she added:

"How in earnest you are! Come, sir! Begin your *dictée*, if you please."

Boris dictated for some few minutes; then, between two of his phrases, he resumed his idea.

"This child is frightfully unhappy here—your mother dislikes her."

Eugène put his head into the half-open door.

"What do you want?" asked Boris, impatiently.

"My balloon," answered the child, with a teasing laugh.

"Find it, and be off with you!"

Eugène spent five minutes in rummaging in all the corners, but did not find the balloon, for the most excellent reason that the object in question was lying tranquilly in the centre of the avenue, where he had just left it.

"Do let us alone, and be quiet!" cried Lydie, out of all patience. "I shall say to mamma—"

"What will you say to mamma?" interrupted Eugène, looking at his sister with the same teasing impertinence.

"That you prevent me from taking my lesson!" replied Lydie, coloring to the very roots of her hair as she spoke.

"Oh! is that all? Well! I do not care," answered the little boy; and going out he closed the door, which he had found open, most carefully behind him. "Mamma! come and play with me!" he shouted, loudly, as he passed the windows.

"Call Sonia—"

"Sonia is stupid; she always plays better than I do; and I do not want her. You are much more amusing; for you always make mistakes!"

"Bad boy!"

"Come, mamma, come this moment!"

Madame Goréline could not resist this adored voice; and at once followed her son into the innermost depths of the garden.

The two young people were now entirely alone, and were silent for a few minutes.

"I am afraid that he suspects something," said Lydie, finally.

Boris had had the same idea, but he was careful not to say so, lest he should make the young girl anxious.

"Possibly," he replied, with a reassuring smile. "But you know that he is given to teasing, and we ought to find no fault with him now, that he has at last left us alone," and Boris drew the girl's fair head down upon his shoulders. She made no resistance. In a moment more, Boris spoke again:

"Now that we are together, undisturbed for a moment, let us talk seriously about this little girl."

"Upon my word," answered Lydie, "you are very strange. Here we have a few moments to ourselves, and you spend them in talking of that little simpleton!"

"She is very unhappy, Lydie," answered Boris, with something of the same gentleness he would have employed in soothing a refractory child. "No one likes her here!"

"And why should any one like her?" said Lydie, abruptly. "As for me, I can't endure her."

"Why not?" asked Boris, astonished, and somewhat wounded, loosening his clasp on the hand he held in his.

Without knowing exactly how, or why, Lydie felt that she had shocked the young man. She had a confused idea that she had made a mistake. So instead of giving any reason why she disliked the little peasant, she snatched at the first pretext; one which, after all, served her better than any other would have done.

"You love her too well," she exclaimed, "and I am jealous!"

Boris laughed and again took her hand.

"If I love her too well, you must love her also. We will share that affection between us, and will see that she is well taken care of. Will you do your part?"

"We will see," she answered, with her adorable smile. "Now tell me again that you love me!"

With this heading to the chapter, the hour came to an end swiftly enough, and there was no more question of Sonia that day.

An hour after dinner that day, about six o'clock, a calèche drawn by four superb black horses, with glittering harness, drew up before the door of Madame Goréline. The servants hurried to receive the unexpected guests; but before the youthful valet, with a startled face, could touch the door of the carriage, the visitor had already leaped from the equipage and ordered his coachman to drive to the end of the court-yard.

"Are the Général and Madame at home?" asked the new-comer.

"I do not know, sir—that is to say, sir—I believe that they are taking a nap after their dinner," stammered the servant, utterly bewildered by the magnificent beard of the coachman, and the glory of the carriage. "Whom shall I announce?"

"No one just now," answered the young man, with a laugh; "but when the Général and Madame are awake, tell them that the Prince Armianof has taken the liberty of going into the garden, there to wait until it be their pleasure to receive him."

Thereupon the stranger turned his steps toward the

garden, and opening the door in the wall, which divided the garden from the court-yard, soon disappeared among the linden trees.

It was just at this moment that Lydie left the spring; where she was in the habit of granting a tête-à-tête to Boris, every day after dinner, while her parents slept.

The lovers had been discussing their future; and Boris, as often happens with a strong, passionate nature, which—longing for the ideal—finds but little solace in commonplace realities, had been overwhelmed with sudden melancholy, in strange contrast to his usual confident lightheartedness.

Now Lydie feared and detested any such moods, whose divine pain and sadness she was far from understanding.

She left the spring, therefore, extremely out of humor with her fiancé, and suddenly, as she turned a sharp angle in the path, she found herself opposite a handsome young man, whose beauty, of an oriental type, was really almost startling, and whose toilette was irreproachable.

Moscow and the winter—with its sledges, its balls and theatres—forgotten now for more than two months, came back to her memory. She stopped short, in some confusion at the searching glances of those gazelle-like eyes, but she knew at once that this gentleman was their neighbor, of whom she had heard so much said, but whom she had not yet seen.

Two generations on Russian soil had not obliterated the purity of the Circassian type in the family of the Prince Armianof. His sister was the most beautiful woman at the court, while he was considered the most faultlessly

handsome man in St. Petersburg; consequently, when he said, in a most musical voice,—

"Mademoiselle Goréline, if I am not mistaken? Permit me to present myself—the Prince Armianof"—Lydie felt almost overwhelmed, but answered with perfect grace and courtesy, though with a heightened color,

"Permit me, sir, to inform my mother that you are here."

Then she hurried away, somewhat agitated, for this apparition from the social world disturbed the magic circle with which she was surrounded by the love of Boris.

The Général and his wife were soon on their feet. Stépane Pétrovitch hastened to the garden to embrace the son of his old friend, whom he had known in his baby-hood. On seeing that elegant cavalier, from whose irreproachable costume came the fragrance of Parma violets, he stood still; for how could he address that splendid-looking fellow in a familiar off-hand manner? How could he accost him by his childish name? No, it was quite impossible. But the Prince left him no time for consideration.

"Général," he said, coming to meet him eagerly, "do you not remember me? Do you not remember how you used to spoil me?"

He put his arms around the old Général with the same affection he had shown when, as a boy, he climbed upon his knees, while the Général, much touched, exclaimed:

"Sacha! my dear Sacha!" But suddenly the idea came to him that this familiar diminutive was by no means

appropriate to the heir of the Armianofs. "Your highness," he added.

"Pshaw! Highness indeed! Call me Sacha, as you did in old times, or I shall think that you love me no longer. I love you still. I loved you as Colonel and as Général. I love you still. Is it to my moustache that you object?"

"Ah! Sacha, how long it is since I saw you!" answered the Général, shaking his head half sadly. "You were but that tall then," and he pointed to a swaying carnation in the flower-border. "And now you are a man! I hear much of you. It seems that you are a great favorite at court."

"Nonsense!" said the Prince, gayly. "All that is only for the winter, and I did not come into the country to think or talk of St. Petersburg; I have had quite enough of it in the last six months. Let us talk of yourself and your family. Is Madame Goréline quite well? I have just caught a glimpse of a most charming young lady—your daughter, of course. I congratulate you!"

"Yes; she is our idol! our beauty! our Lydie!" replied the old man, radiant with delight. "She is as good, too, as she is lovely—"

"I am quite sure of that," answered Armianof, gayly, as he took the Général's arm, who, much pleased with his guest and with himself, and altogether in the most amiable frame of mind, called Sonia and sent her in search of his longest pipe. He offered one to the Prince, who refused, with a smile, and lighted his cigar instead.

The appearance of Madame Goréline arrested further

demonstrations from her husband, and at the approach of this lady, adorned in honor of her guest in a silk dress and new cap, the conversation changed, and lost for a time its confidential tone. Vainly did the young man try to bring back the gayety of the Général. A total change came over him.

Madame Goréline took the weight of the conversation upon herself, and thought she was doing just the right thing in asking news of the gay world of St. Petersburg, to which she had formerly belonged, for unfortunately for her husband, she was of good family. This fact briefly explains all the misery of the old Général; she had decided to marry him only because there was no one else, as her beauty was not enough to counterbalance her want of fortune and lack of all charm of character.

Lydie at last appeared on the scene, with the announcement that tea was ready, and they all, with the addition of Boris and Eugène, were soon assembled around the table, laden with fruit, hot rolls, cake and cream; in short with all those things which constitute a Russian country tea. Compelled by her narrow income to manage with the strictest economy in town, Madame Goréline lived on a grand scale in the country, where the products of garden and farm cost almost nothing.

Armianof was at once struck by the sympathetic countenance of Boris, and the two fell into conversation.

The young student, aware of the position, the family and the wealth of the Prince, and fearing a rival, held himself at first on the defensive, but he could not long resist the kind advances of the new-comer. The two young

men therefore talked freely together, and Boris, interested in the conversation, did not notice that, while they talked, the Prince never took his eyes from Lydie.

The young girl, however, was not so blind. The color in her cheeks became more brilliant; the white dress she wore was wonderfully becoming. Every attitude she assumed was intended to please, but to this fact Boris was singularly blind.

An unfortunate word of Madame Goréline marred the harmony of the evening. Exhilarated by the unusual agreeability of the circle around him, the Général mingled freely in the conversation, and even went so far as to occasionally give utterance to some of those truths which the name of Prudhomme has made illustrious. While he was attempting to lay before his young listeners his idea in lucid terms, his better-half, hoping to display her superiority, uttered the following phrase, which was only the habitual refrain of her discourse:

"You would do better to be silent, my love, for you never utter anything but foolishness."

"Very well, my dear," stammered the old man, humiliated and startled, but too well drilled to rebel, or to reply as he ought to have done.

The effect upon the Prince was most disastrous. His gayety and good-humor instantly fled. He turned an interrogative glance on Boris, who had great difficulty in restraining a compassionate smile.

But no one looked surprised. Eugène ate on with undiminished appetite; Lydie, calm and undisturbed, moved the teacups on the tray, while Madame Goréline smiled upon them all with the most satisfied expression.

"We will discuss these points later, at our leisure, my dear Général," said the Prince, placing his handsome well-kept hand on the large freckled one of the mortified old man. "But I agree with you entirely."

"Most assuredly," added Boris, looking at the Prince with his clear, honest gray eyes.

"I am quite ready to listen to you, if you will both do me the honor of visiting my bachelor quarters, where I shall be most happy to receive you. If you love flowers, mademoiselle," he said, turning to Lydie, "these gentlemen can bring you a bouquet of fine roses, which my gardener is very proud of having acclimated."

Lydie, coloring with pleasure, answered with a smile, and very soon after Armianof took leave of his hosts.

"I shall count on seeing you, Monsieur Grébof," he said to the young student.

"Thank you, Prince," Boris answered. "I shall call upon you with the greatest pleasure."

Armianof jumped into his superb carriage, to the great admiration of the servants and the peasants who had gathered around to see him depart, and was soon lost to the sight of the gaping crowd.

"How handsome he is!" cried Madame Goréline, as she hurried to the dining-room to extinguish the superfluous candles.

Boris assured himself that the Général was with his wife, and then went in search of his fiancée to say good-night to her.

"Ah! yes, very handsome—to be sure," mechanically repeated the Général, still absorbed by the rebuff he had

received—accustomed to them nevertheless as he was. "But why did you speak to me like that, in the presence of strangers?"

"Do you wish me to repeat to you that you never say anything but foolishness?" she answered, roughly, as if she were throwing a stone at a timid dog. "You had better amuse yourself with reeling off your nonsense to Boris, and let the Prince occupy himself with Lydie!"

"Well! he looked at her enough, certainly," answered the good man, whose heart grew warm at the thought of this cherished daughter.

"That was well enough," answered his wife, sharply; "but the next time the Prince comes, try to have more sense. That would be an excellent match for Lydie."

"Yes, dear, I will do my best in regard to it."

"You will do better not to meddle with the affair in any way. For with your usual want of tact—"

Here she left the room, and her words were lost in the distance; but her husband did not need to hear the end of her phrase to appreciate it.

During this conversation Boris, on the terrace, had found a moment to approach Lydie, and to whisper in her ear.

"Lydie, I adore you! Say a kind word to me. I have not dared even to look at you this whole evening!"

"You were very wise," she answered, as she permitted him to take her hand. "Had he seen anything, it would have been fatal!"

It was not of her fiancé that Lydie dreamed that night.

CHAPTER IX.

AN EXPLOSION.

GORÉLINE and Boris made the promised visit on the Prince, and he himself soon acquired the habit of coming to the Général's two or three times each week.

He was very marked in his attentions to Lydie. Boris saw this, and was more than once on the point of telling his rival the real state of things. He had an accurate appreciation of the young man's loyalty, and felt certain that he would relinquish his devotion as soon as he understood the truth.

But there was a certain element of indecision in this character of Boris which prevented him from taking so decided a step, and one which might lead to dangerous results: what would Lydie's parents think? And he resigned himself to waiting.

In a month more they would return to Moscow, and he was certain that the Prince would not follow them there.

Of course, the Prince could, if he pleased, make a formal demand for the young girl's hand before the expiration of this period—"and then it would be time enough," said Boris to himself, and thus allowed the days to slip away.

During all this time Lydie had made certain reflections, and arrived at her own conclusions. She still loved Boris. His noble face and his passionate love for her had lost

nothing of their charm, but—she had found a point of comparison; and how could the poor student hold his own on entering the lists with this brilliant stranger—this accomplished man of the world—who, after having known all the ladies of the court, yet laid his heart at her feet!

In her meditations she had not yet gone the length of saying even to herself, that the title of the Princess Armianof, was better than that of Madame Grébof, but before her eyes floated a mirage—a whirl of superb apartments—rich toilettes—flashing jewels, and court-balls; these last two words quickened the beating of her heart. She saw the scene through a sort of golden mist—laces, diamonds and cachemires, music and perfume; and in the background, on a glittering throne, the imperial family speaking to the Prince, as they would some day speak to the Princess Armianof.

Here her wandering thoughts stopped; but four years of waiting seemed very long, and she asked herself, with terrified misgivings, if, at the end of those four years, Boris would be in any better position than to-day, or if he would be in receipt of an income as large as that of her father; for the girl had no idea of the value of things.

Each day the lesson hour found her calmer and more self-possessed; the furtive kisses of her lover no longer quickened her pulse or agitated her: she received them as a matter of course.

He dared not ask a question, but his heart sank within him, as he realized that did he even succeed in amassing a fortune, that he could never give her the position in the great world which he saw was her ambition.

The influence exercised by Madame Goréline may be easily divined. Twenty times in the day did she say to her daughter "when you are a Princess;" and these words left their imprint as ineffaceably as water dropping perpetually on stone.

The Général's ambition was not aroused: the marriage seemed to him very natural, and quite charming—not because his daughter would become a great lady, but because she would then spend six months of the year so near him, that he could see her daily.

No care was taken to conceal from Boris these plans for Lydie's future. He listened silently with a terrible heart-ache, looking at the girl sometimes, hoping to read some consolation in her eyes; but she would turn them away, and he rarely succeeded in meeting them.

With a sort of animal sagacity Sonia had discovered that her master was unhappy. She overwhelmed him with all sorts of tender cares, but could not succeed in dissipating his melancholy.

She had ceased speaking to him, and contented herself with following him with her eyes, which had an expression like that of a whipped dog, and brightened only when he looked at her, or uttered her name. She had abandoned her former habit of spontaneous services in the house: formerly she had rendered them to every one, and received, as her only reward, abuse for her awkwardness and incapacity; but since she had changed, and was no longer prompt to run here and there with active feet and untiring fingers, she was missed by every one.

"Why are you never here when you are needed?" some one said to her, roughly.

"You have told me a thousand times I was good for nothing," she answered, and blows rained like hail on that weak and slender body.

"You are really intolerable," said Madame Goréline to her one day.

On that day His Excellency, the Général, was not in the most amiable frame of mind. His son, whom he worshipped—Master Eugène—out of temper because he was waked too early, had commenced the day by offering a great affront to his mother.

She spoiled him, it is true, but only at her own times and seasons, and now promptly administered to him several cuffs on his ears, which had not only the result of infuriating the two against each other, but also against the entire world around them.

After having bidden Boris keep Eugène hard at work, she went to her room in a state of intense exasperation to make her toilette.

Sonia, bringing in a huge pitcher of water, had pricked her foot with a pin on the floor, and starting, had dropped the pitcher, inundating the room. The water ran under the bed, saturating the curtains. With the utmost deliberation Sonia sat down on the floor and drew out the pin, which had gone deeply into her naked foot.

"Now just look at her!' cried Madame Goréline, in a fury; "instead of trying to repair the mischief she has done, she thinks only of her foot. Will you go for the sponge and wipe up that water, stupid?"

Sonia ran for the sponge and quickly returned, but she had forgotten to bring a bucket, and the water in the

meantime had conquered more territory, and had reached the other side of the bed and saturated a silk dress, the folds of which hung down from the couch where it lay, and marred its beauty irretrievably.

The lady's anger passed all bounds. "I will not have you here any longer!" she exclaimed, in a fury. "Leave the house: you shall not stay here another night. You are of no earthly use, and ruin everything you touch! Go away!"

"Madame! madame! where shall I go?" said the child, tearless, but in a trembling voice. She rarely shed tears.

"What do I care where you go? Go away from here, go away from the village, go anywhere that I shall not see you. You are not worth the bread you eat!".

Madame Goréline's fury was abated, but her eyes were full of firm determination as she spoke.

"Madame, no one wants me. I am an orphan. If you send me away, I have nowhere but the forest to go to, and there the wolves will eat me."

"Go where you choose, only take care that I never see you again," answered the lady, cold and unmoved.

"You are doing a wicked act, madame. God will punish you!" said the child, looking at her mistress with a defiant expression.

"If I find you here, to-morrow," cried Madame Goréline, passionately, "I will have you soundly whipped. Your mother did not belong to me, and you have no claim on me. Go away!"

"God will punish you!" repeated Sonia, slowly, as she

left the room with her head held proudly, and with her heart full of burning indignation. Her cheeks were scarlet, and her eyes were blazing. She would have killed Madame Goréline without remorse had she found a weapon near at hand. Fortunately there was none there.

She went to find Boris, hoping that he was in his room, and that she could at once tell him all that had taken place, but the tutor was with his pupil in the school-room.

Without a look or a word to the servants, who were teasing and laughing at her for her misadventure, she quietly went out, and after taking from some secret hiding-place the few tattered garments which belonged to her, and making of them a small bundle, she took a seat near the gate, the place where beggars usually sat, and waited until Boris was at liberty. Then she meant to ask counsel and protection from him.

Eugène had heard his mother's injunctions to his tutor in regard to his lessons. His first care, therefore, was to take the offensive, and torment Boris. But seeing that he did not succeed in accomplishing his purpose, he relinquished his teasing and declared open war.

He was determined to wound the young man, and cared little what method he took to accomplish this end, and Boris, notwithstanding all his stoicism, felt the color rise to his face after two or three assaults, and with difficulty repressed a strong desire to throw the boy out of the low window looking on the garden, but contented himself with saying to the lad after two hours of infinite patience on his part:

"To-morrow is Sunday, but you have had your holiday,

as it seems that you have not learned or prepared a recitation to-day. Therefore, to-morrow, we shall just go over all to-day's lessons!"

The child began a remonstrance, but Boris took him by the shoulder and gently put him out of the room.

"Go!" he said, "go and play, and make the most of to-day, for to-morrow will not be a holiday as usual, as you will have all your lessons to say."

Eugène was utterly furious, and went off, intent on thoughts of vengeance. He gnawed his finger nails for a few moments, when suddenly a luminous idea entered his brain, and he ran to his sister's room.

"Lydie," he said, quietly, "I have finished my lessons. You can go now for yours."

And having delivered himself of this sententious remark he put his hands in his pockets and sauntered off to find his mother.

CHAPTER X.

AN "ENFANT TERRIBLE."

THIS struggle of two hours and more with this turbulent, refractory lad, had wearied Boris body and soul. He had been more or less depressed for days, and his spirits seemed to have lost all their elasticity. He rested his tired head on his two hands and closed his eyes. A slight noise made him open his eyes. He saw Lydie. The wearied tutor forgot his fatigue and his anxieties. Into this sombre school-room a beam of sunlight had come with his beloved.

"Lydie!" he murmured, burying his face in the folds of the young girl's dress, as she stood before him, "Lydie! you are my joy and my consolation! You will never abandon me, dearest?"

A rosy flush flickered over the young girl's face. She did not speak, but in reply laid her hand on the young man's head. He raised his eyes; the look he met was at first shifting and uneasy; but this passed away, and Lydie pressed her lips lightly on her lover's brow.

"You love me, do you not?" he said, in a low voice.

"I love you!" she answered, subjugated by the strength of this passion, which she vaguely recognized as so different from her own feelings.

"I have a thousand things to say to you, Lydie. Will you come to the spring after dinner?"

"Yes," she answered, hesitatingly.

"Listen. I have suffered intolerable anguish these last few weeks. I did not dare to speak to you."

The color deepened in Lydie's cheeks, and she turned away her face, possibly half ashamed.

"I had no right to doubt you, dearest, I know; but it did seem to me that you were growing to love me less than you did. Forgive me, Lydie. You are not angry with me, sweetheart, are you? Forgive me!" and he covered the girl's hands with passionate kisses, pressing her cool dewy fingers against his hot and tired eyes. His nervous system was disorganized, and the morning's trying scene with the boy upset him entirely. He was tempted to cry like a child; but exercising all his self-control, he started to his feet, and threw both arms around Lydie.

"I love you!" he exclaimed, with violence; "I love you with my whole heart and soul! Kiss me!"

Lydie turned her cheek toward him; but he pressed his lips on those of his fiancée. The door was thrown open.

"Mamma, look at my tutor kissing Lydie!" cried Eugène, in his shrillest tones.

Madame Goréline rushed toward them like an enraged lioness. Boris had not time to remove his arm, when she faced him with uplifted hand.

"Miserable wretch!" she cried.

What she would have done he never knew, for he snatched this menacing hand, and held it firmly in his own.

"Madame!" he said, in a deep voice, through which, in spite of its firmness, vibrated intense anger, "Madame, I ask you for your daughter's hand."

"Miserable wretch!" repeated the mother.

Boris dropped her hand, and looked at her calmly.

"I am a gentleman," he answered; "and I am not altogether without resources. Besides, I have youth, courage and hope, and the future lies fair before me. I ask again if you will give me your daughter Lydie. I ask for no dowry," he added, after a short silence.

Pale with rage, Madame Goréline had sunk upon a sofa. She looked at the young man for a moment in indignant silence. Lydie had disappeared, and a sharp scream from Eugène testified that in gratitude for his sweet conduct, she had probably pulled her brother's ears. At any other time this shriek would have awakened alarm in the maternal breast of Madame Goréline, but on this occasion she heard nothing. Her eyes were riveted on Boris, who stood erect before her. She was evidently in search of words which could adequately express her feelings.

"So, sir," she gasped at last, "you introduce yourself into respectable families, and then seduce their daughters!"

"I seduce no one," he answered, sternly. "I ask your daughter's hand in marriage." Boris, by this time, had reached that excitable state, whose strongest feature is its external calm.

"My daughter's hand! What audacity! Do you imagine for a moment that she was intended for a penniless fellow like yourself?" and Madame Goréline uttered a little shriek of nervous laughter.

"Then you reject my request?" said Boris, calmly. Madame Goréline still laughed, as she bowed her head affirmatively. "Very well," continued the young man;

"I am now going to lay the matter before your husband."

More than ever angry, Madame Goréline started to her feet.

"Before my husband! I forbid your doing so!" she cried.

"I am not in the habit of receiving orders from any one," said Boris, as he went toward the door.

"You shall not see my husband! I dismiss you from my service from this moment!"

"And give me still another reason for not obeying you," continued the young man, coolly.

Madame Goréline followed him into the hall, overwhelming him at the same time with a storm of invectives. Finally, at the end of all her resources, she said contemptuously:

"Besides, if my husband were foolish enough to give his consent, it would amount to nothing, for he is an imbecile, and has no authority here."

"I have already had occasion to recognize the fact that he is not the master here," continued Boris, quietly; "and I also, on more than one occasion, have had reason to rejoice at that fact."

The servants, assembled by the loud voices they had heard, watched, with malicious curiosity, the movements of the young tutor, who was followed step by step by the mistress. From no one of them could he obtain information in regard to the whereabouts of the Général, who was not to be found in the house; and he returned again to the hall, still accompanied by Madame Goréline.

"Go away!" she cried, angrily; "go, at once!"

"Yes, madame, as soon as you order horses for me," he said at last, turning round and facing her.

"Horses! For you? You can go on foot, with your boots dangling from a stick over your shoulder, like the peasant that you are," cried the lady, furiously.

"I am not a peasant," he answered, calmly. "My family are noble; and if you do not choose to give me horses, I shall find some in the village, undoubtedly."

"You will not get them there," she answered, with a malicious laugh; "for I will have the first man flogged who dares to let you have any."

"You are behind the age, madame," answered Boris, politely. "Heaven be praised! It is many years since peasants have been beaten with impunity: you seem to have forgotten this fact."

"You shall have no horses from my village," she repeated. "I will ruin any one who will dare to lend you any!"

"I will obtain them, then, from the Prince, your neighbor," answered Boris, sternly, his patience by this time quite gone. And he closed the door of his room in her face, and turned the key in the lock.

Sonia, in a state of violent agitation, was crouched outside the low window, and softly called the young man by his name.

He went to the window.

"Master! She has sent you away, too!"

"What do you mean?" he asked, in astonishment at the word "too."

"I mean that she drove me away this morning, and now—"

"Very well," interrupted Boris. "You shall go with me. From this moment you are in my service. Here, take these five roubles—go to the other side of the river to the first of Prince Armianof's villages, and tell them to send me, without delay, a *Télègue* and a horse, to take me to the nearest post-station. Run quickly—let them see the money, but do not give it to them."

Sonia was off like a flash, and Boris thrust all his belongings into his valise with feverish haste. His heart and his head were alike disturbed, but amid the confusion of his ideas an occasional acute pang caused him to start in the same way that, during a fire, poor wretches who cannot escape, feel a tongue of flame flash through the thick smoke, stinging their poor bodies, half-benumbed by fear and suffocation.

But one idea was distinct to his mental vision—he must leave this house. But how could he quit Lydie? Ah! if he could but snatch her in his arms, and bear her away at his side in that humble vehicle for which he had sent. Where could he take her? That was of little consequence. The sky was blue, the world was large, and the horizon stretched broad before them. It would not be an impossible thing to find some humble roof which could shelter two loving hearts.

The thought of his mother, and the mad desire to carry off Lydie, gave place to an inexpressible longing for the presence of his aged mother—so kind and dignified—sad at times, but always gentle and loving. Would the hour ever come when he should see these two beloved ones seated side by side on the bench under the trees in their

little garden—his fiancée and his mother! What joy! "Never," he said to himself, in discouragement. "No, never will that happiness be mine!"

He left his room with the intention of finding Lydie, hoping to be able to say a word or two to her, or even to see her through a half-open door. Useless effort! every door was closed. From the other end of the house came the tones of Madame Goréline, who was holding forth to her husband.

Boris went back to his room, and took a seat near the window.

This garden—the path which led to the spring—the summer flowers, wan and pale, all passing away—the autumnal blossoms, already gay and flaunting, engraved themselves at that moment on his memory like the frame of a picture, in which he had loved Lydie. He remembered, then, that he had forgotten some books in the school-room, and he started to look for them.

How dreary and lonely that room appeared now—that room where he had been so outrageously insulted, where his happiness had been ground to powder like a glass between powerful hands.

Refusing to dwell on these thoughts lest he should break down, he occupied himself with gathering together all that belonged to him. Lydie's book of *dictées* was on the table, where she had placed it when she entered the room; he took it, looked at it for a moment, and then placed it carefully in his pocket. How many long nights after this did he spend in examining these lines, and how many times did he read those verses of Lamartine with an

aching heart, which had heralded for him the dawn and spring-time of love; but this day he did not trust himself to dwell on these thoughts, but took the small yellow volume—the "Jocelyn" which had betrayed them—wrote in it Lydie's name, and placed it between a grammar and a book of exercises, hoping that it would thus escape Madame Goréline's eyes, and went out of the room without casting one glance behind him.

Sonia was again under the window, and spoke as soon as he opened the door of his room.

"The *Télègue* is just opposite, on the other side of the river," she said. "The peasant who will drive you did not dare to come here."

"Why not?" said Boris, more irritated by this last and most insignificant obstacle than by all that had gone before. "If he cares to earn his money, tell him to drive up at once to the hall-door. If he is afraid to do this, tell him to go back to his village, and I will walk."

Once more Sonia departed; and in ten minutes the *Télègue* rattled noisily into the court. The peasant muttered the most humble excuses, to which Boris paid not the smallest attention. The young man handed him his valise and box of books. He placed Sonia on the seat, amid the audible laughter of the servants, and then, with an air of authority, he turned toward them and said:

"Send some one to inform the Général that I am about to start, and wish to see him."

Under the threatening eyes of the young man the laughter ceased. The servants disappeared in every direction, and in a few minutes more the Général appeared on

the balcony. His wife was at his heels. As to Eugène, he seemed to have totally vanished from off the face of the earth; his malicious piece of mischief-making had been only too great, and in a secret corner he was weeping hot tears over his tutor's departure—for insubordinate as was the boy, his heart was not altogether bad, and he loved Boris.

"Général," said the young man, "I wish first to thank you for the esteem and consideration which you have shown to me ever since I have been under your roof." And his loyal hand was stretched forth as he spoke.

The Général took it, with some little caution.

"I asked your wife this morning to bestow upon me your daughter's hand. I received from her an unequivocal refusal. I now reiterate this demand to you. What will you say?"

Madame Goréline was about to speak; but Boris said to her, politely:

"I believe, madame, that this point was settled so far as you and I are concerned. It is to your husband that I now have the honor of speaking. I await your reply, Général."

"But," stammered the Général, "my wife said—"

"It is your reply, sir, which I wish to receive," interrupted Boris, persistently.

"What can I say? I like you, and I look upon you as an honest and honorable man; but I never interfere in such matters—they belong to my wife. And then, too, the Prince—"

"You refuse me as a son-in-law," interrupted Boris, coldly.

"But—"

"Yes," cried Madame Goréline, "yes, we refuse you—how many times do you wish me to say it?"

The Général's head was already held less high.

"Very well," said Boris; "I have one favor to ask of you, sir. Madame has driven from her house this little orphan you see here. I beg of you to give me her papers, that I may take her with me to my mother, with whom she will receive all the care and attention requisite at her age."

The Général looked at Sonia with some sadness.

The child on the high seat of the *Télègue* was weeping bitterly.

The servants laughed no more; the hospitable instinct, vibrating so strongly in the heart of every true Russian, had been touched by these last words.

"It is true," they said to each other, "she is an orphan, and God loves the poor and the fatherless."

"You wish to take her away!" cried Madame Goréline; "do you? Well! I forbid it. I have dismissed her, it is true, from my house; but all the same I forbid your taking her with you. Sonia! come to me this minute!"

Général Goréline straightened himself up; and for the first time in his life, possibly, looked his wife in the face, and ventured to oppose her.

"And why should not this young man take the child, whom you have driven from your house, away with him?" he said, in so loud and clear a voice that the servants exchanged looks of surprise.

"I do not choose that he should take the child with him, merely because it is his wish to do so, and—"

"You are wrong, Julie, very wrong," interrupted her husband, severely; "and you have shown great cruelty to the orphan—"

"Are you mad? Do you dare to blame me, and in the presence of my servants? This is too much! And all on account of this worthless little vagabond. Come here, you miserable little wretch."

"She shall not stir!" said the Général, in the voice of thunder with which he commanded his battery. "The child will go with this young man, who has been so kind to her already; and he will take her to his mother."

"But—Stépane Pétrovitch—"

"Enough! I have the jurisdiction of this estate; it belongs to me; and I choose that Sonia shall go. You need have no anxiety, Boris Ivanovitch," he said, to the student; "at the end of a week you shall have all the necessary papers. Give me your address now."

Madame Goréline foamed with rage; but she felt that further resistance was useless. Never before had her husband spoken to her in this tone; and her habitual contempt gave place to a certain degree of respect. She stood, silent at last, gnawing at the bit.

"Thank you, Général," said Boris, much relieved. "Farewell!"

He was about to enter the *Télègue*, when Madame Goréline cried, hastily:

"And your money? You must have your money." This cross and crabbed woman was a most honest and accurate man of business.

"No," answered Boris, hastily, "I do not want the

money. You owe me nothing; I am taking away one of your servants; I am paid. Farewell!"

For the second time that day, Madame Goréline was compelled to allow disdain to give way to respect in her estimate of others. This young man was certainly disinterested.

The Général took from his wife's hands the roll of roubles intended for Boris, and going to the *Télègue* he placed it on Sonia's knees. The child burst into tears as she kissed the hands of her first protector.

"I will come and see you," he whispered. "Hush! say nothing to any one."

"Adieu, Général," said Boris, in a trembling voice; "you are a good man."

"Au revoir," muttered the Général, with a mysterious wink.

"Well! will you never have done, Général, with your farewells?" cried Madame Goréline, sharply, from the balcony above.

Boris raised his cap to her; and then looked around on the crowd gathered about him. All—servants and peasants—stood uncovered.

"Go on!" he said to the coachman. "God be with us and you!"

The *Télègue* rattled off. The lean little horse trotted gayly down the road; and in a very brief period the roof of the house where Lydie lived was lost among the trees.

CHAPTER XI.

OATHS AND PROMISES.

THE peasant who drove Boris was devoured by curiosity; he made several efforts at conversation; but after two or three repulses, he, in his turn, relapsed into meditative silence.

Soon the green roofs, and the turnip-shaped cupola surmounting the church in the district town, were to be seen in the distance; and in another half hour, the *Télègue* drew up before the little wooden building which represented the post-station.

No one troubled himself to come out to receive so unimportant a personage as our traveller. The peasant was about to drive away at once, but Boris bade him wait; while he himself entered the dingy room, where the official was smoking a pipe with a sulky air.

"At what hour does the diligence for Moscow pass?" asked the young man.

The official took two or three whiffs from his pipe before he condescended to reply; then without discarding his Olympian calm he slowly dropped these words:

"At eleven o'clock, if it is not delayed."

"Must I put my name down, to secure a place?"

"It is quite useless. The diligence is always full when it reaches here."

"I shall nevertheless hope to find an inch or two where

I can squeeze in," said Boris, indifferently; then he returned to the *Télègue* where Sonia sat, with terrified, anxious eyes fixed on the door which had swallowed her protector.

"Listen, Sonia," said the tutor, as he lifted her from the vehicle. "You have considerable sense: I am going to order some tea for you, and you will wait here for me. The diligence does not pass until late this evening. You must take care of all my things until I come back."

"Are you going away?" murmured Sonia, in terror.

"Do not be troubled: I will surely come back. Now," he added, turning to the peasant, "do you think your horse can take me back to the place we came from, and then come here again with me before nine to-night?"

The peasant, who held his hat in his hand, rolled it about, looked into it anxiously, scratched his head, and finally answered, "How much will you give me for all that?"

"How much did you promise him for bringing us here?" asked Boris of the child.

"One rouble and a half," she answered.

"Very well, then; I will give you four in all."

The peasant looked at Boris, and then resumed in a low voice:

"My horse is tired, sir; why do you want to go back there again?"

Boris flushed with anger; but, remembering that the greatest prudence was necessary, he restrained himself.

"I have forgotten something which I must have," he answered.

"Then, sir, if you will give me a blue-paper* I will harness up another horse of mine, which has not been used to-day, and we will be back here when you are ready, as fast as the wind that blows."

"That is settled, then?" said Boris. "We will start in a half-hour."

He ordered his luggage carried into the waiting-room, a large apartment, whose wooden floor was clean and white. He ordered the samovar to be brought in, prepared several cups of tea for the child, who drank them eagerly, and, without touching anything himself, he entered the *Télègue* once more, giving Sonia strict orders not to lose sight, for one moment, of the valise and small box which constituted his luggage.

Sonia seated herself on the floor by the side of her precious charge, and guarded it with canine fidelity until long after every ray of sunshine had deserted the dreary room.

The little horse, who smelt his stable, took Boris rapidly back over the road he had so recently traversed; the peasant excited him by cries, and yet it seemed to the young man that the long, white road stretched out to an infinite length before them.

His whole being was concentrated on one single thought: "Should they kill me as they would a mad dog, I cannot go away thus. I must see Lydie once more!"

They at last reached the village where the peasant resided. Boris gave orders that another horse should stand harnessed to the *Télègue*, and awaiting him, that

* Five roubles.

no time should be lost, and directed his own steps toward the Goréline mansion, which was little more than a verst off. A small grove surrounded the village. As soon as he had passed through this, he made a sharp turn to the left, cut through the forest, and reached the ravine in this way, along which he went until he came to the brook gurgling over the stones; he jumped over this, and found himself by the garden-hedge.

In all this agitation the time had passed as swiftly as a dream, and just as the young man reached the ravine, the sunlight, soft and subdued, filtered, like a golden vapor, through the low limbs and foliage of the forest trees.

It was a little after five: exactly the hour when the Général and his wife took their daily nap; it was exactly the hour when the two young people had been in the habit of meeting at the spring.

"She will be there," said Boris to himself; "she will be there, unless they have shut her up!" he added, sadly.

He stopped for a moment to control the quick beating of his heart, forgetting that if he were seen, he ran the risk of being ignominously driven away. He thought that he was soon to see Lydie again; that he should see her or die of anger and despair.

"She is there," he said to himself, just as the first tinkling of the water in the spring broke on his ear. A thick wall of green branches still separated him from the usual place of rendezvous. He tried to look through it, and even thought he saw the folds of a white dress lying on the turf.

Without paying much heed to thorns or scratches, he

crashed through the hedge and went quickly toward the spring.

But no Lydie! His heart sank like lead. Conquered at last, hopeless and despairing, he threw himself down on the turf, on the spot where she was in the habit of sitting, and, pressing his lips on the cold irresponsive ground, he prayed for death—yes, for death—since she was forever lost to him.

The birds uttered an occasional warble, as if to warn him that it was growing late, and that the servants would soon be there for water for the household. An entire hour passed, and yet Boris had no thought of going.

It mattered little to him if he were found there; his life was of no further value in his eyes; the only hope that had gilded it had perished—his whole being had lost its mainspring.

A footstep startled him. For Lydie's sake he did not wish to be seen; he therefore concealed himself behind a thorn-bush, and waited.

A rolling pebble, the click of a dainty boot-heel, the rustling of silken skirts: ah! it was no servant. Boris listened—a sigh, a sob, and then the words, "Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!"

It was she. Boris threw himself at her feet, not without startling her, for she nearly fainted.

"Lydie!" he murmured, amid passionate kisses. "Did you think that I could leave this place without seeing you again? I should have died of grief, my Lydie! If I wish to live I must work; to work I must have courage and hope, and you must tell me that you love me, that you are mine, and that you will wait for me!"

He could have talked on in this way for hours. She listened to him without replying. She seemed lost in thought, with her eyes fixed on the earnest, impassioned face of her lover.

He was no longer the poor Tutor in a dependent position; he was no longer her fiancé in humble circumstances; he was a man who adored her, who spoke to her as lover and master; it was more than this even: it was love itself—passionate, irresistible. Dazzled by the splendor of this apparition, she felt herself losing her self-control.

"Yes," she said, at last, "I am yours; I will wait for you, for I love you—I love you—I love you!" she repeated slowly, as if she liked to linger over these words, whose full meaning she was incapable of comprehending. Boris was about to reply, when the distant song of one of the women servants of the house closed his lips.

"We are discovered!" he said in a whisper, terrified for her sake, not for his own.

The song drew nearer; but they saw no one as yet.

"They have come for water to make the tea," said Lydie. "Follow me."

She hurried away rapidly, drawing Boris after her. She opened a little gate in the hedge, and they found themselves in the forest.

"A little further," she said to Boris, who wished to detain her. A few steps more and she considered themselves free from all danger of eaves-droppers. They stood still and discussed their plans for future correspondence. The sun

had disappeared behind the hill; the birds were silent, or from them came only an occasional chirp, as if in their sleep; a light blue mist arose and rested along the side of the ravine.

"I must depart," said Boris, desperately. His arms were around Lydie; the girl's head was on his shoulder, and her tears fell fast. "Lydie," he continued, "if you would—"

She looked up questioningly.

"I have a good horse there!" he said, with passionate vehemence. "I am going directly to my mother's house; will you go with me? We will be married at once; the priest at Grébova will make no opposition, and afterwards we will tell your parents. Say; will you give your consent?"

And he pressed Lydie to his heart, as if he could in that way convince her more easily.

"Do you mean for me to go with you, and be married?" answered the young girl, growing very pale; "and my mother—what would she say? She would be very angry."

"What of that?" replied Boris, eagerly. "I do not wish to speak disrespectfully of her, but— However, we will say no more about her. Now, then: will you go with me?"

His heart and soul were in this question; his eyes seemed to penetrate the very inner being of the girl; he waited for her reply.

"No," she murmured, feebly. "No; I dare not. I cannot!" and she loosened the clinging arms around her lover's neck.

Was it the thought of her parents' anger? Was it his poverty which terrified and restrained her in this decisive hour? She could not herself have told; but it is quite certain that her parents' anger would not have restrained her.

"As you will," said Boris, sadly. "I did not think that you would consent. Farewell, Lydie, my love! my life!"

She sobbed bitterly. Many confused impressions heightened her sorrow. She felt herself guilty—toward whom? She did not know. She wished to please the man whom she had accepted as her future husband; and yet she felt weak and powerless before him. She was by no means certain that she did not wish to go with him. She thought of it for a moment—to live at his side, to spend her life with him, would not this be the happiness of which she had so often dreamed? Why should she not say yes? "My duty to my parents," she said to herself, as if in excuse. But she knew very well that in the depths of her heart she despised her father, and judged her mother with merciless severity.

These thoughts and conflicting wishes troubled her sorely. She drove them away like an importunate flock of thieving birds, and turned toward her lover.

Strangely enough, Boris suffered still more acutely; but his sorrow was under restraint; his manner was calm, and the young girl silently accused him of coldness.

"Adieu!" she said, at last, with a passionate pang of regret, and her arms closely around him.

"Not adieu," he answered, closing her lips with a kiss;

"au revoir, rather. Remember, Lydie, that my life belongs to you."

"Mademoiselle! mademoiselle!" cried some one in the garden. "Where are you? There is company here."

The two lovers separated instantly. An hour later, and Boris had reached the station. In spite of the dictum of the official at the station, the diligence, which rolled along at midnight, had two vacant places in the imperial for himself and his little protégée.

CHAPTER XII.

HESITATION AND EXPLANATION.

LYDIE slowly returned to the house. Before her interview with Boris, she had wept for hours, thinking that she should never see him again. And now she realized that the chain which bound them together was not broken. Nothing in fact was changed or lost except the dear delight of living in that atmosphere of love and adulation to which her lover had accustomed her. The happiness was gone, but the chains were left. Terrified by the future which she vaguely saw spread before her, Lydie stood still in the avenue under the linden trees, and asked herself aloud, "Why?"

"Why had he returned? Why has he bound me with these promises? Why did I promise, when fortune and prosperity will never come to him, nor to me through him? No, never!"

She threw herself on the turf, regardless of the guest who was waiting for her, and wept more bitterly than ever; while Boris, by this time far away, thought of her with an aching heart, but one which was, nevertheless, filled with high hopes, and indomitable courage and energy. Lydie did not weep for him: she wept for herself, and her tears brought her no relief.

Then she returned to the house, bathed her burning cheeks and eyes in fresh water, and went down again to

the balcony, where a guest was smoking a cigar while awaiting the rising of the Général and Madame Goréline from their siesta. It was the Prince. No one had told Lydie that it was he; but she knew it in advance. She was never mistaken in the hours of his visits.

Generally, it was with a strong feeling of pleasure that she met him. The young man's very evident admiration flattered her feminine heart; but this evening she felt a strange constraint, as she entered the presence of Armianof.

He, on the contrary, had never been so much disposed to speak openly. Had she wished to provoke a declaration, Lydie could not have managed better. Her keeping him waiting was a *coup d'état.* As soon as he saw her, Armianof advanced with great eagerness to meet her.

"At last! Ah! Lydie Stépanovna, I began to think that I was not to have the pleasure of seeing you to-day."

The evening before, she would have cast a coquettish glance at him, and murmured, "You wished to see me, then, did you?" To-day she had no reply on her lips; she simply stammered:

"I was walking in the woods."

"Had I known that, I should have joined you," replied the Prince, interpreting in his own fashion, and to his own satisfaction, the young girl's embarrassment.

She glanced at him with a startled expression; but the gathering darkness covered her embarrassment.

"You have been waiting alone here for some time, I fear," she said at last, after a short silence. "Did you not send a servant to tell my mother that you were here?"

"No, I did not; and pray do not disturb them now,"

answered the Prince, eagerly. "It is not altogether to see them that I come here so often," he added, slowly. Here again she would have liked to reply as of yore; but the smile froze on her lips.

"Chained for life!" she thought, impatiently.

"Can you imagine why I come so often?" insisted the Prince.

"No," murmured Lydie. She gasped for breath, as she realized that she held her future in her own hands. What was she about to do with it?

"You do not guess why I come so often? Well, then, I will tell you the next time. Ah! Mademoiselle Lydie, how is it that you who are so wise have not discovered that?"

He spoke in a tone that was half serious, half jesting. A little more encouragement from the girl would have made him altogether in earnest; but he was always in mortal terror of being ridiculous, and he had the sense to see that a woman would not necessarily worship him because he was a Prince, and wealthy.

"I am often extremely dull," answered Lydie, who felt more at ease by this time.

"Then you must have a full explanation very soon," replied the young man; "now it is too late to attempt it; for I see your mother at the end of the avenue. Where is Boris Ivanovitch?"

Lydie felt the blood leap in her veins. In a faint voice she answered:

"He is not here."

"So I see," said Armianof, with a laugh; "but where

has he hidden himself? The windows of his room are wide open."

"He has gone away," answered Lydie, struggling to speak with indifference.

"Gone!" repeated the Prince, in amazement; "and where has he gone?"

"To Moscow."

"To Moscow? and wherefore?"

"He had some quarrel with mamma," murmured Lydie.

Madame Goréline was close at hand; Lydie drew back a little, feeling that the situation was becoming quite intolerable.

After an interchange of politenesses, the Prince exclaimed:

"Madame, I have just heard that Monsieur Grébof has left you. May I ask if his departure was not very sudden?"

"Do not say a word about it," answered Madame Goréline, still irritated, and casting a threatening glance at her daughter, which was entirely lost upon her; for it was growing very dark. As the three turned toward the house, she continued: "This young man is a rascal. I cannot understand how I could have been so completely blinded and fooled by him, as to bring him here. We are all subject to errors; but this lesson will have the effect of making me very prudent in future."

Armianof made no attempt to conceal his surprise. Suddenly a thought came to him.

"Has he been guilty of any indiscretion?" he asked,

knowing very well that with Madame Goréline he could be slightly inquisitive, without having the appearance in her eyes of being indiscreet.

"The very worst of all," answered Madame Goréline, without hesitation, and with an accent of condensed indignation in her voice. "Let us say no more on the subject, Prince, I beg of you."

They entered the dining-room, which was brilliantly lighted. At one glance Armianof took in the scene. He saw Eugène's confused air; the harassed, disturbed countenance of the Général; the quick, sharp glances of the mother; and above all, the brilliant color and inflamed eyelids of the daughter, whose delicate nose even, was suffused with an unbecoming tinge of color.

"How stupid I have been!" he thought. "They love each other, and I never suspected it!"

The shock he felt on making this discovery was so violent, that he was compelled to summon all his talent as a man of the world to conceal his impressions. Fortunately the dishes placed before them gave them a pretext for frequent pauses in their desultory conversation, and he had time to make more than one sagacious reflection.

His first conscious thought was not regret at having a rival, but a certain irritation against the entire Goréline family.

"I have been trifled with!" he said to himself; and the tea he swallowed had a bitter taste in his mouth. The next thought proved to him that the parents, at least, had suspected nothing, since they had so hastily disembarassed

themselves of Boris. "Who, then, has trifled with me?" thought Armianof—"Lydie?" Lydie herself, in receiving his attentions so warmly, while all the time having her heart occupied with another person!

Astonished at himself that he was more angry than pained, he looked at Lydie's delicate face, disfigured by tears, and fancied that he had become entirely indifferent to her.

"I do not love her as much as I thought I did," he said to himself. "But it may be merely because she is one of those women who become astonishingly ugly when they cry!"

These reflections and many others did not tend to make him the gayest guest at the supper-table; the ball of conversation was thrown occasionally, but elicited no response. Finally, under the pretext of a frightful headache, Armianof took his leave at an early hour. As he said good-night to his hosts, he said to the Général, "Monsieur Grébof lent me some books, which I would like to return to him. Do you know his address?"

"My wife wrote it down," replied the good man, without any hesitation, while his wife darted a terrible glance at him.

"Will you be kind enough to give it to me, madame?" said the Prince, politely, to Madame Goréline. "I shall be infinitely indebted to you, if you would."

"I have lost it, I believe," she answered, hastily deciding to give a false address rather than to allow Armianof to correspond with that odious tutor.

"I know it," said Eugène, with triumphant eagerness;

"it was on Boris Ivanovitch's valise. I know it by heart: Rue des Jardins, No. 84."

Eugène knew very well that he would have one or two slaps on each ear to accompany him to his bed that night; but he was wretched at having caused the disgrace and dismissal of his tutor, and this bit of malice, perpetrated to his mother, seemed to him a sort of reparation toward Boris.

"Rue des Jardins 84, Moscow," repeated the Prince.

"Not at all!" interrupted Madame Goréline, with an angry light in her eyes. "That is his old address. He has moved, and lives at present at the other end of the town; but I really cannot say just where."

Armianof looked at the speaker with quiet scrutiny. This rapid examination sufficed to prove to him that he could never hope to receive any accurate information on this point from his hostess. Another idea came to him, which he lost no time in carrying into execution.

He took his leave, and less than an hour after his calèche drew up before the door of his sumptuous dwelling.

"Do not unharness!" he said to his coachman, who sat immovable and stiff in his seat.

Armianof mounted the stairs hastily, ordered his valet to put some linen and a change of clothing in a valise, took from his secretary a roll of bank-bills; then throwing open his window, he called to his coachman.

"Efime, is the calèche in good order?"

"Yes, your Highness."

"Will it be fit to go to Moscow?"

"To St. Petersburg, if you wish it, your Highness; I examined it thoroughly this very morning."

Armianof shut the window, ordered his valise to be buckled, threw a cloak over his shoulders, and ran hastily down the stairs.

"I will return, perhaps, in an hour—perhaps to-morrow—perhaps in a week," he said to his amazed servants, who were ranged in the vestibule. "Expect me, therefore, at any time."

He jumped into his carriage, and wrapped himself in his cloak.

"Drive to town," he said to his coachman.

The calèche went as if on wings.

As they neared the post-station, he saw afar off a black moving mass, and heard the snapping of whips.

Armianof summoned the official. "Is that the diligence for Moscow?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; it has just gone," answered the functionary, standing humbly, with his hat in his hand.

"Was there a young man in it?"

"Yes, sir; and a little girl."

"A little girl?" repeated the Prince, in astonishment.

"Yes, sir; one of your peasants drove them here in his *Télègue*."

"Where did these two persons come from?"

"From Général Goréline's, your Highness."

"Four horses!" said the Prince, hastily. "And hurry, for I am in the greatest possible haste!"

The people had the best intentions, but there were not enough horses. One must be sent for from a peasant near at hand, but much time was lost in this way, and it was one o'clock when all was in readiness.

"Tell them at home not to expect me to-night," said Armianof to his coachman, who came to take leave of his master, mounted on one of the carriage horses, and holding the bridles of the other three in his hand.

"And now," said the Prince to himself, while the bells of the four fresh post-horses rang out gayly, "now, I am off in hot pursuit of Grébof. If he has misconducted himself toward Lydie, I shall kill him! If only toward myself, we will decide later what to do."

CHAPTER XIII.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

IT is quite natural to suppose that Armianof slept well during the long hours which ensued. He aroused himself at the various stations only to examine the account, and to ask news of the diligence. He slept so well, in fact, that when, at dawn, he beheld before him the walls of a monastery, and the stone houses of a large town, he was much surprised.

He remembered that he had been travelling the greater part of the night at no mean rate of speed; that he had stopped at a post-station three or four times. He therefore struggled out of his carriage, stretched himself vigorously, and entered the station while fresh horses were being put in.

"Whereabouts is the diligence now?" he asked.

"There it is—just gone!" some one said, pointing to a black speck afar off.

"Give me some tea, quick!" was his reply, and he began walking up and down before the door, to invigorate his limbs which seemed half asleep. He swallowed the boiling tea which was handed him, put in his pocket two or three delicate rolls of white bread, brought to the calèche by the peasants for sale, and said to the postilion, who was swaying to and fro in his seat,

"Overtake that diligence and you will be a lucky fellow!"

The postilion snapped his whip, swore violently at his horses, and the vehicle started—with a rattle and a bang—descending the steep hill which led into the city, with the most surprising noise. But the diligence was too far in advance, and it was not on this occasion that Armianof succeeded in overtaking it.

It was almost ten o'clock when the heavy, rocking mass was again seen at the termination of one of those straight, long roads which, disregarding hills and valleys, have the effect of the various tubes of a telescope, ready to fit one into another.

"Try the spurs. Catch that diligence at any cost!" said the Prince, excited by this novel steeple-chase. "You shall have five roubles if you overtake it before it reaches the next station." The four bay horses galloped at full speed, rattling down the declivities with the quickness of a locomotive, and remounting the opposite ascent with the same rapidity in consequence of the additional velocity they had acquired. Could these horses ever do the like again? Only one class of men could answer this question—those who skin and cut up old and worn-out animals, and keep an account of the number of such who pass under their hands each month.

The diligence was near at hand, and finally the two vehicles were side by side.

"Stop!" cried the Prince to the postilion of the diligence.

"Impossible! The diligence must not stop; it is forbidden," answered the man, carelessly.

He took a rouble from his pocket and held it so that the sun fell full upon it.

"*Iachka!*" called out the postilion, with a wink to the driver, "look back over the road. I am afraid the leader has cast a shoe."

"Monsieur Grébof!" cried the Prince, with the voice of a stentor, while the postilion of the diligence examined each foot of his six horses. All were in perfect order, as no one knew better than himself.

Boris, astonished at hearing his name shouted in such a place, put his head out of the window, and opened his eyes wide when he saw the Prince.

"Come into my carriage, will you? I have something to say; and I will take you on with me."

Boris made no objection, but immediately jumped from the diligence into the calèche. Sonia's frightened eyes followed his movements; he reassured her with a kind smile and a gesture.

"The shoes are all right," called the postilion.

"Go on, then," answered the conductor.

And the two equipages started.

Armianof was by no means fond of long preambles, and Boris was a man who invited frankness. He lost then no time in broaching his subject.

"I beg your pardon, Boris Ivanovitch," said the Prince, as soon as the two young men were seated side by side; "you understand, of course, that it is from no caprice that I interrupt you thus in your journey, and that I follow you all night in this way."

Boris, more amazed than ever, nodded slightly in

acquiescence, but was evidently at an utter loss to understand the scene.

"Will you answer all my questions fully and truly?" asked Armianof. "It is important for me to know if I am to look on you in future as a friend or an enemy. I expect from you absolute truth, and truth too without any reticence. I must know all, whatever it may be."

"I shall certainly tell the truth," answered Boris, upon whose befogged mind now came a ray of light.

"What are your precise relations with Mademoiselle Goréline?"

Boris was half angry, but met the eyes of the Prince with entire fearlessness. Those handsome, haughty eyes had such a serious, almost solemn expression in their depths that his anger faded away. He at once understood the full consequences of his reply, and, still with his eyes full on Armianof's face, he answered:

"I love her, and I have asked her to become my wife."

"And she?"

"She has consented."

"How long since?"

"Two months."

"Before my arrival, that is?"

"Yes, before your arrival."

"Why have you left?"

"Because Madame Goréline, having learned our mutual affection, refuses to give her daughter to me."

"And the Général?"

Boris shrugged his shoulders, and smiled sadly.

"Then you have renounced Mademoiselle Goréline," asked the Prince.

"Why do you wish to know?"

"For reasons of great importance. Answer me, I beg of you; have you renounced all pretensions to Mademoiselle Goréline's hand?"

The calèche went rapidly on. Boris, after a momentary struggle with himself, answered:

"I trust you, sir, because I believe you to be an honest man. I confide to you a secret which involves the peace and repose of Lydie's whole life. I saw her again—"

"When?"

"Last evening, at twilight."

"And what took place then?'

"She promised to wait for me. I regard her as my fiancée. The objections made by her parents will delay, but not prevent our marriage."

"She made you new promises last evening, you say?"

"Yes," answered Boris, shortly, sick at heart and irritated by all these questions.

"Why have her parents refused their consent?"

"Because I am poor," answered Boris, with a bitter smile; "you should know that without asking."

Armianof reflected for a moment, and then extending his hand to the tutor:

"We are friends!" he said. "Tell me everything, even to the smallest details, and I promise you that you shall never have occasion to repent of your confidence in me."

Boris, subjugated by the cordial hand-clasp and by the kind words of the Prince, related to him each event of the previous eventful day; Sonia's dismissal, and his consequent determination to take the child to his mother.

Armianof listened, anger and approval alternate in his eyes. "What a knight-errant you are! We are friends, I said, and now then it is time for me to prove my friendship. What are you going to do?"

"I hardly know," answered the tutor, whose excitement was fast giving way to intense depression. "For the present, I am going to my mother; there I shall remain for several weeks and rest, for I am really worn out," he added, turning toward the Prince with a faint smile.

His weary eyes blazing with fever, and the color high in his cheeks, proved the fact that these two painful days had disturbed even his vigorous physique. Armianof noticed this, but made no comments at that time.

"And then—what are your plans then?"

"I have none, save to resume my usual avocations with more than my usual industry. I must give twice as many lessons each day as I have hitherto done."

"Which will prevent you giving any time to literature."

"Not so, for I shall sleep less. To all intents and purposes my summer has been thrown away. I must work, therefore, doubly hard this winter to make up for lost time."

"But," said Armianof, with some little hesitation, "I supposed that the Gorélines—"

"Do you think that I would take their daughter and their money, too?" interrupted Boris with some bitterness. "No, by no means. One of them will suffice. Besides, not having fulfilled my engagement, which was of course to the end of the season, I have really no claim to any remuneration whatever."

"So that you are really no better off than when you left Moscow!"

"You are correct in this idea," answered the tutor, turning his head aside in annoyance; "but I really do not know why we dwell on these details, which are totally uninteresting to any one but myself."

The Prince made no reply; for although in the beginning of their acquaintance Boris had spoken without constraint of his pecuniary position and his plans for the future, he feared now that he had unintentionally wounded a susceptibility which surrounding circumstances rendered more tenacious than usual. At the end of ten minutes he decided to break a silence which was becoming oppressive, even at the risk of still further offending his morose travelling companion.

"Instead of lessons, why do you not try to find some position as Secretary or Librarian with some savant? In such an association you might win his confidence to such a degree that you would finally become his assistant and companion."

"I should infinitely prefer that kind of work, but alas! such positions are rare, almost impossible to find. I shall continue to turn the grindstone—I have done it for some time; it is slow, but sure."

And Boris continued to watch the dull, monotonous landscape which unfolded itself before him.

"Listen, Boris Ivanovitch," said the Prince, after a long silence; "the truth is due to you. I have been very much in love with Mademoiselle Goréline, and I intended to present myself as a suitor to her parents." Boris looked

at him with eyes full of anxious sadness. "But now that I know that she has entered into an engagement with you, I renounce all pretensions. You were there before me, you obtained her free consent—I will retire, and I tell you so in all truth and loyalty."

Instead of being relieved and comforted by this assurance, the young man's depression increased. Making a great effort, he said in a low voice:

"She ought to have the power of choosing between us —between two lives so different."

"If she could hesitate from such motives," answered the Prince, gravely, "she would be worthy neither of you nor of me."

Boris made no reply, but pressed Armianof's hand warmly. The station was in sight. The Prince had said that here he should turn his face homeward—hardly a word now passed between the two young men. The tutor climbed into his seat in the imperial, from which place Sonia's anxious eyes had never ceased to watch his every movement.

"You have a friend," said Armianof, as they parted; "a friend on whom you can rely. In any emergency, address yourself to me without hesitation. And once more I promise you not to make any attempt at seeing Mademoiselle Goréline again."

This promise was unnecessary. The manner in which Lydie, betrothed to another, had received the attentions of the Prince, had completely detached him from her, and he was sorely tempted to say to Boris that not much reliance was to be placed upon the constancy of this coquettish

child. But on this point he of course had less right to speak than on any other, and he was silent.

A moment more, and the two carriages disappeared in opposite directions, and Boris turned to the little creature who was curled up in the corner by his side—the child who had no friend in the world but himself, and who was now his sole companion.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MOTHER'S WELCOME.

THE evening of the third day after this rencontre, Madame Grébof took her seat in the summer-house in the corner of her garden. The pavilion stood on a slight elevation, which commanded the road which led to the village, and also the one which wound past the court-yard of her modest home.

She was fond of this spot; fond of coming there to catch the last rays of the setting sun. And now, amid the golden dust she could clearly discern her six cows, her four small farm-horses, and the few sheep which composed her flock. Then came the geese, under the care of a bright little boy, with large blue eyes, his fair hair bleached almost white in the sun, and his skin ruddy with health and fresh air. He was the son and heir of the chambermaid, and destined some day to become the valet of Master Boris, provided his intelligence and moral qualities fitted him to occupy so elevated a position—a position which was the object of maternal ambition.

Dropping the stocking which hung unfinished from her knitting needles—a stocking intended for her cherished son—Madame Grébof had folded her hands over her bosom, and watched the tranquil return of the beasts to their barn and outhouses, when suddenly the distant sound of bells attracted her attention. She listened; the sound came nearer.

"Dâcha! Dâcha!" she called to her maid, "visitors are coming! Set the samovar to boiling; and tell the cook to put some rolls in the oven."

The house was not far off; the honest face framed in gray hair belonging to Dâcha, appeared at a window.

"Yes, madame," she answered; "but who can be coming? All the neighbors have been here very lately."

"It may be old Madame Popof; be sure that you have a dish of sorb sweetmeats; she eats none other, you remember."

Dâcha disappeared; and Madame Grébof seated herself to await the arrival of her guests.

The bells were no longer heard. Dâcha, having hurriedly executed the orders of her mistress, had returned to her side, where she stood on tip-toe, shading her eyes with her hand, and vainly endeavoring to see through the cloud of dust which was slowly settling.

"There it is, madame!" she cried, at last. "It went round by the pond; but it is not Madame Popof's tarantass; it is a *Télègue!*"

"A *Télègue?* You must be mistaken, my poor Dâcha, you do not see well," said Madame Grébof, whose own sight had been rapidly failing for some time. "Who could come to see us in a *Télègue?*"

The little vehicle had come nearer by this time. The postilion whipped his ponies, and the stout little creatures trotted rapidly along the avenue.

"Mamma!" cried Boris, waving his cap.

"Good heavens! is it you, my son? Alas! my aged limbs are not strong enough to take me to him," she added, sinking, half fainting with joy, in her chair.

But Boris had leaped the hedge. The *Télègue* drove more slowly round to the door; while the young man fell on his knees before his mother. Weeping and laughing, she could not speak, but covered his brow and eyes with kisses, and with the signs of the cross.

"My son! my Boris! How handsome you are! How you have grown!" (For in the last year Boris had reached his five feet eight inches.) "How good it was of you to come to me! But why did you not write?"

"I had no time," answered her son. "I found myself at liberty earlier than I had hoped."

"So much the better! And how long will you stay?"

"A month! sweet mother; a whole month!"

"Madame, tea is ready!" cried the happy Dâcha.

"Come, dear, and eat something; you must be very weary," said the old lady, taking her boy's arm with pride.

As they were about to enter the house, Madame Grébof saw Sonia, whom Boris had completely forgotten, holding her little bundle in her arms and leaning against the wall. The child looked sadly on at this scene, at this place and people, all so strange to her, and with whom she had nothing in common.

"Who is this?" said Madame Grébof, in amazement, stopping short before this atom of humanity who looked somewhat like a gypsy.

"It is a small chambermaid, whom I have brought to you," said Boris, laughing. "I remembered that Dâcha was not so young as she once was. and I have brought her an assistant."

"I am not, God be praised, quite old enough yet to stand in need of any help whatever!" said the woman, with a frown, as she cast a glance at the slender child. "And besides, what could she do?"

"I was only jesting, Dâcha," interposed Boris, hastily. "She is a good child who has served me with fidelity, and more than that, she is an orphan; she has neither father nor mother—neither home nor bread. She is one whom I implore you, mother dear, to receive for the love of God."

Madame Grébof made a sign of the cross, and then held out her hand to Sonia.

"Our blessed Lord has commanded us to receive all who come in His name," she said; "you are welcome, my child, to our bread and our salt. Where there is enough for five, there is always enough for six. Dâcha, take her to the kitchen, make her eat, and by-and-by we will see what we shall do with her."

That evening Boris told his mother all that could be told of his sojourn with the Gorélines. He did not touch on Lydie, as he had determined not to sadden his mother's old age by anxiety for him. He gave as a pretext for his sudden return the indignation which Madame Goréline's conduct towards Sonia had aroused in his heart. The good woman saw no reason to doubt the accuracy of her son's statement, and his mere recital of the brutal treatment of the child brought tears to her eyes more than once.

"Holy Virgin!" she exclaimed, "can it be that anybody dares to be so forgetful of God's commands, as to ill-treat one of his orphans!"

When Boris had finished, she exclaimed:

"You did well, my son. We will employ this child in the house. We shall be able to find something for her to do, and as to bread, that will come, never fear!"

And she filled her son's plate, with a smile, and handed him the crisp, golden-brown rolls, which attested the ability of her old cook.

All the servants in this house were certainly as old as their mistress. Thirty years before, the cook—then a young woman—had officiated at Madame Grébof's wedding dinner. The two or three old women who attended to the heavy work of the house had known and lamented their master, who died in early manhood, whose widow had never ceased to mourn for him, and had found her only consolation in their little son. How hard it was for that poor mother to live apart from her son! Nevertheless, when the time came that the separation seemed necessary, she had the courage and good sense to place him at school at Moscow, with a French teacher, who however compelled the boy to follow the course of a Russian college.

The child well established at this school, and Madame Grébof returned to the old house by the river-side. At the end of three weeks Boris saw his mother come into the school-room one morning.

"I could not keep away," she said. "It seemed to me all the time that you needed me. I shall come and live at Moscow while you are at school here. You will remain here with your teachers, but I shall come every day to see you, and we can always spend Sundays together."

The sacrifice was very great, far greater than Boris

imagined. To leave her home, her old servants, the habits of a lifetime, the independent, luxurious, and at the same time inexpensive manner of existence in her country home—to abandon all these for a small house in a retired quarter of the city, and there to reside with the strictest economy, was bad enough; but the hardest of all trials for the widow was to leave behind her the small chapel and the flagstone whereon she knelt during prayers; for this stone covered the remains of her husband, for whom she still wept after ten years, "not of widowhood," she said, "but of absence."

Consequently, when the fair summer days once again made the country lovely, what joy there was in the old house by the river, to see the arrival of Madame Grébof and Boris. The noisy school-boy gave infinite trouble by his disorder to the old servants, but even while they scolded they smiled and murmured, "He is as much like his father as one drop of water is like another." And this thought extinguished on their lips the reproach they had been about to utter.

When Boris entered the university, Madame Grébof returned to the country, for the young man now required more money, and she could increase her revenues if she managed her farm herself.

This was another sacrifice, but it was neither the first nor the last that the widow made without a second thought.

Calm as she was, she brought more life to Grébova; and the servants, aged, but by no means worn out, welcomed her return with joy. But death had diminished the ranks, and the small circle was contracting each year.

Sonia brought into this peaceful home an element which, at first, was by no means welcome: her wildness, her complete ignorance of the customs of the place, had nothing attractive to these aged persons, lost in the ruts of routine.

"Has she been baptized?" said one to another.

When Sunday came they saw her go to church behind the others. She watched with wide-open eyes all the ceremonies in this simple village chapel.

She had not, ten times during her whole life at Madame Goréline's, been present at prayers. A rustic Cinderella, she had always been compelled to remain at home and guard the house in the absence of the others. By degrees the child became accustomed to an existence hitherto unknown to her, where she did not receive kicks and cuffs every half hour, but where she was ordered to eat two good meals every day.

She was still timid and startled in her aspect. She talked little, and was extremely reserved in her allusions to her past life, but she made herself very useful in the independent, silent fashion which was natural to her.

From the first day of her arrival in the house she had insisted on taking care of her young master's room, not without some opposition from the old chambermaid, who had rocked her young master in her arms, and who resisted all interference in her devotion toward him; so Dâcha grumbled a little, but Boris consoled her with a few kind words; and Sonia continued to serve the young man with that animal-like devotion which was her strong characteristic.

CHAPTER XV.

LIGHT IN THE HORIZON.

IT was already two weeks since Boris came to Grébova. Each day he became more and more sad. Twice he had himself deposited in the mail thick, mysterious letters, and he had as yet received no assurance that Lydie had reached home safely after their interview, and had not met with any contretemps or surprise.

Anxiety devoured him. Twenty times he thought of starting off in search of intelligence of her, or even to catch a glimpse of her, even if speaking was impossible. But the most powerful of motives prevented this act: he was literally penniless!

One day, finally, he returned from the post-office. His mother had not seen him so gay for a long, long time. He wandered off, again and again, to the foot of the garden to read the precious little note which had come to him that morning.

It was very short, to be sure. An impartial judge would have regarded it as a very commonplace reply to the rapturous effusions of the banished lover. But it was Lydie's writing—the first letter he had received from her!

Had the sheet contained only her signature, Boris would have been satisfied—temporarily satisfied, at all events. She wrote:

"DEAR BORIS:—I have received your two letters. I implore you not to write me so often, for Dounia declares that she will not go to the post-office more than once in a fortnight; she says it is too far to go—and she is right, it is too far. I am afraid that some one consequently will bring your letters in the meantime to us, and you know then what would happen. Mamma is still very angry; the Prince has not been here since the day of your departure, when he passed that evening with us, and then he seemed very much out of temper. I am very well, and I hope you are also enjoying good health. I found the little book *Jocelyn*, in which you wrote my name, and I thank you for it.

"When shall we meet again? How sad it is not to see you, and how far off autumn seems to be! Yours,

"LYDIE."

At first Boris was perfectly happy. At the end of a few moments that happiness had sensibly decreased. This letter was not satisfactory, after all: he wished to know something of Lydie's thoughts—had she been suffering. Of all this she said nothing, and yet his whole heart was filled with tenderness as he touched the paper on which the young girl's hand had rested—he even pressed it to his lips.

He dismissed all these vague feelings of discomfort, and dwelt only on the happiness he experienced in hearing from the girl he loved; this letter was the first visible link in their future lives—she had even signed it "Yours —Lydie." That very signature ratified their engagement.

He slept with this precious letter under his pillow. The next day, when Sonia brought up his tea, Boris was electrified by her saying:

"You have received a letter from Mademoiselle."

"Who told you so?" asked Boris, in astonishment, but assuming an air of the utmost severity.

"No one; I saw the envelope on the table, and I was sure that it came from Mademoiselle, because you were so happy!"

"Be good enough in future to keep your surmises to yourself," replied Boris, annoyed at the perspicacity of this small page in rags. "If foolish ideas like this come into your head, do not repeat them to any one but myself —for I will forget them, and other people might remember them a long time."

"I understand, master!" said Sonia, with a profound obeisance, and then lifting her head quickly. "And Mademoiselle," she said, "how is she?"

"Go away, simpleton," answered Boris, fairly vexed at the pertinacity of the child.

He then boldly declared that the letter was not from Lydie. His assertions had no effect upon the child; her eyes told him that she did not believe him, and Sonia was in disgrace for two days.

The evening of the third day, as he went up-stairs at a very late hour, he saw a small, dark mass at the side of his bed.

"Who is there?" he asked, much surprised.

"It is I, master!" said Sonia, half rising to her feet. "I was waiting for you," she sobbed. "I waited to ask your pardon."

"For what?" replied Boris, somewhat conscience-stricken.

"For having been so foolish the other day. I meddled, Boris Ivanovitch, with what did not concern me, and I was a silly child. I am sorry, and beg your pardon. I made you angry, and now you will not speak to me."

She came close to him, still on her knees, and prostrated herself at his feet with the air of a suppliant.

"Forgive me!" she said. "Forgive me; never again will I do such a thing!"

"Very well," answered Boris, at once touched and humiliated. "Say no more about it: go to sleep; I forgive you."

"You forgive me?" And Sonia leaped to her feet.

"Yes, my child," repeated Boris, out of all patience, "I forgive you."

"And you will speak to me once more! and you will scold me when I have done wrong? Yesterday I did not bring any water to your room purposely; I thought you would scold me, but you did not—you went off and got the water yourself without a word to me. I had rather you would scold me, Boris Ivanovitch, than never speak to me!"

The young man laughed—he could not help it. And as he laid his hand on the child's head, he said:

"Go and sleep, little savage! I promise to scold you on the first occasion."

Sonia's face was radiant with joy. She snatched the young man's hands, covered them with kisses, and fled as silently as a little mouse.

The young man's holidays were fast slipping away. September was near at hand, and the schools and colleges were all opening again.

One beautiful autumnal day Boris left Grébova, his mother, that quiet, serene home, and little Sonia, who could hardly be prevailed upon to let him go.

"Take me with you," she implored. "I can black your boots and boil your tea-kettle. Take me with you, and you will never regret it!"

Vain entreaties! She remained at the village with Madame Grébof, who, half frightened by this wild and ungovernable nature, was, at the same time, attracted toward the child by her blind affection for her son. The old lady pitied Sonia and sympathized with her.

By degrees the child transferred to the mother the devotion which, since her young master's departure, was left without a channel. Instead of running away whenever she was addressed, she now allowed herself not only to be questioned, and to answer these questions, but also to relate to her mistress—but only when alone with her—many dismal tales of her life under Madame Goréline's roof.

With her slender hands closely pressed together—through her set teeth, with dilated nostrils and flashing eyes—looking like an angry little gnome, the child told of the many wrongs she had endured in silence. She told of her impotent rage—of the terrible temptation that had more than once assailed her of setting fire to the house, to destroy those cruel creatures, and herself as well. Then she described her remorse, and the sterile kindness of the Général; and then came the arrival of Boris, who had

brought a little sunshine into a life that had previously been as cold and sad as winter at the North Pole.

Madame Grébof listened to all these things with a feeling of confused horror. Could such things be? She almost refused to believe the child.

"Impossible!" she said. "God would never allow such monstrous conduct!" Then she remembered more than one dismal tale of unmistakable veracity, and her heart filled with divine compassion. She prayed with all her tender heart for those unhappy creatures who disregard the laws of God.

Two months after Boris left home, his mother concluded one of her letters to him in this way:

"Your little savage is fast becoming civilized. Every afternoon she comes to me, sits on the floor by my side, and learns to knit. She breaks as many needles as there are days in the month; but her intentions are good. Sometimes, however, she is excessively headstrong, and harasses me extremely. She has taken a great dislike to the laundress, and nothing can induce her to do for the woman a single one of the thousand services which she lavishes on Dâcha and on me. In the spring I shall put her to work in the garden. Now, as she is quicker than any one else in the house, it is she who waits on the table; but we have never yet succeeded in inducing her to wear shoes. The next time you write home, please say that it is your wish that she should wear both shoes and stockings; I will read this aloud to her, and perhaps when you come home again you will find her decently clad."

Boris laughed heartily at this recital of maternal woes. The idea of issuing his orders to Sonia to wear shoes appeared to him such an excellent joke, that he had at once proceeded to put it into execution; and a few weeks later, he learned with satisfaction that his orders had been obeyed. He laughed again, and this brief moment of gayety did him an infinite amount of good; for since the autumn, his life had grown drearier and drearier.

Lydie had come to Moscow with her family, and Boris was able to catch a glimpse of her, when she occasionally went out with her maid, Dounia, whom they had been compelled to take into their confidence; but these moments were rare and short, and were dearly paid for. Boris deprived himself of many a necessary of life, that he might slip into the hand of the obsequious Dounia the satiny folds of a bank bill. And then, too, by this time, Lydie had begun to go to dinner-parties; she rose at a late hour, and did not like to go out in the morning; in the afternoon, they ran a very great risk of being seen by some acquaintance; in the evening she always went to a ball, or the theatre, or received at home; in short, Boris rarely saw her. Besides what had he to say to her? His daily labor only sufficed to bring him in means enough to purchase the expensive books which he needed. Saddened—almost discouraged—he allowed himself neither rest nor sleep; he never left his work, except when compelled by business to do so; and he gave up his whole time to profound studies. He had no distraction from his assiduous toil. Once each week came a letter from his mother. To answer these letters was neither easy nor agreeable—for he was

desirous of concealing all his heartaches from that tender mother.

In the first sunny day of October, Prince Armianof had called upon him on his way to St. Petersburg. The young man's cordiality made a pleasant impression upon his saddened heart. He had experienced even a momentary joy in pressing the hand of this visitor, whose presence recalled the happy days of his love. Then the Prince went away, and the heavy veil of sad and sombre thought and work, which separated Boris from the external world, enwrapped him about again.

One evening when he was hard at work, and alone, as usual, bending over his task with a sort of ferocious determination, a letter was brought to him. Reading it over and over again, Boris believed himself to be dreaming. It was from Armianof; and this is what he wrote:

"A savant—Monsieur N——, a friend of my father—wishes to find a young man who is able and desirous of helping him in his specialty and researches. He is wealthy, and has no family—generosity, therefore, with him is allowed to do its full and perfect work. He has never stated the salary which he would be willing to pay a secretary; but I think that I am quite safe in stating that it would be at least two thousand roubles per annum. The only condition he makes is, that the moral character of the candidate shall be unexceptionable; for he must confide to him the most valuable results of his labors—researches to which his whole life has been devoted. This savant will pass the winter at St. Petersburg, to complete

his examination of some manuscripts in the Imperial library; then early in the spring, he wishes to travel, taking his secretary with him, and proposes to pass two years visiting the various libraries of Europe. When the books are published—the result of all these researches—the secretary may rely on receiving a reward proportionate to his services.

"Not knowing whether this proposal would be acceptable to you, or that your engagements will permit you to leave Moscow, I have not yet uttered your name. It may be that you will think your liberty too sweet to relinquish it. Nevertheless, I advise you as a sincere friend, who has your interest much at heart, to accept this offer without delay. I expect to receive a formal 'yes' from you, and, in the meantime, you may regard the affair as concluded. If you accept, do not disturb yourself by any material difficulties; everything will be settled in the most desirable way. Besides, on arriving at St. Petersburg, you will at once come to me, and we will consult together."

The first impression upon Boris was that of intense relief and joy. How delightful that he could pursue his studies under such conditions!

But then came the recollection of Lydie. How could he separate himself from her? Impossible! and yet it was equally impossible for him at the beginning of his career to throw aside such an opening. His heart swelled with gratitude toward Armianof. "Rely on me, as on a real friend," the Prince had said. What friend could have done better, or behaved with more delicacy?

These various ideas made such a turmoil in the young man's head, that he never closed his eyes that night. The morning found him feverish and uncertain—tempted to refuse at once, to put an end to the uncertainty in which he was. In another moment he wavered again, and decided to accept the position offered through Armianof without delay. Finally he came to the conclusion that he had no right to take so important a step without consulting Lydie.

The next day was Sunday. It was possible that he might see her at church, and he determined to postpone his answer to Armianof's letter until he had at least made the attempt; but the feverish impatience with which he watched the passage of the hours may be imagined rather than described.

The night was endless; finally, at four o'clock, he heard the bell for matins; then there was the usual stir and bustle in the streets, modified to Boris by the seclusion of the quarter in which he dwelt; and at last it was time for him to start.

While making his toilette, Boris had looked at himself in the mirror. He was really startled at his pallor, and at his worn and weary look. His features were drawn, and looked almost as if they had grown thinner in the night, and any one would have supposed him to be recovering from a long illness. It was not alone the anxieties and uncertainties of these last few days which had so changed him; the slow torture of the three previous months had deeply shaken the springs of his being.

"This state of things must come to an end!" he said to himself, resolutely. "If Lydie wishes me to remain, I will at once dismiss the whole project."

Before ten o'clock he was on the square where stands *L'Eglise du Bien Heureux-Vassili;* there he watched for the coming of his fiancée. The parti-colored roofs, the innumerable gilded cupolas, the fantastic form of this singular church, alone in the world for the oddity and originality of its architecture, annoyed the young man in a very marked degree; for was it not quite probable that Lydie would enter through one of those side chapels without his seeing her?

He passed three hours of this anguish of expectation, only to be understood by persons who can recall similar ones; finally, Lydie, with her maid, appeared on the other side of the square.

It was a clear December morning; the bright sunshine sparkled on the gilded roofs of the churches of the Kremlin; the thick snow, which had fallen during the night, covered the ground and pavements with its glittering purity, and the sky was as blue as turquoise.

Lydie—her slender waist and exquisite shoulders closely defined in her black velvet pardessus, a pink hat encircling her fresh face, and her hands buried in her muff—advanced with a slow, swinging step that was by no means devoid of grace; her maid, clumsy and red, was an extraordinary contrast to her mistress.

Boris watched them from where he stood; but he did not dare to go and meet Lydie; she, however, perceiving him, made a little sign, and he followed her into the church.

They passed through long, shadowy galleries, where candles burning before the Holy Images, which were glittering with precious stones and gold embroidery, threw strange reflections on certain angles, leaving the recesses in deep and mysterious darkness.

From the choir came the swelling tones chanting the solemn prayers of the Advent season.

Lydie leaned against a pillar in a dark corner, made the sign of the cross several times in a mechanical way; then turning toward Boris, she said:

"You do not look well. You should not have come out to-day."

"I had something very important to communicate to you," he answered, drawing so closely to her that she alone could hear his faint whisper.

"What has happened now? Anything unpleasant?" she answered, with an air of annoyance.

"No, sweetheart; not precisely disagreeable."

And with his head bowed down, as if absorbed in his devotions, he related to her in clear and brief terms the proposition and letter he had received, suppressing only—and why he could not have told—the name of his correspondent.

This, Lydie did not ask. She listened in silence, not without emotion; but of what nature was this emotion? She did not herself know; and when he had told his story and relapsed into silence, she did not speak.

"Well!" said Boris, in astonishment; "have you nothing to say?"

"What have you decided?"

"On nothing as yet. I await your reply, and will, of course, do precisely as you wish. If you say 'remain,' I remain."

"Without a pang?" said Lydie, much touched.

"Without a pang, since I am fulfilling your wishes. You know that I live only for you!"

Lydie pressed the hand which held her own. The invisible choir uttered at intervals the responses, which swelled to the dome far above their heads. Boris, with bowed head, listened for the words which would decide his destiny.

"Why should you not go?" she said, at last, with a strange mixture in her voice of shame and sorrow. "Here you can find nothing to do. You had best go!"

"And this is your advice?" murmured Boris, with a sinking heart.

He had hoped that she would tell him to remain.

"Yes, go; it will be best."

He looked at her earnestly, hoping to discover some hesitation and tenderness in her lovely face; but the flickering flame threw it alternately into light and shadow, and made it impossible for him to snatch any definite expression.

"Would you wish to be all that time without seeing me? Can you be happy away from me?"

The girl's hand trembled in his. "Good Lord, have pity upon us," sang the choir, in a minor key, only to be caught up and repeated in a clear, ringing voice that rang above them like a lark in the morning sky. The cry re-echoed among the pillars and arches, and seemed as if

an angel's heart was breaking with grief up among the stars.

Boris repeated, "You wish me to go away then?"

"Yes," she said, with irrepressible impatience.

"Lydie, do you realize what you say? It will be two years, probably three, that will elapse without our meeting in that case?"

He still hoped that she would object to his going.

"It will be best!" she repeated, half sullenly.

He fell on his knees in front of her, as if in prayer, and pressed his burning lips on her hand, on which fell at the same time more than one hot tear. She too wept under her veil. What woman could have been unmoved by such despair?

She leaned over him. "Rise," she said, "we are remarked."

He obeyed, and his features assumed the rigidity of marble.

"You desire it, Lydie? Very well, it shall be as you will. I thank you. You are more courageous than I. I should never have been able to come to this decision. In two years and six months I will return. Then I shall be rich and famous. You will be my wife?"

Lydie bowed in assent.

"Speak! Say that you will be my wife!" he persisted, with feverish energy.

"Yes," she murmured, faintly.

A strange notion here entered the young man's mind. At this time he felt the need of some solemn promise, of an irrevocable oath, to inspire him with confidence.

"Before our Saviour," he said, pointing toward a marble image, which looked down upon them calmly, the world in one hand and the other uplifted in sign of command—"Before our Lord and Master, swear to be mine!"

"I cannot swear," said Lydie, in terror; "it is a great sin to swear—but I give you my promise."

"Then pray with me," he answered, in a fierce whisper, and taking her hand again, he led her to the image faintly lighted by a lamp and by two or three small candles. He held her hand tightly, and Lydie made no resistance, but was obliged to yield. They sank on their knees side by side. But Boris could not pray; he could only think of the girl at his side. She could not pray, either; she was frightened. It seemed to her that they were committing a sacrilege, and she asked herself if God would not punish her for what they were doing.

An old woman, carrying a very small candle as an offering to the image, said to them, in an entreating tone:

"A few pennies, for the love of Christ! May He bless your marriage."

Lydie rose hastily. Boris drew out a silver piece and gave it to the old woman, who turned away, overwhelming him with benedictions. The congregation began to disperse. Children's voices sang the last prayers of the mass, and Lydie whispered abruptly in her lover's ear:

"Adieu!"

"I must see you again," said Boris, resolutely. "I cannot say farewell in this way."

"But that is impossible! Where can I see you?"

"At my own rooms," he said, in the tones of a master.

"Come with Dounia. If you choose, she can remain in the room with you all the time. It is impossible for it to be known; but I must talk freely with you."

"You must not talk freely to me, if Dounia is to hear you; remember that," answered Lydie, with a little air of superiority. "And if she accompanies me, she will exercise too much power over me for evermore; I shall never be my own mistress again."

The maid, a few steps in the background, feigned to have seen nothing that had been going on.

Boris saw that Lydie was right in what she said, but her reasoning seemed none the less cold to him because he realized that it was in the main correct.

"Well, then," he said, after a few moments reflection, "where can I see you? Find a place yourself."

"When must you go?"

"A week from to-day, probably."

"Then on Saturday, at eleven o'clock, be here during mass. During the week there are few persons at that hour."

"Very well."

A sudden rush of people here separated them; he had no time for another word. He left the church hastily by a side door and presently saw Lydie a few steps in front of him. The careless grace of her movements had not changed. She moved slowly and languidly, evidently undisturbed by any new or violent emotion.

He followed her with his eyes as long as he could see her, and then returned to his lonely rooms, his heart full of indescribable sadness. He asked himself whence came

the strange impulse which had made him take the Blessed Image as the witness of his oath. Was it, that in the great emotions of life, one returns mechanically to one's childish recollections and habits?

While Lydie hurried toward her home, Dounia said to her:

"Monsieur Boris is going away, is he?"

"Yes."

"For long?"

"For two or three years."

"I am thankful to hear it, mademoiselle; for if he were not here, you would find a handsome husband, good and rich, ready waiting for you."

Lydie pretending not to hear this remark, made no answer.

CHAPTER XVI.

PREPARATIONS.

THAT same evening Grébof wrote to the Prince, and while awaiting his reply went to take leave of his mother. On his unexpected arrival the old lady was certain that something of importance was impending. It was useless for her son to employ any circuitous methods of conveying the information with which he had come laden.

"I understand, my son. You have come to tell me that you are going to leave me for some time. Otherwise you would never have waited until Christmas. Tell me, are you sure of doing well?"

His mother's calmness and quiet resignation lifted a great weight from her son's heart, who finally summoned courage to give her the details of the proposition which would change the whole tenor of his life. As he explained the new future which stretched indefinitely before him, he was amazed to find that his own heart grew lighter. A heavy burthen, unconsciously borne until then, seemed to have dropped from his shoulders. Life still meant labor, in his eyes; but this was labor of a different kind—agreeable to his intellectual tastes—and not the incessant, ever-recurring warfare of every-day life in pursuit of material needs.

Madame Grébof listened to him, and watched him with the keen eyes of maternal affection, following his discourse with all the concentration of mind of which she was capable. Astonished at her not interrupting him, Boris stopped in the midst of some gay phrase.

"You say nothing, dear mother."

"I am listening," she answered, "and calling upon my son the blessing of the Lord."

"You give your permission, then!" he exclaimed, snatching his mother's white and dimpled hand, and pressing it to his lips.

"If you feel that to go will make you happy," she replied, "what objection could I make? God will perhaps be good enough to let me live to welcome you back again."

Boris fell on his knees before her. The idea of losing this beloved mother had never yet come to disturb him; he had always had the vague thought and impression that they would together descend into the valley of years, and that when he himself was old and gray, that his mother with her white head would still occupy one side of the chimney. She would be very aged, of course, but she would be there, the incarnation of goodness on earth.

"Mother," he murmured, his heart filled with anguish, "mother, I will return to you. If you are ill, write to me, or tell the doctor to write, and I will come at once, I swear to you!"

"No, do not swear," said his pious mother, laying her hand gently on his lips. "The good Lord will punish

you if you break His commandments. You will try to come back, dear; say that, and I shall be satisfied."

"Yes, dear mother, I promise," he murmured in a low, broken voice. "Do you wish me to remain?"

"No, my son; go. After so many trials I should like to see my boy rich and happy."

She smiled, her eyes swimming in tears; and Boris smiled in return, without releasing the two hands, which he pressed at intervals to his lips.

"Then you go to-morrow?" said his mother, after a long silence.

"The day after to-morrow."

"Then to-morrow prayers shall be said in the church for a safe journey for you. When do you leave Moscow?"

"Saturday or Sunday."

"You will write to me?"

"Before I leave, and as soon as I arrive."

"That is well, and afterward you will write every week. Have you shirts enough?"

"I do not know. I suppose so."

"I have two or three pieces of fine linen. I kept them for your marriage." Boris started slightly; his mother glanced at him inquiringly, and then sighed. "I will set all my women to work, and before you go I will have at least a half dozen ready for you. Wait a moment."

She took her keys from a little basket which was always close at hand, and she went out of the room with a slow and languid step, "to look for something in her wardrobe," she said.

Boris sat motionless just where she left him. She went into her room and carefully closed the doors. He remained there alone for some time, thinking of his past, dreaming of his future. The window, fitted with a double sash, permitted him to see nothing—nothing save a vast horizon of snow, overhung by a pale gray sky; but this humble dwelling, bounded by this modest horizon, was very sweet and dear to him. His heart was filled with both sadness and hope, and, above all, with the tenderest love for that dear mother whom he was about to leave in solitude under the shadow of advancing years. He had his face in his hands.

A light noise aroused him from his sad thoughts. He started, fearing to be surprised by his mother. It was not she, however; it was Sonia, who stood on the threshold, looking at him with eyes full of tears. Boris had hardly seen her and had merely addressed a word or two to her as he entered the house. For two hours, crouched outside the door, she had waited for some greeting from her master. Not hearing a sound, she determined to enter the room; but her courage failed, and she dared not cross the threshold.

"Master, are you sad?" she said, in a low voice.

"It is nothing, little one," answered the young man, kindly. "How you have grown, my child!"

She had not grown, but her long skirts fell to the ankles, which were encased in gray woollen stockings, and her small feet in stout leather shoes. She followed her master's glance.

"You bade me wear shoes," she said, "and I wear

them. They cost a silver rouble, and I knit the stockings myself!"

"You have learned then to knit," Boris replied, pretending to be very much astonished.

"To be sure. I have learned many things. I have knit some stockings for you, too, master."

She drew from under her apron an enormous pair of gray stockings, and brought them to Boris, her face radiant with smiles and blushes, a look of triumph lurking in the corners of her mouth and under her downcast lids.

"That is extremely well done," said Boris, with the air of a connoisseur, "and they will keep me deliciously warm on my journey. I thank you."

"It is I who will keep your room in order, is it not, master?" she said, eagerly. "Shall you be here long?"

"Until the day after to-morrow only."

"Only until then! O master! now that I know how to sew and knit, and have learned many other things beside, why will you not take me to Moscow to wait on you there?"

"Not yet," answered the young man, with a smile and a sigh.

Madame Grébof's door opened softly. Sonia fled like a startled sparrow, and the old lady came in with two or three pieces of linen on her arm.

She had been weeping, but her face was now calm. Boris ran to relieve her from her burthen, and covered her cheeks with kisses. She put her arms around him; she uttered one sob, but quickly recovered herself, pushing her son aside with a sigh of resignation.

"It is the will of God," she said, drying her eyes with a corner of the linen. "But we must go to work. We have no time to lose. Tell me what you have and what you need. I have laid aside a couple of hundred roubles, and it shall not be said that my son reached the capital like a penniless orphan. Sit down, now, and make out the list."

CHAPTER XVII.

SONIA'S FAREWELL.

WHEN it came evening, and he entered the little room which he was not to see again for so long, Boris found Sonia awaiting him in the doorway.

"I came to take your coat to brush," she said, in an explanatory manner.

Boris mechanically handed her his overcoat, and then took his seat at the table, which as a boy he had disfigured with a penknife. The recollections of his childhood came to him by hundreds; everything in the house seemed to be interwoven with the past. Sonia pulled his sleeve.

"What do you want?" he said, arousing himself.

The child's eyes were dilated as in those dark days of her melancholy dependence; a look of mad fury distorted her face.

"I hear that you are going on a long journey, Boris Ivanovitch. Is it true?"

"Certainly, it is quite true," answered Boris, astonished at her quick, sharp way of speaking.

"You are going to run away with the young lady."

"What an idea! Indeed I am not. What put that into your head?"

"Then you do not love her any longer?"

"That, my child, does not concern you."

"And is it true that you will be away two years?"

"Yes, it is quite true."

"Will you not take me with you?"

"I cannot, my poor child," answered Boris, shrugging his shoulders. "It is quite out of the question. I do not even know myself where I am going. I am not free, Sonia," he added, noticing the bewildered look in the girl's face; "I must go where another man bids me go—a good man, to be sure, but he will control all my movements."

"You wish to go with him, though?"

"To be sure; that I may be able to work as much as I like!"

Sonia's head drooped; she reflected for a minute or two, but the problem offered was too difficult for her solution. She could not understand, and she returned to her first idea.

"Take me with you, master," she urged; "you promised never to abandon me!"

"I do not abandon you," answered Boris, somewhat impatiently. "I have placed you with my mother, and I do not think she will make you very miserable!"

"Oh, no! she is just like you!"

Boris laughed.

"But it is not the same thing," continued Sonia, with persistent obstinacy. "I love Varvara Pétrovna very much, but it is with you that I wish to go."

"But I cannot take you," answered Boris, with some severity; and, hopeless of making the little savage understand him, he added:

"Just see how small and thin you are! How could you wash the linen, carry water and wood up four flights

of stairs? You see it is impossible for you to be my servant yet a while."

Poor little Sonia, mortified and discouraged, cast a mournful glance at her slender self and her tiny hands. A long silence followed; Boris, much amused, watched her out of the corners of his eyes.

"And when I am big and strong, you will take me?"

"Certainly," answered the young man, with great gravity. "But you must learn how to wash and iron, cook, and mend the linen."

"I know how to do all that now," answered Sonia, raising her head proudly.

"And many other things, which I forget now," added Boris, at the end of his catalogue.

"But when I know how to do them all, you will take me?"

"You must, above all, learn to live in peace with the other servants," added the young man, reprovingly. "I am told that you are always quarrelling with some one. It is not sufficient to obey one's masters; you must live in peace with your companions."

Sonia said no more; she stood rolling the corner of her apron in her fingers. Without being aware of it, Boris had touched her on a most vulnerable point. The other servants in the house were continually telling the small, wild creature, that she could never be of any use to her master if she did not first learn to put up with the caprices of her equals.

"I will try to do as you say," she murmured, after a brief silence, "and when I have grown very gentle you will take me with you, will you not?"

"Yes! yes!" answered Boris, "now be off with you! It is late, and I am very tired. Good-night."

"Good-night, master!"

And, with many a childish sob, she softly shut the door upon her slender figure. Boris, absorbed in thought, did not hear the sound of her new shoes in the corridor. Without attaching any importance to this circumstance he was on the point of putting out the light, when he heard a sob just outside his door. He listened. The noise was regular. He opened the door cautiously. Prostrate on the floor, Sonia was weeping her little heart out.

"Will you go to bed?" he said, as he lifted her to her feet.

The child's strength was gone; and, as she leaned helplessly against him, she murmured:

"Ah, master, I love you so dearly! and it will be so long before I see you again!"

"I will come back," answered Boris, touched by all this love. "I will come back, and you will see me as much as you wish."

"If you would but promise to take me some day as your own servant."

"I will take you if you will become an obedient little girl—"

"I will do everything you tell me."

"Very well, then, go to bed at once, sleep well, and to-morrow morning at seven o'clock come and bring me a cup of milk warm from the cow, just as you used to do, you remember."

"Yes, master!" said the child, half comforted, and she disappeared in the darkness of the corridor.

The next day passed both quietly and slowly; and, on the third morning, when Boris opened his eyes, he could hardly tell whether it was a year or a day since his return to the country. He soon recalled the fact that he must be off in a few hours for Moscow, and he hurried through with his toilette. His mother presently appeared. She was calm but very sad. Her loving care had thought of everything, and many times, during his journey, did Boris have occasion to bless the hand which had anticipated his least want.

The tightly-packed valises were buckled at last. The village priest had come to share the traveller's last meal under the maternal roof, and to recite prayers for the safe return of a traveller; and in a few minutes the sledge, with its merry rattle of bells, drew up before the door. The time had come.

Madame Grébof held her son in her arms. The tears, which she could no longer restrain, now fell fast as she gave her boy her blessing. Her voice failed her. Boris caught only a low murmur, but he did not need to hear the words to understand their meaning: "Remember your mother," said those; "remember that for twenty-two years you have been her sole interest in life; that you have been her care and her joy; that she has had but one thought, one wish, and one aim, to make an honest, cultivated man of you. Remember, that she would give her very life to insure your happiness, but that she would wrap the winding-sheet about you with her own hands rather than see you smirched and stained by low associations or dishonesty."

Boris fully realized all this, and if he said nothing in his turn his reply was fully understood by the heart which beat so sadly against his own.

One word of adieu to the faithful old servants, and Sonia—where was she?

They looked for her in every direction, but failed to find her; Boris charged his mother with an affectionate message for the orphan, and then all of them—mistress and servants—well wrapped in furs, went out upon the balcony.

The snow was falling in large, soft flakes like swans' down upon the ground, which was already covered deeply by preceding storms. There was not a breath of wind; the sky was gray, and seemed hung lower than usual, while the silence was almost oppressive.

The villagers had all assembled to take leave of their young master. Boris looked among them anxiously, but there was no Sonia there. Somewhat disturbed by the strange absence of the child, he once more bade them take every care of her; and kissing his mother again and again, he took his seat in the sledge, and took off his hat in adieu to the loving crowd.

His mother raised her hands in benediction. The sledge started, driving slowly through the open gate, and then flew over the snow with the rapidity of the wind.

The church disappeared behind him; then, one after the other, all the white-roofed houses in the village; then came the huge gate, held open by the children for his sledge to pass through.

Boris sighed, and turned for one backward glance. The

fast falling snow shut out every glimpse of his mother's home. He only caught a glimpse of a gray mass, which faded away in another moment. But at the turn of the road, near a grove of firs, stood a small figure with its angles all rounded by the snow, with which it was half-covered.

It was Sonia, who made a sign to the coachman to stop. A little hood on her head, a thin jacket over her shoulders, and with a small bundle under her arm, she was waiting here for Boris.

"Sonia!" cried Boris, much pleased at seeing her, "I have been looking everywhere for you."

"Master! take me with you," said the child, in an agony of supplication. "I will be so good!" She fixed her large eyes on her master. "I will do all you tell me —I will quarrel with no one—I am already to go—take me with you!"

"I cannot, my child; you know I cannot. Go back to the house; it is growing very cold."

"Farewell, master!" she answered, in a heart-broken voice. "I will do all you have bidden."

"And then you shall go with me," answered Boris, gayly.

"You are in earnest?"

"Yes, in earnest; you shall go with me if you still wish it—that is," added the young man, who took it for granted that this notion would pass away with time.

The half-frozen hands of the little girl were clasped in those of Boris, who leaned over and kissed her hair, which was powdered with fine snow.

She drew back to allow the sledge to pass.

"Au revoir!" said Boris, looking back.

"God keep you!" was her reply.

The sledge went swiftly on, but until they reached a sharp turn, a mile or more away, Boris, looking back from time to time, could see that the child had not moved from the spot where he had left her.

When Boris was far on his road to Moscow, Sonia reached his mother's house again.

"Where on earth have you been?" cried Dâcha, when she saw her. "Everybody has been in search of you, and the master has gone without your having said good-bye to him."

"I have seen the master, and bidden him farewell," answered the child.

"How was that?"

"Down the road a bit."

"And why could you not have stayed here, and said good-bye to him in a Christian fashion?"

Sonia made no reply, but dropped her head and took up her work. Each of the servants, one after the other, reproached her in much the same terms, but she did not lose her temper.

"How queer she is!" said the laundress, her old enemy, at supper. "She, who always is as fierce as a little rooster and flies in your face at the smallest contradiction, is as mild as a lamb to-night."

Sonia did not speak; every eye was turned upon her.

"Why do you not get angry, as usual?" repeated the laundress.

"Because the master forbade it," answered the child.

From this time forth no amount of teasing would disturb her resolute silence; and, as in that blessed household there was no one maliciously disposed, peace soon reigned around Madame Grébof's sad and patient grief.

On reaching Moscow on Wednesday evening, Boris found the reply of the Prince awaiting him. He was expected at once, he learned, at St. Petersburg. He must therefore start at once—the next day—if possible. The letter contained a check for a considerable amount "to cover the expenses of moving and travelling," said Armianof.

After having spent a part of the night in putting his papers in order, Boris, toward morning, ventured to take a little rest. At ten o'clock he went out, bought at a jeweller's two plain gold rings, and then went on to *L'Eglise du Bien Heureux-Vassili*, where Lydie had promised to meet him on that day.

His heart beat fast when he entered the doors; did this moment precede a long or final separation? Were he and Lydie never to meet again? He said to himself with utter incredulity that this was not possible, for the mind refuses sometimes to admit certain things, even when the evidence is clear and distinct.

Besides, the ring which he intended to place on Lydie's hand would be in itself a tie between them. Would she not see it constantly, and would it not always speak to her of her fiancé?

CHAPTER XVIII.

A RAILWAY STATION.

MORNING prayers were over, and Lydie had not appeared. Devoured by impatience, Boris went out two or three times to inspect the square. He looked through the church, too, and examined the most obscure corners, but she was not there.

The choristers went out, and then the priests; then, by degrees, the last loiterers disappeared, and finally the beadle put out the candles, leaving in the church only those lights which were always kept burning over each Image.

Boris left the church slowly, his heart sore with bitterness and suspense.

"Has she been surprised, and prevented from going out? Is she ill?"

Such had been his fears, one succeeding the other; then came the thought that the loss of this interview was irreparable, and that he must leave Moscow without seeing Lydie. He said then that she might have written; that the letter was probably waiting for him then, and he hastened to his rooms.

Their aspect was most dismal, as is always the case when people are about going off. The furniture was displaced; books were scattered here and there; a coat lay on a chair —a cup of tea on the table—papers on the floor; in fact, the room was so unutterably dreary, that he felt as if a

corpse was to be carried away, and that this corpse was himself, wrapped in his despair as in a winding-sheet.

He questioned the woman who waited on him—then the concierge; but no one had been there, and no note had been sent, or, at all events, received.

Boris seated himself on a valise, put his head in his hands, and prayed for strength and patience.

"I must make another effort," he said, at last. "I will walk past her house, until I see some sign of her, and I am sure that she will find some way of sending me a word."

He was dressing when the postman came. Boris almost snatched the letter he extended; and shutting himself in his room, tore open the envelope, and read the following letter in much agitation. The letter was dated the night before. Lydie wrote:

"DEAR BORIS:—I am going to a ball. I shall not return until four or five o'clock in the morning, and, of course, you will admit that under such circumstances I cannot rise early enough to go to church; besides, I am really very tired after a ball, and this fact is so well known that every one would notice it, if I should go out at an early hour. I cannot, therefore, say adieu to you—I can only write it, which makes me very unhappy. I wish you a pleasant journey, and much happiness!"

At this point, the young girl had evidently stopped to reflect, for a large space separated these words from the following lines. She continued:

"My dear Boris, I hope that you will succeed in all

your undertakings, and that you will be very happy. I shall remember all my life long the happy days we passed together in the country, and I beg you not to forget me when you are so far away. Write me all that you do, and think of— "LYDIE."

This letter fell from the hands of the young man, and fluttering to the floor, lay there unheeded.

"And she went to the ball! I shall never see her again!" he murmured, and his heart grew cold and hard as marble. "She was calmly sleeping, while I, consumed with impatience and longing, awaited her coming. She loves me no longer!"

He walked up and down the room, taking no heed where his feet fell, stumbling over any obstacles which lay in his way, and really hurting himself against the angles of the furniture, while his hands were half-benumbed by the violence of the blows he had thus received.

He was insensible to pain—or it is quite possible that physical pain was acceptable to him as a distraction to his thoughts, which persistently dwelt on his anguish and disappointment.

"Ah! well, I must go!" he said, aloud. He looked at his watch; he was too late for that train. "I will wait until to-morrow, and, in the meantime, will move heaven and earth to see her!"

He put his room slightly in order, summoned the proprietor, and told him that he should remain another night in Moscow, and then went out, resolved not to return until he had seen Lydie, or was certain of seeing her.

Night comes on early in the month of December. A dense, cold fog wrapped the city roundabout. The lamplighters were slowly going their rounds, and by degrees the mass of fog was broken by shining points. Boris pulled up the collar of his overcoat, pressed his fur cap down over his eyes, and took up a position before the house where Lydie resided.

An hour, then two hours elapsed without his seeing that Fortune was disposed to aid him in any way. It was the dinner hour on each one of the different floors. Boris was not conscious that he had eaten nothing since early morning—indeed, he was conscious of nothing. He stood with his eyes fixed on the porte cochère, expressing—he hardly knew what.

After a long time, he finally saw Dounia coming out—Dounia was Lydie's maid. She looked very important, and hurried past, as if overwhelmed with business. He took her by the arm so abruptly that she uttered a little shriek.

"Be quiet!" he said; "it is I—Grébof! What is your mistress doing?"

"She is going to a soirée, and I am sent for her pelerine, that the laundress has not brought home. I have no time to waste in talking," added the soubrette, saucily, as she shook off Grébof's hand.

"I must see your mistress—I will see her, do you understand?" and the young man took advantage of a street-lamp to put into her hand a pink ten rouble note.

Dounia took the note with a cursory "thank you," and still continuing her way, decided to aid the young man if she could.

"When do you go?" she asked.

"To-morrow, by the express."

"Then we will go to the train, and say good-bye to you there," said the ingenious Dounia, her intellect quickened by the sight of the pink note. "There is such a crowd in the waiting-room, that you will not be noticed."

"Very well!" answered Boris, with sudden calmness; "but I warn you, if you are not there, that I shall not go, but will remain until I see your mistress; for I will not leave Moscow until I do, if I am compelled to find her in her parents' house by the full light of day! How is she?"

"Ah, monsieur, she has had a frightful headache all day long," said Dounia, in her wheedling voice. "Last night they dragged her to the ball. She has cried all the time, when her parents could not see her. She is miserable because you are going!"

The ice around the young man's heart seemed to crack at these words.

"She has cried all the time?" he repeated, slowly.

"All day long, sir. This is where the laundress lives. Come to the station early, sir; we will be there an hour before the train leaves. Good-night, sir!"

She disappeared in a house, and Boris, his heart buoyant with hope, but with an occasional pang of remorse at what he called his injustice toward her, returned to his rooms, called for a cutlet, and eat it moreover with a hearty appetite, and then going to bed, slept soundly for twelve hours. And Dounia, while she dressed the hair of her young mistress, told her all that had taken place, with the exception of the ten roubles, be it understood, and insisted on

the accomplishment of the promise she had made for the next day.

"Why did you promise it?" said Lydie, with a blush. "It was you who advised me only yesterday not to see Boris Ivanovitch again, and now, to-night, you arrange an interview with him."

"But, mademoiselle," replied the astute soubrette, "he declares that he will not leave Moscow until he has seen you; that he will even come here in broad daylight. With such a madman as that, you must yield something in order to keep the peace."

"How he loves me!" said Lydie, thoughtfully.

The breezy shadows of the country came back to her memory, and with that the recollection of the passionate adoration and kisses of her lover.

"Yes, and to reward him, do what he asks," interposed Dounia, with a coarse laugh, as she placed the last rose-bud in the girl's hair.

Lydie was silent for a moment.

"We are not doing right!" she said at last. "We are deceiving him, and if he should discover the truth—"

"But he is going away, mademoiselle; and how can he learn anything then that is going on here? You know very well, miss, that this Monsieur Boris is no match for you, with his years of waiting! The idea of a pretty young lady like you losing two or three years, dancing attendance on a poor Tutor, when she could marry to-morrow a rich young man, good-looking, too."

"But I ought not to have said that I would wait for him!" exclaimed Lydie, with a last pang of an expiring conscience.

"Tell him then at once that you love him no longer, and that you are about to marry some one else. If you only have the courage to say this frankly to him, you will get rid of him at once; only in his rage he is quite capable of killing you. If you knew how he hurt me when he took hold of me in the street; I declare my arm is perfectly black!"

Lydie continued to roll the ends of her ribbons between her undecided fingers.

"You need not, to be sure, say this all to him. You can treat him kindly and get him off quietly," said Dounia, insinuatingly; "and after a while you can gradually cease to answer his letters; and in short, there are a thousand ways of making him understand that you do not wish to have anything more to do with him. Come, mademoiselle, put on your fichû, and hurry, for your mamma is quite ready. Now, pray, do not cry; your eyes will be red."

"But, Dounia, he will be so unhappy," said Lydie, hesitatingly; "he loves me so dearly, and yet I am going to give him up!"

"Do you wish to marry him then? Will you run away with him without trousseau or fortune, and with your parents' curses? Where could you live?—in his hovel among the wolves at Grébova? Write a line to him, and tell him this, and he will come at once and carry you off, and you will have the rest of your life to gnaw your fingers and repent. You do not care to do this! What a pity!" and the soubrette shrugged her shoulders with a contemptuous laugh.

"You make me very angry, Dounia; you have no right to say such things!" sobbed Lydie, crushing her handkerchief in her trembling hands.

"I tell you to do just as you choose with him. The more you hoodwink him now the better, as he will then go off without making a scene. You are very good to worry over him, upon my word! You are going to give him up, you say? Very well; just wait until he has been three months in St. Petersburg, and then see if he troubles himself much about you! It is you who will be given up if you pride yourself on your constancy. Did ever any man know how to be faithful? I know something about them, mademoiselle; for I had a fiancé, a well-to-do peddler. We were engaged; he went off on an expedition about the country; our marriage was to take place on his return. He came back, of course? By no means! He married the daughter of a churchwarden way down in the country. All men are the same. If you are willing to bide their time, they just throw you over. You will see!"

At this suggestion of desertion on the part of her lover, Lydie's eyes flashed with anger.

"You are right!" she exclaimed. "Besides, we must not run any risk of a scene. It is so stupid to feel all the time afraid of being suspected, or caught, and reported to mamma. Give me my fan; I hear my father calling."

And she went down-stairs with that slow, queenly grace, which was natural to her.

The next day Grébof was at the station long before the hour for the departure of the train. He was, however, by no means alone in his promptitude; for in Russia it seems

to be the custom for every one to wait at least a half-hour for the opening of the gates at the station.

By degrees the waiting-room became crowded with travellers laden with bags and shawls, and accompanied by parents and friends. The bright sunshine, and the day—Sunday—favoring the pleasant custom of seeing one's friends fairly off, the common people at leisure on Sunday came too, to watch the departure of the train.

All these people came and went, talking and laughing gayly. Servants with three rows of red galloon on their sleeves hustled the crowd to take room for Madame La Générale Something, and huge dogs followed their masters in a tranquil, dignified fashion, replying with superb disdain to all advances made by strangers.

Boris had disposed of his luggage and small effects, and engaged a seat on the train, and then came back to the waiting-room, expecting to find Lydie there. His blood was boiling with grief or anger, he hardly knew which. The first stroke of the clock was heard.

"She will not come; I ought to have known it!" he said, with a return of that bitter scorn and indignation which he had felt the evening before. Suddenly the tension of his nerves relaxed. The pressure on his brain and heart was lifted; for Lydie—her face set like a picture in her rose-colored bonnet—was slowly coming toward him. She was looking about with an anxious air, contracting her delicate brow with a slight frown, occasioned by her being a trifle near-sighted. She was prettier than ever, Boris thought.

Breaking the charm he hurried forward, and with an

air and manner which he sought to make indifferent, he greeted her with a ceremonious bow as she passed him. Then, preceding her, he guided her to an obscure corner which he had previously selected for their interview.

"Why are you so late? The second bell will ring in one moment. We have a scant five minutes," he said, as soon as they could speak to each other.

"I could not get away earlier!" she answered, in evident annoyance: "was it to quarrel with me that you sent for me?"

"Lydie, my child! the moments are very precious: we must not lose them. Listen to me: I am going away; my absence will be very long; answer me frankly: will you have the courage and strength to wait for me?"

The young girl's face was covered with vivid blushes. Dounia standing well behind Boris, gave a little decided nod, and the young girl replied:

"Yes, I will wait for you!"

"You have thought seriously on this point?"

She made a sign of assent.

"Very well, then! This is our engagement ring. From this moment you are my wife," said Boris, taking her hand to place the ring upon it; but the hand was gloved, and the ring would not go on. Somewhat disturbed, Lydie took it in her other hand. Her lover's face was dark, but the girl's smile reassured him.

"Remove your glove," he said.

With evident reluctance she obeyed him, but took off her left glove, not her right.

The bell rang. Boris had but a moment more. He

placed one of the rings on the hand she extended, and the other upon his own finger.

"You are my wife," he said, "in the sight of God, and I love you with my whole heart and soul. If ever I betray you, may Heaven punish me."

The station-master hurried through the rooms ringing his bell. The lovers were alone for a moment, for tardy travellers rushing past paid no heed to them.

"You hear, Lydie! may heaven punish me, if I betray you. The day after to-morrow you will receive a letter from me."

"You will lose the train," interposed Dounia, officiously.

"I love you," continued the young man, unheeding this remonstrance; his voice trembled and his eyes were full of tenderness. "Lydie, you are my one hope, and the one object of my life. Remember this!"

"Ring the last bell!" called the station-master from without.

Boris bent over Lydie, pressed a rapid kiss on her lips, pressed her slender fingers once more, and jumped into the first car, to the great displeasure of the conductor; at the same moment the locomotive uttered a shrill whistle.

"Just suppose he had missed the train!" muttered Dounia to her young mistress, who stood sad and pensive.

The doors of the station were closed; parents and friends had taken their departure, some with sad and hopeless faces, others gay and laughing, talking on indifferent subjects; the two young women went with the current.

Suddenly Lydie looked at the ring which Boris had placed on her finger. Impulsively, and as if in spite of herself,

she pressed it to her lips, then passed her handkerchief slowly over her eyes. Her childish lips with difficulty closed over her sobs. She dropped her veil and quickened her steps.

"What a singular idea for him to give you a ring," said Dounia, suddenly. "Fortunately he placed it on your left hand and that amounts to nothing, you know!"

Lydie made no reply, other than to press the ring a second time to her lips.

"Take care that your mamma does not see it!" continued Dounia.

In silence the young girl drew off her ring, not without great difficulty, and tied it carefully in the corner of her handkerchief.

"You must not cry, mademoiselle, or you will ruin your complexion. You ought to be as gay as a lark, now that you are free again."

"What would you have?" answered Lydie, dashing away her tears. "He is gone; I shall never see him again, and yet I shall never love any other man as I have loved him!"

By this time Boris had reached his seat, having struggled through the American car, which is always placed on the train between Moscow and St. Petersburg, and with his head buried in his hands he was thinking of all that he was leaving: his mother, his home, his youth, Lydie and his love. It seemed to him vaguely, that he had set himself adrift and apart from all these, and at this idea his heart contracted as with physical pain.

CHAPTER XIX.

LETTERS! AND NO LETTERS!

THE first few months were simply terrible for Boris. He was home-sick in St. Petersburg; he longed with a passionate longing not only for his home but for the dear ones whom he had left.

His mother's letters were weekly, while Lydie's, which were much rarer, were also much shorter. These letters had the effect of increasing his longing for home and home scenes.

His work was nevertheless very attractive and his patron was the best of men, but the young man was for the time being totally beyond the reach of reason and common sense.

When the day of their departure for foreign lands was definitively fixed, Boris experienced a new pang. Was it not quite enough for fate to compel him to live apart from his mistress without increasing the distance to this frightful degree? And yet what could he do? Lydie had advised him to take the position; his mother had consented, and—Here an idea occurred to him: if he should ask for three days' leave he could rush home and kiss his mother and see Lydie for a moment. He would write and ask her, and almost instantly he despatched a letter, and by return mail received the following:

"DEAR BORIS:—Do not come! We leave to-morrow to visit one of my aunts who is very ill. I do not know how long we shall be away—all summer possibly; and it is equally possible that it may be only for a few days. We shall not take Dounia with us; she has found another place. I do not know at present what arrangement I can make in regard to your letters. Write me, however, to the post-office at ——, 'to be kept till called for.' I shall find some way of getting your letters when I return. Send me your address, so that I may be able to write to you. Do not forget me. Your faithful

"LYDIE."

Boris was not altogether content with this letter—and yet what could he ask more? He knew very well that Mademoiselle Goréline was by no means mistress of her actions, and she had promised to write to him—and yet the young man's heart ached, as he thought that she might be for two or three months without any intelligence of him. "She will not be troubled much by that, I fancy," he muttered to himself, with a bitter smile.

As they left St. Petersburg, a letter from his mother was handed to him.

"I send you my blessing," wrote the poor mother, on paper blurred and spotted with tears. "May God watch over you in your journeying, my beloved son, and bring you home to me in health and strength. Prayers are nightly said for you under my roof; and the other evening Sonia burst into such a passion of tears, that we made her drink a glass of water before she was calmer. She wishes

me to tell you that she has fought and quarrelled with no one since your departure—'not even with the dog,' she adds. She is here at my side watching me as I write. We often talk of you, we two; and we will try to have patience. Be happy, my son, and think every morning when you open your eyes, that your mother is praying for you!"

Boris departed; and the months slipped away. Vainly did he look for a letter from Lydie. "Nothing," he said to himself, "was easier than to drop a letter into the box." And he had taken pains to tell her to add to the address of all the letters she wrote him, "to be called for." But this did not seem to have influenced the actions of his betrothed. He wrote once each week. His letters were filled with reproaches, tenderness and hopes; but the letters remained unanswered. He was in slow torture, and believed that Lydie was sick or dying—dead perhaps. He never thought of her being untrue to him. At the end of the fourth month, he received the long expected letter; and hurried to his room to read it undisturbed. Lydie wrote:

"Dear Boris:—Dounia came to see me immediately on my return from the country; I implored her so vehemently to go for my letters, that she finally consented. She desires to return to us, as the place she now has does not please; consequently she did not dare refuse my request. I have read all you have written, dear Boris, and I thank you for thinking so much of me. But you must not write so often. The clerk who gave Dounia the package laughed, and said to her: 'The young man who is courting your mistress doesn't lose any time.'

"It is only a clerk, to be sure, who said this, but it is disagreeable all the same; and I am horribly afraid that in some way my mother may hear of it. If you write once a month it will be as often as you ought. I do not know, however, how I can procure even that one letter, for my mother will not take Dounia back; she says that 'the woman is excessively coarse'—consequently I shall have no one on whom I can rely. Adieu! dear Boris; I will write as often as I can. Love me always, and think of— "LYDIE."

Boris threw himself into an arm-chair; tears of utter discouragement filled his eyes. After a silence of four months, and a separation of ten, this was all she could find to say to him. In a furious state of excitement he paced up and down the room, but by degrees his anger abated. Lydie, to be sure, was by no means eloquent. She had never had much to say during their interviews. Her frivolous education had not taught her the art of clothing her thoughts in words. She assured Boris of her tenderness—what more was necessary?

Boris went at once to his desk and wrote a letter of gratitude, accompanied by protestations of fidelity. This letter was mailed, and six months elapsed without a reply.

He begged and implored Lydie to send him a line; he even threatened her with an appeal to her father; then he softened, and returned to entreaties once more; but all to no purpose. In a state of utter exasperation, he at last put a definite question:

"Do you love me?" he wrote, "or do you not? If

our engagement is irksome to you—if some other person has stolen your heart from me—at least tell me so frankly. I love you enough to relinquish you. But so long as you refrain from saying in just so many words that you will have nothing more to do with me, just so long will I regard you as my fiancée, and feel that I have a right to pursue you with my letters."

When Lydie received this ultimatum, she had just been mortified by a checkmate she had received in a quarter where it was least expected. An officer of the Guard, after having lavished the most marked attentions upon her for six weeks, suddenly departed to join his regiment, leaving only a series of vague and insufficient excuses as an adieu for Lydie.

Almost at the same time a journal at Moscow published a note from the Savant with whom Boris was associated. This note heralded the discovery of some documents of the greatest importance. "A discovery due," he said, "in a very great degree, to the researches of a young man, of very great talent, Monsieur Grébof, who, if he goes on as he has begun, will before long make a name for himself in the scientific world."

Lydie was tired of Boris; but she wished to keep him on her line, lest some bigger fish should be unattainable. She therefore read his letter over and over again, and finally had a marvellous inspiration.

"When a woman loves," she wrote, "she does not consider it necessary to say so over and over again. Your suspicions are cruel, and wound me horribly. If you have any confidence in me, you will be willing to wait for

me without disturbing me with doubts and fears. I shall write no more: it is too dangerous. We will see when you return if it is I who has been faithless."

Boris replied by a torrent of oaths and reproaches, which filled sixteen pages or more, but Lydie was firm and made no answer.

By this skilful manœuvre she still bound Boris, but had liberated herself—in a somewhat Jesuitical fashion, it must be admitted; but as the proverb says, to make an omelette, one must break eggs.

Boris suffered acutely; he never thought of his past happiness without a pang; he was angry with himself, and angry with Lydie. The Savant saw the young man's unhappiness, and one evening laid his hand on his shoulder, with these words:

"My young friend, you are not seeking peace where only it is to be found. I know not the cause of your sufferings, but that they exist is clear to me. Accustom yourself to the inevitable and irretrievable, and find in study, higher and purer consolation than in simple daily distractions."

Boris profited by this advice, and by degrees his sorrow slept. "If she has deceived me," he said, "I will be true to her—I will wait until I can see her face to face; and if she has been true to me—"

At the thought of this possible joy his heart swelled; but he rarely allowed himself to dwell on this idea, but devoted his life to austere toil.

The blind faith of our hero may seem strange to our French readers, but it must be remembered that Russia

lies very near Germany and Sweden, and that these two countries divide with England the reputation of fidelity and long suffering. It is by no means rare in these lands for engagements of eight and ten years to exist between young people. French people—whom Russians call frivolous—laugh at this, and Boris, you understand, was neither better nor more foolish than many others around him. Besides, he had given himself up to study; and study is a jealous mistress.

In the society of the kind, good man with whom he resided, while deciphering those long manuscripts night after night, he learned to place their real value on the pleasures gained from long and persistent work. He visited all the places that had any scientific interest, and became familiar with the most secluded corners of the libraries, and acquired an immense amount of materials for future use, and got his mind into excellent working order.

His mother's letters, always calm and resigned, conveyed to him without his knowledge the highest moral lessons. This woman, who had always lived for him, whose sole dream of happiness had been for years that she should grow old at his side, was now alone—afar off—and with failing health; she was gathering together, by dint of incessant self-sacrifice, a little money for the return of her dear child; she occupied her sad leisure in superintending the weaving of linen for his future home; and never one complaint nor one regret could be perceived in the serene melancholy of her long letters. Duty sent Boris away from her. He would become a noble, useful man.

In this thought she found tranquillity—her generous heart accepted the separation as best for her boy, and she knew no other law.

One Christmas eve—it was two years since Boris had left her—Madame Grébof felt very lonely. The snow that year had fallen so abundantly that the little house was half buried. Outside all was calm and quiet. The widow went to the window, and lifting the curtain looked out. Her thoughts flew far beyond the low sky, which looked almost black against the wide-spreading sheet of snow. She thought of her son.

"With whom," she said, "is he to-night? At whose side is he spending his Christmas eve—is it with a man or a woman? He is just of the age to fall in love. What woman will he marry? Will she be beautiful? Will she be good?"

And thinking of her future daughter-in-law, Madame Grébof dropped the curtain and sighed. Another sigh echoed hers; she turned and saw Sonia, who, wearing new shoes in honor of the season, came in softly with the samovar.

The copper boiler shone like the sun, through the clouds of steam which came up from the apertures in the top. Madame Grébof's cup was on the tray standing opposite the cream jug; rolls of a golden brown were temptingly displayed in a basket upon a white napkin.

"How prettily you have arranged everything!" said Madame Grébof, kindly.

Sonia's eyes sparkled with pleasure. The mother thought of her son and his solitary repast, and sighed deeply.

"Yes, mistress," answered Sonia, replying to the secret thoughts of her benefactress. "If we only knew that the master was well served, it would be a great comfort."

Astonished at the accuracy of the girl's perceptions, Madame Grébof smiled kindly upon her.

"Who told you that I was thinking of my son?" she said.

"Ah! madame," replied the child, "are we not both of us always thinking of him? What should we think of—good heavens! if not of the master!"

Madame Grébof poured out a cup of tea in silence. The words represented her own thoughts too nearly to require any response. Sonia, standing behind her, served her in silence, anticipating every wish.

"As you love your master so much," said the lady, in a few moments, "go get another cup, and take your tea with me."

Radiant with joy, Sonia ran for a cup, took the tea from Madame Grébof, whose hand she kissed, and then seated herself on the edge of a chair. What an honor! to take tea with her mistress. For the hundredth time the old lady made Sonia tell the tale of how she was snatched from the barbarous hands of Madame Goréline; and more than one tear fell from the eyes of both as they expatiated on the virtues of the absent one.

The term for which Boris had made his engagement had elapsed, but neither he nor his employer thought of making any change. Keen as was the desire of the young man to return to his native country, he realized that it would be the height of folly to precipitate matters; and

that he must profit to the fullest possible extent from the wonderfully favorable position in which he now found himself for the prosecution of his literary labors, and the cultivation of his literary tastes.

Three years glided away, when their researches came to an end; they returned to St. Petersburg, but the labors of Boris were by no means over. Now came the task of comparing the results recently obtained with the documents already completed; and neither of the two could work without the other.

They had been but two days in Russia when Boris received a letter from the priest of his village.

"Your mother is very ill," he wrote; "for some days, she has been unable to leave her bed. If you can do so, I advise you to come at once."

At the reception of this intelligence, Boris hurried to the savant's room; he was out. But as he was friend rather than employer, Boris gave himself no anxiety, but laid the letter open on the desk, and went to pack his trunk.

Some few hours after, the savant entered the young man's chamber.

"You are going," he said. "That is well. I came to say that you were entirely at liberty. If you wish to return to me, I shall be only too happy, for your companionship has become very precious to me; and this house will be dreary without you. Should you prefer to remain in Moscow, and to reside there independently, I shall take it upon myself to find for you an honorable position, and such an one as will permit you to continue our beloved studies.

"And, finally, if you wish for anything wherein I can aid you, tell me so now and always; and anything I can do I shall look upon as done merely in part discharge of my great debt to you."

Boris pressed the hand of this real friend in silence. Then he wrote a hasty note to Armianof; and that same night left for Grébova.

How little like the same journey of three years previous! Now he was also sad and anxious; but his anxiety was of a very different nature. His future was assured. The path before him was straightforward and honorable; he was free to live as he pleased; but he thought little of Lydie. He was absorbed by his mother, by the remembrance of her love for him, of her suffering, caused perhaps by his long absence. Moscow first, then a series of post-stations. The towering monasteries—seen as if in a dream—so quickly did the small, sturdy horses bear him on, through a cold, fine rain. It was autumn; the sad autumnal season of Russia, with its dreary fogs and sunless days. Yellowing leaves fell from the trees along the road, and the monotonous groups of fir-trees stood erect, spectre-like, seen through the mist.

At last! The beloved home of his childhood stood before him. The garden was blackened by frost. The dahlias drooped their heads with a mournful, desolate look; their long petals curling close against their dull, green stalks.

Some one was waiting for him at the summer-house. An expectant ear had heard the distant sound of his bells; and the slender figure of a child with garments fluttering in the wind was defined against the sombre sky.

It was Sonia, who ran to meet him, and saluted him with a "Good-evening, master!" as she kissed his hand, with eyes shining with happiness. For a moment, she had forgotten that her friend and benefactress lay without strength, and almost without breath, in a neighboring room. She has forgotten that the son was to hear the saddest intelligence of his mother.

Had he not come, the master, bringing back the sunlight and joy that had disappeared with him that snowy day so long ago!

"How is my mother?" asked Boris, of the servants who crowded around him.

"She is living, master, thanks be to God!" answered the old cook, joyously, as she took his drenched cloak from his shoulders.

She was living. He was not too late, then! He hurried into the house; but, with his hand on her door, he hesitated. Whom was he about to see? His dearly-beloved mother, or a faint worn shadow of what she had formerly been?

"Come in," whispered the nurse. "Madame knows that you have come; she has been talking of you all night."

Boris crossed the threshold; it was no shadow who greeted him. It was the pretty mother, whose every feature was dear to him. She extended her burning hands, and her voice, broken by sobs of joy, called him by his name.

"Boris, my son! At last you have come!"

He fell on his knees, and buried his face in the hands

of this weeping mother, who turned her grateful eyes on the Virgin who looked serenely down from her shrine above their heads. The servants assembled in the doorway dried their eyes and made the sign of the cross.

"Mother!" said Boris, as soon as he could speak, "why did you conceal your illness from me?"

"I did not conceal it, my son," answered Madame Grébof, passing her hand over her son's hair; "it seems now that I have been ill some time; but I did not know it. But you are here, I shall be well again, as you will see. This very day I intend to leave my bed; and we will dine together at this little table, just as we did when you were a boy and were recovering from scarlatina. How long will you stay?"

"As long as you wish, sweet mother."

She did indeed rise, and seemed to be very much better. Boris, with his broad shoulders, superb blond beard and manly stride, was a perpetual wonder and joy to her.

"You tell me that you have no anxiety in regard to your future—that it is well assured?" she repeated from time to time.

And at the satisfactory reply of her son, she clasped her hands in triumph and thanksgiving.

"Come and kiss me," she said, tenderly.

And each day she grew stronger. In the old house by the river there was one other heart as light as her own, and that was Sonia's.

The wild child, with her half-savage, half-gypsy nature, had subsided into a grave, quiet young girl, with a steady manner, saying little, laughing less, and doing a host of

things with unexampled dexterity. She had not grown beautiful. Quite the contrary; her bones were too prominent. She had grown, too—not to any very great degree, but she seemed to have been elongated, stretched as it were, so that she looked taller than she really was.

She did not look like a woman; and yet she was womanly. At first sight it was difficult to fix her age: she might be twelve or fourteen. Her mouth was dainty; her teeth were superb, when her rare smile permitted them to be seen; and her gray eyes, fringed with brown lashes, were full of tender gratitude when they fixed themselves on either her mistress or young son.

She was indeed happy. Her master was there, and made no allusion to going away. Old Dâcha, devoting herself exclusively to her aged mistress, allowed the girl to do as she pleased in her master's room; while he openly expressed his preference for the linen she ironed for him. What more could she ask?

One evening Madame Grébof complained of great fatigue and went early to bed; Boris, after having read to her a while, relapsed into silence and watched Sonia, who had taken Dâcha's place, she being also indisposed. The young girl moved as noiselessly as a shadow about the room. When she completed her arrangements and the door closed upon her, Madame Grébof said to her son:

"That girl is no ordinary creature. Have you her papers, and do you know all about her?"

"Yes, the Général sent me the papers, and I arranged everything three years ago, before I left home."

"Do you understand, Boris, that that child has been the

greatest possible comfort to me? Every day we have talked of you. She adores you, and I think that many a time she has prevented me from weeping by telling me how good you were to her. We must try to make her happy. She had more than her share of misery before she came to us."

"Why should she not be happy?" asked her son, with a smile; "it seems to me that with you she has nothing to fear!"

"No, not now; but when I have gone to join your father—" she was interrupted by a gesture from Boris. "Ah! my son, you must think sometimes of the days when I shall be no more—for those cannot be very far off—then this child cannot remain here. What will you do with her? You must try and place her in some good family. If you should marry—" she hesitated and looked at her son with questioning eyes, and as he did not answer, she continued, half sadly, "if you should marry, it would be all right—then you could take her into your service; she would take the best of care of your children."

Boris was still silent.

"Have you no thought of marrying?" asked his mother, timidly.

"I do not know; we will see!"

"When you marry, Boris, choose a good woman, who has a generous heart and who loves you, for that is of the first importance. If I was happy with your dead father, it was because he was the best of men; and you are very like him," she added, thoughtfully. "May you be happy!"

"I shall certainly try to be!" said Boris, gayly.

"And do not forget this child; she is a swallow whom God has sent to our chimney-corner to bring us happiness; for it was with her that your prosperity came. We must not be guilty of ingratitude towards Providence!"

Boris smiled as he kissed the caressing hand, laid so tenderly on his arm.

"Be at peace, mother, dear! I will take care of your swallow," he answered, cheerfully. "But for many a long day to come she will be your charge!"

Madame Grébof shook her head gently, and in a moment more fell asleep with her hand still on her son's arm. For a week or more she had fallen asleep in this way at any hour.

The next day, while reading to her from her favorite book, "The Lives of the Saints," Boris saw that his mother was asleep. He dropped his voice so that he should not awaken her, and then gradually ceased to read, and closing his book, looked at her calm, sweet face.

It was the last day of the year. The rays of the setting sun flushed the banks of snow outside. A ray of sunshine glanced in through the double sashes, and gilded the gold and silver images in their triangular shrine, and touching Madame Grébof's pale face, seemed to invest it with something of its former youth and beauty.

Boris watched his mother for a long time, and remembered the days when she had borne him in her arms, a stout and sturdy boy, to the slab which covered his father's remains. Then he recalled the years of study in Moscow —then the separations and the holidays; and finally, this

last long and cruel absence from her—an absence which she had borne so courageously and uncomplainingly.

"Mother," he said, softly, touching his lips to the shawl which was thrown around the shoulders of the invalid, "you have been a Providence to me! How can I love you and cherish you enough?" This movement, cautious as it was, aroused her, and, as laying her hand languidly on her son's head he had fallen on his knees,

"You have been a good son, Boris," she murmured, without opening her eyes; "you have never caused me any grief, and I thank you!"

Her hand slipped from his head, and fell into the other, which lay half open across her breast. Boris kissed them both, and then wrapped the shawl over them, and resumed his seat in an arm-chair at the side of the bed.

The rosy light had faded; the cold blue sky filled by degrees with stars, whose light was as clear and keen as if they had been diamond nails. It seemed to Boris that the room was growing strangely cold. The frost crept over the window panes. He rose, lowered the shades, and drew the curtains noiselessly, and then went to the lamp that was burning before the shrine to light a candle. The flickering flame threw a faint light upon the bed and its draperies. Boris suddenly felt himself taken possession by a vague, unreasoning fear. He opened the door.

"Dâcha!" he said, in a low voice. There was no reply. He closed the door behind him, went forward several steps, and called, "Sonia!" She appeared instantly. "Bring a lamp; the candle burns badly. I can see nothing." He returned to the room. His mother had not moved; on

her face was a half smile, as if she had that moment spoken to him. Boris stooped over her, and said: "Mother!" She did not move. He felt her hands, which were still wrapt in the shawl; they were damp and warm. But without knowing wherefore, he was frightened. "Mother!" he repeated. Still she did not reply. Sonia brought in the lamp. Boris signed to her to approach. She placed it behind the couch; but Madame Grébof did not open her eyes. Boris rushed to her side. "Mother! mother!" he cried, in a choked voice. She was dead!

He uttered a cry, and fell on his knees.

"Master!" said Sonia, standing erect behind him, "she is a saint in heaven! Do not trouble her repose—it would be a great sin in the eyes of the Lord!"

Boris turned around with wide open, affrighted eyes. Large tears were slowly running down the child's cheeks. Her face was very pale, but perfectly calm. Impressed by her appearance, the young man rose mechanically.

Sonia moved the lamp to a table, and then going to the couch, took the dead woman's hands in hers, and kissed them, not with the passionate fervor which was her usual manner, but with a kind of timid respect, which she would have shown to some Holy relic or revered Image. She dropped a tear on the hand that was evermore closed to melting charity, and turning toward Boris again, who stood in a dull torpor, looking at her, but seeing nothing.

"Pray, master; she is a saint in heaven. God will listen to your prayers. Ask him to send you consolation," and Boris fell on his knees and wept.

CHAPTER XX.

A HOUSE OF MOURNING.

IN obedience to the customs of the country, the body lay in state for three days in the large hall, on trestles covered with white cloths. The floor was heaped with branches of evergreens, while from far-off villages came crowds of peasants, both men and women, anxious to behold for the last time the sweet face which had always greeted them with divine compassion, and to kiss once more the generous hand which had relieved so much of their misery. For these three days, Boris guarded that form and features to which Death had imparted new dignity and solemn grace. Boris studied every feature, as if anxious to engrave on his memory every line in that beloved face.

Sonia, too, rarely left the room. She hovered about in perpetual watchfulness, seeming desirous of keeping Boris in sight, lest he should yield to some temptation.

But there was no danger. The young man's heart was crushed with grief; but he was calm and resigned. The sweetness of the dead woman's last moments had imparted something of their serenity to him. Thanks to her last words, he felt at peace with her and himself.

Consequently, on the morning of the fourth day, the humble crowd, assembled from all the country roundabout to pay their last respects to their friend, were struck by the calm manner in which Boris headed the procession. The

peasants claimed the privilege of bearing their benefactress to her grave; and the crowd of small farmers, of humble functionaries, grouped themselves around the bier, which was still uncovered.

A bright winter's sunshine fell on the glittering snow. The path to the church-yard was strewn with odorous branches of spruce. The large gate was thrown open at the end of the garden. Boris cast one glance towards the summer house, where he should never again find his mother awaiting him; then the procession wound along by the side of the pond, the church in the distance looking gray against the snow; on the green cupola shone a modest gilt cross.

The priest, in mourning garments, met them at the entrance, and his tears dropped on the cross he held in his hand. He was no longer young. And the dear old friend for whom he now mourned had wept with him over the graves of those children who had left him one after another.

The cortége entered the church; there was an hour or more of prayers and music; then the huge stone which covered the family tomb was lifted, and the mother was buried where she had so often knelt in prayer.

The interminable funeral repast was very silent; and the greatest respect was felt and manifested toward the grave young man who did the honors of this desolated home with so much dignity.

The peasants gathered in the barn, did not one of them become intoxicated; and in a few hours Boris was alone in the domain of which he was now sole proprietor.

How enormous this little house seemed to him! After some days devoted to putting his affairs in order, he summoned from far and near, all those persons who had in any way served his mother, rewarded them according to their merit, or according to the time they had been with her, and then announced his intention of leaving very soon.

"Are you going again into foreign countries, master?" asked old Dâcha, who had become almost blind since the death of her mistress, so constant had been the tears she shed.

"Not at present. I shall remain in Moscow."

After an oppressive silence, the old woman said: "You must have some one to wait upon you—I had hoped that you would take my son, but he has turned out badly, and I cannot advise you to take him. There is Sonia however; take her!"

The little girl listened in silence, turned very pale, and closed her eyes as if to gather strength; then opening them, she darted a look of gratitude—a look which was warm enough to thaw a block of ice—upon old Dâcha; but the blind woman lost it.

"Take Sonia," resumed Dâcha. "If you wish to have some one on whom you can rely, she is the person. The child does really very well; she is an accomplished laundress. And now, tell me, what could she do here?"

Sonia was still silent; her nervous fingers were twisting and untwisting the corners of her apron. and she trembled from head to foot.

"What do you think about it?" asked the young man, turning to the other women.

"Take Sonia!" they all answered together, like an antique chorus; "she is very young: we are old—all of us; and yet the son of our mistress ought to be well served by some one of this household."

A faint smile played upon the lips of the young man, as he turned toward the orphan.

"What have you to say, my child?"

She stepped forward, and before any one realized what she meant to do, she prostrated herself three times at his feet, touching the earth with her forehead; then straightening herself up, she answered, clearly and calmly:

"I wish to go."

"Then get yourself in readiness. We shall leave on Wednesday."

She left the room without another word, but her step was swift and light.

The hour of departure came, and the peasants again assembled to say adieu to their master. He said a kind word to each, and took his seat in the sledge. Sonia glided in after him as light as a bird. Every one wept, for this son of their old mistress recalled her vividly to their minds, compelling them to feel that on his departure he bore with him all that lingered of her in the old house by the river. But he!—what did he not leave behind him?

The sledge passed all the houses in the village, and when it reached the great gate Boris turned and looked back. The sky was blue and clear; the peasants were disappearing one by one in their little huts by the roadside. The sledge glided smoothly over the snow, and

reached the turn in the road, where three years before Sonia had awaited her master. She laid her hand timidly on his arm.

"Master," she said, "do you remember? It was on this spot that you promised to take me away with you some day."

"And I have kept my word," answered Boris. "Are you content?"

"Ah! yes;" and the child sighed a happy little sigh. "Do you remember how you took me from Madame Goréline's?"

Boris dropped his head and relapsed into thought. That name awoke a thousand recollections—where was Lydie? Was she expecting him, or had she forgotten him?

"Master, you are very good," said a little flute-like voice at his side. It was Sonia's, who was closely hooded and wrapped in furs, given to her by old Dâcha. "God will reward you, master!"

And the sledge dashed on over the sparkling snow.

On reaching Moscow, Boris at once installed himself in a small furnished apartment, where Sonia took up the reins of government with a most vigorous hand. Her master wished to order his meals from a neighboring restaurant, but this plan met with the most energetic opposition from her. Although by no means fastidious, Boris was a little doubtful of her ability, but he was surprised as well as pleased to find that Sonia was quite as skilful as the cook at Grébova.

At the end of a week, the young man found that he had

a home—not commonplace hotel-rooms—but a real home, where he was surrounded by familiar and beloved trifles —where he could find what he wanted, and where his shirts had buttons, and his hose were mended; where the lamp was trimmed and burning when he came in, and where his tea was poured out for him, without his even being compelled to ask for it.

One easily becomes accustomed to the comforts of life, and Boris was quite willing that his expenses should be greater in proportion to the increase of his comforts; but he found that he was in reality spending less money.

"How do you live?" he said to Sonia, one day. "I never hear of your buying anything for yourself."

"Oh! I have enough of everything," answered the girl, with a happy laugh, which showed her pretty white teeth.

"We have never said anything about your wages," said the young man, with an absent air.

Sonia laughed again; so unusual a sound from her, that it sufficed to arouse Boris from his preoccupation. It was almost the first time that he had heard this childlike, rippling laughter from her. He echoed it.

"How much do you want?" he asked, as the girl colored.

"Wages!" she exclaimed. "Are you talking about giving me wages? I never heard such a ridiculous idea, Boris Ivanovitch!"

"The idea is not ridiculous: it is only right and wise, my child! You need money, like the rest of the world."

"I am rich," she answered, proudly. "I have all that

money which Général Goréline gave me, you know, when we left there."

"And in all this time have you not expended it?"

"How could I? Did not your mother give me all I required?"

Boris relapsed into thought; and Sonia, seeing his preoccupation, went about on tip-toe.

The young man was in reality full of care. Since his return, he had ascertained that the Gorélines were no longer in their old quarters; they had moved several times, and no one knew where they were now to be found.

The directory afforded him no assistance; he had hoped that Lydie would let him know where to find her. That she was not married, he knew; that she was still beautiful, he had heard; but no one could tell him that she still remembered him.

In conformity with his voluntary promise, his friend, the savant, had written to Moscow, and Boris had received several most flattering propositions from the journals and scientific reviews.

A lucrative position was offered to him in a library. Would all these advantages suffice, in case Lydie still cared for him, to induce Madame Goréline to forget her ambitious projects? But if Lydie loved him, what mattered all the rest? And the young man's heart beat quickly, as in the days of yore. He had given three years of his life to work; now he turned toward love. He was only twenty-five. Was it not natural?

It was then Lydie who only could decide these questions; but to find her was by no means an easy thing.

He soon learned, however, that every Saturday she went to the house of a most agreeable family; it was their reception evening. These people belonged to the intellectual circles of the city quite as much as to the fashionable ones.

He sought the acquaintance of the lady of the house, but did not succeed immediately; his deep mourning prevented his appearing where there was dancing; but toward Lent, Boris became acquainted with the head of the house, Professor B——, who at once begged him to appear at his soirées.

On the following Saturday, Sonia was astonished at the careful toilette made by her master. She had never seen him so fastidious. Without venturing on any observation, she quietly drew her own conclusions, which did not add to her cheerfulness; but Boris heeded not her silence, nor evident depression.

When she handed him his pélisse and fur cap, and had closed the door upon him, she stood silent and thoughtful in the anteroom. She looked at the door as if to ask the solution of a problem. The cold struck her; she shivered, pressed her hands on her burning eyes, and went back to her master's room.

All was in disorder there. Slowly and noiselessly she gathered up article after article, folded the garments he had that day worn, and deposited them in orderly fashion upon a chair; then drawing from a dilapidated trunk, which she had appropriated, an old writing-book, she began to copy the alphabet with great industry; but alas! not without getting ink on her fingers.

The task was laborious. She uttered great sighs occasionally, and when she compared what she had done with easy flowing lines on a page written by Boris, there was little resemblance between them. With another sigh she resumed her task.

The cuckoo clock struck the hour; the soft light of the lamp, and the heat of the room, were too much for the girl. The pen dropped from her fingers, and Sonia slept upon her copy-book.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE WORLD.

ON entering the salon of Professor B——, Grébof satisfied himself with one quick, comprehensive glance that Lydie was not there. He had gone early that he might have an opportunity to talk a little to the lady of the house. Visitors came in gradually, until, at nine o'clock, the rooms were full, and tea was served. Boris was in despair at the failure of his attempt, when a movement in a group around the doorway attracted his attention. They separated, and Lydie appeared.

She had grown at least an inch. A silk dress, of a gray so pale that it was almost white, fitted her superb bust most admirably. Scarlet knots of ribbon floated here and there on her sleeves and at her throat, and upon her magnificent hair. Her head was well set on her shoulders, and proudly bore the braids with which it was crowned.

She entered with cold self-possession; sure of her beauty, and indifferent to homage. She passed Boris without seeing him, and went at once to the lady of the house. She stood talking, with a gracious smile upon her lips. Her silvery drapery fell behind her, making on the carpet a shining, rippling surface, like that of the moon on the water; and when she seated herself a delicious rustle of silk was heard. She was made for velvet and silk.

Her father, thinner and smaller than ever, followed her

closely, and came very near planting his feet on her train, which awkwardness elicited a most withering glance from his daughter.

"How beautiful she is!" thought Boris, with his heart in his eyes. "She is lovelier than ever; but what a haughty manner she has adopted!"

The young men gathered around Lydie; to one she vouchsafed a word; to another a smile; to a third a friendly glance and a nod; and to many more the slightest possible inclination of the head.

Haughty and indifferent she was, indeed; and would so have struck any indifferent observer. Boris asked himself, however, if it were not possible that this cold indifference arose from the fact that she had a life of her own, apart from this superficial, worldly existence. "May she not love me still?" he said, with a thrill of joy.

His boyish happiness—his alternations of joy and sorrow—the intoxication of that first day by the spring—the pangs of parting; in short, all the details of his passion for Lydie, rose before him. Again he saw Lydie seated on the turf, talking to him with girlish frankness, replying to his tenderness with a smile, which was so strangely different from that which now parted his lips.

"She does not choose to be to others what she has been to me," he said to himself. "I am very ungrateful!"

At this moment, a new adorer came toward Lydie and took a seat at her side. He was a Général: at least fifty years of age, wearing a crowd of decorations upon his breast; his hair was scanty, but his expression was amia-

ble, if a trifle conscious and patronizing. That he was unmarried was evident at the first glance.

At his approach, the girl beamed on him. She drew the folds of her dress aside to make room for him; and smilingly gave him her hand in greeting. They talked in a confidential sort of way. And Boris, while he pretended to be absorbed in a profound literary discussion, never took his eyes from them. He could not hear a word they said, but he saw their faces. The Général was gallant, and Lydie was coquettish; and her replies evidently flattered the self-love of this desirable *parti* to a very decided degree.

"That is the way girls now-a-days fish for husbands," said a lady, behind Grébof; "but they do not always succeed," she added, maliciously.

Boris turned round hastily. Was she speaking of Lydie? or had the chances of conversation allowed him to hear just this one phrase, which possibly referred to a person unknown to him? But the lady was already far away from this topic, and the young man heard no more.

After a half-hour or more of this conversation, which was very like a tête-à-tête, so completely apart were the pair from the groups around them, Lydie rose quietly and gracefully, and with a smile to her admirer, which was a veritable Parthian dart, she addressed a word or two to a group of young girls, and glided into the next room. After a moment's reflection, the Général followed her, with a determined air.

Grébof's expression was not the gayest in the world;

as at that moment his hostess approached to make a few complimentary remarks.

"You noticed that beautiful girl, I suppose, who came in so late," she said, after talking a few moments. "She is the beauty of Moscow. The last time we gave a large ball, the Governor-General danced with her twice."

"She is very beautiful," answered Boris, with an effort.

"Shall I present you?" said the lady, eagerly.

"I shall be charmed!"

He followed her to the next room, where Lydie had taken possession of a small sofa where there was only room for one at her side. The sofa stood in an angle which was partially protected by a screen covered with ivy. She was alone for the moment, and turning over the leaves of an album. The Général, twisting his moustache with an air of triumph, stood at some little distance, watching her. His manner indicated that he felt himself to have attained a victory. Madame B—— approached the girl. Boris was a step or two in the rear.

"My dear Lydie, permit me to present you a young man of celebrity," said the hostess; "Monsieur Grébof—just returned to his native country, from—" The lady was interrupted.

"Excuse me!" she said, hurrying away and leaving them together.

Lydie, in utter bewilderment, was gazing at him with widely opened eyes.

Had she forgotten his existence? Almost—or at all events had arrived at the conclusion that she should never see him again. And he was there, looking into her very

eyes, irreproachably dressed in evening costume, holding his hat in his hand; having, in short, all the air of a man of society. His face was very pale, however, and was neither calm nor smiling.

The girl regained her self-possession almost immediately; and glancing quickly around, to assure herself that no one was paying any attention to them, she quietly said:

"Take this seat—"

Boris sank into the chair she indicated; his limbs refused to sustain him longer.

"Lydie," he murmured, "after three years, to meet you thus—and I have lost my mother!"

"Be careful!" she said. "People are looking at us."

Boris made a violent effort at self-control; and with a more careless manner, and without looking at her, he said:

"You remember me?"

"Most assuredly!"

Notwithstanding her apparent calmness, he detected a trembling in her voice. In fact, the ghost of her youth was passing before her.

"Lydie, for three months I have been in search of you."

"You are living in Moscow?"

"Yes."

"And where?"

Boris looked at her in astonishment. She waited for his reply with evident impatience. He named the street and the number.

"Very well. Now what have you to say to me?"

"I say simply that for three years I have never ceased to think of you; that in this time, my mother has been

taken from me; that I am utterly alone in the world; and that, if I am not wealthy, I have at least a promising future before me. Lydie, look at me."

She turned her face towards him and against her will; her expression was that of tender sweetness. She dropped her eyelids, and her face was covered with blushes.

"We will discuss all that at length on another occasion," she said; "at present we are the objects of curious observation."

"When may I see you?"

"Very soon."

"Lydie, I cannot wait!"

He had drawn his chair nearer to hers, and the conquering hero, the Général, cast moody glances upon the young man.

"How are you served?" she asked, in a quick, low voice.

"By Sonia—you remember Sonia, the little girl I took away with me?"

By this time he was leaning over her.

"Expect me, then, to-morrow, at eleven o'clock," she whispered, in a low, clear voice; and then she added aloud, "and patience is the greatest possible virtue!"

They separated almost immediately. Boris was by no means an adept at dissimulation, and he could not speak to any one for some little time. He was almost terrified at the power Lydia had over herself, and at the calm way in which she uttered the word "to-morrow." He was dizzy with excitement and suspense. The word "to-morrow" rang in his ears.

The evening was not sufficiently advanced for him to retire without exciting remark.

He approached a group of distinguished men, with whom his host was holding an animated discussion. The voice of the principal speaker was often drowned by shouts of laughter and exclamations of dissent or approval.

"I am right!" said a voice, suddenly; and at this voice Boris beheld again in his mind's eye Général Goréline's pipes arranged along the wall—those very pipes which were so carefully gathered together every morning by Sonia, and which every evening were again scattered like the tribes of Israel.

"Monsieur Grébof!" cried Goréline, suddenly seeing the young man; and hurrying toward him, he greeted him warmly. "This is a most unlooked-for pleasure! How are you?—and what has become of Sonia?"

The Général's red freckled hand seized that of Boris, who did his best to reply to the questions which the good man rained upon him. Then the turn of Boris came.

"My wife has been very ill for more than six months," said the Général, with a most radiant expression, "and I am compelled to take her place, and go out with my daughter."

"And cannot Madame Goréline go out at all?" asked Boris, who had his own little motives for the question.

"No, indeed!" was the Général's joyous answer; "she has chronic rheumatism settled in her knee, and she cannot leave her room. I do all the visiting at present."

He rubbed his hands assiduously, which, with him, was always an indication of pleasure. Then suddenly he seemed to recollect what was expected of him; his whole manner changed; he shook his head sadly.

"It is very sad, Boris Ivanovitch, very sad!"

"Indeed it is," answered the young man, trying to be serious—"particularly for Madame Goréline."

"To be sure, particularly for her," repeated her husband, indifferently; "and you say that Sonia is well?"

"Yes—perfectly well; she devoted herself to my mother during the last years of her life, and since—since then she has resided with me."

"In Moscow?"

"You live here, then?—permanently?"

"Ah! that I cannot tell."

"I shall come and see Sonia one of these days. I always loved her; she was a good child. You have no objection, I presume?"

"I shall be only too happy to see you in my house," answered Boris, bowing courteously.

The Général wrote down the young man's address.

"You understand that I cannot now say when I shall call upon you?" resumed the Général. "I am very busy now; all the cares of the house devolve upon me, and it is a tremendous responsibility, sir, perfectly tremendous," he added, with a profound sigh: "everything now-a-days is so very expensive! But you will be here all winter?"

"Most certainly."

"Very well, then; I shall see you again very soon, perhaps almost immediately. You remember that I was very fond of you; I am not in the least like my wife, you know. I hear you have reached a most distinguished position?"

After another fifteen minutes of desultory chat, Boris

took his departure. As he entered his own rooms, his mind seemed to be in a state of absolute confusion. The visit promised by the Général disturbed him considerably.

"Suppose he should come to-morrow!" he thought. "I ought to have told him that I had an engagement for the whole day. Pshaw! he will not be in such extreme haste to call upon a poor devil like myself."

He ceased to think of Général Goréline, and dwelt on Lydie. The girl had developed into a wonderfully beautiful woman, although her face had lost the dimples and rounded contour of sixteen. Her voice had harsh, metallic notes—and was he pleased or satisfied with what she had said? Had he not looked for a very different reception? His heart was as strangely moved as when he formerly met the girl at the spring; but she— After all, though, was he not provincial, accustomed to the society only of his books and manuscripts, while Lydie was a real woman of the world, habituated to self-control—both words and looks closely guarded. But this stout Général, with his dandified airs? She was a coquette—alas! had she not always been one?

Boris was overwhelmed with a feeling of intense sadness. "To-morrow, however, I shall know all," he said to himself; but he had none of the joyous hopes which would have been natural after a separation of three years and more.

"To-morrow" seemed to him more like a funeral knell than a fête day. As he ascended his stairs, he stopped under the light and drew out his watch.

"Half-past twelve!" he said. "In twelve hours, then,

I shall have learned the whole—all will be decided. Until then, I will not allow myself to dwell upon it."

He opened the door of his rooms with a key which he carried in his pocket. The lamp burned before the image in the corner. Sonia slept so soundly that his entrance did not disturb her.

Her head was resting on her arms, which were folded across her open copy-book. The soft light of the lamp fell on the round but somewhat too pronounced contour of the girl's infantine face. Her regular breathing just parted her lips; her face, even in sleep, had a sad, severe expression; she was still dreaming perhaps of the rebellious letters which refused to be formed under her awkward fingers.

Curious to see the occasion of this profound sleep, Boris approached noiselessly and bent over her. Sonia was on her feet instantly, trembling like a bird startled upon her nest.

"Excuse me, Boris Ivanovitch!" she stammered, as she rubbed her eyes with her slender hand. "I did not hear you come in."

The young man had quietly taken up the copy-book, and was looking at it in astonishment.

"What! Is it possible that you are learning to read and write without any assistance from any one?"

"I am not learning, master; I was merely trying," answered Sonia, looking much frightened. "If you forbid it, I will not do so any more."

"If I forbid it! Do you take me for an imbecile?" answered Boris, half laughing, half angry. "Why did

you not tell me that you were anxious to learn? I would have taught you—you have had a hard struggle, my child, with your scrawls!"

He examined the copy-book as he spoke. The little girl saw that he was not ridiculing her in spite of his laughing tone, and she soon regained her confidence.

"And will you really teach me, master?" she said, in a voice so gentle, feminine and coaxing, that Boris was touched to the heart.

"Certainly I will; but I beg of you now to go to bed—you should have been asleep two or three hours since."

"Oh! I have slept very well," she answered, with a fresh, girlish laugh.

"But I have not," said Boris, gravely; "so now be off with you, instantly."

"Do you want nothing?"

"No, thanks; good-night."

"Good-night, master!"

Sonia went off with a light heart. She was half-way to the door when she turned hastily and rushed to Boris, who was at that moment removing his pelisse. As he threw it on a chair she fell on her knees, and burying her face in the heavy fur, which she covered with kisses, she said, with a gay laugh:

"What a kind, good master you are, Boris Ivanovitch. May God reward you!"

Then seizing in both arms the heavy pelisse, which was larger than her whole delicate form, she noiselessly disappeared.

Boris laughed—and in his laugh was a touch of tenderness.

Since he had lost his mother, he had become more and more attached to the orphan. He found in her something of the dear one who had gone to realms of bliss! Sonia had unconsciously acquired from her benefactress certain gestures and movements; and even an occasional tone in her voice brought Madame Grébof back to her son's recollection. At all events, this was the reason that he gave to himself, for the deep affection he cherished for the girl.

He took the chair by the table which Sonia had just vacated. The image of Lydie in her silvery dress, with the flame-colored ribbons, her laughing eyes and haughty head, bewitched and haunted him.

"I will not think of you," he murmured, as he dipped his pen in his ink, drew his papers toward him, and resumed the work which he did not leave until the gray light of morning peeped through the windows.

CHAPTER XXII.

A HAZARDOUS INTERVIEW.

THE next day Grébof came to the conclusion that it were wiser—before the hour came when he might expect Lydie—to send Sonia to execute some distant commission. The clock was on the point of striking—he had taken his tea, and was about putting this idea into execution when a loud pull at the bell startled him. Before he had time for reflection, Sonia had opened the door, and a masculine voice resounded through the anteroom.

"Goréline!" said Boris, aghast. "Who on earth would have expected him—this morning of all others! What shall I do, now, to get rid of him?"

At the same moment the Général appeared, with the radiant Sonia literally at his heels.

"Ah! ha, young man! you did not expect me quite so soon, I fancy!" he cried, as he shook hands with Boris.

"I supposed—" stammered his host.

"Well! you see, I was going out this morning to early mass and then to market, for we are to have people to dinner—Général Troubine—a great admirer of my daughter's—"

Here Goréline assumed a wise, important air, which speedily gave place to the most piteous expression, while he added:

"It is a most serious thing to go to market, I do

assure you, Boris Ivanovitch—prices are so high, and my wife—"

He stopped, and seemed to be making a mental calculation of how much the dinner would cost. The result was more favorable apparently than he had ventured to hope for. He added, more cheerfully:

"So I said to myself I won't go to church, after all! I will go and see Boris Ivanovitch, and little Sonia. Well, my child, does it please you to see the old Général?"

And he placed his hand on the girl's head just as he formerly did, when standing on the terrace at their country home the child had appeared, laden with his pipes. This familiar gesture awakened a thousand recollections in the mind of Boris—would not Lydie come in, wearing her simple lilac morning dress as of yore?

"And you have but a moment to spend with us then, Général?" he said, determining to go out himself if there was no other way of getting rid of his guest.

"Only a moment; but I have time to take a glass of tea, if you should offer it to me," answered the worthy man, seating himself comfortably in an arm-chair.

"Certainly," answered the young man. "I have a matter of business to attend to this morning, but I am in no hurry."

"Oh, do not trouble yourself on my account," answered Général Goréline, most amiably. "Go out as soon as you please. Sonia will take care of me."

This plan was by no means satisfactory to Boris, who hastened to offer his inconvenient guest tea as cold as possible, that there might be no delay in swallowing it.

The cuckoo struck half-past ten. Boris was in an agony. He could hardly remove his eyes from the face of his watch, which lay open on the table.

The Général asked him a thousand questions, and finally the young man made up his mind, when it wanted a quarter to eleven, to take his pelisse from the anteroom and wait for Lydie on the sidewalk, and prevent her coming in.

Goréline, having at last swallowed his tea, remembered the fact that the market was some distance off. He slowly rose, and Boris accompanied him to the anteroom, his heart beating quickly, and all the blood in his body seemed to be thumping in his ears as he watched the Général putting on his pelisse and galoshes. Just as the old man was about leaving, a new idea seemed to strike him.

"Will you let Sonia go with me to market?" he said. "She can carry the basket home for me. No one knows her, you see, at my house now."

"Most certainly," answered Boris, eagerly. "Sonia, put on your coat quickly. Do not keep the Général waiting. Make haste, child!"

The cuckoo struck eleven just as the child, wrapped up to her chin, reappeared in the anteroom.

"Au revoir, Général," said the young man, with feverish haste. "Come soon again to see us. You will excuse me, under the circumstances, from returning your visit?"

"Eh! yes," shouted the Général from the foot of the stairs. "You may rely on seeing me again shortly."

All was silent. Boris left open one of the doors, that he might hear the least sound of the bell, and then waited in the small salon.

The suspense of the hour that had just elapsed had so tortured his nerves that he could not bear with composure the moments of waiting still before him. He exerted all his self-control however, and tried to read.

Half-past eleven! The clear notes of the cuckoo rang through the silent room. All the senses of the young man were on the *qui vive;* he thought he heard the rustling of Lydie's silk skirts on the staircase. Deep snow muffled the sound of the carriages in the street, and the very sleighs seemed to glide silently past, so well padded were the sashes to keep out the wintry winds. This profound stillness so affected the young man's nerves that for a moment he had the idea that he was dead, and that they had forgotten to bury him. He hastily rose from his chair and went to the window, to rid himself of this strange notion.

The door-bell, pulled by a feverish hand, rang loudly through the anteroom. He rushed to open the door. A woman's form, wrapped in a long black silk cloak, with a veil thickly drawn over her face, passed him silently and did not stop until she reached the salon. Boris closed the door, and, pale and breathless, stood before her.

"It is I," said Lydie, lifting her veil.

The light of day was less favorable than the candles of the soirée. The clear yellow light of this frosty morning brought out many hard lines in the girl's face: her teeth were not as brilliant; her eyes had a cold light in them; while her cheeks had that tone of faded rose peculiar to women who go out a great deal and never know. what it is to retire before the wee smu' hours.

The night before, Lydie had seemed to Boris a young creature of twenty or twenty-two. That morning she looked like a worn woman of twenty-eight. Only three years and a half had elapsed since the day at the spring when she had said to Boris, "I love you." Whence had fled all her fresh beauty of her eighteen years?

"It is I!" she repeated, as she sank into a fauteuil.

Had she smiled, said one loving word, or made one caressing gesture, Boris would have fallen on his knees at her feet; the years of absence and indifference on her part would have been annihilated by one look of tenderness; her lover's heart would still have belonged to her, for she had been his first and only love. But her eyes were wandering and indifferent, her lips were too firmly compressed to invite a kiss, and the beatings of her heart were quickened by fright, not by passion.

"I thank you for coming," said Boris, with sudden calmness.

His love was slowly dying. "She never cared for me," he thought. "Why has she come this morning?"

And this same question, under another form, escaped from his lips in spite of himself.

"You have something to say to me?"

Lydie was slightly embarrassed. The young man's coolness disturbed her. After his whispered words of the evening before, she had expected another reception—a scene of tenderness possibly—and now she found him cold and calm as a judge on the bench, weighing her every word and look.

She said to herself, "I knew very well that he had no heart."

And this final judgment pronounced, she took no pains to find out if she had not been mistaken in it.

Drawing from her finger the ring which Boris had given her at the station the morning of his departure, and which she had never worn, she extended it to him without a word. As he made no motion to take it, she laid it on the table before him. His eyes followed her movements, and then fixed themselves on the slender gold circle lying on the dark wood.

If she had but known, that at that very moment, he felt something snap within him—something that seemed to cry to him for help like a drowning child! Had she known that he was asking for strength to bear this last blow—that the eyes and the lips of the young man were closely guarded, lest he should burst into a torrent of tears and reproaches!

She knew and guessed nothing of this, however, but looked at Boris with astonishment.

"Then—all is over?" he said, in a low, sombre voice, after a long silence.

She dropped her eyes, and said not one word.

"Lydie, when you accepted this ring, did you love me?" he continued, in a voice, which, though sad, was also severe.

Having nothing to say, she persisted in her silence.

"If you did not love me then—when, then, did you care for me?"

The girl's eyes flashed with anger. How did this man dare to address her in this tone, and to reproach her?

"I loved you," continued Boris, in the same severe

voice, so firm and measured, that it was almost without modulations; "and yet I did not wish you to feel yourself bound, or in any way hampered by my affection. I did not implore your pity, nor ask for oaths. I left you mistress of yourself and of your future, and you took your choice. Why did you accept my love if you could not love me in return?"

"I came here to ask for the letters I had written you," said Mademoiselle Goréline, rising abruptly. "This is all I had to say to you, and I am in great haste. Will you kindly give them to me?"

Boris sat still, looking at her with an air that was both compassionate and severe.

"Do you know what you have thrown away?" he continued, calmly. "I loved you as no one has ever loved you. Had you chosen yesterday, I would even then have fallen at your feet and worshipped you. But you! Why did you come here to-day? Did you think that my sorrow would be assuaged by seeing what you had become?"

Lydie's eyes and cheeks blazed with anger. She was wonderfully like her mother at that moment, as Boris recognized with a pang.

"I came because I wanted my letters! Give them to me at once!"

"You might have written to me to burn them, and I would have destroyed those poor little letters. Lydie, why did you lie and tell me that you loved me?"

He spoke to her gently as to a naughty, troublesome child. Did he hope to hear from her lips one word of

regret? To see in her eye one tear of penitence? Did he think to awaken one emotion which would enable him to remember her in the future with other feelings than bitterness and contempt?

"I will not bear any reproaches from you!" she cried, angrily. "The only one who deserves them is yourself! You, who took advantage of my youth and my inexperience, to obtain a promise from me when I did not know what I was doing. It was due to you that I missed at eighteen a brilliant marriage with Armianof, and you would like to prevent another unexceptionable match to-day. But you will not succeed! I am about to be married, and I want my letters!"

"You are to be married, then?" said Boris, still in the same tone: "to the Général who was at the soirée last night?"

"What is that to you?" answered the girl, almost with insolence. "Give me my letters!"

Boris drew the ring, which he had always worn, from his finger, took the one Lydie had laid on the table, and slowly opened the vasista,* held them a moment in his hand as if examining them, and then tossed them carelessly into the light snow, which closed over them.

"I will get your letters," he said, gently, as he left the room.

When Lydie was alone, she began to be frightened. The young man's calmness did not seem altogether natural to her.

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* Movable panes of glass set in the double sashes of the windows in Russia for purposes of ventilation.

"He must be deranged," she said to herself, and she began to think of escaping before he returned.

Standing in the centre of the small salon, trembling with mingled impatience and fright, she listened to the rustling in the next room made by Boris as he turned over his papers. She heard him move some metallic substance. She was certain that he was loading a pistol. In mortal terror she ran toward the anteroom just as Boris appeared on the threshold.

"Here are all your letters, mademoiselle," he said, handing her the package. "Will you count them?"

"It is quite unnecessary!" stammered Lydie, with a hot blush of shame.

"I beg that you will do so, and I have a right to insist upon it," answered the young man.

The girl looked at him hesitatingly, and read in his eyes the utter contempt in which he held her, and which she so well deserved.

"I will not!" she said, attempting to thrust the package into her muff.

"You must! I insist upon it!" replied Boris, arresting her movement with a firm hand.

She stood irresolute, more than ever alarmed by his calmness and determination, and began to turn over the letters with the one hand that was free.

"They are all here," she said, in a choked voice.

The young man released the wrist which he had clasped.

"You have nothing more to ask of me?" he said, with politeness.

"Boris Ivanovitch," murmured Lydie, much agitated,

and ready to burst into tears, "I have brought you much sorrow!"

His physical strength had conquered her. She was almost ready to ask his pardon.

"By no means!" he answered, with cold cheerfulness. "None worth speaking of!"

She turned toward the anteroom, when the door was thrown hastily open, and Sonia entered, followed by Général Goréline, who exclaimed, without seeing his daughter,

"I left my spectacles here, my dear Grébof, a little while ago—"

And suddenly seeing a lady, who turned her back upon him, he stopped short, in great embarrassment. The four persons present all stood in silent and awkward embarrassment.

Goréline was the first to speak. An involuntary gesture, and possibly the cloak, revealed the truth.

"Lydie! You here!"

And the Général looked five inches taller, in his parental wrath and dignity.

"Why are you here?"

"And you, papa? Why are you here?" said the young girl, with enormous coolness.

"That is not your affair; but you—"

"I? Well, I came to go to mass with you; they told me that you had just gone out, and I followed you at once. You forgot your snuff-box—or was it your spectacles which you left behind you? Never mind. But will not mamma be pleased when I tell her that you have

been visiting the very worst enemy we have in the world?"

The Général's figure seemed to shrink to its normal condition—that is to say, below that of his daughter.

"You came to know where I was," he answered, in hesitating meditation. "It is very strange that you should have come here—to the house of a man who once wished to marry you—whom you once loved!"

Lydie stamped her foot impatiently. "Very well—go and tell my mother all your doubts and suspicions, and then she will understand what you do with yourself at the hours when she believes you in church."

"Monsieur Grébof!" said the Général, suddenly turning toward him, who contemplated this scene with folded arms. "Can you give me your word that my daughter did not come here as to a lover?"

"I give you my word of honor, Général," answered Boris, "that between your daughter and myself there is not the faintest question of love!"

"Come, papa, let us go," interposed Lydie, in a low voice. "And if you tell mamma that you met me here, I will tell her what terms you are on with a man she hates!"

Considerably abashed, the Général allowed himself to be drawn from the house; the door was left open, and for a moment Lydie's irritated voice came back to them, as she threatened her father. Soon all was silent. Sonia, in great consternation, closed the door.

"Do not stay here, master—it is very cold," she said to Boris, who still stood motionless in the centre of the room.

She took him by the hand; he allowed himself to be

led by her into his sleeping-room. The girl closed the door with tender solicitude. The open desk, where Boris kept his most valuable papers and his money, told the story of the last half-hour. She pushed a chair toward the fire, closed the desk, locked it, and placed the key on her master's dressing-table, and then came back to his side, where she stood and looked at him, with a great pity in her eyes. He was looking at his hand, which wore no ring. Sonia discreetly left the room.

In a moment more, Boris realized all that had taken place.

"Miserable woman!" he cried aloud, in his rage. "Miserable woman—she has robbed me of everything—of every hope—of every recollection—and worse than all, of every ray of respect for her!"

He threw himself on his bed; and man as he was, fairly sobbed with rage. By degrees his anger passed away, leaving only profound sadness; for had he not looked forward for three years to this day, which had so drearily ended? He rose to his feet, and walked with slow and measured strides up and down his room. What was he thinking of? Revenge, possibly!

Twilight came. Boris had eaten nothing, but he continued his monotonous walk in his apartment.

The door opened, and Sonia appeared.

"Will you dine at home, sir?" she said. "Dinner will be ready in an hour!"

"I shall not dine at all. Leave me in peace!"

Instead of retiring, the young girl advanced two or three steps into the room, and shut the door behind her.

"Master!" she said, in a firm voice. "When your mother died—and she is to-day in Paradise—you were very unhappy!"

Boris, in astonishment, turned and looked at her.

"To lose your mother was a great misfortune!" Sonia's voice trembled. "And yours was a saint on earth. You were very sad then, but you were not angry. You knew that it was the will of God, and you bore it with resignation. But to-day it is different—you are very angry—"

"How do you know that?" interrupted Boris.

But she did not answer this question. "It is a sin, master—a terrible sin. No greater grief can ever come to you than that of last New Year's day! Why are you more wretched now than then?"

The girlish voice had a certain ring of authority. In the gathering darkness, with her arms loosely dropped, the slender hands relieved against the heavy straight folds of her black robe, she looked like a statue of the Middle Ages. Her grave face and eyes were full of tender reproach. Again she spoke:

"It is very wrong, master, to allow yourself to be troubled in this way. The young lady does not care for you; she is a bad woman, like her mother. I knew this when I was in the country with them."

Boris started.

"You are going to tell me that I am only a servant, and I know very well that these affairs are no concern of mine; but your mother loved me, and if she were here—" Sonia's voice broke. "If she could see you now, she

would not be pleased with you; and she would pray God to change your heart!"

The grave, pure tones of Sonia's voice had regained their firmness. Her arms were modestly crossed over her breast, and in silence she waited for a reply or a reproach.

It was momentarily growing darker. The young man's head drooped: he seemed to be listening to some internal admonition.

"Sophia!" he said, in a few moments.

At this name of "Sophia"—which almost never escaped from her master's lips—the girl, accustomed to the more familiar "Sonia," turned toward him hastily and listened.

"Do you know the Greek signification of your name?" asked Boris, with a faint shadow of a smile.

"No, master."

"It means 'Wisdom.' And you were well named! Light the lamp and bring it in."

Sonia disappeared noiselessly, and returned almost immediately, holding the huge lamp, with one hand high above her head, as was her usual habit. Before putting it down, she hesitated for a moment, looking for a place on the table, which was piled with books and papers. It was exactly in the same way that she had stood at the side of Madame Grébof's couch at the moment when her son first realized that she had died.

Overwhelmed by this sudden thought, Boris turned away, but not until he had met the girl's gaze. What tenderness, what mingled submission and reproach he read in those limpid eyes!

She placed the lamp on the table, and turned to leave the room, when he stopped her.

"Do you wish to learn to read and write?" he said, in a perfectly calm voice.

"Certainly I do, master!"

"Then sit there," he said, in a tone of authority, as he placed his hand on her head. "I will give you your first lesson now."

And the two spent an hour over the mysteries of the alphabet.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ARMIANOF AGAIN.

THREE months elapsed. The Gorélines had gone into the country, and Lydie was not married. Boris had received this information from Professor B——, for the Général had never reappeared.

Moscow was empty. Every one had gone to the country or travelling. Boris, yielding at last to Sonia's entreaties, decided to go himself and superintend the farm at Grébova, that miniature domain which the girl looked upon as one of the most important estates in Russia.

Just as he was about to depart, in the beginning of June, he one day received a most unexpected visit from Prince Armianof.

"You surely did not suppose that I would pass through Moscow without unearthing you," said the young man, as they smoked their cigars by the open window, through which the light breeze brought the sweet smell of the expanding buds on the birch trees. "The country is particularly attractive at this season, when Moscow is very ugly under its triple coating of dust; but I should nevertheless have remained a week if I had not succeeded in seeing you before the expiration of that time."

"Why can we not go together?" said Boris.

"To-morrow morning, then," answered his guest.

"This evening, if you choose."

"That would be best," concluded the Prince. "We will go in my calèche. You are alone?"

"No; I have my housekeeper."

"Is she very heavy? Will the springs support her?" asked Armianof, with comical anxiety.

He was thinking of his own housekeeper, who weighed about two hundred pounds.

"This is she," said Boris, with a smile.

Sonia came in bearing a tray with china, in preparation for the traditional tea always offered to guests in Russia.

"Is this the person whom you call your housekeeper?" cried Armianof. "Why, my dear fellow, she has not near weight enough."

Sonia looked at the speaker with a faint curiosity in her eyes. The Prince recollected that he had seen her on the diligence.

"You remember the day, Grébof?" he said, with a sigh. "Ah! those were pleasant days. We were young then."

The two friends set out in the calèche, just as they did after the Prince had followed Boris in such hot haste. But on this occasion Sonia sat on the box, by the side of the coachman.

During the first few days at Grébova, Armianof and his host talked incessantly and of a thousand different things. But on one subject they were both profoundly silent; the one dared not ask a question, and the other had nothing pleasant to communicate.

Armianof nevertheless had formed his own opinion, and the evening previous to his departure, knowing that friends who are about to separate for an indefinite length of time

are more confidentially disposed than at other times, he induced Boris to take a long walk, and spoke to him as he thought he ought to do.

"Well, you remain at Moscow?" he asked.

"I think so. Life at St. Petersburg is too worldly to be altogether agreeable to me. It is difficult, if not impossible, to isolate oneself there. Here I work to much better advantage."

"You are quite right. Our mutual friend, the savant, requested me to present you to several intelligent men, to whom you would be useful. I will take pleasure in doing so on my return in the autumn; at present, all the birds are flown."

Boris thanked him with a smile. After a long silence the Prince continued, with some hesitation:

"Do you intend to marry?"

"No; I do not," answered Boris, curtly, with the color surging to his face.

The constant, dull heartache had quickened to a sharper pang, and his heart beat fast with hot indignation against Lydie. Armianof saw that he had given him pain; he nevertheless, with apparent unconsciousness, resumed:

"Then you have seen Mademoiselle Goréline?"

Boris did not answer. The Prince gently placed his hand on his friend's shoulder, and then said, with quiet persistence:

"You know, my dear fellow, that I have no wish to intrude on your private affairs, and still less desire to hurt your feelings in the smallest degree; but, on the contrary, that I wish most earnestly to serve you in any

way which lies in my power. Did you ever know me to deceive you?"

Boris looked up, and the cordial sympathy he read in Armianof's face carried with it a certain serenity.

"You are right. I have seen her," he said.

"And has she forgotten you?"

"I am surely neither the first nor the last man in the world to whom such a disaster has occurred!" said Boris, hotly.

"Precisely," answered Armianof, with a sigh, which indicated that he too might have had reason for similar regrets. "I was convinced from the beginning that this affair would end precisely as it has done. Had I mentioned this conviction to you then, it is possible that I might have saved you three years of unhappiness, or rather of uncertainty. But after all a man is compelled to exercise a certain discretion and reticence in such matters, or else acquire the reputation of ill nature and interference."

"But how could you foresee this?" asked Boris, with quiet astonishment.

"Are you altogether yourself again, and heart-whole? May I tell you exactly my ideas?"

"Certainly," answered Grébof, looking away.

He was arming himself for some new blow.

"Mademoiselle Goréline did not love you and never could have loved you," said Armianof, in slow, measured tones. "She could not love you because her nature is coquettish and frivolous, passionately fond of luxury and the gratification of her vanity, and a total stranger to any

elevated sentiments. It is not that I blame her for this," he hastily continued, as he saw Boris about to speak; "she is simply just that which nature and education have made her, and *au fond* she is not bad in any way. She is, or was rather, a hundred times better than her mother, who has absolutely embittered the existence of my beloved old Goréline, who is really one of the best of men. But with her natural disposition and her surroundings, she could not possibly be in any respect different from what she is. Had she married, at an early age, a good man of moderate fortune, she might have become a good wife and mother; but never, Grébof, could she have grown into a companion for you. You asked her for a thing which she had not to give you. You asked her for love, and she knows not even the meaning of the word, and is totally incapable of the passion."

"But she loved me once!" cried Grébof, with the old pain gnawing at his heart-strings—a pain which he had fancied dead for evermore.

"No, my dear fellow," answered Armianof, firmly, "you deceive yourself; she never loved you. At the very time that she promised to be your wife, she entertained the idea of becoming mine, and she encouraged that belief in the minds of all who spoke to her about it, with smiles and blushes."

"Who told you this?" asked Boris, angrily.

He repudiated the idea of having been deceived *then*, although he knew very well that he had been since.

"My old governess, who had it from Goréline's people, and who told me the whole story after you had gone.

Besides it was clear enough to all who had eyes to see. When I discovered that you had left so suddenly, and heard why—heard that you and Lydie loved each other, it was my turn to feel that I had been trifled with and deceived; yes, deceived, for she had given me every reason to believe that she was interested in me."

Boris kept silent. The accumulating evidence chilled his whole being.

"Would you like to hear the history of Mademoiselle Goréline since your departure? All Moscow knows it, and any one will repeat it to you, since such things are only too common among poor and ambitious girls. When you were away, she accepted the addresses of a young man with limited means, who soon withdrew, startled by the luxury of the toilettes to which Madame Goréline had accustomed her daughter. Then appeared on the scene a government employé; he too, I think, was frightened away by the mother; then a Colonel; and finally, a Judge. With each new aspirant, Madame Goréline declared to her intimate friends, under promise of secrecy, that her daughter was engaged, while in reality her hand had not once been asked. This little habit of hers got about, and the young men became disgusted, and one after the other withdrew. How is it that with all her incontestable beauty, surrounded as she has always been with so much homage, that Mademoiselle Goréline has never felt nor inspired a serious affection? Even you loved her with your head rather than with your heart. It is that the girl has no heart; she has simply a nervous sensibility which she calls upon when needful! When I think that but for you

I unquestionably should have married her, and I feel that I have had a most narrow escape."

Boris was still silent. Armianof continued:

"You can never understand such a nature as hers; you are unwilling to admit that such a woman as I have depicted could ever have quickened your pulses! Alas! my friend, it was not she whom you worshipped: it was love itself, with all its sweetness and its pains; it was her very great beauty, which was something remarkable at eighteen; it was the spring-time, your age, and your own noble nature which all combined to deceive you. She, in her turn, thought for a brief period that she loved you, and therefore at that hour she was not so culpable; her seventeen years were accomplices of her falsehood; she loved your love. Had you been able to carry her off and seclude her from the world, she might have made a good wife, as I told you. Nevertheless, thank heaven, as I do, that you did not become her husband; for life is before you—you are already known—you will become celebrated—fortune will come to you, and you will be beloved by some woman who is worthy of you."

Boris shook his head; the mere idea of loving again was terrifying to him; he did not feel himself strong enough to begin to suffer anew.

"You will see," said the Prince, in reply to this silent denial. "I do not say that it will be to-morrow; you must have time to recuperate; but, believe me, this woman —this doll, rather—does not deserve to be treated like a reality. You will do some day as I have done—you will meet a young girl with an honest, upright nature,

who will give her whole heart and soul to you, and you will marry her!"

"Are you thinking of marriage?" exclaimed Boris, in amazement.

"Yes, and before the end of the year," answered Armianof, with a contented smile. "I make what the world calls a mésalliance; I shall marry the daughter of a Professor, and we shall be perfectly happy."

"I hope so, from the very bottom of my heart," said Boris, with much emotion, grasping his friend's hand.

The young men silently returned to the house; they were to separate the next day; but between them now was a tie—the growth of mutual confidence and esteem—which nothing could sunder.

CHAPTER XXIV.

UNEXPECTED VISITORS.

WINTER came, then summer; then two years more. Boris saw himself from day to day more appreciated and more famous; his incessant and conscientious toil was worth all the patronage with which he had not cared to entangle himself; his dull life was in every respect similar to that he had led during that dreary winter which followed the loss of his mother; his lodgings were the same; and, with the exception of brief periods accorded to social relations, nothing ever interrupted his solitary labors, which had become to him the very essence of life.

Many reviews and certain journals, published regular articles from his pen. He had sometimes the opportunity of aiding beginners, by giving them opportunities of making themselves known, and this gratified both his heart and ambition.

His summers passed at Grébova; his winters at Moscow, under the soft light of his study-lamp in the genial atmosphere of his well-warmed rooms, surrounded by familiar objects. What more could he ask? In the cultivated circles, where he occasionally showed himself, more than one woman looked at him with admiring eyes. His height was commanding; his step manly, and his face frank and kind.

Mothers, after careful inquiries in regard to his fortune and position, received him cordially, and invited him to come and see them "without ceremony, whenever he pleased—they were always at home."

Boris bowed, made one visit, perhaps, and was seen no more. Several of his friends spoke seriously to him of marrying, but it was time thrown away.

"He cares for nothing but his work!" said his friends, with mournful shakes of the head; "he is in love with that!"

This was quite true; he loved his work, and his quiet, peaceful life. From the idea of introducing a new element into his modest home—a home that was so simple that it was almost poor—he shrank with absolute terror. Any change, he felt, would destroy the sweet harmony of his existence.

"My hour is not yet come!" he said to himself at times, as he dismissed certain suggestions made to him by enterprising friends. "I am not made to love." And finally, as time went on, he added—

"It is too late—my hour has passed, never to return!"

A certain melancholy overwhelmed him sometimes, when he remembered that he was not yet thirty, and that his youth had brought him only pain. Then, the recollection, that his honorable labors could never deceive him, reconciled him to life.

"An old head on young shoulders!" said one; "perhaps it is disgust with some former love affair," thought another; and both were right!

The home-like look about him, which Boris so highly valued, was not entirely due to material surroundings.

A long time previous, Sonia had conquered the mysteries of reading and writing; and under the young man's tutelage, had learned enough arithmetic to keep the accounts of a household; but this, in the eyes of her young master, was not enough; and therefore, in the evenings, when the house was placid after the disorders of the day, the docile pupil came to read at his side, where she could ask questions of him when she failed to understand.

He did not look at her; she was utterly noiseless, except when her soft voice addressed him a timid question, or thanked him with a syllable; and then silence again reigned in the peaceful room.

During all this time the young girl had read a great deal; and better still, had profited by this reading. Not one novel had passed through her hands. Boris did not own one. But history and elementary science had, by degrees, formed this austere little mind.

It was impossible to believe that three years more had passed over her head. She had grown a little taller, to be sure; but her clear, pale complexion, and delicately-chiselled lips, were unchanged. She laughed less, so that her even, fresh white teeth were more rarely seen. She moved about the house with quiet grace, pursuing her daily duties with such methodical industry that they seemed to be done almost by machinery.

At the beginning of the fourth year after his return to Moscow, Boris received a letter from his former patron, who, just as a certain important work of his was going to

press, was taken with so severe an attack of rheumatic gout that it was utterly impossible for him to watch over it and correct the proofs.

He implored Boris, if the thing were in any degree practicable, to come and pass several weeks at St. Petersburg, to take his place until his health was in some degree restored.

Laying aside all his other affairs, the young man started off as soon as possible, leaving Sonia guardian of his home.

The days seemed endless to the girl, now that she could not look forward to her master's coming in—now that his place was vacant; and that evening after evening passed without her addressing a word to a single human being.

She saw no one except the tradespeople; and to them she addressed not one word except on business.

"What good was there in talking," she said, "when Boris was not there to answer?"

She had lived, up to this time, with an almost untamed and timid nature, asking nothing more of life than that which she had—satisfied with her present happiness, which she had thought would last forever. Would not her master be always there? And yet he had gone!

He would come back, of course; and he even occasionally wrote her a few lines, which she read over and over again, to satisfy herself that she had forgotten none of his directions; and yet she invariably felt, as she took in the lamp at dinner-time, a sharp heartache—why this lamp, and her master away? She lighted it, nevertheless, —placed it on the desk, and took her seat by its side, as if her master were there. But she dropped her book very

often. The very solitude, of which, at other times, she had been so fond, now terrified her. She snatched a shawl, threw it over her head, and ran to the nearest church for refuge; and when evening prayers were over, hurried home, as if she expected to find Boris waiting for her.

No; he was not there! The lamp before the shrine burned serenely; and she often wept until midnight, longing for the master, and the life and the light which he had taken away with him.

She received two visits during his absence; the first was from Armianof, who, passing the winter on his estates, had come to Moscow for a few hours only, to catch a glimpse of his friends.

At the sight of the slender, dainty-looking girl who opened the door when he knocked, Armianof started with surprise.

He did not recognize Sonia. She had grown very much taller since he had seen her. Her dark, stiff dress of some common material, fell around her graceful figure in heavy folds; her hands, though sunburned, were exquisitely formed and well cared-for; a narrow white collar was just visible around her throat, under the heavy masses of brown hair, which seemed almost to weigh down her delicate head. Armianof hesitated.

"Pardon me, madame," said he; "I wished to see Monsieur Grébof."

"My master is at St. Petersburg," answered the young girl; "he will not return for some time."

At the sound of the grave, somewhat *voilé* voice, the Prince recognized General Goréline's little handmaiden.

"Is this you, Sonia?" said he—formerly he had used the familiar "*thou;*"—"I should never have known you."

The girl's dignified face slightly relaxed into a faint smile, while she quietly gave to the Prince her master's address. Armianof departed, asking himself more than one question, which only time could solve.

The second visit was less agreeable to Sonia. One fine day, when curled up on the floor—a favorite trick of hers—and absorbed in reading, she heard the door-bell ring violently. Throwing her book on the table, she ran to open it.

Two ladies, in half mourning, stood there. Dresses of wrinkled silk, jackets of threadbare velvet, and gloves carefully mended, indicated that, if once well off, they were so no longer. At one glance, Sonia, who knew wonderfully little of the world, measured the distance between the past and the present of these two ladies, who were Madame Goréline, accompanied by her daughter, both much aged.

While they asked about Boris, they measured Sonia from head to foot; and Lydie recognized her.

"Mamma," she said, without taking the trouble to lower her voice, "this girl is the one whom you sent off, and whom Monsieur Grébof took away with him!"

"It is not possible!" exclaimed Madame Goréline, who had not seen the child since that stormy day.

"Yes, but it is! You are Sonia, I am sure?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle." And the girl's honest eyes met the hard, scornful glance thrown at her, as it were, by Lydie.

"Your fortunes are bettered, to be sure," said the mother, as she examined with jealous eyes the simple but fresh and well-made garments of her former servant. "Monsieur Boris certainly does not allow you to lack for anything!"

"No, madame; he is the best of masters," answered Sonia, with equal coolness.

Boris was a good master, but it was with a tinge of malicious pleasure that little Sonia gave utterance to this truth.

"You have been very lucky," replied Lydie. "You were ugly enough in those days!—not, though, that you are much better-looking now!"

"But with taste and care you will do very well," broke in Madame Goréline, in what she meant as a conciliatory tone. "Come, Lydie. And when did you say that Monsieur Grébof will return?" she continued, addressing Sonia.

"In about two months probably," the girl answered, as serene and cool as candor itself.

"Very well, we will see him then. Good-morning!"

The door closed. Sonia decided that they were two very disagreeable persons, but that she had done well not to reply to them as she was tempted to do; and then took up her book and went to reading with the enthusiasm with which she always attacked everything.

CHAPTER XXV.

NEW THOUGHTS AND PLANS.

HIS duties completed, Boris returned to Moscow. Before going there, he had stopped at Grébova, and, detained by the difficulty of procuring horses, was in consequence very late in reaching his home.

The night was half over when he gained the hills which encircle the holy city. Lights, scattered here and there, indicated the immense space it covers. The silent faubourgs each seemed a huge town by itself. His horses, fatigued by a journey of thirty kilomêtres, struggled along through the half-melted snows of March; but as he had long before given up the hope of reaching Moscow at an early hour, he quietly resigned himself to the slow tediousness of his journey. By degrees the houses stood more closely together. Spire after spire of the churches were faintly seen against the gray sky; he was in the city. In another half hour he would be at home, where he was not expected. The faint light from the altars shone through the windows of the church which stood opposite his house.

"Sonia will be surprised," he said to himself with a smile. Surprise and pleasure to him were one and the same. "Two o'clock!" he added, as he sounded his repeater. "It is both too early and too late to arrive. But after all, what does it matter? Here I am."

The concierge, half asleep, slowly opened the huge

porte cochère, the sledge drove away, and Boris, with his valise in his hand, ran lightly up the stairs and rang very gently at the door of his apartment. He waited, and rang a second time more loudly.

Behind the door he heard the sound of quickly coming feet, which were evidently bare; and a voice sweet, though startled, called:

"Who is there?"

"It is I, Sonia—Boris Grébof. I have come; open the door."

A joyous little cry, the key turned, the door opened wide, and Sonia appeared with her lamp in her hand.

A long linen garment covered her slender figure from throat to feet. A scarlet shawl was thrown hastily about her, while her superb hair fell in rippling masses to her knees.

"Master! master! Is it you?" she cried joyously, as she closed the door.

Boris looked at her, almost as if he did not know her. Was this the same Sonia whom he had left some months before, so pale and so frail? Her eyes flashed with joy, and possibly with fever, for she trembled from head to foot, so great was her surprise. Her cheeks were crimson and her red lips smiled. Was this Sonia?

The girl saw nothing of the effect she produced on her master. She was totally unconscious of any change in herself, and had even forgotten the simplicity of her costume; and it was the cold that recalled her to the fact that she was but thinly clad. She ran away to dress herself more warmly, and came back almost immediately to make arrangements for the comfort of her master. The samovar was soon smoking upon the table.

"Sit down and let us have some tea together," said Boris. "You are trembling with cold."

"No, master, it is with pleasure. Oh! how I have longed to have you back again!"

And Sonia's sparkling eyes laughed with joy, as did her lips.

"You are glad to see me, then?" said Boris, delighted at the girl's happiness.

"I should think so, indeed. Everything has been so dismal here without you. You never can imagine how dreary and lonely I have been!"

"What did you do to amuse yourself?"

"To amuse myself? Well! I made a new dress, and then I read; and then I read more. All those," and she pointed to a pile of books which lay on a small table in the corner. "I put scraps of paper to mark those things which I did not understand. You will explain them all to me, will you not, master?"

And she looked at him again with that expression of joyous confidence, which had already gone straight to Grébof's heart.

"I will explain anything in the world you wish," he answered, after a long silence. "But just at present I feel that the best thing for me to do is to sleep."

"I am ashamed of myself," cried Sonia, darting to the linen press.

And in a few moments more the bed was made up with fresh sheets, and the girl, as she withdrew, lingered on the threshold to utter her usual words:

"Good-night, master. Do you need anything more?"

How sweet her voice was! how fresh and clear! But it was no longer the voice of a child; it was that of a woman.

"No; thanks. Nothing more," answered Boris, absorbed in some strange new thought.

Sonia disappeared, and the young man was left alone, to wonder at the strange transformation which had taken place in her. He had doubtless thought—if he had thought about it at all—that she would always remain the same slender, pale little creature whom he had rescued from Madame Goréline's oppression.

Suddenly, like one of those mysterious river plants, which send forth flowers and leaves in one night, to float in gorgeous triumph upon the blue, tranquil waters, the child had burst into womanhood—and what a woman she was! at once modest and seductive—a coquette, without knowing it—by virtue of her magnificent eyes and her bewildering smile. And thus he found that under his roof, instead of the docile child he had left behind him, he had now a young girl in all the youth and beauty of her eighteen years! What on earth should he do with her?

Here Boris felt that he was thrown against a granite wall; for to this question neither his heart nor his head had any reply in readiness. What should he do with Sonia? But how could he do without her? Was she not part and parcel of his home?

As he sat thus buried in thought, with sleep still far from him, a prolonged deep sound of a bell rang through the house. Boris gathered himself up with difficulty.

"Matins!" he said to himself, "and four o'clock already!"

From afar off there came another single muffled clang as if replying to the first, and then ten more from different quarters of the town. A silence ensued, and then in a moment more all the bells rang out. That strange funereal, Lenten knell—a solemn sound which, once heard, is never again forgotten.

It was this magnificent wail to which Boris listened from his window.

The smaller bells rang in their turn one solitary peal, like discreet and single tear-drops, then all the hammers struck at once upon the resounding metal in one despairing cry. From the north and the south, from the right and the left, came the funeral lament, and then the three thousand bells in Moscow's church-towers rang out like the vibrations of some vast Æolian harp.

A strange melody, composed of scattered notes, flew from one bell as it were to another—in strange accord; a cluster of arpeggios, like a pearl necklace falling from its strings into a shield of brass; then some fugitive notes, followed by a tinkling harmony of inexpressible melancholy, as if sung by spirits in pain, astray in the fast falling snow.

Not another sound without, in the almost palpable darkness—nothing but that fitful wail.

This stupendous funereal lament, which alone from each bell, would have been very melancholy in its harmonious whole, produced a very different effect—a certain calm joy—and awakened in the mind of dreaming listeners, certain vague feelings of life, security, and companionship; and to a poet how much more? The wind, sighing through

lofty forest trees, has nothing more solemn and grand than those bells.

Boris listened, until one by one the vibrations faded away. A distant church-tower continued for a minute longer than all the others to send its appeals toward the far-off sky.

A great silence then followed; the dripping of the water from the roof on the melting snow below was the only sound; a soft, damp breeze, precursor of spring, blew the young man's hair. All at once he felt a glow of unspeakable unhappiness.

"The end of Lent!" he thought. "Easter and spring-time! And my name is printed on that book with that of the kind savant to whom I owe so much! Shall I have both fame and fortune?"

He fell asleep full of different hopes, and plans.

It was very late when Boris awoke. The strong wind which arose at dawn had blown away the fog; a bright sunshine was melting the snow on the roofs, and the water poured down in brilliant sheets. A discreet hand knocked lightly at his door.

"Who is there?" called Boris, only half awake.

"It is I, master—Sonia! It is past twelve o'clock. Do you not want some breakfast?"

"Certainly," answered the young man. "I had no idea that it was so late. Lay the table. I will be with you almost immediately."

His toilette was quickly made, and he soon opened the door of the small salon, which was also the dining-room.

The white linen, the shining porcelain, the carafe of cut

crystal through which glittered the rays of the sun piercing the mass of growing plants in the window, were all so home-like and agreeable to the eye, that the young man's heart leaped with pleasure.

He uttered a sigh of satisfaction as he drew a chair to the table. He was again at home, and what palace, however magnificent, can equal that humble home where one is master, where each thing is your own, and gives you a silent welcome!

"Be patient, master, I am coming!" said Sonia from outside the door. She appeared in another minute, carrying in both hands a smoking dish whose steam surrounded her rosy, smiling face with a sort of halo.

She deposited her burthen on the table.

"Good-day, master!" she said, with a profound bow and courtesy after the Russian custom. Then she took her place behind him ready to wait upon him.

Boris met the honest, beaming eyes, which always made him think of his mother.

"Eat, master, I beg of you. I hope you will find your breakfast good, for you must be in great need of it."

Boris was very hungry, but he could not take his eyes off the white throat and luxuriant braids, nor from that simple gown, and the delicate wrists from which the sleeves were carefully rolled up.

"Sonia, how old are you?" he said, suddenly.

The *you* surprised the girl.

"Have I offended you in any way?" she murmured, in much trouble.

"No, indeed!" answered Boris, coloring slightly.

"How old are you?"

"I do not know exactly," she answered, in a relieved tone; "either sixteen or seventeen. Why do you ask?"

"That I may know," answered her master, with a smile.

And why did he ask? He could not have told himself.

"We had visitors in your absence," continued Sonia, seeing that he was not disposed to talk. "Prince Armianof."

"Yes, I know it. He wrote to me," replied Boris, eating with an excellent appetite.

Sonia mentioned several other visitors, and then named, with a certain hesitation, the wife and daughter of Général Goréline.

"Goréline!" repeated Boris, with his fork in the air; "are you not mistaken, child?"

"Oh! no, master; it was certainly they—they were both in black, but poorly dressed."

"Ah!" answered her master, thoughtfully. "Did they say what they wanted?"

"No; they simply said they would return."

Grébof reflected for a few moments, then suddenly resumed his knife and fork as if resolved not to lose time. Sonia, following him with her eyes, was properly astonished and pleased at the compliment paid to her culinary skill.

"Is it good, master?" she said, eagerly.

"Excellent! And you—do you not eat your breakfast?"

"Yes, after you have finished."

Boris looked at the rosy cheeks and happy eyes which were by his side, restrained a sentence which he was about to utter, and finished his breakfast in silence.

As he rose, Sonia hastened to clear the table.

"Let those things be!" cried Grébof, impatiently.

Sonia looked at him in astonishment.

"Why do you do such things?" He stopped, not knowing in precisely what words to couch his sentiments.

"Dear master! who would do it if I did not?" answered Sonia, with a soft little laugh. "You took me to wait upon you—things must be in order, or you would certainly send me away!"

She laughed and talked, as she moved busily between the salon and the kitchen.

"Send her away!" Boris could not smile at this jest. Send away Sonia! the very light and life of his home! Then returned the troublesome question—what was he to do with the young girl?

"I will think about it later," he said, and he went out on business.

"Later" is the Russian's great word.

On his way he had a brilliant idea; but whatever it was, it was by no means a consoling one, and totally robbed him of his morning's gayety. By dint of steady thought, he had decided that there was only one solution to the problem.

He re-entered the house, however, determined to do what he had decided was for the best.

"Sonia," he said, while she waited on him at dinner, "have you ever thought of marrying?"

"I?" she answered, in great amazement.

"Has no one made love to you during my absence? Has no handsome young fellow asked you to marry him?"

"Asked me?" she repeated, more and more bewildered, and blushing to the tips of her ears. "No one," she continued, firmly; "no one whatever. But why do you ask, master?"

It was Boris who had taught her to ask "why" when she failed to understand anything; and at this moment he possibly regretted his instructions.

"Because," he answered, slowly and with some confusion, "I have decided to do something for you when you are married—and now that you are eighteen—"

He hesitated; he hardly knew in what words to explain his intentions.

Sonia waited a moment, and finding that he had no intention of saying more, she began to speak in the grave, slow voice which he had heard but twice before in his life from her lips—the day he had lost his mother, and the other time when Lydie had betrayed him.

"Master!" she said, and a certain innocent reproach vibrated in her tones. "Your dead mother made me promise her to serve you faithfully all my life! If I am unfortunate enough to displease you, and if you order me to leave your house, it is not a husband whose protection I should seek—I should go to the house of the Lord, where, perhaps, they would condescend to receive me as a servant. If I ever offend you, my master, it is God alone who could comfort me; and it is to a convent that I should go. If therefore I have not displeased you, allow me to continue to serve you!"

Erect and with her arms falling at her side, she was again the Sonia of other days; her words were humble, but her dignity was perfect, and Boris it was, who felt humiliated and belittled.

As she finished speaking, she was about to prostrate herself after the common Russian custom. He lifted her before her brow touched the earth. She did not persist, but straightened herself, and awaited his reply, with her sweet pure eyes fixed on his.

"You are right, and I am a fool!" he said suddenly, and turned away. He was really ashamed to meet her eyes, and yet he felt himself compelled to do so—so strong was their magnetism.

"I am a fool!" he repeated, laughing to conceal his embarrassment. "Go! I will not talk any more nonsense to-day."

Sonia resumed her ordinary expression—that is to say, the one which was new to Boris. Her fair face had a soft color in the rounded cheeks, and to her eyes and lips the smiles returned; and later still, above the hissing and bubbling of the tea-kettle, he heard her humming a peasant's song—and this was a sound he had not heard from her for years.

Many visits, much business, and innumerable cares had accumulated during the absence of Boris, who for a fortnight was in his rooms only to sleep. Sonia found no time to discuss her studies with him, but her patience was untiring, and the house was full of happiness.

By degrees this outside work and excitement calmed down; they fell back into the old groove, to the infinite contentment of both Sonia and Boris.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A FAIR HORIZON.

ONE afternoon the young master had settled down to his work. Sonia was putting the salon in order when the bell rang, and a voice which Boris failed to recognize, so sharp had its tones become, asked for Monsieur Grébof.

"Come in, mademoiselle," answered Sonia.

"Announce us!" said the same voice.

While Sonia disembarrassed the visitors of their wraps and furs, the voice added, in a lower tone, and in French:

"You see, mamma! She is absolutely elegant!"

"A mere waiting woman!" replied the other person.

At this kind and courteous observation Boris was no longer in doubt: it was Madame Goréline and her daughter.

Instinctively he examined Sonia, who, after having introduced them to the salon, now came to give him the names of his visitors. There was nothing elegant in her toilette itself—a very simple stuff dress of a soft shade of brown—a white collar and black apron. It was, indeed, the costume of a waiting woman, but one who is exceptionably careful and neat. But that which gave an air of fête to this severe simplicity, where not an end of ribbon, or scrap of lace was visible, was the care with which the dress was fitted to the graceful figure; the classic head and rich

hair; the delicate tone of the complexion, and the girl's simple dignity. She had no look of a waiting-maid, and yet her whole attire was not worth five roubles.

Boris saw all this at one glance, and smiled at Sonia, who questioned him with her eyes earnestly, but almost unconsciously. She had grown pale as she pronounced Mademoiselle Goréline's name. Did she anticipate a painful scene for her master? It is quite possible.

But the smile reassured her; she answered back with another, and retired to the kitchen to continue her interrupted avocations.

As he entered the salon, Grébof felt himself to be entirely his own master. The Past was dead, as dead as if it had never existed. The two ladies rose when they saw him; he saluted them politely, and offered them chairs, and then took a seat himself.

Lydie was no longer Lydie. She was a faded old maid —an old maid at twenty-five! This was her real age, and of course she should have been in all her freshness; but to husband-hunters, a year passed in the chase counts double. She had been in society seven years, and wasted hopes and expectations, wounded vanity and disappointed ambition had left their mark on her voice and character, as well as on her face.

By candlelight she was still beautiful; for nothing could mar the pure classic outline of her features; but by daylight, as Boris now saw her, in her dress of tumbled black silk, her lace hat, which was far from fresh, and with her worn gloves, her reddened eyes and faded complexion, and the discontented expression about her eyes,

she was not even Lydie's shadow. She was a younger edition of Madame Goréline.

Boris, seeing all this sad change, compassionated her in his heart; but only as he would have pitied any woman whom he knew to have fallen from a brilliant past to a miserable present.

His commiseration was short and superfluous however; to tell the truth, he had never known her, and never really loved her; it was simply the possibilities inherent in her nature which he had recognized; it was rather what she might have been than what she was, that he had loved, and therefore it was, that he was able to give her up so utterly the day of his discovery of her treason toward him.

While he contemplated her daughter thus sadly, Madame Goréline began to speak with such fluency, that it was easy to see that she was greatly embarrassed, notwithstanding her characteristic self-possession.

She recited her bead-roll of miseries as if she had been in the habit of doing so for some time. "Her husband was dead," she said, "and justice had not been done to her in regard to her pension as a widow.

"As to my daughter," she continued, with bitter emphasis, "she is entitled to an especial pension, although they pretend to say that my son, Eugène, is old enough to be of use. He is to be sure a handsome young fellow of eighteen; but are boys of eighteen often able to add to the incomes of impoverished mothers? Do you yourself think, Boris Ivanovitch, that a youth of that age, who has not yet left college, can be good for very much?"

Boris remembered when he was eighteen, while he was still at the university—that he had given lessons to enable him in some degree to lighten his mother's burthens; but not wishing to say this, he merely made a slight gesture, which the lady accepted as acquiescence.

"I am glad you agree with me," continued the lady, "for I said precisely this to the minister. Then I was informed that if some influential person would intercede for me, that something might be done. I wrote to Prince Armianof, my neighbor—a terrible humiliation to me, after the manner in which he has behaved. You know, of course, that he is married—he has not presented his wife to us, by the way—not that she is in the least interesting, you understand; she is not even pretty, and such airs as she gives herself! She evidently thinks us not worth visiting, and yet she is the daughter of an ordinary professor of Latin!

"However, there is nothing that a mother would not do for the sake of her children; so I wrote to the Prince to tell him of the injustice with which I had been treated. And will you believe me when I tell you that he has not condescended to come and see us! He wrote that he would do all that lay in his power for us, and that is all. He knows very well that I am simply a poor widow without any protector. During the life of my beloved husband, no one would have dared to treat me in this way."

And Madame Goréline wiped her perfectly dry eyes with a ragged handkerchief.

"Prince Armianof, then, has been able to do nothing for you?" said Boris, coldly.

"On the contrary, he obtained an addition to my pension of three hundred roubles, to revert to my daughter after my death; but he took no pains to inform me of this, and when I heard it, if I had not at once gone to see the minister to ask when and how this had been done, I should never have known that Armianof had lifted his finger in the matter—that it was in fact he who had asked and obtained the increase in the pension. Really, it seems to me that there are some people who have no *savoir vivre* whatever."

"If you have what you wish," said Boris, repressing a smile, "you ought to felicitate yourself on having succeeded—"

"Yes," answered Madame Goréline, with volubility; "but that is not enough, Monsieur Grébof! We were compelled to buy mourning, and then my son—ah! sons are expensive, as you know, and we cannot make both ends meet. I do not like to say this to you, Monsieur Grébof—to you who have known us in better days; but I assure you we practise the most rigid economy. We live simply, almost poorly, and yet our expenses are greater than our income. Then I thought it was possible that you could be useful to us—you are so good!"

Madame Goréline stopped, with her eyes fixed on Boris, waiting for a word of encouragement.

Extraordinarily enough she had forgotten that she had actually once lifted her hand to strike him; that she had overwhelmed him with insults—with hot, burning words—that she had driven him out of her house—all because he had presumed to ask the hand of her daughter! She

remembered only one thing: that he had loved Lydie, which, in her opinion, was reason enough for him to go on all-fours the rest of his life to serve her, if they should happen to desire it.

Such characters are by no means rare; many such are met in society; the varnish of good manners which cover them over is more or less thick. Boris, utterly dumbfounded, listened to this flow of words, to which this most unexpected conclusion added a deliciously comic element. Had Lydie not been there—Lydie, who sat with her eyes cast down in pale silence—he would have politely conducted Madame Goréline to the door, and told her that he was utterly useless for her purposes; but her daughter's weary look made him more merciful toward the mother, and he allowed himself to be drawn on to the desired end.

"You are so good!" resumed Madame Goréline, after waiting in vain for a reply. "You have become a person of celebrity also," she added, with an attempt at a gay laugh. "You have published a new book, which is really very creditable to you, Monsieur Boris." Here she nodded with a most knowing air. "Your name is invariably seen among the contributors to all the journals and reviews, and we consequently thought that you might be useful to us. As I said before, we are old friends, Monsieur Grébof—very old friends," she added, after a pause.

Boris felt as if he were in a dream, and he sat looking at her almost incredulously.

"Yes, indeed, we are old friends. I was possibly a little quick-tempered," she sighed, profoundly; "I have always been so; and then who could possibly foresee after

so many years that— Well, never mind! You will come and see us, I hope, Boris Ivanovitch."

"You came, I think," said Boris, in a most frigid tone, "to ask something of me?"

"Ah! yes—precisely. This is just it: my daughter refused to come; she said that you had forgotten us; but I determined to come all the same, and she finally concluded to accompany me. She has translated a German novel—a long one—three whole volumes, Monsieur Grébof, and I thought that you might recommend it to the editor of a review—either the *Messager de l'Europe*, or the *Messager Russe*, perhaps."

"You are not squeamish, upon my word, Madame Goréline!" thought Boris.

"This is the manuscript," continued the lady, taking a voluminous roll from her daughter's hand; "will you glance at it? It is well and most conscientiously done, I do assure you. She looked out every word in the dictionary that she did not know. Yes, indeed, it is thoroughly well done!"

Boris took the manuscript—that same fine but irregular writing had made his heart beat to suffocation more than once in the past few years! How distant seemed those *dictées* from Jocelyn! He opened the package, and examined the title.

It was a sentimental effusion, such as would be found in a *Journal des Demoiselles;* but one where the lips of the fiancés play as important a part as their hearts, after the German fashion.

Lydie, trembling and nervous, watched Grébof, as he

turned over the leaves. Did she remember Lamartine and the year she was eighteen? Who knows, so much had since happened?

This little salon, too, might possibly have some suggestions to make to her.

"I am really grieved that you should have had all this labor," said Boris, much distressed by the reply that he was forced to make, and turning for the first time a kindly glance upon the young lady. "You have undertaken an enormous labor, and it is very unfortunate that you did not ask the advice of some man experienced in such matters before you began it. The translation seems good, but the work itself, I fear, is worthless. No editor whom I know would consent to publish a tale of such little value."

"But, Boris Ivanovitch, we know that if you should take it to any Review, they would take it on your recommendation. Every one has such entire confidence in your judgment, that they would not ask a question if you handed it in."

"I am very far from having the influence with which you credit me," answered Boris, quietly; "but were it as you say, I should in that case be compelled to use the greater caution and discretion, and should never venture to offer any work like this most unfortunate romance. I say this to you with the greatest possible regret, and trust that you will understand that it is not the translation which I in any degree condemn, but the book itself; and I assure you that the public will think with me."

"You refuse, then, to do what I ask of you—what we both ask of you, Boris Ivanovitch?" replied Madame

Goréline, in her most insinuating voice; "ah! that is not kind! Once you would have done anything to please my daughter!" she added, with a smile, which she tried to make extremely insinuating.

Lydie snatched at her mother's arm with a quick, almost rude gesture, but it was too late; the words had passed her lips. Boris rose, pale with anger, and bowed to his visitors in a way that clearly indicated that he regarded the interview as closed. Madame Goréline was, however, by no means the woman to allow herself to be thus dismissed without taking her revenge.

"You refuse because you have other matters in hand," she broke out, angrily. "The society of respectable people is irksome to you now, I presume. When people associate with beggars and the scum of the earth, one loses one's disposition to be useful to people of birth and position."

"What do you mean?" asked Boris.

"I mean," cried Madame Goréline, in her sharpest voice, "that I did a kindly act to society the day I drove you from my door, with the girl whom you have taken for your mistress—with whom you live openly—and in defiance of public opinion—and whom you have the impertinence to allow to open the door to visitors. Come, Lydie; we should never have set foot in this house."

"So I told you, mamma," the girl replied, in her sharp voice.

A heavy fall was heard, but Boris paid no attention to it; he shook from head to foot. The blood rushed to his head and blinded him. The brutal side of his nature—and all men have more or less of this quality—tempted

him to wring the necks of these two women. He made one hasty step toward them, showing so much energy and anger, that they retreated in terror.

"Mamma! mamma!" cried Lydie, taking refuge behind an arm-chair. "He will certainly hurt us. Call for help!"

These words restored to Boris all his *sang froid.* With the most punctilious politeness he threw open the door of the salon. They hurried into the anteroom, and hastily caught their cloaks and wraps, which were hung there by Sonia's careful hands.

The manuscript had fallen to the ground. Boris picked it up and laid it on the table before Lydie, who was pulling on her fur boots. She cast a furtive glance at this man who had once loved her. Anger, fear, respect, and not a little admiration, were in her eyes, which met those of Boris, while his were full of cold contempt. All that was bad in her nature rose to the surface, and as her foot reached the stairs, she uttered these words:

"I did well not to marry a profligate; a man who carries off little girls to seduce them!"

"After Treason comes Calumny," replied Boris, now entirely master of himself. "It is always the order of things. Good-morning."

And he closed the door on the two women.

For a few moments he lingered in the anteroom, seeking to bring order into the mental chaos which his visitors had created.

A hot flush of rage.—Sonia must have heard all! The thin walls of the apartment permitted the least whisper to

penetrate them. He rushed to the kitchen with feverish haste, a vague misgiving tormenting him.

The bright little room was shining with cleanliness, but it was deserted. He opened the door leading to the private stair-case. Not a sound could he hear. Much disturbed, he examined, with trembling hands, Sonia's clothing, which hung in a small wardrobe: the cloak and shawl she ordinarily wore on going out were in their places. He went on and entered his room, but there was no one there either.

There was now no other spot to examine except the half dark closet where Sonia's bed had stood, and which he had never entered since the day they moved into the house. Up to this moment he had not called her, but, when his hand was on the door, he stopped and said, in a low, smothered voice:

"Sonia!"

A faint sound—sob or sigh—was heard. He entered quickly, and, kneeling on the floor, he beheld Sonia, with her face buried in her hands.

Boris could hardly see her in the dim light. Her hair had become loose, and covered her shoulders with its wealth. As the young man appeared, she seemed to crouch still lower, as if ashamed to meet his eyes.

"Sonia!" said Boris, taking another step toward her.

His heart was aching. He would have given anything in the world, to calm those despairing sobs which convulsed the shoulders of the crushed little creature. He would have liked to snatch her to his breast, to dry her tears with his kisses, as he would have done to a hurt child. He

dared not, however; for it would have been an offence to the girl's awakened susceptibility.

"Sonia!" he repeated.

This appeal was full of tenderness.

She turned her eyes, swimming in tears, toward him. How submissive and yet entreating was her gaze! and it seemed to demand mercy, as if she expected a blow.

The young man's heart beat quickly. Those supplicating eyes revealed to him a host of sentiments, hitherto lying dormant and unsuspected in his heart.

"Sonia," he said, "I have been very wrong. I implore your pardon."

"Pardon," she exclaimed, rising hastily. "You! Is it you who ask pardon of me?"

She fell on her knees before the young man.

"I ought to have known that my presence here would do you harm; that it was not proper for me to be your servant any longer, and that you would be accused of wicked things. O master! you have given me everything. Thanks to you, I have learned to know God and good people. You have given me ease and liberty, and you have loved me, as your blessed mother did. And I have only brought to you insult and injury. Ah! would that I could die!"

Boris did not venture to interrupt her. It seemed to him that this was the critical hour of his life; that his destiny hung on Sonia's lips, and that her next words would seal his fate.

"Yes, I would like to die—or go away," she resumed, with tears and passionate vehemence; "but I cannot leave

you—you, master!—I cannot leave you; for you are everything to me; and I cannot live away from you! I love you too much to depart. How can I live where you are not? When you were away I thought that all the sunlight had faded out of the sky. My life was desolate—I have been a miserable coward! When you asked me if I did not mean to marry, I should have said Yes, and gone away at once; but I could not. I never dreamed that you would be insulted on my account!"

Boris listened, and with each despairing word uttered by the child, a deeper joy filled his heart, a new horizon spread itself before him—a lifetime of happiness. He listened with his eyes dilated and lips parted, as if fearful of losing one word; while his arms were half extended as if to snatch her when she had finished speaking.

"I am going away, master; I am going away this very day, this very hour; and you will tell them all that there was no truth in what they said, and that I am gone. Ah! yes; I should have done this before; but it was surely not my fault that I love you more than my life. When I am gone, you will be happy!"

She was leaning on the little box which contained all her worldly effects, and turned a face glowing with the beautiful light of self-sacrifice toward Boris. She turned away. Boris caught her in his arms.

"Happy!" he cried. "Happy without you! I love you, Sonia! Will you be my wife?"

THE END.

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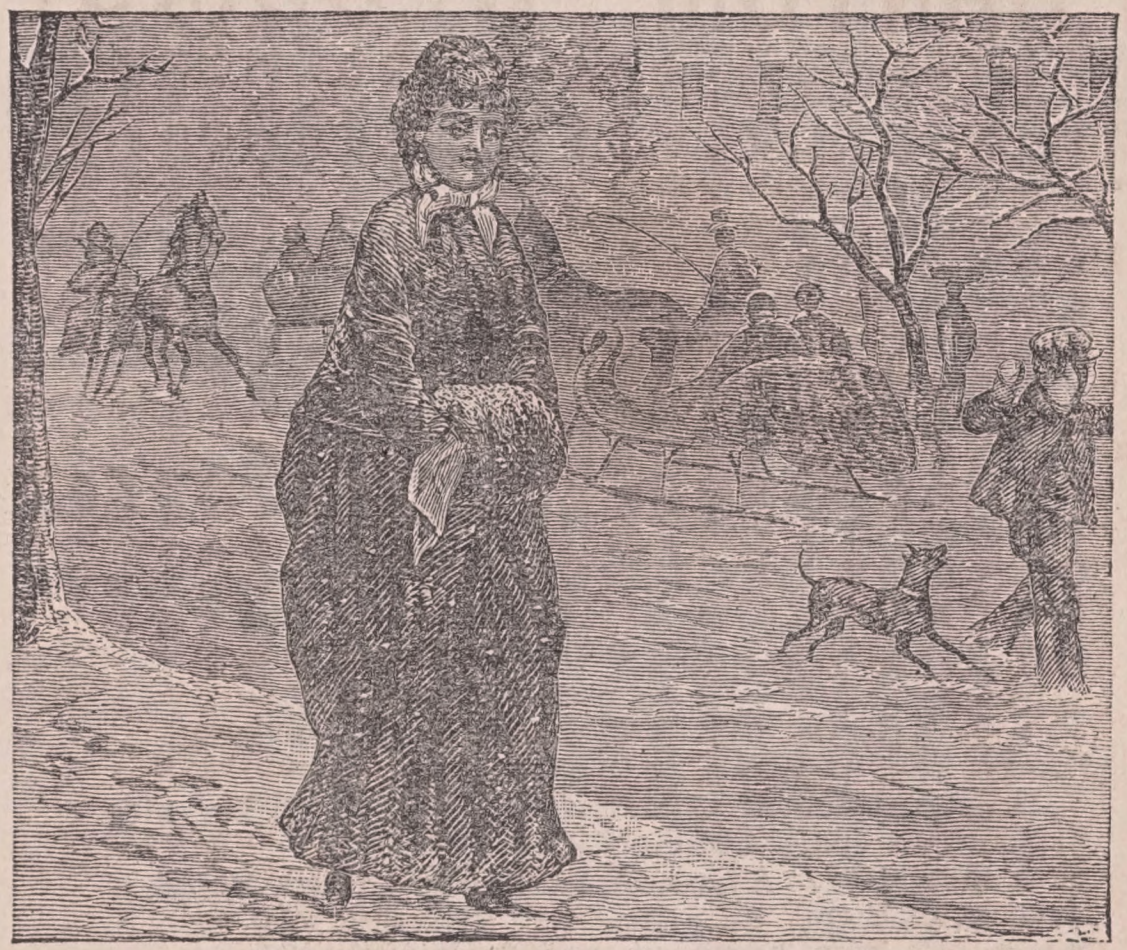

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