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PLAYS OF TO-DAY & TO-MORROW
THE
LOWER DEPTHS
MAXIM GORKY
TRANSLATED BY LAURENCE IRVING



July 4th 1912
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THE LOWER DEPTHS

Plays of To-day and To-morrow

DON. By RUDOLF BESIER.

"Mr. Besier is a man who can see and think for himself, and constructs as setting for the result of that activity a form of his own. The construction of 'Don' is as daring as it is original."—Mr. Max Beerbohm in *The Saturday Review*.

"It is a fresh and moving story . . . and full of good things."—Mr. A. B. Walkley in *The Times*.

"'Don' is a genuine modern comedy, rich in observation and courage, and will add to the author's reputation as a sincere dramatist."—Mr. E. F. Spence in *The Westminster Gazette*.

THE EARTH. By JAMES B. FAGAN.

"A magnificent play—at one and the same time a vital and fearless attack on political fraud, and a brilliantly-written strong human drama."—*The Daily Chronicle*.

"'The Earth' must conquer every one by its buoyant irony, its pungent delineations, and not least by its rich stores of simple and wholesome moral feeling."—*The Pall Mall Gazette*.

LADY PATRICIA. By RUDOLF BESIER.

"One of the most delightful productions which the stage has shown us in recent years. Mr. Besier's work would 'read' deliciously; it is literary, it is witty, it is remarkable. . . . 'Lady Patricia' is much more than merely a success of laughter. It is also a success of literature. It is difficult, if not impossible, to convey the delicate feeling for words, the quaint, satirical quizzing of Mr. Besier of the *précieuse*, the dabblers in sentiment, the *poseurs* who form the people of his play."—*The Standard*.

THE MASTER OF MRS. CHILVERS.

By JEROME K. JEROME.

"It cannot be denied that Mr. Jerome has written an excellent acting play."—*Glasgow Herald*.

"There is no caricature of the suffragist, and every type in the play is both carefully and skilfully drawn."—*Aberdeen Free Press*.

THE WATERS OF BITTERNESS

(A Play in Three Acts) and **THE CLOD-HOPPER** (An Incredible Comedy).

By S. M. FOX.

"I am inclined to think that we shall hear a great deal of Mr. Fox—supposing that Mr. Fox writes other plays as clever as 'The Waters of Bitterness,' and supposing that managers think the public clever enough to appreciate them. Anyhow his is a strong and bold début."—Mr. Max Beerbohm in *The Saturday Review*.

LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN
NEW YORK: DUFFIELD & CO.



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MAXIM GORKY.

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THE
LOWER DEPTHS

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

BY
MAXIM GORKI

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL RUSSIAN
BY
LAURENCE IRVING

*Mondays
94/1*

LONDON: T. FISHER UNWIN,
ADELPHI TERRACE

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The Cast of "The Lower Depths," as it was produced
at the Kingsway Theatre, London, on December
2, 1911 :

Luka	...	...	...	...	...	...	HOLMAN CLARKE
Vassilisa	...	...	...	...	...	...	FRANCES WETHERALL
Vaska Pepel	...	...	...	...	...	...	O. P. HEGGIE
Natasha	...	...	...	...	...	...	JEAN BLOOMFIELD
The Actor	...	...	...	...	...	...	LEWIS WILLOUGHBY
Anna	...	...	...	...	...	...	HAIDEE WRIGHT
Satine	...	...	...	...	...	...	HERBERT BUNSTON
Nastya	...	...	...	...	...	...	LYDIA YAVORSKA
The Baron	...	...	...	...	...	...	VINCENT CLIVE
Kvashnya	...	...	...	...	...	...	CLARE GREET
Boobnoff	...	...	...	...	...	...	E. H. BROOKE
Kleeshtsh	...	...	...	...	...	...	C. F. COLLINGS
Myedvyedeff	...	...	...	...	...	...	ALBAN ATTWOOD
Kostoloff	...	...	...	...	...	...	J. H. BREWER
The Tartar	...	...	...	...	...	...	IVAN BERLYN
Alyoshka	...	...	...	...	...	...	RICHARD NEVILLE
When	...	...	...	...	...	...	SIDNEY TEVERSHAM

THE FIRST ACT

THE FIRST ACT

SCENE.—*A cave-like cellar. The ceiling is arched, grimy, with the plaster peeling off. The light comes from a square window high up in the right wall. The right corner is partitioned off with thin boards; it forms PEPER'S room. Close to the door of this room are BOOBNOFF'S sleeping-planks. In left corner is a large Russian stove; in the stone wall left is the kitchen door, where KVASHNYA, the BARON, and NASTYA live. Against the wall, between the stove and the door, is a large bed with dirty print curtains. Sleeping-planks around the walls. To the front by the left wall is a block of wood with a vice, and an anvil, also another lower block of wood.*

(On the lower block KLESSHTSH is seated trying keys into old locks. At his feet are two large bundles of miscellaneous keys, strung on wire rings, a battered tin samovar, hammer, and pincers. In the middle of the shelter are a large table, two seats, a stool, all dirty and of plain wood. KVASHNYA is behind the table attending to the samovar, the BARON is chewing some black bread, and NASTYA

is on the stool, leaning her elbow on the table, reading a tattered book. In the bed, behind the curtains, ANNA lies coughing. BOOBNOFF is seated on his planks with an old hat shape between his knees, considering how he shall deal with a pair of unstitched old trousers. Scattered about him are a couple of vizors, some pieces of buckram, a rag. SATINE has only just gone off to sleep on his planks; he grunts in his sleep. The ACTOR, out of sight, tosses about on the stove and coughs.)

(It is an early spring morning.)

THE BARON.

And after !

KVASHNYA.

No, says I, no, dearie, just you stow it, says I ; I've tried it, you see . . . and it's no more marriages for me !

BOOBNOFF.

(To SATINE.) Stop that grunting !

KVASHNYA.

What for, says I ; me a free woman, my own mistress—what for should I go and give up my passport and saddle myself with a husband—no ! I wouldn't marry no man—let alone one of them American Princes, that I wouldn't !

KLESSHTSH.

You lie !

KVASHNYA.

What-at?

KLESSHTSH.

You lie ! You'll marry Abramka. . . .

THE BARON.

(Reading the title of the book he has snatched away from NASTYA.) "The Fatal Love" . . .
(He laughs.)

NASTYA.

(Extending hand.) Give now . . . give it . . . stop fooling !

(The BARON flourishes the book in the air.)

KVASHNYA.

(To KLESSHTSH.) You red goat, you—telling me I lie ! Just don't you dare to give me none of them coarse words.

THE BARON.

(Striking the book on NASTYA'S head.) Nastya, you little fool ! . . .

NASTYA.

Give it here.

KLESSHTSH.

Quite the fine lady. . . . But you'll be married to Abramka . . . and you know you're just dying to. . . .

KVASHNYA.

Aren't you clever ! I just see myself . . . you as 'as done your wife nearly to death.

KLESSHTSH.

Stop it, you hag ! Tain't no affair of yours. . . .

KVASHNYA.

Ah, ha, you can't stand the truth !

THE BARON.

They're started. Nastya, where are you ?

ANNA.

(Putting her head through the curtains.)
Morning at last ! For Heaven's sake don't shout . . . stop quarrelling.

KLESSHTSH.

Moaning—moaning.

ANNA.

Every blessed day. . . . Might let me die in peace.

BOOBNOFF.

Noise ain't no 'indrance to dying.

KVASHNYA.

(Approaching ANNA.) 'Ow yer ever 'ave managed, you poor soul, to live with such a beast ?

ANNA.

Don't . . . don't. . . .

KVASHNYA.

Well, well! You're such a patient thing. . . .
Ain't the chest no easier?

THE BARON.

Kvashnya! Time for market. . . .

KVASHNYA.

Just a second! *(To ANNA.)* 'Ud yer like
some of my 'ot pies?

ANNA.

No, no . . . thanks. Why should I eat?

KVASHNYA.

Must eat. 'Ot ones—soothing. I'll leave you
some in a cup . . . then when you feel like
it, yer gobble it up! Come on, Baron. . . .
(To KLESSHTSH.) Er—you dirty beast! . . .
(Goes into kitchen.)

ANNA.

(Coughing.) Lord, Lord. . . .

THE BARON.

(Softly nudging NASTYA'S elbow.) Chuck it
. . . yer silly!

NASTYA.

(Growls.) Do go. . . . I let you alone.

*(THE BARON goes out after KVASHNYA,
whistling.)*

SATINE.

(*Sitting up on his planks.*) Can't think who it was that pummelled me yesterday?

BOOBNOFF.

Does it matter much 'oo it was?

SATINE.

Leave it at that. . . . But what was it for, though?

BOOBNOFF.

Was yer playin' cards?

SATINE.

Played.

BOOBNOFF.

Well, then, that's 'ow it was. . . .

SATINE.

The blackguards.

THE ACTOR.

(*Raising his head from the stove.*) One of these days you'll get such a real pummelling—a pummelling to death.

SATINE.

Don't talk rot.

THE ACTOR.

Why rot?

SATINE.

Because . . . a man can't die twice over.

THE ACTOR.

(After a silence.) What do you mean? How can't he?

KLESSHTSH.

Come down off that stove, and sweep up. . . .
What are yer shamming there?

THE ACTOR.

That's none of your business. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

Wait till Vassilisa comes—she'll soon show yer yours.

THE ACTOR.

Vassilisa can go to the devil. It's the Baron's day to sweep. . . . Baron!

(BARON coming out from the kitchen.)

THE BARON.

I've no time for sweeping. . . . I'm off to market with Kvashnya.

THE ACTOR.

For all I care . . . you may be going to jail. . . . It's your turn to sweep . . . and I'm not on to doing other people's jobs. . . .

THE BARON.

Oh, go to blazes! Let Nastya do it. . . . Hi, you there, fatal love! Buck up! *(Takes book from NASTYA.)*

NASTYA.

(*Getting up.*) What now? Give it here! You puppy! And you call yerself a gentleman. . . .

THE BARON.

(*Giving back the book.*) Nastya! You're going to sweep up for me—understood?

NASTYA.

(*Going into kitchen.*) Likely indeed. . . . What next!

KVASHNYA.

(*To BARON through kitchen door.*) Now come on! They can do it without you. . . . Actor! you was asked—you do it . . . it won't kill yer!

THE ACTOR.

Yes . . . it's always me. . . . I don't see it. . . .

(*BARON comes out of kitchen carrying some earthen pots strung on a pole and covered with rags.*)

THE BARON.

A bit heavy to-day. . . .

SATINE.

Fat lot of good being born a Baron, I don't think! . . .

KVASHNYA.

(*To ACTOR.*) Just you be sure and sweep up!
(*Goes off pushing the BARON before her.*)

THE ACTOR.

(*Coming down from stove.*) It's harmful for me to inhale the dust. (*With pride.*) My organism is poisoned with alcohol. . . . (*Seated meditating on planks.*)

SATINE.

Organism . . . organon. . . .

ANNA.

Andree Mitritch. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

Well, what?

ANNA.

Left some pies for me Kvashnya did—you have them.

KLESSHTSH.

(*Approaching ANNA.*) Well, won't you?

ANNA.

No, no. . . . Why should I eat? You've to work; you . . . you need it. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

Frightened? Don't be frightened . . . might get all right. . . .

ANNA.

Go and eat! In a bad way . . . all over soon. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

Come, come—you never know . . . may pull round . . . such things happen !

(Goes into kitchen.)

THE ACTOR.

(Loud, as if he had suddenly woken up.)
Yesterday in the hospital, the doctor he said to me : “Your organism,” he said, “is thoroughly poisoned with alcohol” . . .

SATINE.

(Smiling.) Organon. . . .

THE ACTOR.

Not organon—*or-ga-nism*.

SATINE.

Sicambri. . . .

THE ACTOR.

(Waving his hand at him.) Oh, rubbish ! I say this, and seriously. If the organism is poisoned . . . why, then it must be harmful for me to sweep the floor—to inhale the dust. . . .

SATINE.

Macrobistik . . . ha !

THE ACTOR.

What are you muttering ?

SATINE.

Words . . . here's another for you—*transcendentalistic*. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

What does it mean?

SATINE.

Don't know . . . forgotten. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

What are you coming at?

SATINE.

Just so . . . I'm tired, mate, of all our human speech . . . all of our words. I'm sick of 'em. I've heard 'em every single one . . . at least a thousand times. . . .

THE ACTOR.

In the play of "Hamlet" they say: "Words, words, words!" It's a good piece . . . I played the grave-digger. . . .

(KLESSHTSH coming from the kitchen.)

KLESSHTSH.

Let's see how you play with that broom.

THE ACTOR.

Keep to your own business . . . *(Strikes his chest.)* Ophelia! O . . . think of me in thy prayers!

(In the distance is heard a dull murmur, cries, and a police whistle. KLESSHTSH sits down to his work, and scrapes away with a file.)

SATINE.

I love difficult, rare words. When I was a little chap . . . I was in a telegraph office . . . read a heap of books. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Did you work the telegraph?

SATINE.

I did. . . . There are some very good books . . . and quantities of curious words. . . . I've received an education . . . see?

BOOBNOFF.

You don't let one forget it! Much good it'd done yer! Now I—I was a fur-dyer . . . had a place of my own . . . 'ands all yaller—with the dye: dyed 'em this and dyed 'em that: 'ands all yaller right up to the elbows! "Well," I thought, "I shall never get 'em clean in this world . . . I shall just die with these 'ere yaller 'ands." . . . But look at 'em now, there's only dirt on 'em . . . nothing else.

SATINE.

Well, what of it?

BOOBNOFF.

That's just all about it. . . .

SATINE.

What are you talking about?

BOOBNOFF.

Just so . . . just comparing. . . . It shows yer whatever you does to the outside it all comes off . . . it all comes off, ay, ay.

SATINE.

Ah . . . my bones are aching !

THE ACTOR.

(*Seated nursing his knee.*) Education's bosh, the great thing is talent. I knew an actor . . . had to spell out his parts, but he played heroes in a way that . . . why, the theatre would just rock with the delight of the audiences.

SATINE.

Boobnoff, lend us five kopyeks ?

BOOBNOFF.

All I have's two. . . .

THE ACTOR.

I say . . . to play heroes you must have talent. And talent's just belief in yourself, in your own powers. . . .

SATINE.

Give me five kopyeks and I'll have belief in you ; I'll believe you a hero, a crocodile, a police inspector. . . . Klesshtsh, five kopyeks !

KLESSHTSH.

Go to hell ! The whole pack of you !

SATINE.

What are you cursing at? You haven't got a stiver in the world—I know yer!

ANNA.

Andree Mitritch . . . I'm choking . . . I can't breathe!

KLESSHTSH.

What can I do?

BOOBNOFF.

Open the passage door!

KLESSHTSH.

Thanks. Nice for you up there; I've to be on the floor . . . if I was in your place I'd say "Open it." . . . I'm cold enough without no door open.

BOOBNOFF.

It wasn't for me . . . it was for yer wife. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

(*Sulkily.*) Makes no odds who it's for.

SATINE.

My head's all buzzing. . . . Eh . . . why must people be thumping each other's heads?

BOOBNOFF.

Not only each other's heads, but all over each other's 'ole bodies. (*Gets up.*) Goin' to buy

some thread . . . they're late in showin' up to-day our losses !

(Goes out.)

(ANNA coughs: SATINE lies motionless, with his hands folded behind his head.)

THE ACTOR.

(After a melancholy look round, approaching ANNA.) Feeling bad, eh?

ANNA.

. . . the choking . . .

THE ACTOR.

Would you like to go out into the passage? Up you get, then. *(He helps her to rise, pulls a kind of shawl round her shoulders, and supports her towards the passage.)* Ay—ay . . . it's a job. I'm ill myself—poisoned with alcohol. . . .

(KOSTOLOFF in doorway.)

KOSTOLOFF.

Having a stroll?

*Here's a very pretty pair,
Gallant knight and lady fair. . . .*

THE ACTOR.

Get on one side there. . . . way for the invalids !

KOSTOLOFF.

Pass out, pass out. . . . *(He hums an anthem*

tune, glances round suspiciously, and inclines his head to the L. as if he were listening for something in PEPEL'S room.)

(Exeunt ACTOR and ANNA.)

(KLESSHTSH is jangling his keys and scraping away with his file.)

How you squeak !

KLESSHTSH.

What d'you say ?

KOSTOLOFF.

I say you squeak. *(Pause.)* Er . . . There was something I wanted to ask you. *(Quick and low.)* Wife not been here ?

KLESSHTSH.

Ain't seen her.

KOSTOLOFF.

(Carefully approaching the door of PEPEL'S room.) It's a lot of room that you take up for your rouble a month. The bed . . . and then where you sit . . . hum, yes ! Five roubles' worth of room as Heaven's above us. I shall have to stick you on half a rouble. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

You'd put a rope round my neck, and strangle me. . . . You're near the grave, and you think of nothing but half-roubles. . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

Why strangle you? What were the use of that? Live in the Lord, live and prosper. . . . But I shall have to stick you on half a rouble—'ave to buy oil for the sacred lamp . . . that it may burn before the Holy Ikons in atonement of my sins. . . . And my sins will be forgiven me, and yours too. Your sins you don't think about . . . no, verily. . . . Oh, Andruishka, you are a wicked man! Your wife is perishing through your wickedness . . . no one loves you, nor esteems you . . . your work is squeaky, disturbing to everybody.

KLESSHTSH.

What do you come here for—baiting me?

(SATINE gives a loud growl.)

KOSTOLOFF.

(With a start.) Lord, there's a noise for you. . . .

(The ACTOR entering.)

THE ACTOR.

I've sat her down in the passage, and wrapped her up.

KOSTOLOFF.

Here's what I call a real good fellow. There are good deeds. They shall all be paid back to you.

THE ACTOR.

When?

KOSTOLOFF.

In the other world, my boy . . . there all, every one of our acts, they shall all be reckoned up. . . .

THE ACTOR.

Suppose you were to reward me for my goodness down here. . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

How can I do that?

THE ACTOR.

Wipe out half my debt.

KOSTOLOFF.

He—he ! You are always joking, my dear boy, —always poking fun. . . . Is the goodness of the heart to be paid for in money? Goodness— is above all other gifts. But your debt to me— that is . . . your debt to me. And accordingly you should pay me back. . . . Doing me good for its own sake, to me, who am an old man. . . .

THE ACTOR.

Old man—you old rogue ! . . .

(Goes into the kitchen.)

(KLESSHTSH gets up and goes into the passage.)

KOSTOLOFF.

The squeaker—he's hooked it. He—he ! He has no love for me. . . .

SATINE.

Who but the Devil does love you?

KOSTOLOFF.

Oh, you've a bad tongue! Yet I love all of you. . . . I see that you are my poor, down-trodden, useless, fallen brothers. . . . (*Suddenly and rapidly.*) And Vaska . . . is he at home?

SATINE.

Look . . .

(*Going to the door and knocking at it.*)

Vaska!

(*THE ACTOR appears at the kitchen door, chewing something.*)

PEPEL.

Who is it?

KOSTOLOFF.

It's me . . . me, Vaska!

PEPEL.

What d'you want?

KOSTOLOFF.

(*Bawling back.*) Open!

SATINE.

(*Without looking at KOSTOLOFF.*) He opens, and there she'll be. . . .

(*THE ACTOR makes a grimace.*)

KOSTOLOFF.

(*Low, anxiously.*) Eh? Who'll be there? What do you mean?

SATINE.

What's that? Are you asking me?

KOSTOLOFF.

What did you say?

SATINE.

I was just . . . talking to myself.

KOSTOLOFF.

Look here, my friend! Don't get too funny . . . see! (*Bangs on the door.*) Vassili!

PEPEL.

(*Opening door.*) Now, then? What's up?

KOSTOLOFF.

(*Looking into the room.*) I . . . you see . . . you. . . .

PEPEL.

'Ave yer brought the money?

KOSTOLOFF.

I wanted to tell you. . . .

PEPEL.

Where is—the money?

KOSTOLOFF.

What money?

PEPEL.

Why, the seven roubles for the watch—now?

KOSTOLOFF.

What watch, Vaska? What a fellow you are!

PEPEL.

You're a good 'un! Yesterday, before witnesses, I sold you a ticker for ten roubles . . . three I had—the seven—fork it up! What are yer blinking for? You prow! about waking people up . . . and now you don't know yourself what you're after.

KOSTOLOFF.

Sh—sh! Don't get angry, Vaska. . . . The watch, you see—it was . . .

PEPEL.

Stolen. . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

(*Sternly.*) I receive no stolen goods . . . that you should think—

PEPEL.

(*Taking him by the shoulder.*) Now, what did you disturb me for? What is it you want?

KOSTOLOFF.

I don't want—nothing. . . . I'll be off—if you're going to. . . .

PEPEL.

Be off, and bring the money!

KOSTOLOFF.

A dreadful surly lot! Who ever did! . . .

(*Goes off.*)

THE ACTOR.

It's a farce they're playing.

SATINE.

Good. I like farce. . . .

PEPEL.

What was he after, eh?

SATINE.

(*Smiling.*) You don't know? He's after his wife . . . why don't you settle him, Vaska?

PEPEL.

Risk my life for a thing like that. . . .

SATINE.

You're a sharp lad. Then—why shu'd marry Vassilisa . . . and become our boss. . . .

PEPEL.

You are good ! Why, you'd just fatten on me ; I'm a soft-hearted fool, you'd drink away every farthing I had. . . . (*Sits on the planks.*) The old devil . . . woke me up. . . . I was having a fine dream ; I was fishing, I'd caught a pro-digious bream ! Never saw such a one out of a dream. There I had him on my hook, and I was just dreading—"the line'll snap !" I'd just got out the gaff . . . and I was thinking to myself, now in a moment . . .

SATINE.

That weren't no bream, it was Vassilisa. . . .

THE ACTOR.

He hooked Vassilisa long ago. . . .

PEPEL.

(*Angrily.*) You can all go to the devil . . .
and you can take her with you !

(KLESSHTSH *coming out of the passage.*)

KLESSHTSH.

Cold . . . devilish cold.

THE ACTOR.

Have you left Anna out there? She'll
freeze. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

Natasha 'as taken 'er with 'er into the
kitchen. . . .

THE ACTOR.

The old man'll put her out. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

(*Sitting down to his work.*) Hum . . .
Natasha'll see to her. . . .

SATINE.

Vaska ! Let's have five kopyeks. . . .

THE ACTOR.

You . . . you and your five kopyeks. . . .
Give us twenty kopyeks. . . .

PEPEL.

I'd best hurry up . . . or you'll be wantin' a rouble. . . . There ! . . .

SATINE.

Gee-bral-tar-r ! Crooks are the best folk in the world.

KLESSHTSH.

(*Grumbling.*) Their money's easily come by . . . they don't work. . . .

SATINE.

Heaps come by their money easily, there's precious few to part with it easily. . . . Work? You make your work so that it's pleasant to me, and I don't say I won't work. . . . I might ! When your work's a pleasure, life's jolly then. When it's a toil, a duty, then life's slavery ! (*To the ACTOR.*) Here, Sardanapalus ! Come on. . . .

THE ACTOR.

Come on, Nebuchadnezzar ! I'm going to swill it down like forty thousand drunkards.

(*They go out.*)

PEPEL.

(*Yawning.*) Well, and 'ow's yer wife?

KLESSHTSH.

She ain't for long. . . . (*Pause.*)

PEPEL.

Yer know I look at you—there's no good in all that scraping.

KLESSHTSH.

What should I do?

PEPEL.

Nothing.

KLESSHTSH.

'Ow should I live?

PEPEL.

People manage. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

Them? Call them people? Rabble, muck—people! I'm a working man. . . . I'm ashamed even to look at 'em. I've worked since I was a child. . . . D'you think I shan't get clear of all this? I shall, if I leaves all my skin behind me . . . just you wait . . . my wife, she'll die. . . . I've been here six months, but it seems more like six years.

PEPEL.

There's no one here any worse than you . . . say what yer like. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

No worse! They 'aven't no honour nor no conscience.

PEPEL.

(Indifferently.) Much good of them—honour, conscience! Can you get 'em on to your feet in-

stead of boots—honour and conscience? Honour and conscience does mighty well for them as 'as the power and the strength. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

(*Re-entering.*) Ooh ! . . . bitter.

PEPEL.

Boobnoff ! Got a conscience?

BOOBNOFF.

What for? A conscience?

PEPEL.

That's just it.

BOOBNOFF.

What 'ud I do with a conscience? I ain't no rich man.

PEPEL.

That's what I say : honour and conscience they're for the rich, yes ! Here's Klesshtsh lettin' it into us ; says we ain't no consciences. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Why, is 'e wantin' to borrow some?

PEPEL.

'E 'as 'is own supply. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Oh, then 'e's sellin' off. Won't find no market here. Now, if it was old cardboard I'd take some of it . . . on account. . . .

PEPEL.

(*Didactically.*) You are an ass, Andruishka !
Just you let Satine talk to you about consciences
. . . or try the Baron. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

D'you think I'd talk to sich !

PEPEL.

They've better 'eads than yours . . . for all
their drinking. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

*'E that can be drunk and wise
'E's a man a man should prize. . . .*

PEPEL.

Satine says, every man wants a conscience in
his neighbour, but 'e says, no man wants one in
'isself . . . and that's a fact.

(*NATASHA comes in. After her, LUKA with
a staff, a pack over his shoulder, a
kettle and a teapot at his waist.*)

LUKA.

Give you good-day, honest people !

PEPEL.

(*Twisting his moustache.*) Ah, Natasha !

BOOBNOFF.

(*To LUKA.*) I was honest up to last spring
year. . . .

NATASHA.

See, here's a new room-mate. . . .

LUKA.

Oh, it's all one to me! Sharpers—I respect 'em, too. There's no two sorts for me; all just fleas . . . all little black fellows . . . all hopping about . . . tha-t's the way. Show me, dearie, where shall I squeeze myself?

NATASHA.

(Pointing to kitchen door.) Go over there, daddy.

LUKA.

Thanks, girlie dear! It's all just a place. . . . Where the old man's warm, there the old man's happy.

PEPEL.

A wonderful little old boy that you've brought us, Natasha. . . .

NATASHA.

A sight more interestin' than you. . . . Andree! We've got yer wife in the kitchen . . . just you come and fetch 'er.

KLESSHTSH.

Right. . . . I'm coming.

NATASHA.

And you might try and be kinder to 'er. . . . She hasn't much longer. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

I know. . . .

NATASHA.

You know. . . . There's no good in knowing, the thing is to do. Ah, it's a fearful thing to die. . . .

PEPEL.

See me. . . . I'm not afraid. . . .

NATASHA.

Oh, you're a marvel, aren't you?

BOOBNOFF.

(*Whistling.*) Um . . . sticky thread. . . .

PEPEL.

God's truth, I'm not afraid! This very moment—I'm ready to die. Take a knife, plunge it into my heart. . . . I'll die—without a sound. And gladly, too, for I should fall by a pure hand. . . .

NATASHA.

(*Going out.*) Keep your soft soap for them as likes it.

BOOBNOFF.

Um . . . sticky . . . sticky. . . .

NATASHA.

(*By the passage door.*) Don't forget, Andruishka, about your wife. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

All right!

PEPEL.

There's a fine girl!

BOOBNOFF.

Ay, the girl's all right.

PEPEL.

Why's she so short with me? Why? Ah, well, she's bound to come to grief here.

BOOBNOFF.

You'll bring her to grief. . . .

PEPEL.

What do you mean—I? I'm sorry for her. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Like the wolf for the lamb. . . .

PEPEL.

You liar! I *am* right down sorry for her. . . .
She 'as a 'ard life 'ere. . . . I see. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

Wait till Vassilisa spots you gabbing with her. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Vassilisa? M'yes, she ain't one to let 'er own go. . . . She's a fierce woman. . . .

PEPEL.

(*Lying on the planks.*) Go to the devil . . .
yer croakers !

KLESSHTSH.

You'll see—wait a bit !

(LUKA *from the kitchen, singing :*)

*Through the night we trudge along,
Dark as night is all around . . .*

KLESSHTSH.

O Lord ! . . . another shouter. . . .

PEPEL.

I'm bored. . . . Why do I get this boredom?
All's going along well. Then all of a sudden,
yer kind of dry up and it all gets tiresome. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Tiresome? Hum. . . .

PEPEL.

Ay—ay. . . .

LUKA.

(*Sings :*)

All the road is dark before. . . .

PEPEL.

Old man ! Hi !

(LUKA *appearing in the door.*)

LUKA.

Call me?

PEPEL.

Don't sing!

LUKA.

You don't like it?

PEPEL.

When it is good singing, I like it. . . .

LUKA.

That's to say, then, mine isn't good?

PEPEL.

You've hit it. . . .

LUKA.

There now! I *did* think I could sing. That's just always the way: a man he goes along thinking now this is something I *can* do. And suddenly folks seem not to care for it. . . .

PEPEL.

(*Smiling.*) Yes, that's the way. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Say you're bored, and now you're laughing. . . .

PEPEL.

Let me alone, you crow. . . .

LUKA.

Who is it says they're bored?

PEPEL.

Me . . . here. . . .

(Re-enter the BARON.)

LUKA.

There now! There's a girlie there in the kitchen, sitting there, and reading a book, and she's crying! That she is! The tears are flowing. . . . I says to her, "Why, my pet, what is it all, eh?" "Oh," she says, "it's so sad!" "What is it," I says, "that's sad?" "Here," she says, "in the book." . . . And that's how people pass their time, eh? It's all from this boredom. . . .

THE BARON.

That's girl's a fool. . . .

PEPEL.

Baron! Had your tea?

THE BARON.

Had it. . . . What then?

PEPEL.

What d'you say—'ud you like me to stand yer half a bottle?

THE BARON.

What do *you* think ! . . . What then?

PEPEL.

Go down on all fours, and bark like a dog !

THE BARON.

Fool ! What are yer talking about? Are yer drunk?

PEPEL.

Bark—go on ! That'll amuse me . . . you're a gentleman. There was a time you thought yourself better than your brother man . . . and all the rest of it. . . .

THE BARON.

Well, what then?

PEPEL.

What ! Why now I make you bark like a dog, and you've got to do it—are yer going to?

THE BARON.

And if I do. And where's your gain if you do know that I've fallen even below you? You made me go an all fours when I was above you.

BOOBNOFF.

That's true !

LUKA.

It's true, and it's good. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

What was, was ; what's left's all nothing. . . .
There's no difference here. . . We're all of us
level ; nothing but the bare, naked man. . . .

LUKA.

That means all are equal. . . . But tell me,
dearie, have you been a Baron?

THE BARON.

What is it? Is it a spectre?

LUKA.

(*Laughs.*) Counts I've seen, and I've seen
princes . . . but a baron—the first that I ever
saw, and this only a damaged one.

PEPEL.

(*Laughing.*) That's up against you, Baron.

THE BARON.

We live and learn, Vassili. . . .

LUKA.

Hey—hey. . . . When I look around, my
lads. . . . Your way of life . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Our way of life is uproar commencin' from
daybreak. . . .

THE BARON.

We've some of us lived better . . . Yes ! I, in my time, have lain in bed of a morning and drunk my coffee . . . coffee !—with cream. . . .
Ay !

LUKA.

But all of us—are all men ! You can pretend all you like, and give yourself all the airs, but a man were you born, and a man you have to die. . . . And I see, for all folks gets wiser and busier . . . and though they live worse and worse . . . they've the will to live better . . . the stiff-necks ! . . .

THE BARON.

What are you, old 'un? Where are you from?

LUKA.

What? I?

THE BARON.

A tramp?

LUKA.

Tramps we are all. . . . And they say now, as I'm told, this whole earth is a tramp in the skies.

THE BARON.

(*Severely.*) Maybe it is ; but—have you a passport?

LUKA.

(*After a slight pause.*) And what are you, then—an informer?

PEPEL.

(*Delighted.*) Had 'im, old 'un ! How do you feel now, Baron?

BOOBNOFF.

Um—yes, that was one for the gentleman. . . .

THE BARON.

(*Taken aback.*) What d'yer mean? . . . Why, I was only joking, old man ! I haven't got any papers myself. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Now you're lying. . . .

THE BARON.

Oh, well . . . I've got some papers . . . but none that are good for anything.

LUKA.

But those papers are all the same . . . they're none of them good for anything. . . .

PEPEL.

Baron, let's go to the trakter. . . .

THE BARON.

Right ! Well, goodbye, old man . . . you're a rascal !

LUKA.

Tell me who isn't, friend. . . .

PEPEL.

(By passage door.) Well, come along !

(Goes out, the BARON rapidly following.)

LUKA.

Is it true that that man was a Baron?

BOOBNOFF.

Who can say? A gentleman 'e 'as been. . . .
It comes out every now and then. You can see
he hasn't got rid of it yet.

LUKA.

Ay, to be sure, this gentility it's like the small-
pox . . . a man may get over it, but it leaves
its marks. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

He's right enough though . . . every now and
then breaks out a bit . . . like he did about
your passport.

(ALYOSHKA enters, drunk, with a concertina, whistling.)

ALYOSHKA.

Hey, boys !

BOOBNOFF.

What are you bawling for ?

ALYOSHKA.

I beg pardon . . . ask your forgiveness ! I'm a well-bred man. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

On another jag?

ALYOSHKA.

Many as you like ! This moment the Inspector Myedvyedyeff 'e's just thrown me out of the station ; 'e said : " See," says he, " that you keep out of the streets " . . . that's all. . . . I am a man of character. . . . My master 'e sneers at me. What is 'e 'imself—my master ? Fi-i ! 'E's an idiot—a drunkard, my master is ! . . . But I'm just such a man that wants nothing ! I wish for nothing and—that's flat ! You say—here's twenty roubles ! But I—I don't want nothing. A straight chap like me to 'ave my mate set over me, and a drunkard. . . . Won't stand it, won't 'ave it !

(NASTYA comes out of the kitchen.)

'Ere's a million—d-d-don't want it.

(NASTYA stands in the door shaking her head at ALYOSHKA.)

LUKA.

(Good-naturedly.) Ay, lad, you've got a bit mixed up. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

What fools men are ! . . .

ALYOSHKKA.

(Lying on the floor.) Well, eat me. For I—I want nothing. I am a wretched man. Show me how I'm worse—why am I worse than others? Show me? Myedvyedyeff says, "Keep off the streets or I'll bash in your mug." And I—I go and lie down right in the middle of the street—crush me. Nothing—I want nothing ! . . .

NASTYA.

Poor fellow . . . such a kid . . . and now already . . . come to this. . . .

ALYOSHKKA.

(On his knees before her.) Lady . . . me'mselle ! Parle français price-current ! Been on the spree. . . .

NASTYA.

(In a loud whisper.) Vassilisa !

(VASSILISA opening the door sharply.)

VASSILISA.

(To ALYOSHKKA.) You here again?

ALYOSHKKA.

Good-day . . . don't be 'arsh. . . .

VASSILISA.

Puppy, I told you to keep your carcass out of here . . . and now you've come back !

ALYOSHKA.

Vassilisa Karpovna . . . would you like me to play you a funeral march?

VASSILISA.

(Seizing him by the shoulder.) Clear out!

ALYOSHKA.

Stop! That's not the way! Funeral march . . . just learnt it! Real music. . . . Stop! that's not the way!

VASSILISA.

I'll teach you . . . what's the way. . . . I'll 'ave the 'ole street on you . . . you dirty tattler . . . you cub, to dare go tattling about me. . . .

ALYOSHKA.

Well, I'm going. . . .

VASSILISA.

(To BOOBNOFF.) Never you let him set foot in 'ere. D'you hear me?

BOOBNOFF.

I aint' your watchman here. . . .

VASSILISA.

It's nothing to me what you are! You're here out of charity—don't forget it. How much do you owe me?

BOOBNOFF.

(*Calmly.*) Never reckoned. . . .

VASSILISA.

I'll reckon for you !

ALYOSHKA.

(*Opens door and shouts out.*) Vassilisa Karpovna ! I'm not afraid of you—n-n-not afraid !

(*Disappears.*)

(LUKA *laughs.*)

VASSILISA.

Well, what are you ?

LUKA.

A wayfarer . . . a bird of passage. . . .

VASSILISA.

For the night or to stop ?

LUKA.

I'll look round. . . .

VASSILISA.

Passport !

LUKA.

Well, yes. . . .

VASSILISA.

Come on !

LUKA.

I'll fetch it . . . it'll arrive with the rest of my luggage.

VASSILISA.

A bird of passage . . . eh? A jail-bird 'ud be nearer the truth. . . .

LUKA.

(With a sigh.) Um, you're not gentle, mother. . . .

(VASSILISA goes to the door of PEPEL'S room; ALYOSHKA looks out from the kitchen.)

ALYOSHKA.

(Whispering.) Has she gone, eh?

VASSILISA.

(Turning on him.) You still here?

(ALYOSHKA gives a whistle and disappears.)

(NASTYA and LUKA laugh.)

BOOBNOFF.

(To VASSILISA.) 'E ain't there. . . .

VASSILISA.

Who?

BOOBNOFF.

Vaska.

VASSILISA.

Did I ask if he was?

BOOBNOFF.

I saw you was looking all about. . . .

VASSILISA.

I was looking if things was straight, d'yer see? Why's the room not swept out yet? 'Ow often have I told you it's to be kept clean?

BOOBNOFF.

It's the actor's turn. . . .

VASSILISA.

Don't care whose turn. Suppose the inspectors come along and put a fine on me . . . then it's out you get, all of you!

BOOBNOFF.

(*Calmly.*) Then what will you live by?

VASSILISA.

I'll have none of this litter. (*Goes into the kitchen. To NASTYA.*) What's up with you? What's your face all swelled up for? Clean the floor! Natasha—have you seen her? 'As she been here?

NASTYA.

Don't know . . . 'aven't seen her.

VASSILISA.

And he . . . has he been home?

BOOBNOFF.

Vassilisi? Yes . . . Natasha, she was here talking to Klesshtsh, she was. . . .

VASSILISA.

Did I ask you who she was talking to? Dirt everywhere . . . filth! Ah, yes—pigs! Clean it all up . . . d'you hear!

(Goes out rapidly.)

BOOBNOFF.

That's a wild beast of a woman!

LUKA.

She's a serious lady. . . .

NASTYA.

It's the life that's made her a beast. . . . Any one as was tied to a husband like hers . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Come, she don't let the tyin' worry her. . . .

LUKA.

Does she always rage around like that?

BOOBNOFF.

Always. . . . Then, you see, she came after 'er lover, and 'e wasn't 'ere.

LUKA.

And that put her out, of course. Oh-ho-ho !
How all sorts of people on this earth is putting things in order ! And with all sorts of punishments, all punishing one another . . . and yet there's no order in life . . . and there's no cleanness.

BOOBNOFF.

Everybody likes things in order . . . but some 'asn't brains enough. Still, for this cleaning-up—Nastya . . . you see to it. . . .

NASTYA.

I see myself ! D'yer think I'm yer servant ?
(*After a silence.*) I shall get drunk to-day !

BOOBNOFF.

That's—flat !

LUKA.

Why, what d'you want to drink for, girlie ?
A moment back you were crying ; now you say
“ I'll get drunk ! ”

NASTYA.

(*Loud.*) I'll drink, and then I'll cry again
. . . and that's all !

BOOBNOFF.

It's not much. . . .

LUKA.

But what for?—tell me that. Every pimple has a reason for it. . . .

(NASTYA remains silent, shaking her head.)

So . . . ah-ha! the race of men! What's to be made of it? . . . Well, then, say that I was to sweep up. Where do you keep the broom?

BOOBNOFF.

Behind the door in the passage. . . .

(LUKA goes into the passage.)

Nastya!

NASTYA.

Well?

BOOBNOFF.

Why did Vassilisa go for Alyoshka?

NASTYA.

'E said that Vaska was sick of 'er, and wanted to chuck 'er . . . and take on with Natasha. . . . I shall leave here . . . and go somewhere else. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Why? Where?

NASTYA.

I'm sick of it. . . . I'm not wanted here. . . .

BOOBNOOF.

You're not wanted anywhere . . . and none of all the people on earth—there's none of 'em wanted. . . .

(NASTYA *shakes her head. Gets up, and goes slowly out into the passage.*)

(MYEDVYEDYEFF *comes in; LUKA after him with a broom.*)

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Seems to me I don't know you. . . .

LUKA.

'And all the other people, do you know them all?

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

I have to know every one in my ward . . . but here's you—I don't know—

LUKA.

Now the cause of that, daddy, is that the whole world doesn't lie in your ward . . . there's just a leetle piece outside of it. . . .

(*Goes into kitchen.*)

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(*Over to BOOBNOFF.*) It's true my ward's not a big one . . . but it's worse than the big ones . . . just now, as I was comin' off duty I 'ad to run in Alyoshka, the bootmaker. . . . 'E was

right in the middle of the road, with his concertina, and bellowin' "I want nothing—I want nothing!" Horses goin' and all the traffic—might get run over and so on. . . . 'E's a wild lad . . . so I just took him by the collar. Very fond of giving trouble. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

'Er yer comin' to play draughts to-night?

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Coming? M-yes. . . . What about Vaska?

BOOBNOFF.

Nothing . . . same as usual. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Means . . . he's getting along? . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Why shouldn't he get along? He's able to get along.

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(*Doubtfully.*) Able to?

(*LUKA goes into the passage with a bucket in his hand.*)

M-yes . . . there's a sort of talk . . . about Vaska . . . ain't yer heard?

BOOBNOFF.

I've 'eard all sorts of talk. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

But about Vaska? Ain't yer noticed?

BOOBNOFF.

What?

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Why . . . in general. . . . Maybe yer know and you're lying? Why everybody knows. . . .
(*Sternly.*) Let's 'ave no lies, brother!

BOOBNOFF.

What should I lie for?

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

So . . . so . . . ah, come! They say that Vaska and Vassilisa . . . what's it to me? I am not her father, I'm her uncle. . . . It can't make me look silly. . . .

(KVASHNYA *comes in.*)

But there's a kind of people sprung up who wants to make every one look silly. . . . Ah, so there you are. . . .

KVASHNYA.

Boobnoff! Hey, my gallant sentinel! Again in the market he asked me to marry him. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Well, and what then? 'E's got money, and 'e's a sturdy fellow yet. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

What, I? Ho-ho!

KVASHNYA.

You old grizzle pate! Let be, it's my sore point. I've tried it once, duckie—for a woman to marry it's like throwin' yerself down a 'ole in the ice—when you've done it once, yer never forget it. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Now wait a bit . . . there are husbands of all sorts.

KVASHNYA.

I'm always one and the same. When my beloved old man breathed his last, may I never 'ave a roof over my 'ead, if I didn't just sit up for joy a whole day and night: sat and simply couldn't believe in my happiness. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

If your 'usband beat yer . . . why, you should have complained to the police. . . .

KVASHNYA.

I complained to God for seven years . . . it 'elped none!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Nowadays it's forbidden to beat your wife . . . all in these days is strict, according to law . . . and order! No one is to be beaten wrongfully, all the beating's to be done to keep order.

(LUKA *leads in* ANNA.)

LUKA.

Slow but sure . . . so here we are. Fancy leaving her to go alone when she's so weak? Which is your place?

ANNA.

(*Pointing.*) Thanks, dear old man. . . .

KVASHNYA.

She's got a 'usband . . . look!

LUKA.

The poor soul's in quite a weak state. . . . She creeps along the passage, feeling for the walls, and groaning. Why do yer leave 'er by 'erself?

KVASHNYA.

'Adn't noticed, daddy—pardon us! 'Er maid, you see, 'as just gone out for a stroll. . . .

LUKA.

So now . . . you're making fun . . . but 'ow can one neglect a 'uman creature so? Whoever it is, all of us is of value. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Supervision there must be ! Suddenly—say she dies? Then there's no end of bother. . . . Watch must be kept !

LUKA.

True, Mr. Sergeant. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

M-yes . . . though I'm . . . I'm not quite a sergeant yet. . . .

LUKA.

Not? The bearing's so very heroic !

(Noise and scuffling in the passage. Loud cries.)

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Oh, not—not a row?

BOOBNOFF.

Sounds like it. . . .

KVASHNYA.

Go and look.

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

There, I've got to go. . . . Ah, the service ! And why part people when they fight? They'll

stop of themselves . . . yer bound to stop fighting . . . if they was left to fight it out in peace . . . why, they'd fight less, because they'd not forget it so easy. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

(*Getting off his planks.*) Must speak to your superiors about it. . . .

(*KOSTOLOFF cries out, throwing open the door.*)

KOSTOLOFF.

Abraham ! Come . . . Vassilisa, Natasha . . . she's killing her . . . come !

(*KVASHNYA, MYEDVYEDYEFF, BOOBNOFF rush into the passage. LUKA looks after them, shaking his head.*)

ANNA.

O Lord ! . . . poor little Natasha !

LUKA.

Who is it fighting ?

ANNA.

The mistress . . . with her sister.

LUKA.

(*Coming to ANNA.*) What's to be done ?

ANNA.

Well, they've both food enough . . . and health. . . .

LUKA.

And you—what is your name?

ANNA.

Anna. . . . It seems to me . . . you look like my father . . . my dear father . . . gentle like him . . . and mild. . . .

LUKA.

It's the knocks I've 'ad ; they've made me gentle. . . . (*Laughs with a grating laugh.*)

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

THE SECOND ACT

THE SECOND ACT

SCENE.—*Same scene. Night.*

(On the planks round about the stove SATINE, BARON, WHEN, and the TARTAR are playing at cards. KLESSHTSH and the ACTOR are watching the game. BOOBNOFF, on his planks, is playing draughts with MYEDVYEDYEFF. LUKA is seated on a stool by ANNA'S bed. The shelter is lighted by two lamps: one on the wall by the card-players, the other on BOOBNOFF'S planks.)

THE TARTAR.

One more game—then I stop. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

When! Sing! *(He sings:)*

The sun it rises and it sets.

WHEN.

(Harmonising:)

In my prison darkness reigns. . . .

THE TARTAR.

(To SATINE.) Shuffle! Shuffle well! We know you, yer know. . . .

WHEN *and* BOOBNOFF.

(Together :)

*Day and night the warders go,
Pacing underneath my window.*

ANNA.

Yells . . . abuse . . . nothing else have I
seen . . . nothing besides. . . .

LUKA.

There, missus, don't fret !

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Look out, where are yer moving?

BOOBNOFF.

Ah ! yes, yes, yes. . . .

THE TARTAR.

(Threatening SATINE with his fist.) Why er
yer trying to hide a card? I see yer . . . yer
beauty !

WHEN.

Chuck it, Hassan ! They're sure to skin us.
. . . Boobnoff, strike up !

ANNA.

I can't remember when I wasn't hungry. . . .
I've trembled all my life. . . . Dreaded. . . . I
shouldn't get no more to eat . . . been in rags
all my life . . . all my wretched life . . .
why, why?

LUKA.

There, there, darling! You're tired. Never mind.

THE ACTOR.

(*To WHEN.*) Play the Knave—the Knave, damn yer!

THE BARON.

We 'ave the King.

KLESSHTSH.

They win every time.

SATINE.

It's a way er 'ave. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Crown him!

BOOBNOFF.

And I . . . um-m. . . .

ANNA.

I'm dying. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

Just look at 'em! Prince, you chuck it!
Chuck it, I tell yer!

THE ACTOR.

You let him alone.

THE BARON.

Look out, Andruiska, that I don't give you a damned hiding !

THE TARTAR.

One game more. The pitcher goes to the well so often it gets broken at last.

(KLESSHTSH, *with a shake of his head, moves over to BOOBNOFF.*)

ANNA.

I'm always thinking. Oh ! Lord, can it be that in the other world, too, I shall have to suffer ? Not there as well ?

LUKA.

There won't be nothing ! Lie and listen ! Nothing ! You'll have rest there. . . . A little more patience. . . . All, dearie, they all suffer . . . each in his own way. . . . (*Gets up with quick steps.*)

(*Goes into the kitchen.*)

BOOBNOFF.

(*Sings :*)

Take your gun, and have some fun. . . .

WHEN.

I'm not going to run away. . . .

BOTH.

(*Together :*)

*Longing, longing to be free,
But my chains I cannot break. . . .*

THE TARTAR.

(*Shouts out.*) That card was in your sleeve.

THE BARON.

(*Confused.*) Do you want me to ram it under your nose?

THE ACTOR.

(*Positively.*) Prince, you're wrong . . . never, never in this world. . . .

THE TARTAR.

Saw it! Sharper! I'll play no more!

SATINE.

(*Gathering up the cards.*) Hassan, go and shake yourself . . . yer know we were sharper. Then why did yer play with us?

THE BARON.

I've won forty kopyeks, and you shriek as if you were beggared . . . come, one more!

THE TARTAR.

(*Hottly.*) Then play straight.

SATINE.

What for?

THE TARTAR.

How "What for?"

SATINE.

Just so . . . what for?

THE TARTAR.

Well, don't yer know?

SATINE.

I don't know. Der you?

(The TARTAR spits viciously. All laugh at him.)

WHEN.

(Good-naturedly.) You're green, Hassan! Can't you see! If they was to begin living honestly, why, in three days they'd starve. . . .

THE TARTAR.

That's nothing to me! They must live honestly!

WHEN.

Keep it now! Better go and 'ave some tea . . . Boobnoff! And . . .

Oh, my chains, my heavy chains. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Oh, my heavy clanking chains. . . .

WHEN.

Come along, Hassanka! *(Goes out singing.)*

Tease me not, and I'll not beat yer. . . .

(TARTAR threatens the BARON with his fist, and goes out after his companion.)

SATINE.

(*Smiling to BARON.*) You, your mightiness, you came another cropper! You've had an education, but yer can't palm a card. . . .

THE BARON.

(*Hands apart.*) Devil knows how it happened. . . .

THE ACTOR.

No talent . . . no belief in yourself . . . without that no good ever . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

I've one King . . . and you've two . . . m-yes!

BOOBNOFF.

One's good enough, if he's a brainy one . . . on yer go!

KLESSHTSH.

Er yer winning, Abra'm Ivanitich?

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

None of your business . . . d'yer see? So shut yer mouth. . . .

SATINE.

Fifty-three kopyeks in.

THE ACTOR.

Three kopyeks for me . . . though what do I want with three kopyeks?

LUKA.

(Coming out of kitchen.) Well, so you've cleared out the Tartar? Going to have a glass now?

THE BARON.

Come along with us.

SATINE.

Let's see what yer like drunk.

LUKA.

No better than I am sober.

THE ACTOR.

Come along, old man. . . . I'll recite to yer. . . .

LUKA.

What ever's that?

THE ACTOR.

Verses—understand?

LUKA.

Verses! What do I want with verses?

THE ACTOR.

They're amusing . . . sometimes they're sad. . . .

SATINE.

Hi, recitationist, er yer coming?

(Goes out with BARON.)

THE ACTOR.

Coming. . . . I'll catch yer up! Now, for instance, here's a bit out of one poem, old man. . . . The beginning I've forgotten . . . clean forgotten! . . . (*Strikes his forehead.*)

BOOBNOFF.

There! I've taken yer king . . . on you go!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

If I'd gone there, you'd 'ave 'ad 'im.

THE ACTOR.

In the past, before I was poisoned with alcohol, I had a fine study, old man. . . . But now you see . . . It's all up, brother! All up with me. I used to give that poem with' enormous success . . . thunder of applause. You—you don't know how it feels—applause . . . why, brother, it's like vodka! . . . I'd come on . . . stand like this . . . stand like this and . . . (*Silence.*) Can't remember a thing . . . not a word . . . can't remember! Used to love that piece: in a bad way, eh, old 'un?

LUKA.

There can't be no good in fergettin' what yer loved. Where yer love there's all yer soul.

THE ACTOR.

I've drunk my soul, old man. . . . I'm lost, brother. . . . Lost how? Hadn't no belief . . . I'm done with. . . .

LUKA.

No! Why? You . . . you can be cured! In these days they cure people of drunkenness—fact! Cure them, brother, fer nothin'. . . . There's a 'ospital been built for drunkards . . . and they cure 'em fer nothin'. . . . It's recignised, yer see, that a drunkard's a man, too, and when 'e wants to be cured, they rejoice at 'im! So stir up and be off.

THE ACTOR.

(*Reflectively.*) Where? Where is it?

LUKA.

Well, it's . . . it's in a certain town . . . what d'yer call it! It's just a name like! . . . Now you just do this: be gettin' ready. . . . Control yourself! . . . Take yerself in hand, and—wait. . . . And then—get cured . . . and begin life all over again . . . sounds good, brother, all over again? Make your mind up, and it's done.

THE ACTOR.

(*Smiling.*) Over again . . . from the beginning . . . that's fine . . . m-yes. . . . All over again? (*Laughs.*) Um. . . . Yes! Can't? I really can, eh?

LUKA.

Can yer? Anything a man can do . . . if 'e makes up his mind to do it. . . .

THE ACTOR.

(Suddenly, as if awakened.) You're a crank. By-bye for the present! *(Whistles.)* Old boy—goodbye to yer.

(Goes out.)

ANNA.

Gran'pa, darling!

LUKA.

What, dearie?

ANNA.

Talk to me. . . .

LUKA.

(Close to her.) Come now, let's talk. . . .

(KLESSHTSH looks round, silently comes towards his wife, looks at her, makes some movements with his hands, as though wishing to speak.)

What's up, comrade?

KLESSHTSH.

(In a low voice.) Nothing. . . .

(Goes slowly to passage door, stands in it for a few seconds—and goes out.)

LUKA.

(Following him with his eyes.) Takes it to heart, does your old man.

ANNA.

He's nothing now to me.

LUKA.

Did 'e beat yer?

ANNA.

Worse than that. . . . I'm dyin' through 'im. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

My wife . . . she 'ad a lover—played draughts finely—a thorough scoundrel. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Um-m. . . .

ANNA.

Dear gran'pa! Talk to me, dearie. . . . I can't breathe.

LUKA.

That's nothing! Comes before death, lovie. . . . Just hope. . . . You're goin' to die, and then you'll be at peace; there'll be nothing more that yer need fear—nothing! Calm, peace. . . . Don't move! Death—it settles all. . . . It's very tender with us. . . . You die, you rest, that's to say . . . that's what it is, pet! Because—for can a man find rest here?

(PEPEL comes in. He is slightly drunk, dishevelled, sullen. Sits on planks by door, silent without moving.)

ANNA.

If there too—there's suffering?

LUKA.

There won't be anything! Nothing! Trust me! Rest—and nothing more! They'll lead you up to God, and they'll say, "Lord, look here, behold, here is Thy servant, Anna." . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(*Severely.*) How do you know what they say up there? I like that. . . .

(*At the sound of MYEDVYEDYEFF'S voice, PEPEL lifts up his head and listens.*)

LUKA.

It's just like this, that I *do* know, Mr. Sergeant. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(*Conciliatory.*) M—yes! I don't see myself . . . though I'm not yet exactly a sergeant.

BOOBNOFF.

I take two. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

O Lord . . . do go ahead.

LUKA.

And the Lord, 'E'll look at you mildly and fondly, and He'll say, "I know that same Anna."

Then He'll say, "Take her, that Anna, into Paradise. Let 'er be at peace . . . for I know—'er life it was very hard . . . she's very weary. . . . Give rest unto Anna."

ANNA.

(Breathing hard.) Uncle . . . you are such a dear! If it is so . . . if there's just rest . . . and to feel nothing more. . . .

LUKA.

There won't be! There won't be anything! Trust me! Die joyfully, and no worry. . . . I tell you, Death it's to us . . . like a mother with her little children.

ANNA.

Yet . . . I may . . . I may get well?

LUKA.

What for? For fresh suffering?

ANNA.

But . . . to live a little . . . just a wee bit more. If there's no suffering I could endure a little longer. I could.

LUKA.

There'll be nothing more. . . . It's simple. . . .

PEPEL.

(Rising.) May be . . . and may not be.

ANNA.

(*Frightened.*) Oh, Lord ! . . .

LUKA.

Ah, dearie. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Who's that bellowing ?

PEPEL.

Me ! What of it ?

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

You shouldn't bellow, that's what. Folk should bear themselves quietly.

PEPEL.

Ah . . . yer block ! You're a fine uncle . . .
ho—ho !

LUKA.

(*To PEPEL in a low tone.*) Please now don't shout ! A woman's dying here . . . don't disturb 'er !

PEPEL.

I respect you, gran'pa ! You're a brick, you are ! You're a good liar . . . you put things nicely ! Lying's no harm . . . there's so little that's cheering in the world !

BOOBNOFF.

What ! Is the woman really dyin' ?

LUKA.

Ay, there's no joke about it. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Shan't have no more coughing then. . . . Most disturbin' 'er cough was. . . . I take two. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Ah, I'm done for—I'm done for!

PEPEL.

Abraham!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Don't call me Abraham. . . .

PEPEL.

Abramka! Is Natasha ill?

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

What's that to you?

PEPEL.

I want to know. Was it a bad beating Vassilisa gave her?

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

And that's none of your business! It's a family matter. . . . Who do yer think yer are?

PEPEL.

Don't matter who I am . . . but if I choose, you'll never see Natasha again!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(*Leaving the game.*) What d'yer say? Who are yer talkin' of? D'yer think my niece? . . . Ah, yer robber!

PEPEL.

A robber you never could catch. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Wait! I'll catch yer . . . you see. . . .

PEPEL.

Catch me—and I'd flog the whole nest of yer. D'yer think I'd keep quiet before the beak? Expect a wolf to howl! They say, "Who taught yer to rob, and showed yer the cribs?" Mikhail Kostoloff and his wife! "Who was yer fence?" Mikhail Kostoloff and his wife!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Lies! They won't believe yer!

PEPEL.

Yes, they will, for it's truth! And I'll give you a twist . . . ha! I'll sink the whole lot of yer, yer devils—you see!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(*Shaking.*) Lies! And . . . lies! And . . . what 'arm 'ave I done to you? Yer scabby cur! . . .

PEPEL.

And what good 'ave yer done to me?

LUKA.

Ri-ight there !

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(*To* LUKA.) What er you . . . croaking for? Is this any of your business? This is a family matter !

BOOBNOFF.

(*To* LUKA.) Let be ! Not ours to meddle in.

LUKA.

(*Peaceably.*) I said nothing ! I only say that if one man 'asn't done good to another, 'e 'asn't done well. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(*Not understanding.*) 'Ere we are . . . and we all know one another. . . . But who are you, pray?

(*Makes an angry grimace and goes out.*)

LUKA.

The gentleman's angry. . . . Oh-ho, brothers, things here . . . I see things here in a tangle !

PEPEL.

'E's gone to whine to Vassilisa. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

You're foolish, Vassili. Much good yer boldness has done yer. . . . Boldness is all right in its place . . . but 'ere it cuts no figure. . . . They'll slice yer 'ead off alive. . . .

PEPEL.

N-no, they won't! Us Yaroslaff boys—you don't catch us napping . . . if it's war we shall fight. . . .

LUKA.

But I tell you truly, lad, you get out of this house . . . get clear of it. . . .

PEPEL.

Where to? You tell me that. . . .

LUKA.

Go . . . to Siberia. . . .

PEPEL.

Ho-ho. When I go to Siberia, I mean to go at the charge of the Crown. . . .

LUKA.

Now listen to me—you go there! There you can make your own way . . . you're just the kind for there!

PEPEL.

The way is marked out for me. My father passed his whole life in prison, and 'e told me to. Why, when I was a little boy they called me thief—and thief's son.

LUKA.

But it's a grand country—Siberia! A golden country. 'Oo 'as the might 'as the right.

PEPEL.

Old boy, why are you always lying?

LUKA.

What's that?

PEPEL.

Deaf? Why do yer lie, I ask?

LUKA.

In what do yer mean I lie?

PEPEL.

In all . . . you say it's good there, good here
. . . you're plainly lying! What's it for?

LUKA.

You take my word and go there, and see fer
yerself. You'll say thanks. . . . What's the
good of loafing here? And . . . why are yer so
mad after the truth? . . . Think a bit! The
same truth might cut like a razor. . . .

PEPEL.

I don't care! If it's a razor, it's a razor. . . .

LUKA.

Oh, you're crazy! Why go and destroy
yerself?

BOOBNOFF.

What is it that you two are jawing about?
I don't know! What sort of a truth, Vaska,

d'yer want? And why? Yer know the truth about yerself . . . ay, and every one knows it. . . .

PEPEL.

Hold on, stop yer croaking! I want 'im to tell me . . . listen, old man: is there a God?

(LUKA gives a silent smile.)

Say now, is there?

BOOBNOFF.

People just live . . . like shavings on a stream . . . a house is built . . . and the shavings . . . off they floats! . . .

LUKA.

(In a low voice.) If you believe it— there is; if you don't believe it, there's not . . . that which yer believe in, that is. . . .

(PEPEL looks at the old man fixedly and in surprise.)

BOOBNOFF.

Shall we go and have some tea . . . come on to the trakteer? Eh?

LUKA.

(To PEPEL.) What are you looking at?

PEPEL.

Just so. . . . Now wait. . . . Then that means . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Then I'll go alone.

(Goes to door, encounters VASSILISA.)

PEPEL.

Therefore . . . you. . . .

VASSILISA.

(To BOOBNOFF.) Nastya at home?

BOOBNOFF.

No.

(Goes out.)

PEPEL.

Ah . . . you're there. . . .

VASSILISA.

(Over to ANNA.) Still alive?

LUKA.

Don't disturb 'er.

VASSILISA.

What er yer hanging about here for?

LUKA.

I'll go . . . if yer want me to. . . .

VASSILISA.

(Towards the door of PEPEL'S room.) Vassili !
I've somethin' to say ter you. . . .

*(LUKA goes to the passage door, opens it,
and shuts it loudly. Then he clammers
on to the planks, and from there on to
the stove.)*

VASSILISA.

(*From PEPEL'S room.*) Vaska . . . come here !

PEPEL.

I'm not coming . . . I don't mean to. . . .

VASSILISA.

Ah . . . what's wrong? What's annoyin' yer?

PEPEL.

I'm bored . . . sick of the whole rigmarole.

VASSILISA.

And . . . of me?

PEPEL.

And of you. . . .

(*VASSILISA draws her handkerchief tight over her chest, pressing against it her hands. Goes towards ANNA, looks carefully behind the curtains, and returns to PEPEL.*)

Well . . . out with it. . . .

VASSILISA.

Out with what? Can't force people to be kind . . . and it ain't in me to beg for kindness. . . . Thank you for the truth. . . .

PEPEL.

What truth?

VASSILISA.

That I'm a bore to you . . . or isn't it the truth?

(PEPEL looks at her in silence. She turns to him.)

What er yer staring at? Don't yer know me?

PEPEL.

(With a sigh.) You're beautiful, Vassilisa (*she puts her hand on his shoulder, but he shakes it off*)—but my 'eart it was never yours. . . . And I lived with you, and the rest of it . . . and I've never really liked yer. . . .

VASSILISA.

So-o . . . well?

PEPEL.

Well, we've nothing to talk about! Nothing at all! Get away from me! . . .

VASSILISA.

You fancy some one else?

PEPEL.

Not your business. . . . If it was so it's not you I'd consult.

VASSILISA.

That's a pity. . . . P'raps I might arrange things.

PEPEL.

(*Suspiciously.*) What d'yer say?

VASSILISA.

You know . . . how to conceal things. Vassili . . . I'm a straight chap. . . . (*Lower.*) I'll hide nothing . . . you've dealt with me shabby . . . for no reason you've laid it on with a whip . . . said yer loved me, and all of a sudden . . .

PEPEL.

'Twasn't sudden . . . for a long time . . . there's no soul in you, woman . . . we are beasts. . . . We must be . . . we must be trained . . . and what 'ave you trained me to?

VASSILISA.

What was it over? . . . I know a man can't help 'is own will . . . yer love me no more . . . all right. . . .

PEPEL.

That's it, it's at an end. We part peaceably, without no rows . . . the proper way!

VASSILISA.

No, wait now! It's this. . . . When we came together I banked on you to drag me out of all this nastiness—to free me from my 'usband, my uncle . . . from all this life . . . and p'raps it wasn't you, Vaska, that I loved . . . but my hope

. . . it was that thought of you I loved. . . .
D'you follow? I expected you to pull me
out. . . .

PEPEL.

You aren't a nail, I—ain't a pincers . . .
you've wits enough' . . . and you're—wily!

VASSILISA.

(*Coming close to him.*) Vaska! Come, now
. . . let's 'elp one another. . . .

PEPEL.

'Ow?

VASSILISA.

(*Low and forcible.*) My sister . . . she's
taken yer fancy, I know. . . .

PEPEL.

And that's why you beat her, you savage!
Vassilisa, look 'ere! Don't dare to lay a finger
on 'er.

VASSILISA.

Stop now! Don't get hot! It can all be done
quietly and well. D'yer wish—to marry 'er? I'll
give yer money with 'er . . . three hundred solid
roubles! If I can afford it, more. . . .

PEPEL.

(*Coming up to her.*) Stop . . . why is it?
What's it for?

VASSILISA.

Rid me . . . from my 'usband. Relieve me of that millstone. . . .

PEPEL.

(*Whistling softly.*) So now we've got to it. Oh ho-ho! A very crafty notion . . . get your 'usband in his grave, your lover doin' time, whilst you . . .

VASSILISA.

Vaska! Why doin' time? You won't yerself . . . get some of yer pals! Suppose it was yerself, who's to know? Natasha . . . think now! You'll 'ave money . . . you can go anywhere . . . set me free for ever, then, too, the sister, she won't be round me, that's good fer 'er. The sight of 'er's bad for me . . . on account of you I get spiteful . . . and I can't hold it in. . . . I torment the girl, beat her . . . beat her so . . . that myself I can cry with pity for her . . . yet I beat her. And—I will beat her!

PEPEL.

You savage! Do yer brag of yer savageness?

VASSILISA.

I don't brag—I speak truth. Think now, Vaska. Twice through my 'usband 'ave you gone to jail . . . through 'is avarice. . . . 'E's glued to me like a limpet . . . four whole years! And what sort of a 'usband d'yer call 'im? 'E scolds

Natasha, torments her, calls 'er a beggar ! To every one 'e's just—poison. . . .

PEPEL.

You do yarn cleverly. . . .

VASSILISA.

All I say's above board. . . . It's only a fool that won't see what I want.

(KOSTOLOFF *enters cautiously and steals forward.*)

PEPEL.

(*To VASSILISA.*) Oh—get away !

VASSILISA.

Think it over ! (*Sees husband.*) What, you ? Er yer followin' me ?

(PEPEL *leaps up and eyes KOSTOLOFF savagely.*)

KOSTOLOFF.

It's me . . . me ! You're here—by yourselves ! Ah—ah : . . . You're . . . having a talk'. (*Suddenly stamping with his feet and shouting out.*) Vaska . . . you devil ! Beggar ! Hag ! (*Startled at his own cries, met by silence and immobility.*) I ask pardon. . . . Here again, Vassilisa, you lead me into sin. . . . Been everywhere hunting fer yer. . . . (*In a scream.*) It's bedtime ! You've forgotten to fill the lamps . . .

you, you . . . beggar . . . sow. . . . (*Points at her with trembling hands.*)

(VASSILISA slowly goes to passage door, looking round at PEPEL.)

PEPEL.

(*To KOSTOLOFF.*) Get out of here . . . clear out. . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

(*Yells.*) I'm the master! Clear out yourself, thief!

PEPEL.

(*Sullenly.*) Be off, Mikhail! . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

You dare to—I'll show you. . . . I tell you. . . .

(PEPEL seizes him by the collar and shakes him. A noise is heard from the stove and a loud yawning. PEPEL releases KOSTOLOFF, who runs into the passage.)

PEPEL.

(*Springing on to the planks.*) Who's there . . . on that stove?

LUKA.

(*Raising his head.*) Eh?

PEPEL.

You?

LUKA.

Me . . . me myself. . . . Of Lord Jesus Christ.

PEPEL.

(Closes the passage door, feels for the bolt and can't find it.) The devils ! . . . Old man, get down !

LUKA.

All ri-ight . . . getting down. . . .

PEPEL.

(Menacingly.) Why did yer get on that stove?

LUKA.

Where 'ud yer 'ave me get?

PEPEL.

Yer made as you'd gone in the passage.

LUKA.

In the passage, comrade, it's cold for an old man.

PEPEL.

You . . . heard?

LUKA.

Ay—heard. How not to 'hear? Ud yer 'ave me deaf? Ah, my lad, your happiness is coming to yer . . . it's happiness that's coming to yer.

PEPEL.

(*Suspiciously.*) What 'appiness? In what way?

LUKA.

Why, in the way that took me on to the stove.

PEPEL.

Ah . . . why did you make that noise?

LUKA.

Why, because I was getting aglow . . . for the orphan laddie's welfare . . . yet I knew well that the laddie might take it all wrong, that he might be for throttling the old man. . . .

PEPEL.

Ye-es . . . it was a near thing. . . .

LUKA.

Ay . . . them mistakes often get made. . . .

PEPEL.

What are you?

LUKA.

My lad! Now listen to me, what I say: that woman—cut it! Nothing to do with 'er!—keep out of 'er way? She'll put 'er 'usband out of the way better ner you could, yes! Don't you listen to her, the devil. . . . Look at me—ah? Bald . . . and why? Out of all these same different sorts of women . . . I should say I've known,

maybe, more women than ever there grew hairs upon my head. . . . And that Vassilisa—she . . . she's worse than a pagan Finn!

PEPEL.

I don't know if I ought to thank yer, or whether you as well . . .

LUKA.

Don't you say nothin'! You'll say nothing better than what I've said! Listen: the one you fancy, put 'er arm in yours, and out of here in double-quick time. Get out of here, clean away. . . .

PEPEL.

No makin' people out! Who's good, 'oo's bad . . . can't understand a thing. . . .

LUKA.

What's there to understand? There's all sorts of men. . . . As their hearts tells 'em, so they live . . . good to-day, bad to-morrow. But if that girl's really got hold of yer heart . . . take 'er clear off, and 'ave done with it. . . . Or else go alone . . . you're young, you've time to look out for a wife.

PEPEL.

(Takes him by the shoulder.) No, you tell me, why are you on to this?

LUKA.

Now come, let me go. . . . Must see to Anna

. . . she was rattling so bad. . . . (*Goes to Anna's bed, opens curtains, looks, feels with his hand.*)

(PEPEL comes after him, thoughtful and distraught.)

Jesus Christ, most merciful Lord, the spirit of Thy newly departed servant Anna receive into Thy peace. . . .

PEPEL.

(*Softly.*) Dead? (*Without approaching, leans forward so as to obtain a sight of the bed.*)

LUKA.

(*Softly.*) She is gone! Where will 'er 'usband be?

PEPEL.

In the trakteer, most likely. . . .

LUKA.

Well, 'e must know. . . .

PEPEL.

(*Shuddering.*) I don't care for dead people. . . .

LUKA.

(*Going to the door.*) What's there to care for? Care for the living . . . the living. . . .

PEPEL.

I'll come with yer. . . .

LUKA.

What, afraid?

PEPEL.

Don't like it. . . .

(They go out quickly.)

(Emptiness and silence. At the passage door a dull, incomprehensible, uneven sound is heard. Then enter the ACTOR.)

THE ACTOR.

(Standing in the open door, supporting himself against the door-posts, shouts out) Old man, hi! Where are yer? I've remembered . . . listen!

(He staggers two steps forward, strikes an attitude, and begins:)

*Then, gentlemen, for all our pain
If truth still flee our straining eyes,
Shall we not hail the madman's brain:
The brain that spins us golden lies?*

(NATASHA appears in the door behind the ACTOR.)

Old man!

*And tho' the earth to atoms fly,
And tho' the sun be quenched and dead,
They shall be re-created by
The thought within a madman's head!*

NATASHA.

(*Laughs.*) You gaby! You're full. . . .

THE ACTOR.

(*Turns to her.*) Ah, it's you! Where's the little old boy . . . the darling little old man? Nowhere 'ere, that's clear. . . . Natasha, farewell. . . . Farewell . . . yes.

NATASHA.

Never said good-day, now says goodbye.

THE ACTOR.

(*Barring the way to her.*) I—am going away. . . . The spring'll come, and you won't see me no more.

NATASHA.

Rubbish . . . where er yer goin'?

THE ACTOR.

To find a town . . . to get cured . . . you clear out, too. Ophelia . . . into a monastery . . . yer see, there's a hospital for organisms . . . for drunkards . . . a splendid hospital. . . . Marble . . . marble floor! Light, clean food—all for nothing! And a marble floor . . . yes! I'll find it, get cured, and . . . I shall be all over again. . . . I'm on the way to regeneration . . . as said . . . King Lear. Natasha, on the stage . . . my name was Svvertchkoff—Yavolski. . . . No one knows that—no one! I've no name

here. . . . Can't you understand how that's gall-
ing—to lose yer name? Dogs even have their
names.

(NATASHA *manages to get round the* ACTOR,
goes over to ANNA'S bed and looks.)

No name, and you're no man. . . .

NATASHA.

Look . . . the poor soul . . . look! She's
dead! . . .

THE ACTOR.

(*Shaking his head.*) It can't be. . . .

NATASHA.

(*Moving away.*) God! yes . . . look. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

(*In the door.*) Look at what?

NATASHA.

Anna . . . she's dead.

BOOBNOFF.

Won't cough no more, that means. (*Goes
to ANNA'S bed, looks, goes to his place.*) You
must tell Klesshtsh . . . it's 'is business. . . .

THE ACTOR.

I'll go and tell him . . . she has lost her
name.

(*Goes out.*)

NATASHA.

And then . . . one . . . I too . . . same
for all . . . struck down.

BOOBNOFF.

*(Stretching a rag of some kind over his
planks.)* What—what er yer mumbling?

NATASHA.

So . . . to myself. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Waiting for Vaska? You see, Vaska'll break yer
head for yer. . . .

NATASHA.

Does it much matter—'oo breaks it? I'd
sooner that he did. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

(Lying down.) That's your affair. . . .

NATASHA.

For surely . . . it's well she's dead . . . it's
sad, too. . . . Lord! Why do people live?

BOOBNOFF.

So with all: born, live, die. And I shall
die . . . and you too . . . where's the sad-
ness?

*(Enter LUKA, the TARTAR, WHEN, and
KLESSHTSH. KLESSHTSH comes behind
the others, slowly, shrunk up.)*

NATASHA.

Sh ! Anna.

WHEN.

We've heard . . . in 'eaven, if she's dead. . . .

THE TARTAR.

(*To KLESSHTSH.*) You must have her out ! Out into the passage ! Can't keep dead bodies in here ; here the living have to sleep. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

(*Low.*) Well, take 'er out.

(*All go over to the bed ; KLESSHTSH looks at his wife over the others' shoulders.*)

WHEN.

(*To the TARTAR.*) You think she'll smell ? There'll be no smell from her . . . she 'ad wasted alive. . . .

NATASHA.

Good Lord ! won't yer pity 'er ? . . . if some-one 'ud speak a kind word ! Oh, you. . . .

LUKA.

Girlie, don't take on . . . it's all right ! For what . . . and how shall we pity the dead ? Eh, darling ! The living we don't pity . . . and ourselves we don't pity . . . why her ?

BOOBNOFF.

(*Yawning.*) And besides, death don't wince from a word . . . illness may wince from a word, but death . . . no !

THE TARTAR.

(*Going out.*) Must fetch the police. . . .

WHEN.

Police—that must be done ! Klesshtsh ! 'ave yer informed the police ?

KLESSHTSH.

No . . . she's got to be buried . . . and all I've got's forty kopyeks.

WHEN.

Well, in that case yer must borrow . . . and we'll club together . . . one gives five, another—what 'e can. . . . But get the police—and quick ! Else they'll be fancying it was yer doin', or what not. (*Goes to the planks and makes ready to lie down beside the TARTAR.*)

NATASHA.

(*Moving away from BOOBNOFF'S planks.*) Now . . . you see I shall dream of 'er . . . the dead always appear in my dreams. . . . I'm afraid to go alone . . . it's dark in the passage. . . .

LUKA.

(*Following her.*) You be afraid of the living . . . that's what I say. . . .

NATASHA.

Come with me, daddy.

LUKA.

Come . . . come, I'll see yer safe!

(They go out. A pause.)

WHEN.

Oh—ho-o! Hassan, spring soon, mate . . . we shall feel warmer then. Now in the country already peasant's looking to 'is plough and 'is 'arrows, gettin' ready to till . . . all ready for tilling . . . m-yes! And we . . . Hassan? Snoring already! Accursed Mahometan!

BOOBNOFF.

Tartars love to sleep.

KLESSHTSH.

(Standing in the middle of the shelter and gazing vacantly in front of him.) What am I goin' to do now?

WHEN.

Lie down, and sleep . . . that's all there is to it.

KLESSHTSH.

(Low.) But . . . she . . . how?

(No one answers.)

(SATINE and the ACTOR come in.)

THE ACTOR.

(*Shouts out.*) Old 'un ! Hither to me, my true Kent.

SATINE.

Way for Miklooka—Maklai. . . . Ho-ho !

THE ACTOR.

It's fixed and decided ! Old 'un, where's the town . . . where are yer ?

SATINE.

Fata Morgana, the old man diddled yer ! . . . There's nothing. . . . No towns, no people—nothing at all !

THE ACTOR.

You lie !

THE TARTAR.

(*Leaping up.*) Where's the master ? I'll fetch the master. If I can't sleep 'e shan't take my money. Corpses . . . drunkards. . . .

(*Goes out quickly.*)

(SATINE *whistles after him.*)

BOOBNOFF.

(*In a sleepy voice.*) Lie down, boys, keep quiet . . . in the night yer must sleep.

THE ACTOR.

Yes . . . here—aha ! A corpse. . . . " We took a corpse up in our nets " . . . poetry. . . . Béranger !

SATINE.

(*Calls out.*) Corpses can't hear ! corpses
can't feel. . . . Bellow . . . yell . . . corpses
can't hear. . . .

(LUKA *appears in the doorway.*)

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

THE THIRD ACT

THE THIRD ACT

SCENE.—“*The Waste*,” strewn with all sorts of rubbish and overgrown with long grass. At the back, a high brick party wall. It shuts out the sky. Around it are elder bushes. At right a dark timber wall belonging to some sort of an outhouse, a barn or a stable. At left the grey, crumbling plaster wall of the house in which KOSTOLOFF’S night-shelter is. It stands on a slant, so that the further corner reaches almost to the middle of the “Waste.” Between it and the party wall a narrow passage. In the grey wall are two windows: one on a level with the ground, the other about six feet higher up and closer to the party wall. By that wall is a big sledge turned upside down and a beam about twelve feet long. At right, by wall, a heap of old planks. Evening. The sun is setting, throwing a red light on the party wall. Early spring, the snow being lately melted. No buds as yet on the black elder branches.

(NATASHA and NASTYA are seated on the beam, side by side. LUKA and the BARON on the sledge. KLESSHTSH is lying on the pile of timber, right. In the ground-floor window BOOBNOFF’S mug.)

NASTYA.

(With eyes closed, and nodding her head in tune to the words, relates in a sing-song way)
Then at night would he come into the garden and talk with me, as we 'ad agreed . . . and I had been waiting for him a long while, and I shook with dread and anguish. And he shook, too, and—pale as honey, and 'e 'eld in 'is 'and a pistol. . . .

NATASHA.

(Chewing reeds.) Oo! Then it's true that these students—they're such desperate fellows. . . .

NASTYA.

And he says to me in a terrible voice, "My own precious love." . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Ho-oh! Precious?

THE BARON.

Here! If you don't like it, don't listen, let her lie. . . . When, then?

NASTYA.

"My imperishable love," 'e says, "my parents," 'e says, "will not consent for me to marry yer . . . and threaten to curse me for ever because of my love for you. Therefore, I must," 'e says, "for that reason take my own life." . . . And his pistol was huge, loaded with

ten bullets. . . . "Farewell," 'e says, "my 'eart's beloved comrade! I 'ave decided past recall . . . to live without you—that I cannot." And I replied, "Oh, never can I forget you, my Raoul!"

BOOBNOFF.

(*In astonishment.*) What—what's that?—Kravol?

THE BARON.

(*Laughs.*) Come, Nastya, steady on! Why, last time it was Gaston!

NASTYA.

(*Leaping on.*) Silence, you wretches! . . . mongrels! D'yer think you . . . d'yer think you can understand . . . love? Real love? For mine—it was . . . real! (*To BARON.*) You! Dirt! . . . an educated man, you . . . lay and drank coffee, did yer? . . .

LUKA.

Come now, come . . . wait a bit! And don't you interfere! Show respect to folk . . . not in word—but in deed. It's the reason for a word that matters. That's where the matter lies! Tell along, dearie girl, it's all right!

BOOBNOFF.

"For all the crow may dye its wings." . . . Dash along!

THE BARON.

Well, what then?

NATASHA.

Don't mind them . . . what are they? They're only jealous . . . 'cause there's nothing to tell about themselves.

NASTYA.

(*Re-seats herself.*) No, I won't any more! I won't go on. . . . If they won't believe . . . if they're going to laugh. (*Breaks off suddenly, is silent for a few minutes, then, with closed eyes, and keeping time with her hands, as though beating to some far-off music, she goes on again loudly and heatedly.*) And then I answer to 'im, "Joy of my life! thou, my limpid moon! And I, too—it is not possible for me to live without yer . . . because I love you so wildly, as I shall love you as long as a heart beats in this bosom! But—I say—take not away your young life. . . . It is so necessary to your dear parents, for you are all their joy . . . give me up! let me cast away my life . . . out of my love for thee. . . . I am—alone . . . I am—what I am! I am fit for nothing . . . and I 'ave nothing . . . nothing—nothing at all." . . . (*Hides her face in her hands, and weeps noiselessly.*)

NATASHA.

(*Turning to one side, in a low tone.*) Don't cry . . . yer mustn't cry!

(LUKA, with a smile, strokes NATASHA'S head.)

BOOBNOFF.

(*Laughs.*) Ah! . . . what damned foolery!

THE BARON.

(*Also laughing.*) Old 'un! D'yer think all that's true? All out of a book—"The Fatal Love."
. . . It's all a lot of trash! Let 'er alone!

NATASHA.

Leave off! Just shut yer mouth! God'll punish yer yet.

NASTYA.

(*Bitterly.*) Degraded creature! Empty fellow! How could you have—a soul?

LUKA.

(*Taking NASTYA'S hand.*) Come away, dearie! It's nothing . . . don't get angry! I—know . . . I—believe! It's you that's right, not them. If you believe you had a real love . . . why, then, you had one—'ad one! But don't get angry with 'im, with yer room-mate . . . maybe he's envious, and that's what he's laughing for . . . maybe 'e never 'ad one of that real sort . . . 'ad nothing! Come along, then!

NASTYA.

(*Pressing her hands fast against her bosom.*) Gran'pa! God's truth . . . that's 'ow it was . . . it was, indeed it was! 'E was a student . . . a Frenchman—we called 'im Gastosha . . .

or little black beard . . . and wore patent boots . . . strike me dead if I'm lying ! And 'e loved me so . . . 'e loved me so !

LUKA.

I—know ! It's all right ! I believe ! Did 'e wear patent boots ? Ai—ai—ai—and *you* loved 'im too, didn't yer ?

(Disappears round the corner.)

THE BARON.

There's a fool of a girl for yer ! . . . Good ! but such a fool—it's incredible !

BOOBNOFF.

Why is it ? . . . people's so fond of lying—just as if they was up before the beak . . . it's so !

NATASHA.

Can't yer see that lies is . . . jollier . . . than the truth . . . I too—

THE BARON.

You too ? Come, let's have it !

NATASHA.

I think, and think . . . and I think and—expect.

THE BARON.

What ?

NATASHA.

(Smiling in a perturbed way.) Just . . . Now, I think, to-morrow . . . there'll come somebody . . . something . . . extraordinary . . . or something will 'appen . . . something unusual. . . . I've been expectin' long . . . I'm always expectin'. . . . But really . . . as a matter of fact—what is there to expect?

(Pause.)

THE BARON.

(With a faint smile.) Nothing to expect . . . I—expect nothing! All that was . . . has been! Passed, ended! . . . What then?

NATASHA.

And then . . . I get a fancy that to-morrow . . . suddenly . . . I shall die . . . and that gets me scared. . . . In the summer it makes one imagine about death . . . in summer the storms are about . . . you may be struck by lightning. . . .

THE BARON.

Your life, it's a hard one . . . that sister of yours has a fiend's temper.

NATASHA.

Tell me—'oo does live 'appily? It's 'ard for all . . . that I see. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

(Till then motionless and indifferent, suddenly

jumping up.) For all? That's a lie! Not for all! If for all . . . then all right! Then—there's no 'arm . . . yes!

BOOBNOFF.

What's up—is the devil biting yer? You, indeed, howlin' that way!

(KLESSHTSH *lies down again in his place, muttering.*)

THE BARON.

Um! . . . I must go and make it up with *Nastya* -Nastya . . . if I don't I'll not have the money for a drink. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Um! . . . People's fond of lying. . . . With *Nastya* it's clear enough! She's used to colourin' 'er mug . . . and 'ere she is now wantin' to colour her soul . . . to put rooge on her soul. . . . But . . . the others. . . . why do they? Now, for instance, there's Luka . . . 'e lies rarely . . . 'e gets nothin' from it. . . . And an old man, too—why is it all?

THE BARON.

(*Smiling and going off.*) All men they have all grey souls and they all want to rouge 'em up. . . .

(LUKA *appears from round the corner.*)

LUKA.

Now, dear sir, why do you tease the girl? Don't interfere with 'er . . . let 'er cry—it gives her pleasure. . . . It's for 'er own pleasure, yer see, that she 'as 'er weeps . . . where is the 'arm to you?

THE BARON.

It's rubbish, old man! She's a nuisance. To-day Raoul, to-morrow—Gaston . . . still the same old tale! Still—I shall go and make it up with 'er. . . .

(Goes out.)

LUKA.

Go along, that's it . . . go and fondle 'er! Fondle people . . . never does no 'arm. . . .

NATASHA.

Daddy, 'ow good yer are! . . . Why are yer so good?

LUKA.

Good, der yer say? Um . . . that's right, if so be . . . yes! *(Behind the party wall the sound of low singing to a concertina is heard.)* One must, dearie, be good to some one . . . and we must pity people! Christ—He pitied all, and so He ordered us. . . . I say this—if you pity a man . . . then good comes of it! Here, now, I was once a caretaker in a villa . . . an engineer's it was, near the town of Tomsk. . . . Ay, it was! The villa stood in a forest, in the 'eart of it . . . and it was winter and—there I

was in the 'ouse all alone. . . . Well and good !
One day—a sound—people rustling !

NATASHA.

Thieves ?

LUKA.

Yes. That's what's rustlin', ay ! . . . Pick up my little gun, and out I went. See 'em—two . . . openin' the window—so busy about it that—they don't see me. I shouts out, "You rascals . . . be off !" And then, yer see, they're at me with an 'atchet . . . I tell 'em to stand off ! Or else—I fire ! . . . And my gun I keeps pointin' it at one and then the other. Down they goes on their knees, as to say, "Have mercy !" For I tell you I was riled . . . 'cause of the 'atchet, you see ! I says : "Now, you woodmen, I've ordered yer off once, and you're not gone. Now just you break me off a birch." They broke it off. Now, I says "Lie down" to the one, and to the other, "Flog 'im." So they flogged one another. And then they began to beseech me. "Dearie man," they says, "for Christ's sake give us some bread ! We'll go away ; we meant no 'arm." Them was my robbers, lovie. . . . (*Laughs.*) Them was their 'atchet, too ! Yes . . . good peasants both of 'em. . . . I says to them : "Why, my woodmen, you should 'ave asked right out for bread." And they say : "We're tired of asking," they say—"ask and ask . . . and no one gives . . . it's cruel !" So all that winter they lived with me. The one that was called Stepan—he'd take my gun

and go shootin' in the forest. . . . But the other man, Jacob—'e was ill, coughing always. . . . And there the three of us together—we took care of the villa. . . . When the spring came—"Goodbye," they say, "gran'pa!" And off they went . . . they were going to Russia.

NATASHA.

Were they runaways?—convicts?

LUKA.

That's just what they were—runaways . . . broken out of prison. . . . Proper moujiks! If I'd not pitied them—maybe that they'd 'ave killed me . . . or what not. . . . Besides—courts, and prison and Siberia . . . where's the sense? Prison don't teach nothin' good, and Siberia don't . . . but it's the man—'e teaches . . . yes! A man, 'e can teach for good . . . very simply!

(Pause.)

BOOBNOFF.

M-m-yes! . . . But here am I . . . I can't lie! Why? To my lights—give us just all the truth, as it is! Why 'ide anythin'?

KLESSHTSH.

(Suddenly leaping up again and shouting out in an ecstatic way.) What's truth? Where is the truth? (Tearing at his rags.) Here's—truth! No work . . . no strength! Here's truth! No shelter . . . no shelter! We must pant and die . . . that is the truth! The devil!

What—what do I want with the truth? Give me room to breathe . . . room to breathe! Why am I guilty? What's to me . . . the truth? Can't live—blast it!—I can't live! Live—hell!—let us live . . . and there is the truth! . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Touched 'im up a bit! . . .

LUKA.

Lord Jesus . . . now listen, love! You . . .

KLESSHTSH.

(Quivering with excitement.) You talk about—truth. You, old man, you go about and you soothe every one. . . . I tell yer . . . I loathe every one! And that's a truth . . . blast the truth! Now do you hear? Now do you know? I say to you—blast it!

(Rushes off round the corner, turning as he goes.)

LUKA.

Ai—ai—ai! It's a real shock 'e's 'ad. . . . Where's 'e run off to?

NATASHA.

'Is raving don't matter. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

'E let it go fine! The way they do in the theatres. . . . Often 'appens that way . . . not got used to the life.

(PEPEL comes slowly round the corner.)

PEPEL.

Peace be to this honest assemblage! Well, Luka, my wily old boy, been givin' them the story of yer life?

LUKA.

You ought to 'ave 'eard just now 'ow one fell a-shouting!

PEPEL.

What, Klesshtsh, was it? What's up with 'im? 'E's runnin' as if he was scalded. . . .

LUKA.

When yer run like that, it means . . . it's gone right to yer 'eart. . . .

PEPEL.

(*Sitting down.*) Don't like 'im . . . 'e's beastly spiteful and 'aughty. (*Imitates KLESSHTSH.*) I am a working man. Every one's beneath 'im. . . . Work, if yer want to . . . nothin' to be cocky about? If yer value people by their work . . . a 'orse can give any man points . . . 'e pulls and—says nothin'! Natasha! Your people—in?

NATASHA.

They're gone in the Square—then to evenin' service. . . .

PEPEL.

So, yes, I see that you're free for once . . . a novelty !

LUKA.

(*Reflectively to BOOBNOFF.*) Now see . . . you say—truth . . . it's not always a good treatment for man . . . can't always heal the soul with the truth. . . . For instance, now 'ere's a case : I knew a man 'oo believed in a land of righteousness.

BOOBNOFF.

In wha-at?

LUKA.

In a land of righteousness. "There must," 'e said, "on the earth be a land of righteousness . . . and there must be dwelling in that land—an exceptional kind of people . . . good people ! they respect one another, and it's just natural to them to help one another . . . and all about them is wonderfully good !" And there was that man . . . 'oo was always wantin' to go and seek the land of righteousness. 'E was—poor, lived miserably . . . and when it got so bad with 'im that even lyin' down didn't 'elp 'im—still 'e didn't lose 'eart, he'd only just smile and 'e'd say : "Never mind ! I can bear it ! A little more waiting—and I've done with all this life—and I shall go off to the land of righteousness." . . . It was his one delight, was that land. . . .

PEPEL.

Well? Did 'e go?

BOOBNOFF.

Where? Ho, ho!

LUKA.

And then to this place—all this was in Siberia—there came an exile, 'e was a scholar . . . books and plans 'e 'ad, that scholar 'ad, and every sort of thing. . . . Then the man says to the scholar: "Show me, if you will be so kind, where does the land of righteousness lie, and which is the way there?" At once the scholar opens 'is books, undoes 'is plans . . . 'e looked—looked—no, there's nowhere no land of righteousness. It's quite true, the countries there are all marked, but for a righteousness one—there isn't such! . . .

PEPEL.

What? None?

(BOOBNOFF *laughs.*)

NATASHA.

Stop now. . . . Well, uncle?

LUKA.

The man won't believe. . . . "There must be," 'e says . . . "look well! If not," 'e says, "yer books and yer plans they're no use: if there isn't any land of righteousness." . . . The scholar was offended. "My plans," 'e says, "are the very latest, and there isn't nowhere not any land of

righteousness at all." Well, and then the man grew angry. "Can't be! I've lived and lived and suffered and suffered and always believed—there is! and your plan says that there's not! Robbery!" Then 'e says to the scholar: "Ah, you . . . you scum! You're a swindler, not a scholar" . . . and gives 'im one—whack—on 'is ear! Then another! . . .

(*Silence.*)

And after that 'e went 'ome and 'anged 'imself!

(*All are silent, LUKA, with a smile, looks at PEPEL and NATASHA.*)

PEPEL.

(*In low tones.*) Oh, the devil! . . . that's not a cheerful tale.

NATASHA.

'E couldn't stand the deceit. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

(*Sullen.*) All of it's made up.

PEPEL.

M-yes . . . so much for your land of righteousness . . . it wasn't to be found. . . .

NATASHA.

I'm sorry for that man. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

It's all—a story. . . . Ho, ho! the land of righteousness! There's a notion! Ho, ho, ho!

(Disappears from window.)

LUKA.

(Nodding towards window.) 'E laughs! Eh-hay-hay! . . . Well, children . . . live in God! I'll soon be leaving you.

PEPEL.

Where are yer off?

LUKA.

To little Russia. . . . I'm told that they've found there a new faith . . . 'ave to look into it . . . yes! People are always seeking and wishing—a better way. . . . God give 'em patience!

PEPEL.

'Ow d'yer think—will they find it?

LUKA.

If people will? They'll—find it! Who wishes—finds . . . who wishes strongly—finds!

NATASHA.

If they'd found anything . . . they'd 'ave arranged better than . . .

LUKA.

They're arranging! But they must be 'elped, little one . . . they must be respected. . . .

NATASHA.

'Ow can I 'elp? I'm without 'elp . . . for myself. . . .

PEPEL.

(*Decisively.*) Once more I'm . . . I'm going again ter talk ter yer . . . Natasha. . . . It's—this—'e knows all. Come . . . with me!

NATASHA.

Where? To prison?

PEPEL.

I told you—I'll chuck thieving! God's truth—I'll chuck it! What I've said—I'll do! I can read and write. . . . I'll work. . . . Here's 'e been tellin' me to go to Siberia on my own hook . . . let's go together—eh? . . . D'yer think my life, it don't jar me? Ah, Natasha . . . I know . . . I see . . . I consoles myself because I see others steals more than me, and they live in honour . . . though they don't help me! It ain't that! I ain't repentin' . . . I don't believe in conscience. . . . But this thing I *do* feel: I must live . . . different! Must live better! Must live . . . so as I can be able to respect myself. . . .

LUKA.

That's true, friend! God grant it . . . Christ 'elp yer! True: a man ought to respect 'imself.

PEPEL.

I've been from my cradle a thief . . . all 'ave always said to me : "Vaska's a thief, the son of a thief." Aha ! Eh ? There it is ! Set down—a thief ! . . . Yer see : I might 'ave been a thief from badness—yes . . . but I 'ave been a thief because no one ever called me anythin' else . . . Say now . . . Natasha, well ?

NATASHA.

(*Sorrowfully.*) Some way, I don't believe . . . not in any words . . . And I feels uneasy to-day . . . my 'eart's 'eavy . . . as though I was expectin' somethin'. . . It's a pity, Vassili, you started on this to-day . . .

PEPEL.

But when then ? It isn't for the first time . . .

NATASHA.

And where should I go with you ? As to . . . loving you . . . I don't much love you . . . 'At times—you *do* please me . . . then sometimes I can't bear to see you . . . when it's love . . . one sees nothing bad in one's sweet-heart . . . but I—see . . .

PEPEL.

You'll love me—never fear ! I'll make you care . . . if only you'll say yes ! I've watched yer for over a year . . . I see you're a straight

girl . . . good . . . a man yer can trust . . .
'e loves yer very much. . . .

(VASSILISA, *in her best dress, appears in
the window and listens.*)

NATASHA.

Well, you love me, but my sister . . .

PEPEL.

(*Agitated.*) Well, what of 'er? That sort
. . . they don't count. . . .

LUKA.

Never mind that, girlye. When yer can't get
good bread, yer put up with stale stuff. . . .
When there's no clean, good, fresh bread. . . .

PEPEL.

(*Gloomily.*) Per'aps yer might pity me. My
life's not soft . . . a wolf's life—little joy in
it . . . like a man in a swamp . . . and what-
ever I catches at . . . it's all rotten . . . no
hold nowhere. . . . Your sister . . . I thought
different . . . if she weren't so . . . so 'ot after
money—I'd gladly 'ave taken 'er . . . for good
and all! . . . If as she'd be mine altogether.
. . . But she wants other things. . . . She
wants money . . . and 'er own way . . . and
'er way is to—to go on the loose. She—can't
'elp me. . . . But you're like a young fir-tree,
and—it may rock, yet it 'olds firm. . . .

LUKA.

And I say—you go with him, dearie, you go with 'im ! 'E's the right sort—a good lad ! And you just keep on remindin' 'im 'e's a good lad, so, I mean, as 'e shan't forget it. 'E'll believe yer. . . . Only you say to 'im, "Vaska, it's certain that you're a good man . . . don't forget it !" And think, too, dearie, where else is there you could go to?—um? Your sister, she's just a fierce beast—and 'er husband—what can one say of 'im? There's no words bad enough for the old man . . . and all of this life 'ere—what can it lead to? But the lad's strong. . . .

NATASHA.

Nowhere to go . . . I know . . . I've thought of it. . . . Only it's this. . . . I don't believe nobody. . . . But I've nowhere to go to. . . .

PEPEL.

One way . . . but that way I'll not let yer go. . . . Sooner I'd kill yer. . . .

NATASHA.

(*Smiling.*) There . . . I'm not his wife yet, and already 'e's talkin' of killin'.

PEPEL.

(*Putting his arm round her.*) Come, Natasha, say yer will !

NATASHA.

(*Pressing herself to him.*) But this one thing. I say, Vaska . . . and I speak it before God!—the first time you strike me, or any way insult me, I'll either 'ang myself . . . or . . .

PEPEL.

May my 'and rot off, if I touches yer!

LUKA.

It's all right, never doubt it, lovie. You're dearer to 'im than 'e to you. . . .

VASSILISA.

(*Out of the window.*) So that's arranged! A pretty love council!

NATASHA.

She's there. . . . Oh Lord! She's seen—ah, Vaska! . . .

PEPEL.

What er yer frightened for? No one dare touch yer now!

VASSILISA.

Don't fear, Natasha! He'll not beat yer. . . . 'E can't beat, for 'e can't love. . . . I know!

LUKA.

(*Low.*) Ah, woman . . . poisonous snake! . . .

VASSILISA.

'E 'its yer with words. . . .

(KOSTOLOFF *enters.*)

KOSTOLOFF.

Natasha! What er yer after 'ere, sluggard? Tittle-tattling? Grumbling at yer relatives? And the samovar not ready? . . . the table not touched?

NATASHA.

(*Going out.*) I thought you was goin' to Church. . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

That's none of your business where we're goin'! Keep to your own business . . . and do as yer ordered!

PEPEL.

Hold you! She's no longer yer servant! . . . Natasha, don't go . . . don't do nothing!

NATASHA.

You stop ordering . . . you're beginning a bit early!

PEPEL.

(*To KOSTOLOFF.*) So that's 'ow I get left . . . never mind! Now she is . . . mine!

KOSTOLOFF.

Yours? When did you buy 'er? Fer 'ow much?

(VASSILISA *laughs.*)

LUKA.

Vaska!—you—be off. . . .

PEPEL.

You're pleased to think it funny! Maybe you'll learn that it's a cryin' matter!

VASSILISA.

Oh, 'ow terrible! Oh, ain't I terrified!

LUKA.

Vassili—be off! for see . . . she's drawing yer on . . . working yer up—don't yer understand?

PEPEL.

Yes . . . aha! She's lying . . . you lie! You won't have it all your way!

VASSILISA.

And it won't be the way that I don't want, Vaska!

PEPEL.

(Clenching his fist at her.) We'll see!

(Goes out.)

VASSILISA.

(Disappearing from window.) I'll arrange you a wedding.

KOSTOLOFF.

Well, my old man?

LUKA.

Just so, my old man ! . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

So . . . you're going away, they say?

LUKA.

Soon.

KOSTOLOFF.

Where?

LUKA.

Where my eyes draw me.

KOSTOLOFF.

On the tramp, you mean. . . . Ain't to yer taste, I see, stoppin' in one place?

LUKA.

Under a firm stone no water flows, they say.

KOSTOLOFF.

That's—for a stone. But a man ought to live on one spot. Men ought not to live like beetles . . . each one popping about just as ever 'e pleases. A man ought to settle 'imself in one place . . . not wander at random over the earth. . . .

LUKA.

But supposing that every place is his place?

KOSTOLOFF.

Why, that shows 'e's a tramp . . . a useless man . . . a man, 'e ought to be of use . . . he ought to labour. . . .

LUKA.

Get on !

KOSTOLOFF.

Yes. Consider . . . a vagrant . . . what is he? A man apart . . . a man not like others. . . . Suppose 'e—a real pilgrim—knows somethin' that's no good to any one . . . though' it be true enough . . . but there's not good in every truth' . . . yes ! Well, let 'im keep it to 'imself and—keep still ! If he's a real pilgrim, 'e—is silent. But then 'e—'e don't wish for nothing, don't interfere, don't annoy people without reason. . . . 'Ow people live's none of 'is business. . . . 'E ought to follow a righteous life . . . to live in the woods . . . in the fastnesses . . . out of sight ! And interfere with no one, judge no one . . . but only pray for all . . . for all the sins of the world . . . for mine . . . for thine . . . for all. It's for that 'e forsakes all earthly cares . . . so as to pray. And that's the way. (*Pause.*) But you . . . what sort of a pilgrim are you? You've no passport . . . a good man should 'ave a passport . . . all good people 'as passports . . . yes !

LUKA.

There are people, and then there are others that are men. . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

Won't do for me. Don't give me no riddles. . . . I'm as clever as you. . . . What stuff—people and men!

LUKA.

Where's the riddle? I say—there is ground that won't take seed . . . and there's land that's fertile . . . whatever you put in it—it grows . . . and by that . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

What er yer gettin' at?

LUKA.

Now thus, for example. . . . Suppose the Lord God 'Imself says, "Mikhail, be you a man!" . . . It's all settled . . . without no bother . . . as you are—so you remain. . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

But . . . but—are you aware—my wife 'as an uncle—a policeman. And if I . . .

(VASSILISA *comes in.*)

VASSILISA.

Mikhail Ivanitch, go and 'ave yer tea.

KOSTOLOFF.

Here's fer yer ! get out of here ! clear out of this place !

VASSILISA.

Yes, you get out, old man ! Your tongue's a sight too long . . . yes, and 'oo knows you're not a runaway. . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

From to-day take yer carcase off ! or else—look out !

LUKA.

Call up uncle ! Call uncle . . . think if 'e caught a runaway. . . . Uncle might get a reward . . . three kopyeks. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

(*At window.*) What's that for sale ? What's that fer three kopyeks ?

LUKA.

It's me they're threatening to sell.

VASSILISA.

(*To husband.*) Come on. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

For three kopyeks ? Why, you see, old man, they'd sell you for one. . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

You . . . sprang up just like a devil from under the stove? (*Going with his wife.*)

VASSILISA.

What 'eaps of shady people in the world . . . and every kind of swindlers. . . .

LUKA.

Wish you a good appetite ! . . .

VASSILISA.

(*Turning round.*) Shut your mouth . . . yer rotten toadstool !

(*Disappears with her husband round the corner.*)

LUKA.

This night—I'm off. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

That's best. Never outstay your welcome. . . .

LUKA.

You say true.

BOOBNOFF.

I—know. Maybe I'd be in prison, if I 'adn't gone off in time.

LUKA.

Um?

BOOBNOFF.

True. This way : my wife took up with the master. . . . To say truth, the master was all right . . . 'e was a rare 'and at changing dog's coat, re-dyin' it, into racoon . . . cat's too—into kangaroo . . . musk-rat . . . and all sorts. A knock out ! So you see—the wife took up with 'im . . . and they were that gone on one another that I feared they might poison me, or get me out of the world some'ow. So I beat the wife . . . and the master—me. . . . We 'ad dreadful fights. Once 'e pulled out 'alf my beard and broke my rib. Then I'd get wild too . . . once I cracked my wife over the noddle with an iron yard . . . and altogether we was in the wars. 'Owever, I see—nothin' can come of all this . . . they get the best of it ! And then I thought to myself—I'd kill my wife . . . thought of it powerful ! But I pulled myself up in time—and cleared off. . . .

LUKA.

That was the best ! Leave 'em to go on chang-
ing dogs into racoons !

BOOBNOFF.

Only that the shop was in the wife's name . . . and I was left—as you see ! Though, to tell the truth, I'd 'ave drunk away the shop. For, yer see, I 'as those drinking spells. . . .

LUKA.

Drinkin' spells? Ah !

BOOBNOFF.

The worst yer can! Once I begin to put it down—I do in everything, leave nothin' but my skin. . . . What's more—I'm lazy. It's awful 'ow I 'ate work!

(SATINE and ACTOR enter quarrelling.)

SATINE.

Rot! You won't go anywhere . . . it's a pack of lies. Old man! why did yer pour all that stuff into 'is ears?

THE ACTOR.

You lie! Uncle! tell 'im that 'e lies! I—am going! To-day I worked, swept the floor . . . and took no vodka. How's that? Here they are—two five kopeys, and I'm—sober!

SATINE.

You pack of fools! Give it here, I'll drink it!

THE ACTOR.

Get out! That's all towards it.

LUKA.

(To SATINE.) And you—why do you lead 'im away?

SATINE.

Tell me, you magician, beloved of the gods—what's my life going to be? Blown myself, I have, into smithereens! But it's all gone yet, uncle—there are sharpers in the world cleverer than me!

LUKA.

You're merry, Konstantine . . . agreeable !

BOOBNOFF.

Actor ! Come along 'ere !

*(The ACTOR comes to the window, and sits
in front of BOOBNOFF on the sill.)*

SATINE.

In early days, brother, I was a great wag. It's good to remember ! . . . One of the boys in my time . . . danced splendidly—played on the stage—liked to amuse people . . . fine. . . .

LUKA.

'Ow did yer get out of yer bearings, eh?

SATINE.

Aren't you just curious, little old chappie ! You have to know all . . . but—why?

LUKA.

I want to understand the ways of men . . . and I look at you—I don't understand ! You're a bold fellow, Konstantine . . . no fool . . . yet all at once . . .

SATINE.

Prison, daddy ! Four years and seven months did I sit in prison . . . after the prison . . . nowhere to go !

LUKA.

Oh-ho, ho ! What were you in for ?

SATINE.

For a rascal. . . . I killed the rascal in a rage . . . and in the prison I learned to play cards. . . .

LUKA.

Was the killing—for a woman ?

SATINE.

For my own sister. . . . Anyhow—you come off it. I don't care for being questioned . . . and . . . all that happened long ago. . . . My sister—died . . . nine years have passed since then. . . . Ah, brother, she was a real brick of a girl, my sister was. . . .

LUKA.

You take life easily ! Yet 'ere just now was the locksmith—'ow he did yell . . . ai—ai—ai !

SATINE.

Klesshtsh ?

LUKA.

Yes. "There's no work," 'e cries . . . "there's nothing !"

SATINE.

He'll get used to it. . . . What shall I be up to now ?

LUKA.

(*Softly.*) See! 'ere he comes!

(KLESSHTSH *comes in slowly, his head bowed.*)

SATINE.

Hey, widower! What do yer hang yer head for? What are you pondering?

KLESSHTSH.

Thinkin' . . . what shall I do? I've got no tools . . . all gone for the funeral!

SATINE.

I'll give you some advice . . . do nothing! Simply dig up the world!

KLESSHTSH.

That's what yer say . . . I should be ashamed before men. . . .

SATINE.

Come off! Men aren't ashamed to let you live worse than a dog. . . . Think now—you stop working, I don't work . . . and a hundred more . . . thousands—all!—d'yer see? All chuck work! No one will do anything—then what'll happen!

KLESSHTSH.

They'll all die of hunger!

LUKA.

(*To SATINE.*) If these are your notions, you ought to go to the "fugitives" . . . there's a people they call the "fugitives." . . .

SATINE.

I know . . . they're no fools, ancient. . . .

(*NATASHA is heard from KOSTOLOFF'S window crying out, "What for? Stop! . . . What 'ave I done?"*)

LUKA.

(*Agitated.*) Natasha! It was her cryin'—
Ah!

(*From the KOSTOLOFFS' apartment is heard noise, scuffling, the sound of broken crockery, and the shrill cry of KOSTOLOFF—"Ah! heretic! hag!"*)

VASSILISA.

Wait a bit . . . I'll teach her . . . there, there! . . .

NATASHA.

Beating me . . . killing me. . . .

SATINE.

(*Shouts in at the window.*) Hi! in there! . . .

LUKA.

(*In trepidation.*) Vassili . . . call 'im; call Vaska. . . . Oh, Lord! Brothers . . . children!

THE ACTOR.

(*Running out.*) Here, now. . . . I'll find 'im at once!

BOOBNOFF.

It's nothin' uncommon, their beatin' 'er.

SATINE.

Come on, old man . . . we'll act as witnesses!

LUKA.

(*Following SATINE.*) I ain't no sort of a witness! It's Vassili . . . quick and fetch 'im. . . .

NATASHA.

Sister . . . sister, dear! . . . Va—a—a . . .

BOOBNOFF.

They've stopped 'er mouth—I'll go and look. . . .

(The noise in the KOSTOLOFFS' apartment diminishes, seems to die away as if they had gone out into the passage. The cry of an old man heard: "Stop!" The loud slam of a door, which seems, as it were, with a hatchet, to cut off all sound. Quiet on the stage. Evening twilight.)

KLESSHTSH.

(Seated on the sledge, rubs his hands firmly together. Then begins to mutter something—

at first indistinguishable, then)—'Ow, then? Must live. (*Aloud.*) Must have a roof . . . well? No roof . . . nothing! Man alone . . . alone—that's all. . . . No hope. . . .

(Slowly he goes out.)

(A few seconds of ominous silence, then, somewhere in the passage, a volume of sound, chaos of cries. It increases and approaches. Individual voices are distinguishable.)

VASSILISA.

I'm her sister! Let me go. . . .

KOSTOLOFF.

What right have you got—?

VASSILISA.

Jail-bird! . . .

SATINE.

Call Vaska! . . . quick—When—give it 'im!

(A police whistle.)

(TARTAR runs in, his right hand bandaged.)

THE TARTAR.

'Ere's a pretty pass!—murder in broad daylight!

(Enter WHEN, followed by MYEDVYEDYEFF.)

WHEN.

Ha! I gave 'im one for 'imself!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

You—you've been fighting, too?

THE TARTAR.

And you? Do yer own duty!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(Feeling for his cord.) Here! give up my whistle. . . .

(KOSTOLOFF runs in.)

KOSTOLOFF.

Abraham! Stop 'im! . . . Seize 'im! . . .
It's murder!

(From around the corner come KVASHNYA and NASTYA, supporting NATASHA, all dishevelled. SATINE moves backwards towards the house, dragging VASSILISA, who is trying to get at her sister; ALYOSHKA is leaping about her like a madman, whistling in her ears, shrieking, roaring. Also other tattered persons—men and women.)

SATINE.

(To VASSILISA.) Would you? you damned owl! . . .

VASSILISA.

Let go, you jail-bird! I'll tear you to pieces. . . .

KVASHNYA.

(Taking away NATASHA.) Karpovna, leave off . . . aren't you ashamed? Er you mad?

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(Seizes SATINE.) Aha . . . I've got yer!

SATINE.

When I flay 'em . . . Vaska; . . . Vaska . . .

(All are struggling in a mass near the passage, near the party wall. They draw NATASHA away to the R., and set her down on the pile of wood.)

(PEPEL rushes in and silently, with powerful movements, forces his way through them.)

PEPEL.

Where are you—Natasha?

KOSTOLOFF.

(Getting behind the corner.) Abraham! Seize Vaska! brothers, help us . . . take Vaska! Robber! footpad!

PEPEL.

You—you old goat! (*Violently swinging round, he strikes the old man.*)

(KOSTOLOFF *falls so that only the upper part of his body is in sight.* PEPEL *rushes to NATASHA.*)

VASSILISA.

Beat Vaska! Good people! . . . beat the robber!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(*Cries to SATINE.*) Let be . . . this is . . . a family matter! They're relations . . . what'er you?

KVASHNYA.

Look, look the savages! They've scalded the child's poor feet. . . .

NASTYA.

The samovar upset.

THE TARTAR.

Maybe . . . an accident . . . must 'ave the truth . . . mustn't talk wildly. . . .

NATASHA.

(*Half fainting.*) Vassilisi . . . take me . . . save me. . . .

VASSILISA.

Good folk ! look here ! look, see ! Dead !
Murdered !

(All gather round KOSTOLOFF in the passage. BOOBNOFF comes out from the throng, goes to PEPEL.)

BOOBNOFF.

(Low). Vaska ! the old man ! It's done now !

PEPEL.

(Looks at him, seems not to take it in.) Go . . . and call . . . take 'im to the hospital . . . leave me to deal with them !

BOOBNOFF.

I say—the old man—some one's finished 'im. . . .

(The noise on the stage goes out like blazing wood extinguished by water. Separate half-whispered ejaculations: "Not really?" "Done it this time!" "Let's get out of it!" "Oh, the devil!" "Some one's in for it!" The crowd decreases.)

(BOOBNOFF and the TARTAR go off.)

(NASTYA and KVASHNYA rush to the body of KOSTOLOFF.)

VASSILISA.

(Getting up from the ground, cries out triumphantly) Killed 'im! my 'usband . . . there's 'is murderer! Vaska murdered 'im! I saw it! Good people—I saw it! . . . And now—Vaska?—the police!

PEPEL.

(Coming from NATASHA.) Take 'er away!
(Looks at the OLD MAN. To VASSILISA.) Well? You're glad? *(Touches the body with his foot.)* Croaked the old dog! It's come your way. But can't I serve you the same? *(Rushes at her.)*

*(SATINE and WHEN pounce upon him—
VASSILISA rushes into the passage.)*

SATINE.

Hold on!

WHEN.

Proo! Where are you jumping to'?

VASSILISA.

(Reappearing.) What, Vaska, darling friend? You've got to go on trial. . . . Police! Abraham! Whistle!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

They tore it away, the devils! . . .

ALYOSHKA.

Here it is! *(He whistles. MYEDVYEDYEFF runs after him.)*

SATINE.

Vaska, don't funk ! Manslaughter—that's all it is—that's nothing ! That doesn't cost you much. . . .

VASSILISA.

Hold Vaska ! 'E killed 'im. . . . I saw 'im !

SATINE.

I gave 'im three good taps. . . . Can't have needed much ! Call me as a witness, Vaska. . . .

PEPEL.

I don't want to acquit myself. . . . What I want's to bring Vassilisa in . . . and I will bring 'er into it. She wished for it . . . she 'as urged me to kill 'er 'usband . . . 'as urged me to. . . .

NATASHA.

(*Suddenly and loud.*) Ah !—I understand. . . . So, Vassili ? Good people ! They are—at one ! My sister and—him . . . they are at one ! They had arranged it all ! So, Vassili, that's why you talked to me to-night . . . so that she . . . might overhear it all ? Good people ! She is 'is lover . . . you know it . . . all know it . . . they are at one ! She . . . it was she got 'im to kill 'er 'usband . . . 'e was in their way . . . and I—was in their way. . . . See 'ow they've mangled me. . . .

PEPEL.

Natalya ! What d'yer say . . . what d'yer say ?

SATINE.

The devil's in it all !

VASSILISA.

You lie ! She's lying ! . . . I . . . He, Vaska's the murderer !

NATASHA.

They are—at one ! Curse you both ! Both of yer.

SATINE.

'Ere's a muddle ! Take care, Vassili. They'll sink yer between 'em !

WHEN.

No understanding it. . . . What a world it is !

PEPEL.

Natalya ! No, it can't be you do really?—you can't believe that me and her . . .

SATINE.

God's sake, Natasha, think what you're saying !

VASSILISA.

(*In the passage.*) They've killed my 'usband . . . Your worships. . . . Vaska Pepel, a thief . . . he 'as killed him, Mr. Inspector. . . . I —saw it, they all saw it. . . .

NATASHA.

(*Her mind wandering.*) Good people . . . my sister and Vaska they're murderers! The police—you can 'ear them . . . it's she, it's my sister, she's urged him—persuaded him . . . her lover . . . there 'e is, the wretch . . . they are the murderers! Take them . . . judge. . . . And take me to prison! For Christ's sake . . . let me go to prison! . . .

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

THE FOURTH ACT

THE FOURTH ACT

SCENE.—*Setting of First Act. PEPEL'S room is gone, the partition is broken, and in the place where KLESSHTSH sat there is no anvil.*

(In the corner where PEPEL'S room was the TARTAR lies, moving and groaning from time to time. Behind the table KLESSHTSH is seated; he is mending a concertina for a leak in the bellows. At the other end of the table—SATINE, BARON, and NASTYA. In front of them a bottle of vodka, three bottles of beer, a large hunk of black bread. The ACTOR is turning about on the stove and coughing. Night. The scene is lighted by a lamp in the middle of the table. Wind in the yard.)

KLESSHTSH.

Y-yes . . . during all of that shindy . . . 'e cleared out.

THE BARON.

Vanished before the police. . . . Just like smoke dies before fire. . . .

SATINE.

Just as evildoers flee the faces of the just!

NASTYA.

'E was good was the little old man ! . . . But you're not men . . . you're mildew !

THE BARON.

(*Drinks.*) To your health, lady !

SATINE.

An interesting old boy . . . yes !. Nasturka here—she's fallen in love with him.

NASTYA.

In love with 'im . . . and dead in love with 'im ! 'Onest ! 'E saw . . . everythin' . . . understood everythin' . . .

SATINE.

(*Smiling.*) And on the whole . . . he was good for a lot of yer . . . like slops are when you've no teeth.

THE BARON.

(*Laughing.*) Or a plaster on a boil. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

'E 'ad pity . . . you 'asn't no pity. . . .

SATINE.

Does it help yer if I pity yer ?

KLESSHTSH.

You—may . . . it's not that you should 'ave pity . . . but it is that yer shouldn't give offence. . . .

THE TARTAR.

(*Sitting on the planks and nursing his damaged hand like a child.*) The old 'un was good . . . 'ad the law in 'is soul ! 'Oo 'as the law in 'is soul's good. Lose the law—and yer done for !

THE BARON.

What law, Prince ?

THE TARTAR.

Just . . . different ones . . . you know just . . .

THE BARON.

What then ?

THE TARTAR.

Don't offend people—there's the law !

SATINE.

We call that “The code of punishments, criminal and correctional.”

THE BARON.

And, moreover—“an act for the regulation of punishments to be inflicted by justices of the peace.” . . .

THE TARTAR.

Koran tells . . . your Koran ought to be yer law. . . . The soul ought to be the Koran. . . . Yes !

KLESSHTSH.

(*Testing concertina.*) Wheezes, wheezes, damn it! . . . but the Prince 'e says right . . . must live—by the law . . . by the gospel. . . .

SATINE.

Live it. . . .

THE BARON.

Try it. . . .

THE TARTAR.

Mahomet gave the Koran ; 'e said : 'Ere's—the law ! Do as it's written there. Then in course of time—the Koran's not enough . . . time gives its own law, a new law. . . . Each time gives its own law. . . .

SATINE.

Just so. . . . Time went by and gave “ a code of punishments ” . . . A strong law . . . you won't soon get rid of it. . . .

NASTYA.

(*Bangs her glass on the table.*) And what for . . . why do I live here with you? I'll go away . . . go off to some place . . . to the end of the world !

THE BARON.

In your slippers, lady?

NASTYA.

Naked ! On all fours !

THE BARON.

Quite a picture, lady . . . if on all fours. . . .

NASTYA.

Yes, I'll crawl! If it's only not to have to look at your mug. Ah, 'ow it all revolts me! All life . . . all people! . . .

SATINE.

Go on, and take the Actor with yer . . . 'e's off on some goose chase . . . he's learned that, at exactly half a verst from the end of the world, there's a 'ospital for organons. . . .

THE ACTOR.

(*Getting up from the stove.*) Or-ga-nisms—yer fool!

SATINE.

For organons poisoned with alcohol. . . .

THE ACTOR.

Yes, he'll go! he'll go! just see!

THE BARON.

He—who, monsieur?

THE ACTOR.

I!

THE BARON.

Merci, servant of the Goddess . . . what's 'er name? The Goddess of plays, of tragedy . . . what on earth's she called?

THE ACTOR.

The Muse, idiot ! Not a Goddess—but—a Muse !

SATINE.

Hera . . . Aphrodite . . . Atropos . . . to 'ell with em ! It's all the old man . . . that's screwed it into the Actor . . . d'yer see, Baron ?

THE BARON.

The old 'un's—an ass. . . .

THE ACTOR.

Clods ! Goths ! Mel-po-me-ne ! Heartless creature, you shall see—he'll go ! “ Get ye hence, ye dismal spirits ” . . . verses of Béranger . . . yes ! He'll find 'im a place where there's no . . . no . . .

THE BARON.

No, anything, monsieur !

THE ACTOR.

Yes ! Nothing ! “ That ditch shall be my tomb, sick and exhausted I die ” . . . Why do you live ? Why ?

THE BARON.

You ! “ Kean or genius and excess ” : don't bellow !

THE ACTOR.

You lie ! I will bellow !

NASTYA.

(Looking up from the table, wrings her hands.)

Shriek ! Let 'em listen !

THE BARON.

I don't quite take you, lady !

SATINE.

Quiet, Baron ! Oh, 'ell ! . . . Let 'em shout . . . split their own ears . . . let 'em ! That's sense, too. . . . Don't 'inder folk, as the old man put it . . . yes, yer know, that old bird he's just turned all our people's heads. . . .

KLESSHTSH.

'E pointed 'em some place . . . and then—never showed 'em the way. . . .

THE BARON.

The old 'un was a humbug. . . .

NASTYA.

You lie ! You're a 'umbug yerself !

THE BARON.

Silence, lady !

KLESSHTSH.

The truth . . . 'e didn't like it, the old 'un

didn't. 'E stood firm against the truth' . . . and right 'e was! Yes—where's there truth 'ere? But without it—yer can't breathe. . . . Look at the Prince there . . . 'e's spoiled 'is 'and workin' 'e'll 'ave to 'ave 'is 'and sawed off, see now . . . and there's some of yer truth!

SATINE.

(*Striking his hand on the table.*) Silence! You're all of yer—cattle! Boys—shut up about the old man! (*Calmer.*) You, Baron—are the worst of all! . . . Not a thing do yer understand . . . and—yer lie! The old 'un's no hum-bug! What is—the truth? Man—there's the truth! He understood that . . . you—don't! You're—as dead as bricks. . . . I understand the old man . . . yes. He lied . . . but out of pity fer you, devil take yer! There's lots of people that lie out of pity for their neighbours. . . . I—know! I've read! Beautifully, inspiredly, affectingly they lie! There's the consoling lie, the preceptive lie . . . the lie to justify the burden that crushes the hand of the labourer . . . to lay blame on the starving. I—know about lies! The weak of spirit and them that live on the sap of others—it's them that need lying . . . some it supports, and others—it screens. But him—that's his own master . . . who don't depend on others and don't feed on others why should he lie? Lying's the religion of slaves and masters. . . . Truth's the God of the free man!

THE BARON.

Bravo! Finely spoken! I—agree! You talk—like a decent man!

SATINE.

Shan't a rogue sometimes speak the truth, when decent folk so often talk like rogues? . . . I've forgotten a lot, but—I shall know something! The old 'un! He had brains. . . . He . . . worked on me like acid does on a dirty old coin. . . . Let's drink to his health! Fill up. . . .

(NASTYA *pours out a glass of beer and gives it to SATINE. He laughs.*)

SATINE.

The old man lives his own way . . . looks at everything through his own eyes. Once I asked him: "Daddy! why are men alive?" . . .

(*Trying to speak in LUKA'S voice and to imitate his demeanour.*)

"Why—they live for the better man, dearie! Now, let's say, there's carpenters and the rest—masses—people. . . . And then out of them a carpenter's born . . . a carpenter such as never was in all the world: above 'em all: never was his like fer carpent'ring. 'E stamps 'imself on the whole carpent'ring trade . . . shoves the whole thing twenty years forward. . . . And so for all the others. . . . Locksmiths then . . . bootmakers and other working folk . . . and all the agriculturals . . . and even the gentry—they

live for the better man ! Each thinks 'e's livin' fer 'imself, yet it turns out it's for that better man. A 'undred years . . . and maybe longer, we 'as to go on livin' till the better man ! ”

(*NASTYA looks fixedly into SATINE'S face. KLESSHTSH stops working at the concertina, and also listens. The BARON, with his head lowered, drums with his fingers softly on the table. ACTOR has got off the stove.*)

SATINE.

“ All, dearie boy, all in their way live for the better man ! Therefore you must show respect unto all . . . it's clear we can't know who 'e is, why 'e was born, and what 'e can do . . . 'e may have been born for our 'appiness . . . to bring us 'elp. . . . And the most of all . . . that we must respect children . . . the little bits of mites ! For the little children—there must be no cramping ! Never interfere with the children : respect the mites ! ” (*Pause.*)

THE BARON.

(*Thoughtfully.*) M-yes. . . . For the better man? So . . . it was in our family . . . an old family . . . of Catherine's time. . . . Noblemen . . . originally French. . . . In the service rose and rose. Under Nicholas, my grandfather, Gustave Debille, held a high post. . . . Riches. . . . Hundreds of serfs . . . horses . . . cooks,

NASTYA.

Lies ! 'E never did !

THE BARON.

(Leaping up .) What? Well . . . and after !

NASTYA.

'E never did !

THE BARON.

(Shouts out.) A house in Moscow ! A house in Petersburg ! Carriages . . . with coats-of-arms.

(KLESSHTSH takes the concertina, gets up, and goes to one side, from where he watches the scene.)

NASTYA.

Never 'ad !

THE BARON.

Silence ! I say . . . ten footmen ! . . .

NASTYA.

(With exultation.) N-never 'ad !

THE BARON.

I'll kill you !

NASTYA.

(Preparing to run.) There was no carriages !

SATINE.

Stop, Nasturka ! Don't rile 'im.

THE BARON.

Just wait, yer spawn! My grandfather . . .

NASTYA.

'Ad no gran'father! 'Ad nothin'!

(SATINE *laughs.*)

THE BARON.

(*Worn out with rage sits on the bench.*)
Satine, tell 'er . . . the slut. . . . You, too . . . you're laughing! You . . . too—don't believe me? (*Cries in despair, pounding his fists on the table.*) It's true, damn you all!

NASTYA.

(*Triumphant.*) A-ah, got 'im. D'yer know now 'ow it is when people won't believe yer?

KLESSHTSH.

(*Returning to table.*) I thought there'd be a fight. . . .

THE TARTAR.

Ah! Silly folk! Very bad!

THE BARON.

I . . . won't let myself be jeered at. I've got proofs, documents, damn it!

SATINE.

Stole them! And forget about your uncle's carriages . . . in a carriage that was you can't go anywhere.

THE BARON.

That she should dare, anyhow!

NASTYA.

D'yer hear 'im? Should dare! . . .

SATINE.

'E's only laughing! How's she any worse than you? Though in her past we'll take it that she's had no carriages and—grandfathers, or even a father and mother. . . .

THE BARON.

(*Growing calmer.*) Devil take yer! . . . you're able . . . to judge things . . . coolly. . . . But it seems time. . . . I've no strength of character. . . .

SATINE.

Get some! It's of use. . . . (*Pause.*) Nastya, er yer going to the hospital?

NASTYA.

Why?

SATINE.

To Natasha.

NASTYA.

What er yer thinking of? Been out long since . . . came out and—disappeared! No findin' 'er. . . .

SATINE.

That's to say—she's a goner.

KLESSHTSH.

It's interestin' to see who's goin' to floor which?
Vaska—Vassilisa, or she him?

NASTYA.

Vassilisa'll win! She's cunning. But Vaska
—he'll go to penal servitude. . . .

SATINE.

For manslaughter—only to prison. . . .

NASTYA.

Pity. You're better off—in penal servitude.
. . . That's where yer ought all to be . . . in
penal servitude . . . all mixed up together . . .
all mixed up . . . like rubbish . . . in the
dust-hole.

SATINE.

(*Astonished.*) What are you saying? Are
you mad?

THE BARON.

Now I'm just going to give her one . . . for
her insults!

NASTYA.

Try it! Touch me!

THE BARON.

I'll try it!

SATINE.

Let be! Don't touch her . . . give no offence to folk! I can't get him out of my head—that old man! (*Laughs.*) Give no offence to folk, and if a man does me an offence—what I call a life-long offence—what then? Forgive? Nothing! No matter!

THE BARON.

(*To NASTYA.*) You ought to know that I'm—I'm on a different level to you! You . . . muck!

NASTYA.

Ah, you poor wretch! Why you . . . you live on me like a worm does in a little apple!

(*Laughter of the men.*)

KLESSHTSH.

You . . . stupid! A little apple!

THE BARON.

You can't . . . be angry . . . she's such an idiot!

NASTYA.

Laughing? That's a lie too! You don't find it funny!

THE ACTOR.

(*Gloomily.*) Thrash 'em!

NASTYA.

If only I . . . could! I'd give yer . . .

(Takes cup from table and throws it on the ground.)

that's 'ow!

THE TARTAR.

Why break the crockery? La . . . yer ninny!

THE BARON.

(Getting up.) No, now I'm goin' . . . to teach her manners.

NASTYA.

(Running away.) Go to the devil!

SATINE.

(After her.) Here! Stop! What are you running for?

NASTYA.

Wolves! may yer choke! yer wolves!

THE ACTOR.

(Gloomily.) Amen.

THE TARTAR.

O-o. She's a bad woman—the Russian woman! Scolding wilful! Not the Tartar woman—the Tartar woman knows the law!

KLESSHTSH.

Give 'er a shaking.

THE BARON.

The huzzy!

KLESSHTSH.

(*Trying the concertina.*) Finished! But 'er master didn't come for 'er. . . . 'E's on the loose. . . .

SATINE.

Come on—drink!

KLESSHTSH.

Thanks! Bedtime soon. . . .

SATINE.

Are you getting used to us?

KLESSHTSH.

(*Having had a drink, goes over to the corner where his planks are.*) It's all right. . . . Everywhere—there's men . . . at first—yer don't see that . . . then—you look round, you find that they're all men . . . it's all right!

(*The TARTAR spreads something on his planks, goes on his knees, and prays.*)

THE BARON.

(*Pointing the TARTAR out to SATINE.*) Look!

SATINE.

Stop! He's a good chap. . . . Let him alone! (*Laughs.*) I to-day—am good. . . . Devil knows why!

THE BARON.

You're always good when you're drunk—and clever. . . .

SATINE.

When I'm drunk . . . I like everything. Yes. . . . He—prays? Fine! A man can believe or not believe . . . that's his affair! A man is free . . . he pays for everything himself! . . . for belief, for unbelief, for love, for wisdom. A man pays everything himself, and therefore is—free! . . . The man—that's the truth! What is man? . . . It's not you, not me, not them—no! It's you, I, them, the old 'un, Napoleon, Mahomet . . . in one! (*Draws in the air the face of a man with his finger.*) D'yer see? That's prodigious! In that is the beginning and end of all. All is—in man, all for man! There exists only man, all the rest—is the work of his hands and of his brains! Man! That's magnificent! That sounds . . . mighty. Mankind! You must respect mankind! Not pity him . . . not lower him with pity . . . must respect him! Let's drink to Mankind! Baron! (*Gets up.*) It's good—to feel yourself a man! I'm a ticket-of-leave, a murderer, a scoundrel—yes, I am! When I walk the streets people eye me for a

crook . . . and they draw away, and they glare after me, and they often say to me, "Loafer! black-guard! work! work!" Why! To fill my belly? (*Laughs.*) I've always despised people who worry too much about stuffing themselves. It isn't that, Baron? That isn't it. Man is higher than that. Man is higher than repletion!

THE BARON.

(*Nodding his head.*) You're getting at it . . . that's prime . . . that's the thing to warm one's heart. I haven't got that. . . . I don't know how! (*Looks round—then softly, cautiously*) I, brother, I'm afraid . . . sometimes. D'you see? Get in a funk . . . because—what after?

SATINE.

Rubbish! There's nothing that a man should fear?

THE BARON.

Yer know . . . from when first I can remember . . . there's been inside my noddle a sort of fog. Never anything have I understood. I'm . . . in some way—I'm clumsy. It seems to me all my life I've done nothing but dress up . . . and why? Went to school—wore the uniform of the Institute for the Sons of the Nobility . . . but what did I learn? Don't remember. . . . Married—in a frock-coat, and an overcoat . . . but I picked out the wrong wife and—why? Don't understand. . . . Squandered all I

had, wore some sort of a grey pea-jacket and red trousers . . . but where did it all get to? Never noticed. . . . Entered the Court of Exchequer . . . uniform, and a cap with a cockade . . . made away with some Government money—they put me into the convict's gown . . . then—I got into this lot here. . . . And all . . . like in a dream . . . ah? That's funny. . . .

SATINE.

Not very. . . . I should say—stupid. . . .

THE BARON.

Yes . . . and I think it's stupid. . . . But I must have been born for some reason. . . . Eh?

SATINE.

(*Smiling.*) Probably. . . . Man is born for the better man! (*Shaking his head.*) So . . . it's all right!

THE BARON.

That . . . Nastya! . . . Where's she run off to? I'll go, and see . . . where she is? For after all . . . she . . .

(*Goes out. A pause.*)

THE ACTOR.

Tartar! (*Pause.*) Prince!

(*The TARTAR turns his head.*)

THE ACTOR.

For me . . . pray. . . .

THE TARTAR.

Why?

THE ACTOR.

Pray for me. . . .

THE TARTAR.

(After a silence.) Pray yerself !

THE ACTOR.

(Gets quickly from the stove, goes to the table, pours himself some vodka with trembling hands, drinks, and almost runs into the passage.) I'm off !

SATINE.

Hi, you, off where?

(Enter MYEDVYEDYEFF in a wadded woman's jacket, and BOOBNOFF ; both drunk, but not very drunk. In one hand BOOBNOFF is carrying a packet of cracknels; he has a bottle of vodka in one armpit, and another sticking out of the pocket of his pea-jacket.)

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

A camel—it's a kind . . . of a donkey ! Only with no ears. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Chuck it ! Yerself—yer a kind of a donkey.

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

A camel, it hasn't got no ears at all . . .
it—hears with its nostrils. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

(*To SATINE.*) Chum! I've been looking for
yer in all the trakteers—all the stills! Take
the bottle, all my 'ands is full!

SATINE.

You—put the cracknels on the table, then you'll
have one hand free. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

True! You're right. . . . Jumble, look at it
all! So there, eh? . . . Wire boy.

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Sharpers . . . they're all clever . . . I
know! They 'ave got to be clever. A good
man he—may be stupid and good, but a wrong
'un, 'e's bound to 'ave wits. But, about the camel,
yer know . . . yer can get me up on 'im . . .
'e 'asn't no 'orns, not no teeth. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Where's every one? Why's there no one 'ere?
'Ere, get up . . . it's my treat!

SATINE.

You'll soon drink all *you've* got, blockhead!

BOOBNOFF.

Soon, yer say? This time I've gathered some capital—a little pile. . . . When! Where's When?

KLESSHTSH.

(*Going to table.*) Not here. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

Ooo-r-r! Yer peacock! Don't bark, don't growl! Drink, be jolly, don't turn yer nose up. . . . I treats everybody! Why, mates, I loves to stand treat! If I was rich . . . I'd . . . I'd build a free trakteer! Yes, my God! With music, and a troupe of singers. . . . Come, drink, eat, listen to the singers . . . gladden yer 'earts. A man's a sad creature . . . come along to me to my free trakteer! Satine! For you . . . you . . . 'ere, take 'alf of all my capital! This way!

SATINE.

Give it me all in a lump!

BOOBNOFF.

The 'ole capital? At once? Right! Then . . . here's a rouble . . . and here's a twenty kopyeks . . . a five kopyeks . . . a two kopyeks . . . all. . . .

SATINE.

That'll do! It's safer with me. I'll play cards with it!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

I am—a witness . . . the money is placed in your keepin' . . . 'ow much is it?

BOOBNOFF.

You? You're a camel . . . we want no witnesses. . . .

ALYOSHKA.

(*Comes in barefooted.*) Fellows! my feet are soaking.

BOOBNOFF.

Go and soak yourself . . . only all over! I like you. You sing and you play . . . that's very good! But, drinking—that's a poor game! That does 'arm, brother; drinking does 'arm!

ALYOSHKA.

Why, I look at yer! And it's only when yer drunk yer anythin' like a man. . . . Klesshtsh! My concertina—mended? (*Dances, and sings:*)

*If my nozzle weren't so bonny,
Then my gossip wouldn't love me. . . .*

I'm frozen, fellows! Cold!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Um. . . . If one was to ask: 'Oo is that gossip?

BOOBNOFF.

Keep still. You're no one now, brother. . . .
You're no "bobby" in these days . . . you're
done with! No "bobby" nor no uncle. . . .

ALYOSHKA.

You're just—auntie's darling hubby!

BOOBNOFF.

One of yer nieces is—in gaol, the other's
dyin'—

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(*Proudly.*) Yer lie! She's not dyin': she's
disappeared without tellin' no one!

(SATINE *laughs.*)

BOOBNOFF.

All the same, brother! A man with no niece—
'e's not an uncle!

ALYOSHKA.

Your Excellency! The retired drum-major!

*My gossip—has 'er savings,
And I've not got a penny!
Oh, aren't I a merry boy?
Oh, I am so good!*

It's cold!

(WHEN *enters; then—until the end of the
act—some other male and female
figures. They undress, get on to the
planks, snore.*)

WHEN.

Boobnoff? What made yer 'ook it?

BOOBNOFF.

Come 'ere! Sit down . . . let's sing, mate!
My beloved . . . eh?

THE TARTAR.

In the night yer must sleep! Sing songs in
the day!

SATINE.

That's all right, Prince. You—come here!

THE TARTAR.

How—all right? There'll be a noise. . . .
When there's singing, it means a noise. . . .

BOOBNOFF.

(*Going to him.*) Prince! 'ow's—yer 'and?
'Ave they cut it off? . . .

WHEN.

Means the gutter for you, Hassan! Without
a hand—what er yer good for? A man's valued
by 'is 'ands and 'is back. . . . No hand—no
man! Go and drink! Nothing like it!

(*KVASHNYA comes in.*)

KVASHNYA.

Ah, my dear good people! Out in the yard, out
in the yard! The cold, the slush—is my man
here? Mannie!

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

Me?

KVASHNYA.

Got on my jacket again . . . and it seems to me . . . a bit on, ah? What d'yer mean by it?

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

On account of the birthday . . . Boobnoff . . . and—the cold . . . the slush!

KVASHNYA.

Look at me . . . the slush! No foolery. . . . Come to bed. . . .

MYEDVYEDYEFF.

(Going into the kitchen.) Sleep, yes . . . I will. . . . I want to . . . it's time!

(Exit.)

SATINE.

Why are yer so beastly strict with him?

KVASHNYA.

It's the only way, my friend. A man like 'im 'as got to be kept strict. We keep 'ouse together, now; I thought 'e would be a 'elp to me . . . seein' as 'e's 'ad discipline, but you—you're a disorderly crew. . . . I've got my

woman's view . . . let 'im go gettin' drunk.
That don't suit my book!

SATINE.

You've chosen your help wrong. . . .

KVASHNYA.

No—better than you . . . you'd never live
with me . . . a fellow like you! I'd see yer
one week in twenty . . . you'd gamble away me
and my very insides!

SATINE.

(*Laughs.*) That's true, my girl! I
would. . . .

KVASHNYA.

So now! Alyoshka!

ALYOSHKA.

Yes—here am I!

KVASHNYA.

What's this you've been saying about me?

ALYOSHKA.

I? No 'arm. I've said, there, I've said, there's
a woman! Wonderful woman! Flesh, fat bones
—good forty stone, and brains—not a ha'porth!

KVASHNYA.

And there you're wrong! I've got a deal of brains. No, and why did yer say that I beat my man?

ALYOSHKA.

I thought that was beatin' 'im when you seized 'old of 'is 'air. . . .

KVASHNYA.

(*Smiling.*) Fool! Then just you don't see! Why do you carry tales out of school? And yer 'urt 'is feelin's too. . . . It's cause of your talk 'e's took to drinkin'.

ALYOSHKA.

Then the sayin's true, then, even a bear likes drink!

(KLESSHTSH *and* SATINE *laugh.*)

KVASHNYA.

You're a pretty sort of man, you are, Alyoshka!

ALYOSHKA.

I'm the very first superfine sort of man for any job! I just go where my eyes lead me!

BOOBNOFF.

(*By the TARTAR'S planks.*) Come along! It's no use . . . they'll not let us sleep! Come and drink . . . the night through, When!

WHEN.

Drink? Why not. . . .

ALYOSHKA.

And I'll play to yer!

SATINE.

Let's 'ear yer!

THE TARTAR.

Well, Boobnoff, yer devil—fetch the wine! We'll drink, we'll rollick—death comes . . . we've got to die!

BOOBNOFF.

Pour 'im out, Satine! When, squat! Ah, pals! Does a man want much? I've drunk a bit and—happy! When! Strike me . . . lad! I'll sing. . . . I'll pay!

WHEN.

(Sings:)

The sun it rises and it sets . . .

BOOBNOFF.

(Going on.)

In my prison all is dark!

(The door is opened suddenly. BARON on the threshold.)

THE BARON.

Hi . . . you ! Go . . . go over there ! On the waste . . . out there . . . the Actor . . . he's hanged himself !

(Silence. All look at the BARON. NASTYA appears behind his back, and slowly, with wide-opened eyes, goes over to the table.)

SATINE.

(In a low voice.) Ah . . . he's spoiled the song . . . the fool !

THE END.

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