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SAVELI'S EXPIATION

A RUSSIAN STORY.

BY

HENRY GRÉVILLE.

AUTHOR OF "DOSIA."

PHILADELPHIA:

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# SAVÉLI'S EXPIATION.

A RUSSIAN STORY.

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by Mary Neal Sherwood.

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Henry Gréville's most dramatic and most powerful novel, and the one that established her fame in Europe, is "Savéli's Expiation," which is a faithful portrayal of Russian despotism in the time of serfdom; and although the character on which the plot rests is strongly drawn, it is not overdrawn, but is true to the times and situation. Powerful as it is, it is as free from exaggeration as if it were described from memory of an actual event, while a pathetic, tender love story is presented for relief. "Savéli's Expiation" shows more power and wonderful concentration than any the author has written; the descriptions are so vivid, and the characters and surroundings presented with such clearness and strength, that one is carried to the very scene and feels the atmosphere.—BOSTON TRANSCRIPT.

Henry  
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**Saveli's Expiation.** *By Henry Gréville.* A dramatic and powerful novel of Russian despotism in the time of serfdom; combining in it a pure, pathetic and tender love story. *Translated from the French of Henry Gréville, by Mary Neal Sherwood.*

The name of Henry Gréville is becoming familiar to the American public through the great popularity of her novels, for she is a writer of unusual genius and great originality. Her most dramatic and most powerful novel, and the one that established her fame in Europe, is "SAVÉLI'S EXPIATION," (*translated from the French, by Mary Neal Sherwood*), which is a faithful portrayal of Russian despotism in the time of serfdom, and although the character on which the plot rests is strongly drawn, it is not overdrawn, but is true to the times and situation. Powerful as it is, it is as free from exaggeration as if it were described from memory of an actual event, while a pathetic, tender love story is presented for relief. "SAVÉLI'S EXPIATION" shows more power and wonderful concentration than any the author has written; the descriptions are so vivid, and the characters and surroundings presented with such clearness and strength, that one is carried to the very scene and feels the atmosphere. Henry Gréville's canvases are never crowded, though she is not what is called an emotional writer; yet there is an underlying tone of pathos in this novel which escapes at times in powerful passages, the interest being well sustained throughout, while the story is refined and exceedingly enjoyable. The charm of her novels consists in their freshness, her characters being delineated with bold yet delicate touches, and perfect truthfulness made subservient to art, so that one finds in them an individuality which makes them life pictures. Herein lies this author's power, for few could write novels which leave so strong an impression on the mind as hers, and yet employ so few incidents and so little of the sensational. Her portrayal of life and manners, as well as her descriptions of scenery, give evidence of quick observation and keen analysis, and her language is peculiar for its figurativeness. Her characters are not tediously described, but represent themselves, like veritable *dramatis personæ*, as do those from every masterly pen. Henry Gréville is also a woman of education and intellect, second only to George Eliot, with whom foreign reviewers justly compare her, who also consider that she will take a higher rank than any novelist on the continent, and that it will outlast that of any of the popular writers of the day. She was employed by French journals to go to Russia to write for them; and, as Edward King says, "they fight for the possession of her pen."—*Boston Daily Evening Transcript.*

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# SAVÉLI'S EXPIATION.

TRANSLATED FROM THE  
FRENCH OF HENRY GRÉVILLE,  
BY MARY NEAL SHERWOOD.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BLUE BEARD.

THE manorial mansion of Daniel Loukitch Bagrianof—built of wood, upon a high foundation or basement of brick—stood in the centre of a large court-yard. On the right of this court extended a long, low range of stables and carriage houses, while on the left were the servants' quarters and the bake-houses.

The oval sward before the door divided the wide road like an island in the centre of a river. This road was built expressly for the Bagrianofs, and came in a direct line from the nearest post-station, eighteen versts away; it was set thick on both sides with superb great birch trees, from the station to the very door, which door, it must be acknowledged, was not very superb. There were no walls on this side. A simple moat sufficed to defend the manorial

dwelling against the wolves. As to men, that was quite a different matter.

Who could have the audacity to even dream of passing this slight protection, more to be feared than the thorny hedges which surround enchanted castles? Daniel Bagrianof had dogs, but his dogs fed on raw meat, and, let loose every night, were less to be feared than the cold, stern eyes of the Seigneur.

No human being had ever seen Bagrianof angry. It was said that even as a child he had been guiltless of infantile irritability and rebellions. His pale face, his heavy eyebrows, and full rich beard were early frosted, and this gave him a look of great serenity. His steel gray eyes and thin lips alone suggested the pitiless tenacity and cold ferocity of this man. Although no one had ever seen him angry, it was also equally true that he had never within the memory of man been known to forgive an injury, voluntary or otherwise. A story was whispered about which gave a very accurate idea of his character. One fine day in his early youth, Bagrianof, having been ridiculed by a pretty woman behind her fan, took his revenge not upon her husband, but upon him who, right or wrong, was supposed to be on especially good terms with the lady. After having insulted him in a select assemblage, he ran him through the body in a duel a few hours later; and a week afterward said to the husband, carelessly: "You owe me a great debt of gratitude, my dear fellow, for I have performed a task which in reality belonged to you: I have killed your wife's lover."

The indignant husband sprang upon him; they were separated, but the next day the lady was a widow.

This summary fashion of settling matters was quite enough to give even the most courageous a cold shiver; and after having seen Bagrianof behave in a similar way more than once, it was quietly decided by the noblesse of that district to let him alone; consequently, for several years, he was left very much to himself. "I go nowhere," he said, one day; "I am too comfortable at home!"

As years went on, Bagrianof married. He took for a wife the daughter of a widower, his neighbor, whose estates were next his own. It was a marriage which had been long foreseen, and yet the announcement caused a great sigh of relief for thirty versts around, for no one need now fear that this terrible personage would appear as a suitor.

The young wife, Alexandra Rodiovna, brought up in freedom in her father's house, soon learned to moderate her childish glee. She ceased to laugh, then to speak, and finally learned to weep. All this in one short fortnight! And when her aged father, whose mind was much weakened, came to see her in her new home, he had much difficulty in recognizing his little household pet, his *Sacha*, in this grave woman, with lowered eyelids and measured footfall—who spoke in whispers, and never volunteered a remark, but replied, when addressed, in evident fear and trembling.

Bagrianof in the meantime called his wife, "My love, my life," etc.; but while he lavished upon her these tender

epithets, the sardonic glances of those cold gray eyes followed every movement of the poor woman with strange insistence.

Scanty as was the intelligence left, the girl's father had quite enough to understand what his daughter's lot would be in this world; and, at the end of a very few weeks, grief and regret had killed him.

Twenty years had passed away since then, and the destiny of Madame Bagrianof had in no way changed. She had brought into the world and nursed ten children, who had all died at a very early age. The eleventh child was a little girl—frail and delicate to such a degree that it was not supposed that she could survive, particularly as her mother had suddenly lost her milk, in consequence of a fright caused by her lord and master. This saved the child, who, handed over to a stout peasant woman, grew wonderfully, and developed like a timid little bird under the protecting care of her mother, who fairly idolized her.

For many years Bagrianof had been in the habit of recruiting his seraglio from the hosts of pretty girls in his various villages. He summoned them to his house, made his selection, kept them a day, or possibly two days, ordered them to eat their meals in the kitchen, and then sent them off with some trifling gift—generally a kerchief of many colors, such as the women thereabouts wore on their heads, and of which he kept a large stock in a wardrobe in his dressing-room.

In the village they had given up cursing him. What is the good of loading with imprecations the stone at the

mouth of the sepulchre which separates you forever from every living being? Bagrianof was as deaf and as dumb as this stone. From time to time, in obedience to immemorial custom, the peasants went to entreat him to remit the payment of a tax until the next harvest, or to buy one of them off at the recruiting season.

Lost labor! His cruel smile, his sarcastic laugh, his manner of a grand seigneur, which never left him—all these threw back more heavily than ever the stone which some vague hope had slightly lifted. Thus the peasants belonging to Bagrianof seemed to have forgotten all the laws of hospitality.

Unfortunate indeed was any traveller of noble birth who, losing his way, saw himself compelled to ask his road at one of these villages! Unfortunate was he who, in the heat of summer, implored a glass of water to staunch his thirst! He saw himself repulsed by the women, driven away with stones by the children, and pursued by snarling dogs. Every man of noble birth was, in their eyes, an enemy.

The naked cabins, the arid soils and empty wells which they dared not feed from the spring lest there should not be a sufficiency of fresh water in their master's house; the dilapidated granaries, the lean cattle, all spoke with eloquence of the master's tyranny; while in the neighboring villages the rustling wheat, green meadow-lands, and rich herds, all suggested wealth and prosperity.

The peasant women from these last villages, in brilliant skirts and striped chemises, met at the wells the ragged girls belonging to Bagrianovka.

“Why do you not live like us?” they said, when they met these women—all worn and harassed by poverty, who were obliged to walk a good half-hour in the broiling sun to fill their pitchers.

“Because the Seigneur takes everything,” they murmured, looking behind them in terror as they spoke.

But later on they ceased to answer; their haggard eyes flashed with hatred as they looked at the happy people who had everything in such abundance. “The peasants at Bagrianovka live like wolves and devour each other!” was said, from time to time; and soon it came to pass that no more pity was expended upon them.

## CHAPTER II.

## SEED-TIME AND HARVEST.

THE harvest of 1842 was exceptionally bad for the inhabitants of Bagrianovka. The soil had been burned to powder by the burning sun. There had been little or no rain for four months, which was the finishing-touch of misery to these poor people.

In the interior—that is to say, back in the country—government had taken matters in hand and given wise assistance, while the granaries of the Seigneurs, which generally contained an amount of wheat sufficient for ten years, were drawn upon. But this was in no degree the case at Bagrianovka. They had nothing. The previous year, too, had not been favorable, and in the spring they had neglected to take to their masters the seed grain which was due. September had come; the scanty oats fluttered in the breeze, so sparse and empty were they that they were good for little more than fodder for the cattle. The harvest of wheat had been absolutely nothing; consequently, the Bagrianovka peasants saw themselves, one Sunday morning, face to face with the obligation of paying their rent to the Seigneur that very day. The winter threatened to be a very severe one, and not one among the whole of them was certain of being able to feed his family until the spring.

A little before the church was opened, the men gathered about the door. The starchina—the eldest man in the village—raised his voice and sadly spoke to this effect:

“Brothers—we have nothing, and the commune has nothing—not even the necessities of life. We must implore the Seigneur to forgive us our debt until next year. Perhaps God will take pity on us and will grant us a better harvest time.”

A mournful silence followed this proposition; the drooping heads, and shoulders carelessly shrugged, announced the hopelessness with which it was regarded by the peasants.

“Is there among you a man who will take it upon himself to answer for the others?” added the starchina. “Is there one here who has any property which he is willing to put at the disposal of his brothers? If so, the kindness would never be forgotten.”

The peasants looked at each other. Some few among them were not altogether penniless; but distrust comes quickly to those who are suffering.

“What you say, starchina, is not reasonable,” said one who was less impoverished than the others; “you know very well that if one of us should show either wheat or money it would at once be taken from him, and then, how would that profit you?”

A dead silence followed, and just then the priest was seen coming toward the church; the men drew aside for him to pass.

“Father, will you advise us,” said the starchina, “for we cannot pay!”

The priest was a man of about twenty-six, tall in figure and with a kind, honest face, a blond beard and long hair which made him look like the heads of Christ which are painted on the tabernacle doors.

His face had an expression of great sweetness and yet of manly firmness, calculated to inspire both confidence and respect. With eyes brimful of pity, he looked around on these poor peasants.

He was as yet new among them, had learned much of their miseries, but did not dream of the dull and sullen rage which slept in their souls.

“Ask, my children, and it shall be given to you. Go to your Seigneur, and perhaps God will open his heart to hear your prayers.”

“But he never grants them,” muttered a peasant, sulkily.

“He may, this time, Ilioncha. Never despair of Providence, my son. If you wish it, I will offer up a prayer after the mass.”

“We cannot pay you, father,” said another man in the crowd.

“Never mind that; have no anxiety on that score,” answered the priest, with a smile. “Come, children—prayer rests the weary heart. Perhaps God will soften that of your Seigneur to mercy and compassion.”

He entered the church with the Sacristan, while the crowd followed slowly.

The Seigneur kept them waiting. He never allowed the services to begin without him. Then the bell began to strike slowly and regularly; the master was coming. He crossed the threshold of the sacred edifice with his head haughtily erect, counting his men as he would his heads of cattle. He reached the elevated seat, the seigneurial tribune, separated from the rest of the church by a wooden railing; he took his seat, and the *Diacre* sang the first verse before the closed door of the Holy of Holies.

Mass was over, and as Bagrianof was about to leave his place, he saw the priest in sacerdotal garments begin the prayer for mercy. Displeased with this unauthorized innovation, he frowned deeply. Who, then, in his church—his own especial church—had had the audacity to ask an especial prayer, without previously requesting his permission? He was silent, however, but he examined each group in turn.

His live-stock prayed with extraordinary fervor; their heads and shoulders, bowing in their responses, waved to and fro like a field of grain in a strong north wind. The words, "Good Lord, have mercy upon us," were uttered with intense feeling.

Bagrianof remarked all this, but still said not a word.

The prayer was over, and the priest having blessed the crowd, now advanced to the centre of the church, with the crucifix elevated between his two hands; ready to present it to the adoration of each one. The Seigneur did not stir. And no other person dared to move before he did; his wife looked at him with astonished eyes, and then, with a shudder, turned them hastily away.

He enjoyed his despotic authority over this crowd, over this priest, who stood firm and undisturbed, but very pale—apparently unmoved by this insult. Then the Seigneur advanced, made the sign of the cross, kissed the crucifix, made a second sign of the cross, and finally, examining the priest with hard, cruel eyes, he said :

“And who, reverend father, commanded these prayers to-day ?”

“It was I only, my lord ; I thought that the wrath of heaven seemed let loose on these poor people, and that prayer was their only consolation.”

“A very good idea !” replied Bagrianof, still smiling ; “but I am not fond of novelties ; remember this in future, I beg of you. Come and dine with us !”

And with this contemptuous invitation, which was in fact a command, the master retired without awaiting any reply. The priest turned very pale at the insult, and his hands held the tall crucifix more firmly. He presented it to the lips of the next person who approached. Piously, as was the custom, she kissed also the hand which held the cross, and a tear fell on the fingers of the priest. He looked down upon her, and a smile full of benevolence flitted over his face.

An hour later the deputation from the village presented itself before the mansion. Bagrianof, who had seen them approach, made them wait at least a good fifteen minutes, with their heads uncovered, standing in the north wind, which was tearing the dry leaves from the trembling trees ; then, throwing on his fur pelisse and pushing a warm cap well down over his ears, he went out upon the balcony.

The ten or twelve poor devils who awaited his good pleasure were huddled together, and inclined themselves before him until they touched the ground with their foreheads. When they were erect again the starchina entered the lists.

“Seigneur,” he said, “the harvest has been very bad, as you know. God has not spared us—we promised to pay you the grain that we owed to you in the spring-time, but we cannot. Have compassion upon us. Wait for the payment of this debt for one whole year; we will then pay you double what we owe you. And we will be grateful for your compassion until the end of our days.”

Bagrianof listened with his cold smile; he looked from one to another, and then replied, in his most suave tones:

“I do not know why you offer me double what you owe me, my children. Have I ever been looked upon by you as an avaricious man? Have I ever exacted more than my due from you? Then, my children,” said the master, “pay me the money you owe: I ask no more,” he continued, with a smile of triumph; “pay me that, and I shall be altogether satisfied, and all will go well!”

“We cannot pay it immediately,” stammered the starchina; “you know yourself that the harvest has been an absolute failure.”

“A failure for me quite as well as for you,” answered Bagrianof; “I need money.”

“Money!” sighed the peasants. “And where can we get money?”

“Where?” repeated Bagrianof, still perfectly calm.

"Where can you get it? How do I know? Do you ask me where? Have you not your fur pelisses and your farm implements, your cows and horses? these are all worth money, I believe."

"But the priest!"

"Who is it, who says 'but?'" answered the master.

"I know no buts! Then you do not intend paying me to-day? Have you brought nothing?"

"No, master."

"Very well, I give you one week more, until next Sunday. If, by that time, you have not paid, there is but one means of compelling you to make money with which to pay me. The district of Olonetz has sent to me for some people to guard their geese, milk their cows, and to do farm-work generally. You have girls among you who are stout and hearty; I will have them valued, and I will sell them. You may in this way, you see, pay your debts and yet not untie your purse-strings. Farewell, my children, take care of yourselves."

He turned his back upon them and closed the door of his house.

The district of Olonetz! Exile to an icy desert! families and homes broken up! The peasants departed in broken-hearted silence.

"God curses us! It is the end of the world!" said Ilioncha, as he entered his hut.

He had five daughters, three of whom were of an age to be married.

## CHAPTER III.

## A MIDNIGHT SCENE.

NIGHT came on, cold and desolate; a ferocious wind shook the trees, and the dry limbs fell to the ground. Great black clouds hurried athwart the young moon. The village was silent and as if struck by death. It was hardly eight o'clock, and yet the women and children in all the huts had gone to bed exhausted with tears.

The men did not sleep, however. They were gathered together under the starchina's roof, where, in the darkness, they were taking counsel of each as to what should be done. The question was not one of easy solution. The sale of their cattle and of their tools could be but a palliative. Spring would return, and then what were they to do? How could they cultivate the soil, which another year might be more fruitful, without the aid of a plough and a horse? Must they allow their daughters to depart? Many of them inclined to this alternative. It is a sad thing to say; but poverty destroys all feeling among the Russian peasantry—even family affection—and allows only instincts to remain; and that which is the strongest in the mother's heart is for the child she has brought into the world. And the tall young girl, reserved and silent in the *isba*, is little more than a child.

But Ilioncha, nevertheless, could not resign himself to this idea; he loved his daughters—he had no sons—his three beautiful, strong daughters, who were each as good as a man to work. Besides he knew very well that a black mark stood against his name; and that owing to several feeble acts of insubordination, he was certain of being the first to suffer, if this last threat was carried into execution.

“No,” he said, after a discussion interrupted by many a long silence; “no, I will never consent to seeing my daughters sold like sheep. And you may be sure, too, that he would deceive us as to the price they brought. No, I will not!”

“But what will you do, then? Shall we all die?”

“No,” answered Ilioncha, dropping his voice; “if he should die, it would be enough!”

A terrible silence followed. There was not one of these men who had not thought an hundred times that death alone could deliver them from this insolent yoke; but no one of them dared to say so. The daring thought did not seem to have been grasped. After waiting a moment, Ilioncha resumed:

“It would not be difficult; there are only women in the house—the men all sleep in the servants’ quarters. It would be an affair of a moment; and we should be free—”

“And then?” said a voice, which did not express either horror or opposition.

“And then, nothing at all! The lady would own the estates, and she is not unkind.”

"And the blood?"

"If he is strangled, there would be no blood," answered Ilioncha, with a calmness which showed that all these objections had been foreseen, and carefully considered. "It would be an accident, of course. A stroke of apoplexy, perhaps!"

"He sleeps alone, does he not?" said a voice in the darkness; no one knew who spoke.

"Alone, in his dressing-room. The lady and the demoiselle sleep in another part of the house, and their maids close at hand. We need make no noise."

"And the dogs?"

"We will kill a few chickens, and throw them to them while they are warm; they like that, and will be quiet enough, I fancy."

Another dismal silence.

"There are too many of us," resumed Ilioncha; "five are enough, or even four, if you agree."

"He is very strong," said the same voice, from the corner; "he will defend himself."

"So be it then. There shall be five of us. With a good gag he can make but little noise, and we will not give him much time to struggle. Well, is this agreed?"

Another silence.

"Is this agreed?" repeated Ilioncha, angrily. There was no reply. "You are only women!" he cried, and he spat on the ground, as a sign of contempt.

"It is agreed!" repeated the four or five men, not without terror.

“Then let us take an oath! Who is here?” said Ilioncha, with a tone of triumph in his voice.

The peasants gave their names one by one.

“Do you swear to secrecy? and that you will die rather than speak?”

“We swear!” they answered, as with one voice.

“Upon your everlasting salvation?”

“Upon our everlasting salvation!”

“Who will go with me?”

“Make your own choice,” said a voice. “We do this thing for the good of our families, and for the welfare of the whole village; it is not a revenge that we execute. Choose those whom you wish to have go with you; they shall go.”

Ilioncha named four stout, strong men. They were among those whom he knew his Seigneur disliked, and who were themselves very discontented.

“Let us wait two hours longer,” he said. “When the moon is lower in the sky will be the hour when the Seigneur sleeps the soundest; we will surprise him then.”

“You others,” he continued, turning to those who remained, “you go to bed as usual, and do not appear to be in expectation of anything; everything, to-morrow, must go on as usual.”

Towards midnight Ilioncha, followed by his band, resolutely entered the court-yard by leaping the moat. The dogs growled, but the still warm chickens made them welcome the intruders as if they were friends. The door of the house, fastened by an ordinary lock, yielded to Ilion-

cha's manipulations, and the conspirators, who well knew their way, reached the door of the Seigneur's dressing-room, which was no better defended than the rest of the house.

A lamp burned in the corner before the Holy Images, and its light under the door stopped for a moment the men who were about to imperil their lives. They listened; they heard no unusual noise. The long-drawn breathing of Bagrianof told that he was asleep; this, and the creaking of the boards under their weight, the cry of a distant bird, were all the sounds. They entered the room.

Bagrianof started up in bed. He was about to shout for assistance, when a large gag, adroitly applied, muffled every sound, and he fell back, half choking, with a cord around his neck.

The murderers stood still, and looked at each other and then at their lord.

Their enemy was in their power, and they had nothing now to prevent them from taking his life. But this, which had seemed such a very simple thing to do in the face of danger and a struggle, became absolutely impossible in the presence of this utterly defenceless man.

Bagrianof, motionless, watched them with angry, half-maddened eyes. His face was partially concealed. The fingers of his right hand, which were alone free, made the sign of the cross upon his breast, while he appeared to be praying.

"What does he want?" said one of the peasants.

"He wishes, probably, before he dies, to ask God to forgive him and receive his soul," answered another.

"Listen, Seigneur," said Ilioncha. "You are about to die because you are so hard and cruel toward us, and because you are deaf to the voice of compassion."

Unconsciously this uncultivated man fell into a lofty phraseology, a phraseology which was almost Biblical—for the Bible is read in the Slavonic dialect during the services of the Russian church.

"We wish thy death," he continued, "because in that way alone can we be liberated from thy thralldom; but we do not wish also to sacrifice thy soul. Repent, and pray to God that He will receive thy sinful soul into His celestial kingdom."

Bagrianof moved his fingers again upon his breast.

"He cannot even make the sign of the cross," said one of the conspirators. "Let us untie his right hand and let him say his prayers."

Ilioncha loosened, therefore, Bagrianof's right hand, who used it to point to the Holy Images and to the Holy Gospel, which lay open on a desk. This pitiless being, this insolent Seigneur, this hard and cruel man prayed devoutly morning and night, and never retired until he had read some verses from the Scriptures.

"You wish to read?" said one of the peasants. "No; you had best pray—that will do you more good."

Bagrianof, still humble and submissive, made a negative gesture, and extended his hand to the volume. Upon the same desk lay a crucifix.

“Is it the crucifix you want?”

Bagrianof made a sign in the affirmative.

“Bring him the crucifix and let him kiss it,” said Ilioncha. “But remember, Seigneur, if you make a noise, we shall pull that cord so quickly that you will have no time to make your peace with your Maker! Give me that handkerchief,” he added, to his companions.

They passed the handkerchief around Bagrianof's neck, and Ilioncha made in it a slip-knot, and held the end in his hand; then another peasant brought the cross, and a third removed the gag.

Bagrianof drew a long breath, closing his eyes that he might not show the great joy he felt. It was an enormous step that he had regained the power of speech. He was almost certain now that he should succeed in saving his life.

“My good friends,” he said, gently, “I am indeed guilty toward you and toward God; but, if you give me time for repentance, I swear to you that the remainder of my life shall be consecrated to repairing the evil which I have done to you.”

The phrase was long, but skilfully turned, for he had had time to mature it.

“Yes, yes!” said Ilioncha, disdainfully; “we know you. You speak very smoothly to-day, and to-morrow you will send us off to Siberia.”

“No! I swear to you that I will not;” and Bagrianof again quickly signed the cross. “I understand now all the harm I have done, because I see that it is my acts

which have led you to commit the horrible crime of murder—a crime so detestable in the sight of God. May the sin rest upon my own head. Had I been a kind, indulgent master, you would not have conceived a project which the church would never pardon, and which delivers your souls to the anger of the Omnipotent.”

“Think of your own soul, rather than of ours,” said Ilioncha, harshly. “We have time to repent, but for you the moments are counted. Go on—ask God’s pardon, and let us get through.”

“If you give me my life, I shall look on you as my benefactors,” said Bagrianof, in his most persuasive voice, “and I will forgive you your debts. I will do more: I will give you wheat enough to last your whole village all through the winter. My granaries are full, as you know. And in addition, each one of you shall have a bag of potatoes.”

“Pshaw!” said one of the peasants, “that is not much.”

“Let us finish!” interposed Ilioncha, tightening the handkerchief in his hand.

The peasant’s words had convinced Bagrianof that if he offered enough he could escape. The conspirators were none of them as resolute as Ilioncha, and the idea of the murder and the everlasting punishment he held before them terrified their timid consciences.

“A bag of potatoes for every man in the village,” resumed the Seigneur, “and a half-bag for each woman and child. And in addition, I will make you a present of your dues for the coming year.”

"Enough!" cried Ilioncha, imperiously, for he felt his enemy slipping through his fingers. "Say no more." And he pulled the handkerchief. One of his companions caught his arm.

"But if the master will do what he says—and perhaps a little more," they exclaimed, "it would not be worth while to kill him."

"So be it then!" answered Ilioncha; "I feel the knouts upon my back, and know that my body will rot on the plains of Siberia. It is your will, my brothers; and it shall be as you choose. I seek only your good."

He turned his back and took a seat at the other end of the room.

"What else will you give us if we do not take your life?" asked one of the peasants, while the others hesitated and looked toward Ilioncha, who seemed unconscious of anything that was going on around him.

"I will give you the meadow by the side of the river for a pasture for your cattle," said Bagrianof, now secure of his safety.

This meadow was the finest bit of pasture land anywhere in the vicinity, and was in fact the wonder and envy of the whole neighborhood. It brought in enormous crops of hay, which were worth a million of silver roubles per annum. The peasants, subjugated by all this magnificence, looked first at him and then at each other.

"You promise to-day, and to-morrow will take back all your words. Upon what do you promise?"

"My eternal salvation."

"That is not enough," said the peasant. "You sin, and then you repent, and then you sin again; but the Lord is merciful. Swear on something else."

"Upon the cross!" said Bagrianof, his eyes sparkling with joy.

The cross was held before him.

"Swear to give us all that is due to you for the two years that have just elapsed, and for the whole of the coming year."

"I swear," said Bagrianof.

"Repeat it all," cried the peasants, full of distrust.

Bagrianof repeated the entire phrase, word for word.

"And to give us wheat and potatoes, as you promised?"

"The wheat and potatoes as I promised," repeated the Seigneur. "I swear it."

"And the meadow by the river side, just as it is?"

"Just as it is, with the barns that are now upon it," repeated Bagrianof. "And now I take an oath—"

"To never reveal to a human being anything that has happened this night," interrupted Ilioncha, rising hastily.

"To be always indulgent and merciful toward your peasants, chaste with our daughters, and honest in your accounts of our day's work."

"I swear," repeated Bagrianof, "never to repeat what has happened here; I swear to be indulgent toward you, reserved toward your daughters, and exact in the accounts."

"Swear this on your immortal soul, and upon your

body, and on the cross whereon the Saviour died for us all—for you as well as for me,” repeated Ilioncha.

“I swear it on my soul, in the fear of eternal damnation, and upon the cross on which our blessed Saviour died for us!”

The peasants made rapid signs of the cross, and kissed the crucifix. Bagrianof followed their example.

“Now, my boys, untie me!” he said, half gayly.

He was untied; he rose, drew up his tall form, and took two or three steps. His eyes, full of malice, met the suspicious glance of Ilioncha, who looked around, thinking there must be arms of some kind near at hand.

“We are lost!” he said to his companions. “I told you how it would be, but you would have it so! Adieu,” he continued, addressing his master; and, with his head held high in the air, the old peasant preceded Bagrianof, who had not laid aside his jesting air, to the door.

“Do not forget your oath!” cried the peasants, smitten by a sudden fear.

“Be without fear, my friends,” answered the Seigneur, going with them to the door. “To-morrow, at noon, we will sign the paper which gives my meadow to your Commune. Good-night.”

The peasants crouched along like whipped hounds behind Ilioncha, who walked with a haughty bearing and a dignified step, like a man who is utterly indifferent to all that can ever happen to him again.

When they disappeared at the turning of the road,

Bagrianof opened the door again noiselessly, and went to his stables. He aroused his coachman, and spoke to him with unusual amiability.

“Harness two good horses,” he said; “wrap the wheels of the drozhki in hay, and also the animals’ hoofs. I have business in town, and I do not wish any one here to know that I have gone.”

A half hour later, and the equipage stole down the soft sandy road. The village and the mansion were one confused black mass in the darkness. When they reached the broad government road, Bagrianof threw himself back in a corner of his carriage and laughed a long, silent laugh.

“Fools! idiots!” he said, in a whisper.

## CHAPTER IV.

## A VISIT TO TOWN.

THE sun had been up about two hours, when Bagrianof entered the town. He went directly to the authorities. The governor-general received him with excessive coldness.

“Your peasants wish to kill you, you say? And of what do they complain—for I presume that it is not without a motive that they have reached this point?”

“They are not willing to pay their dues, nor the amount they owe for their seed.”

“The harvest has been better with you than with your neighbors?”

“No, your excellency, it has not,” said Bagrianof, biting his lips.

“You are the master, of course,” replied the governor, “and equally, of course, it is none of my affairs. But you say that they released you after all?”

“As you may suppose, your excellency, since I am here.”

“And on what conditions?”

“The conditions are of little consequence; promises extorted by threats are of no consequence, and amount to nothing in law.”

“Precisely,” said the governor; “and without doubt, the first of these trifling, unimportant conditions was

secrecy, and naturally you came at once to denounce them!"

"Is that amazing, your excellency?" asked Bagrianof, in the tone of persiflage which was natural to him. He felt his blood boil with anger under the contemptuous glance of the man before him.

"No, Monsieur Bagrianof, it is not in the least amazing. Do you wish inquiry made?"

"No; that is not necessary. My simple deposition will suffice, I think."

"Not precisely; but if you have any proofs—"

Bagrianof's face darkened. He, a nobleman, to be called upon to furnish proofs!—to be confronted with his peasants!

"Have them examined, your excellency—that certainly ought to suffice. But while waiting for this, I ask for an armed force which shall protect me against these desperadoes."

"That is reasonable enough. You know, of course, that the lash and Siberia will be the lot of these poor creatures, if I may call them so?"

"I sincerely trust that it will."

"Very well, sir; your request will be granted, and your village occupied with government troops this evening."

"I thank your excellency," said Bagrianof, going toward the door.

He had his hand upon it, when the governor-general, with a sudden movement of impatience, knocked down a book which was on the corner of his desk. Bagrianof turned. The two men looked at each other for a moment.

"Do you know, sir," said the governor, "that your peasants, when you were in their power, made a great mistake in not killing you at once?"

"I cannot say that I agree with you," answered the Seigneur. "I have the honor of bidding your excellency a very good-morning."

The governor-general walked two or three times up and down the salon, a prey to that unreasoning rage common to honest men who see rascals escape from their hands. Finally, seeing that there was no way of changing matters, he seated himself at his desk, turned over some papers impatiently, and wrote an order commanding that troops should be stationed at Bagrianovka.

"There are not many knaves of this kind!" he murmured, signing a paper, with a gesture of displeasure; "not many like him; but few as they are, they disgrace our country in our own eyes as well as in those of strangers. If they had but killed him!" he repeated, with emphatic regret.

Bagrianof went to the best hotel in the town. It was a house built of brick, and whitened with lime outside as well as within; brown cockroaches ran freely over the carefully washed floors; a vague, disagreeable odor hung around the crimson curtain—the result of years of use. Waiters in red shirts, and with very dirty napkins hanging over their arms, ran here and there about the house, carrying trays filled with cups of tea. When Bagrianof entered, everybody looked at him curiously; and those who sat at tables in the farthest corners of the room leaned forward

to see the terrible Seigneur with the white beard, whom the nurses called upon as they did on *croque mitaine* to quell refractory children. More flattered than wounded by this curiosity, Bagrianof touched his hat.

“Good-morning, gentlemen,” he said.

A timid “good-morning” greeted him in return. If people were in no hurry to quarrel with him, they were equally disinclined to have any intimacy with him. A waiter hurriedly wiped down a table, which had been vacated as by enchantment; and Bagrianof took his seat then, establishing himself comfortably. The room was strangely silent as the proprietor of the hotel approached and obsequiously bowed to the very earth.

“What will your lordship have?” he said, in dulcet tones.

“My lordship wishes to dine; bring the best you have, and that very quickly!”

An excellent *menu* was speedily arranged.

“And some sweetmeats,” added Bagrianof. “I like sweetmeats.” The host disappeared like a shadow from a Chinese lantern.

A linen merchant in the town decided to open a conversation.

“You have come to town then, my lord?” he said, not without some astonishment at his own boldness.

“As you see,” answered Bagrianof, stretching himself out on two chairs.

“Permit me to ask if it is for business or for pleasure,” continued the merchant, more boldly.

"For both," replied Bagrianof, pleasantly; "but I shall buy nothing to-day, André Prokofitch."

"Oh! it was not on that account I asked. But does not your highness intend to make any purchases?"

The dinner-tray appearing at that moment obviated the necessity of any reply from Bagrianof. He began to eat with very great enjoyment. The excitement of the previous night, and this cold October journey, had given him a most extraordinary appetite. He dined freely, and drank a bottle of Bordeaux—he liked French wines; ordered a cup of coffee; then tipped his chair back against the wall, and looked about with a mocking glance.

"And now, dearly beloved, you would like to know, possibly, what brought me to town?"

"Yes, my lord, certainly," said a stout man, who happened to occupy the next table.

"Well, then, my good fellows, I will proceed to satisfy your curiosity. I came because my peasants—blast them!—undertook to assassinate me in the night."

A murmur of astonishment, rather than of horror, ran through the group.

"Yes," continued Bagrianof, excited by the wine he had taken; "they tried to assassinate me; but I promised them all they wanted, and they let me go—the fools! You think they are fools, too, do you not? Say it then!" and the Seigneur pushed the linen merchant rudely, he being within reach of his arm.

The entire group recoiled with one movement. There was no more laughing.

Bagrianof frowned slightly, and scrutinized the faces about him; then, remembering suddenly that he was not upon his estates, he resumed his indifferent attitude, leaning back in his chair against the wall.

“Yes,” he continued, “they let me go, and I went! I came to the governor-general’s. He is not very agreeable, this governor-general of yours; he is an old block-head; but all the same, the village will be occupied by troops to-morrow, and the good Christians who wished to send me to Paradise will themselves be despatched to Siberia, after they have received the proper number of lashes. This is why I said I came for pleasure, as well as for business!”

The icy silence still continued; insensibly the circle was widening around Bagrianof.

“Here, garçon, give me a little music. I always want music after dinner!” he cried.

One of the waiters glided up to the huge hand-organ which invariably stands at the upper end of the *salle d’honneur* in every Russian inn, and began to turn the heavy crank.

“Quicker!” exclaimed the Seigneur. “I like dance music. Am I not right, good people?”

He turned around to obtain a sign of assent, but the room was vacant. The waiter who had served him at table was alone to be seen, and this boy stood behind him with a napkin in his hand, watching him in evident fear and trembling.

“Call your master!” said Bagrianof, in a voice of thunder.

The master appeared, bowing low, fearing some trouble.

"Why are these people gone?" asked the Seigneur.

"Business, my lord, business! It is market day."

"You lie!" said Bagrianof, calmly. "It is neither market day nor Friday. You are afraid of me because I said I intended to have my peasants who wished to kill me, well flayed. I have but one regret, and that is that you do not all belong to me, that I might be able to send you every one off to Siberia. Give me your bill and have my horses harnessed. I prefer the wild beasts in my own forests to bleating sheep like you and the people about you."

Notwithstanding the entreaties of the landlord, Bagrianof departed at once; but he did not hurry his horses, as he did not care to arrive too soon.

As he drew near the village he caught a gleam of sunlight on the helmets of the soldiers who were encamped near the entrance. He rubbed his hands softly, and entering his house, received a cup of tea from the hands of his wife, who dared not ask him a question.

## CHAPTER V.

## LASHES AND SIBERIA.

THE examination into the attempted assassination of the evening before was by no means a lengthy one. The accused peasants took refuge in an obstinate silence, which was sufficient in itself to prove their guilt. Ilioncha, alone, consented to open his lips.

“Well, and what then?” he said to the officer who questioned him, “what if I did wish to kill my master? In the first place, it is none of your affairs. You townspeople know nothing about us; you only come to tie our hands and feet, and send us off to Siberia, occasionally. Do you ever know what we think, what we do, and what we suffer? You know nothing whatever about us, as I said before, except that we are miserable wretches, born only to do harm to others. How is it that there are good peasants in the next Commune, who love their masters, and serve them faithfully? The only reason we did not long ago do what we attempted last night is, because we have been as patient as sheep. We are not, however, the only servants who have wished to kill their Seigneurs; it was done in ancient times, and will be done again, unless the good God above takes pity upon us poor peasants.”

The official who conducted this melancholy business was a man of both sense and heart; for a long time he had

indulged in dreams of emancipation. He allowed the accused to speak without interruption. When Ilioncha relapsed into silence—his face still distorted with sullen rage, and his clenched fists extended—he looked at the peasant with profound compassion; he wished to offer some consolation, but could say nothing, as he could neither pardon nor set the men free, and, feeling therefore that every word was too much, he was silent.

The five guilty peasants, with several others of whose animosity toward him Bagrianof was fully aware, were condemned each to two hundred lashes, and to the mines of Siberia for life.

They heard their sentence without a quiver of their eyelids; but all day long the village rang with the cries and groans of women and children. The sorrow which was within so many of the cabins spread outside in great waves of lamentation.

Bagrianof, who in his own home heard these bitter cries of the women crouched on the thresholds of their dwellings, began by rejoicing at their desolation; but ere long his nerves, more sensitive than usual, were disturbed by this sad, monotonous wail. He wished to send an order for it to cease, but at the first word he uttered to the *stanovoi* charged with the commission, the man replied, with some sharpness:

“It is the custom, and I have no power to do what you ask!”

To Bagrianof remained, however, the supreme happiness of assisting at the execution of the sentence. He did

not attempt to conceal the pleasure he felt. Under his very eyes the shoulders of the poor wretches who had given him his life were uncovered. They were tied upon a sort of hurdle, and, in the presence of the whole village, drawn up in a circle, the soldiers applied the knout.

At the cry of the first victim, the blood rushed to Bagrianof's pale face. A ferocious joy glittered in his pale eyes as he looked about him; his servants were all gathered upon the wide porch like a guard of honor, but Madame Bagrianof was not there. The Seigneur went into the house, and reappeared with his pale, half-fainting wife, whom he had found prostrated before the Images.

"Your nerves are too weak, my dear," he said to her, as he held her up with his strong right hand, half crushing her delicate wrist in his rough grasp. "It is always a good thing for us to see the guilty punished! Remember, my love, that they wished to deprive you of your husband!"

Madame Bagrianof with closed eyes started convulsively at each scream of the sufferers. The punishment continued, and the groans changed to one continuous rattle.

The lips of the lady murmured prayers mechanically, for she no longer understood the words.

"One hundred!" said the stanovoi, who counted the lashes. "Stop!"

"They have finished?" murmured Madame Bagrianof, turning her livid face toward her husband.

"By no means! A hundred more, my turtle-dove!"

"Have mercy on them, Daniel Loukitch—that mercy

which you hope to receive; and God will allow you to enter Paradise. Have mercy on them!"

"You wish, perhaps, that they had succeeded in killing me?" said the Seigneur, coldly.

"Mercy! mercy!" she whispered, hardly knowing what she said.

"Go on!" said Bagrianof, in a firm voice, as he raised his hand.

The lashes whistled through the air; a wild shriek was heard, and Madame Bagrianof fell unconscious.

"Chicken-hearted creature!" said her husband, shrugging his shoulders. "Take your mistress away!" he added to the servants. "Burn some feathers or something under her nose; it is a sovereign remedy in fainting-fits, I believe."

The chastisement continued and concluded amid profound silence. The exhausted women wept no more; many of them were lying with their faces crushed into the earth in a despair which had neither words nor tears. The patients were, some of them, unconscious, the others indifferent and benumbed. Great drops of sweat stood on their foreheads—great drops of blood on their lacerated backs.

When all was over, they were untied and given a little brandy, after which they were led to the parish record office, which served on occasion for a prison.

The stanovoi, less hard-hearted than the Seigneur, although such spectacles were only too familiar to him, permitted the poor women—either out of compassion to them or hatred to Bagrianof—to come and bathe their

husbands' wounds. Like the holy women of the gospel, the peasants glided noiselessly into the low, narrow room, where the unfortunate men lay on heaps of straw; for a few moments they mingled their tears of compassion with the groans of pain.

Then tender hands washed the wounds with fresh, cool water; gentle kisses like the sound of wings were heard, as if the angels of mercy hovered over this scene of horror, bringing to the martyrs the blessed balm of pitying tears.

Bagrianof came also, not from charity, nor to bring any consolation; but for the first time in his life he met with resistance.

The stanovoi on the threshold absolutely forbade him to enter the prison.

"Here!" said the Seigneur, "on my own estates!" He was more surprised than angry at the opposition he encountered.

"For the present, my lord, I am in charge of this prison," said the good man, brave above his class. "I cannot allow any one to disturb my prisoners."

"I will have every bone broken in your body! you may rely on that," replied Bagrianof, with a shrug of his shoulders, and glaring at the audacious being who ventured to dispute his will.

"As you please, sir; and you can make application for my place," said the stanovoi, turning his back.

This tragedy had still another act; for the next day the condemned, strongly bound, were lifted upon carts, to which two horses were harnessed. The soldiers marched

each side of the vehicles, and the stanovoi gave the signal of departure.

Then from the whole village arose a great cry of lamentation. The whole population, men and women, old and young, mourned for the brothers who would die far from their own land, far from their own people, far from the spot where they had found life so hard, and yet where they were beloved.

The exiles themselves had exhausted their tears. Some of them were in a high fever, and the others, stupefied by despair, allowed those who remained behind to weep for them.

Just as this melancholy procession was about to start, the priest came out of the church, his head uncovered, and his long, fair hair floating over his shoulders, holding a tall crucifix in his hand. His face wore an expression of lofty faith, which was almost prophetic. He approached the first wagon.

“Our blessed Lord,” he said, “has commanded us to pray for those who travel by land or by sea. May His blessing rest upon you!”

The enamelled silver crucifix was held over the condemned, and forgiveness fell upon the martyrs.

Bagrianof, with folded arms, looked on at this spectacle with increasing astonishment—that his priest—his own priest—nourished by a salary from his hands—should allow himself to speak to this cattle, without permission from him! That he should bless and offer the cross to the people who had sought to kill his master, the Seigneur

Bagrianof! It was incredible! Was the world then turned upside down? He determined to have an explanation with this simpleton, who, after all, was but a boy, just from college.

As the wagon moved off, Ilioucha found strength to lift his heavy head.

"Seigneur," he cried, "listen to me. We forgave you; we believed you, and you betrayed us; but others will be wiser than we, and will not fail in what they undertake!"

The entire village followed the condemned as far as their poor strength would take them. The very young children, confided to the care of the old, and the sick, were alone left in the darkened houses. The dogs wandering about the square howled dismally. Bagrianof threw a few stones at them, and put them to flight; after which valiant deed he turned and looked at the Rectory, which stood opposite the church. Upon the threshold he saw the priest. The eyes of the two men met; those of the Seigneur cold, and yet fierce, while the priest's were full of dignity and of holy wrath.

Bagrianof stepped forward.

"Vladimir Andréitch," said he, "who are you?"

"An humble servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and of His church," was the answer, and the priest removed his hand from the latch of his door.

"You are also a servant in *my* church, I presume?"

"I serve God, certainly, my lord, in the church which you have built and consecrated to Him."

"Do you not know that a good priest attends to the affairs of the church, and never to those of the Seigneur?"

"I am aware of that, and I never meddle with the affairs of any one."

"On the contrary, sir, you meddle with mine. Your conduct displeases me, Vladimir Andréitch; I advise you to think it over. The Rectory is comfortable; there are a goodly number of deaths here, baptisms and marriages. Your wife, I think, is enceinte?"

The priest made an affirmative sign.

"I think myself that you will do well, therefore, to remain here; but to do so you must change your conduct. I give you one week for reflection."

The priest bowed, without replying, and entered his dwelling. His young wife ran to meet him, and threw herself weeping into his arms. She was a pretty creature, all pink and white, but frail and delicate—not more than eighteen.

"What did that wicked man say to you?" she exclaimed, as she buried her face on her husband's shoulder with a shudder.

"I think, Marie, that we must make our preparations to leave."

"To leave! Ah, good heavens! and my unborn child—and the winter coming on! If we leave, where shall we go?"

"I cannot tell you, my child. We are in God's hands, and must trust to His mercy. He takes care of the birds of the field; why not, then, of an unborn babe?"

"Tell me, Vladimir, is there no way of smoothing matters over with the Seigneur? You make him very angry, you know, when you oppose his wishes. Can you not—"

The priest laid his right hand on the head of his fair young wife, who was still but a child.

“Marie,” he said, “the duty of all God’s servants is to reprove and repress iniquity. Never speak to me again like this, dear child. It is a sin. Look,” he added, leading his sobbing wife toward an engraving hanging on the wall, which represented the flight into Egypt; “if it must be, we will depart, like them, and, like the infant Saviour, our child will also find some shelter provided for him.”

The young wife, half comforted, laid her head again on her husband’s manly breast and listened to his tender words of consolation.

## CHAPTER VI.

DANIEL LOUKITCH BAGRIANOF.

BAGRIANOF should have been now content, but he was not. The manner in which the innocent and the guilty had been punished was not satisfactory to him. It was hardly worth the trouble to have the knout applied to them, and to send them to Siberia, if general compassion was felt for them instead of for himself! Could it be possible that at each village "the poor creatures," as, throughout the length and breadth of Russia, these unhappy prisoners were called, had fresh water, milk, kvass, tobacco, and hot tea, with a little money, brought to them by the compassionate peasants; the guard winked at this proceeding, which took place at each successive village on to the very outskirts of civilization—while he, Bagrianof—was obliged to endure the haughty, reproachful airs of these petty officials about him!

Through his mind passed a succession of unpleasant recollections connected with this whole occurrence: the discourteous remarks of the governor-general, the rebuffs of the stanovoi, the mortifying isolation at the inn in town, and finally the determined position of the priest, who had braved him with such insolence in public. Each time that he thought of this man he saw him with his

arms outstretched in blessings over the criminals, and his indignation was boundless.

Of all who had offended him the priest alone was in his power; it was only he whom he could punish, consequently he condensed all his anger upon him. Since his arrival in the village had not the insolent fellow avoided, as far as lay in his power, any acceptance of the hospitality of the manorial house? When he had been invited to read prayers and bless the collected family, had he ever remained to dine? The former priest, an old man with scanty intelligence and less energy, had kept his eyes shut to all that he was not wanted to see; was not the Seigneur master there? and what he might choose to do was none of the parish priest's business. This good man being dead, there had been sent to Bagrianof this youth, who had just left the Ecclesiastical Seminary, had been married scarce a year, and was totally ignorant of the manners and customs of the superior classes. Stop! was he so ignorant as he appeared? Might it not be that he knew very well that the priest was expected to be the familiar, acquiescent friend of the Seigneurial mansion, expected to be gratified by every invitation, ready and willing to do anything desired by the master; and above all, was he expected to inculcate by word and act the most absolute obedience to the lord of the estate, which in his eyes should represent Providence on earth?

But, voluntary or not, this ignorance was none the less a crime in itself. Furthermore, instead of endeavoring by an excess of politeness to earn forgetfulness for his

omissions, this extraordinary priest saw fit to pity his flock, to bless them, *in extremis*, as if God would allow His blessing to fall on the heads of people who had wished to kill their master!

The certainty, however, of being able to punish this priest whenever he pleased, somewhat abated his indignation. In order to enjoy this pleasure to its fullest extent, he resolved to strike him not immediately on the warning he had given, but just at the moment when the storm seemed fairly over—when his anger, carefully hidden, would have left but a dim recollection of a vague threat. He, therefore, wrote his complaint in due form to the archbishop, copied it carefully in his most beautiful writing, sealed it with his coat-of-arms, and placed it in his desk, ready to despatch it when he was quite ready.

This affair settled, Bagrianof's heart felt lighter. There were left still those of the peasants who had ventured to show their pity for the exiles. For a few moments he thought of selling all the young girls together, but he remembered that there would be difficulty in finding a purchaser.

One grand consolation remained: thanks to the gracious law which allowed him to designate which of his peasants should be taken to swell the number of soldiers offered by his generous self to his country, he had it in his power to make desolate such families as he pleased. This agreeable contemplation occupied his mind for two entire months.

He selected at his leisure therefore a dozen of the

handsomest young fellows on his estate as recruits, to be for the rest of their lives clothed and fed at the expense of the government. "I owe the state this compensation!" he said, with a most amiable smile.

When this design of Bagrianof became known, the rage of the village passed all bounds. What! not content with breaking his oath—with insulting the name of the Blessed Saviour by which he had sworn—with giving over the innocent to punishment as well as the guilty ones, who had spared his life, he now meant to strike again at the same families, to carry off the son where he had already robbed them of the father, to take the young, vigorous lad where the eldest had been sent to Siberia! He wished, then, for general ruin, for death and destruction!

The first time that Bagrianof appeared at church after the promulgation of this intention, he was very much struck by the general air of his peasantry. Up to this time, with bowed heads and eyes fixed upon the ground, they had prostrated themselves before him with the most perfect submission. But on this day he met more than one pair of eyes fixed upon him, with a mute and sullen questioning in their depths. Some among them too seemed to threaten him.

From his place near the tabernacle, which was raised considerably above the others, he examined at his ease the surging mass, who watched him, too, as they followed the prayers. His fierce eyes caught the gleam of other eyes as fierce as his own. And yet they were interrogative withal.

“How long,” they seemed to say, “how long will you thus trifle with human souls?”

“They need an example!” said Bagrianof to himself. “They feel the bit and kick against the prick. We will let them find out that they are not the strongest.”

Prayers were over; he waited until the crowd dispersed, and then slowly went through the church, putting out here and there the little wax candles in front of the Holy Images, or straightening a taller one that was somewhat out of the perpendicular, and finally went out with the priest, who had vainly sought to avoid the meeting.

Bagrianof, however, seemed to have totally forgotten his former displeasure. Three months had elapsed since the admonition addressed to the young priest, and these three months seemed to have raised between him and his old wrongs a bank of snow as deep as those which now covered the ground.

The Seigneur asked the young priest for news of his wife, who was very ill; then he interrogated him in regard to the sacerdotal ornaments and vestures, of which some began to show mark of wear. In this way he had all the conversation to himself, for he received only monosyllables in reply; and, thus talking, they reached the Square, where the peasants usually lingered for a little gossip before they entered their homes.

At his approach they lifted their caps. Bagrianof stood a good two minutes looking at them, as the cold north wind whistled around their uncovered ears.

The cold was fearful; the terrible January frosts, those

which are called in Russia the Epiphany frosts, had come with intense severity. The shining snow crackled under their feet, white smoke arose in clouds above the low black cabins, and the Seigneur, wrapped in his warm pelisse, and his head protected by a Zibelline cap, contemplated in sarcastic silence the poor creatures whose cheeks and ears were purple with the cold.

Then again he met the same glances which had so surprised him in the church. Some of his live-stock, it seemed, had eyes capable of human expression, and this expression was not altogether satisfactory to him. He quietly made a mental memorandum of these individuals.

As he hastily examined his flock with these thoughts, he saw a young man leave the group with a careless shrug of his shoulders and a disdainful motion of the fingers of the right hand. After having gone a few steps in the direction of his home, the young peasant replaced his fur cap and continued his way, with long, manly strides.

"Savéli! Ha! Savéli!" cried Bagrianof, in his loud, ringing tones.

The young man went on, without seeming to hear.

"Savéli!" repeated the Seigneur, in a voice of thunder.

"What will you have?" replied the young man, in the same tone, without lifting his hat.

"Come here," replied his master, in a gentle, kindly voice.

The young man returned upon his steps and stood before Bagrianof.

"Why did you go away?" asked his master.

"Because I was cold," replied the young rebel.

"You had no business to be cold when I was about to speak," said the Seigneur, angrily.

"You were saying nothing. I did not know that you intended to open your lips."

"Whether I intend to do so or no, it strikes me that it would be as well for you to wait and find out. Do you not think so?"

"So it seems," answered the young man, "as I am still waiting."

Bagrianof's eyes emitted a baleful fire from under their half-closed lids.

"A soldier!" he said, as he shook his forefinger in the face of the insubordinate youth.

Savéli lifted his head haughtily, and looked at his master as he answered:

"No, my lord, you will not do that."

"And why not, Master Savéli?"

"Because it would be an injustice. My father is dead, my elder brother has already been taken for the army, my younger one you have sent to Siberia, and there are only women left of our family. Oh, no, my lord, you could not do that!"

"A soldier!" repeated Bagrianof, as he again shook his forefinger, which whistled through the freezing air like a knife-blade.

"Listen! all of you," he continued, turning toward the group, from whence came sullen murmurs. "What I do to this fellow, because he is insolent and rebellious, I will do

to all of the rest of you if you give me any more trouble. Yes, you will all be sent away, old and young, if you dare to utter one single murmur or complaint. I do not wish to hear any more talk about your *souls*. I do not want any more *souls* in my village. I prefer to have peasants. I intend to make an example of this fellow." And he pointed to Savéli, who, with a haughty, impassible countenance, stood silently by his side. "And I will make such an example of all of you that, throughout the whole of Russia, people shall speak of Bagrianovka as of a village whose Seigneur knew how to put down rebellion!"

Having said this, he turned toward the priest, who listened to what had taken place without allowing his secret thoughts to make themselves visible on his face.

"Come and dine with us, father," he said, amiably.

"I cannot, my lord; my wife is ill and needs me. Pray, accept my thanks, and excuse me."

"Ah! Very good. And your wife, when does she expect to be confined?"

"Any day now, my lord."

"Very good. Take care of yourself. My regards to your wife. Au revoir, my children."

And dropping these careless, kindly words to the mournful, bare-headed crowd, he turned toward his own dwelling with an alert, cheerful step. When he had turned the corner, the peasants assumed their caps once more.

"Ah, brother!" said the starchina to Savéli, "you have made a bad piece of business of it."

"I shall not go!" replied the young man, calmly.

"What! you will not go?"

"I shall not go!" he repeated, with the same calmness.

At this moment a pretty girl of sixteen—a child almost—appeared at a cabin door, hesitated a moment, and then ran swiftly toward the group; other women followed her, but with less rapidity, and mingled with the men.

"Fear nothing, Fédotia," said Savéli to the girl, who looked at him with tearful eyes. "He threatened to send me into the army, but be tranquil."

Fédotia raised her arms to heaven, and then hid her face in her hands and began to weep bitterly, swinging her body from right to left. This swaying movement, characteristic of great grief among the Russian peasantry, was in her indescribably graceful; her slender young form bent like a reed, while her arms were crossed over her breast as if to protect her from some threatening peril.

Savéli put one arm around her.

"Fear nothing; you are my fiancée; you shall be my wife, whether he be willing or no; and I tell you I will not go! The czar is just; and if it is necessary, I will appeal to the czar. He is our father, and he will never allow an offence against his subjects. And as for you all, you others, do not be in such despair. Do you not know that the czar is our father?"

"Certainly," said the peasants, in tones of relief.

"Very well then, we will go to him; he will not abandon us. Do not weep, child," he said, turning to Fédotia,

who was still sobbing upon his breast. "Come to my mother. I tell you that I will not be a soldier!"

The group dispersed. The priest watched Savéli and Fédotia until they disappeared in a distant cabin; then he returned to his own dwelling with a very sore and anxious heart.

Must his poor wife have the additional shock and horror of witnessing a rebellion in the village?

## CHAPTER VII.

## POOR LITTLE FÉDOTIA.

SAVÉLI'S *isba* was rapidly crowded. It was an unusually roomy cabin; the walls, darkened by the smoke of years, had all around them benches of wood polished by long use.

A lamp burned before the consecrated Images, which occupied the corner of distinction. Seated a little above his guests as the head of his family, Savéli welcomed them with the cheerful voice and quiet assurance of former days. No one would have suspected that with one word from his master his fate and future had been totally changed within the last half hour.

The women, however, by no means shared his serenity; they were gathered around Fédotia, who, engaged to the young man only within the past few weeks, was about to be married. They were only waiting for the Seigneur's consent; in regard to this, however, they anticipated no difficulty, as Bagrianof approved of early marriages and large families. In spite of this predilection on his part, his people were so miserable, and had such a hard struggle for subsistence, that not one in four of their children lived to grow up; but their master was none the less pleased with each new couple who came to ask his consent.

Now, however, all this was changed. Savéli, as a soldier, could, of course, take away his wife; there was no objection to that. Soldiers' wives do not dislike that kind of life, as a rule, either. But now that Savéli had offended him, would Bagrianof permit the marriage? It was more than doubtful, and the poor girl was in despair, for she loved her fiancé with all the strength of her ignorant, artless nature.

The young man took little notice of these fears. He had decided on his course, for from his childhood he had always hated Bagrianof. He had not been able to contain himself when he saw the Seigneur expose his companions and himself with such ill feeling and insulting irony to the icy winds, but his hatred and contempt were as old as he was himself. Since his father's death, and even before, he had more than once seen the resentment of the Seigneur, aroused by some trifling occurrence—so trifling that it was forgotten—explode upon his household and strike one after another the bread-winners of his family.

On one of his excursions to the city, where he went several times each year to lay in stores for his family, he had met a peddler, belonging in a village not very far off. This man, who was born on the territory of the crown, was much more liberal in opinion and manners than the serfs belonging to individuals. For some time, in fact, the state had permitted a semi-freedom to those peasants who were born and raised in its domains. This peasant had communicated his liberal opinions to Savéli, who was

already goaded to exasperation by the incessant tyranny of Bagrianof.

“When you have had enough of it all, brother,” said the peddler one fine day, “and when you wish to escape, come and find me; I will give you an asylum, and will not betray you.”

“Yes,” said Savéli; “and the next day the police will be on my track, and I shall be found under your roof! You will be ruined and thrown into prison for having succored me. I can see the master now, and his pleasure in trapping me!”

“No,” said the peddler, in a low voice. “My brother, who went with me to the fair at Nijini-Novgorod, died down there. The authorities forget to ask me for his passport; what good to them was the passport of a man who was then six feet under ground! But I thought that the time might come when it would be useful; and this passport I still have. When you want it, come and get it. I love you, and like your spirit; and I hate the Seigneurs!”

Savéli had thought much of this confidence; he knew the peddler to be a man of his word—smart enough to deceive a Jew, and to sell at a fabulous price worthless merchandise to any Seigneur whom he found fool enough to buy it, and yet incapable of robbing a brother peasant of one penny. When, therefore, he had so calmly said, “I will not be a soldier,” he had thought of the friendly peddler, Antoine Philippitch. But Fédotia, would she be willing to wait until a merciful Providence disembarrassed them of Bagrianof?

Meanwhile, Savéli was very calm. To his soul, filled to the brim with hatred and contempt, this last injustice brought a great calm. Placed now in an unforeseen position, he looked about him and weighed and measured every circumstance, that he might attach to each their just value. The men of the village, and particularly the new conscripts, were gathered around him. They pitied him much, and blamed him more.

“You had no business to provoke him!” they exclaimed. “Now that the wolf has shown his teeth, who knows which one of us he will take it into his head to devour next?”

Savéli fully appreciated the justice of this reproach; but the indignation he had felt at the time returned to him again, with the remembrance of the scene of the morning.

“You are right,” he said at last, as he rose from his chair. “You are right, but I could not help it; and if it were all to be done over again, I should do just the same, I am certain.”

At this moment, Fédotia's father entered. He was a tall, well-developed peasant, still vigorous and youthful in appearance. He leaned upon a stout wooden stick, more from habit than necessity. At his entrance, every eye was turned upon him; he went at once to his daughter.

“What are you doing here?” he said to her. “Go home. You can never be a soldier's wife. I will not part with my last child. Say farewell to Savéli; he is no longer your betrothed.”

Fédotia raised her soft blue eyes, filled with tears, to her father's stern face, and prostrated herself before him.

“Oh, father!” she cried, “my dear, good father! order me to die, but not to give Savéli up!”

The old man was about to reply, when Savéli himself thrust aside the lookers-on, and knelt at the girl's side.

“Iérémeï Antipof, you gave her to me,” he said, imploringly; “you cannot take her back again! I have your blessing; you cannot withdraw it! Bless your children once again!”

The betrothed pair touched the ground with their foreheads three times; then they rose to their feet, and stood before the father.

“I gave my daughter to a peasant lad; I did not give her to a soldier,” answered the old man.

“I will not be a soldier. I swear to you before God and all the saints that I will not be a soldier. Only give me your daughter!” The old man shook his head. “Well, then,” resumed Savéli, who had grown very pale, “wait, at least, before you forbid her to speak to me, until the Seigneur carries out his threat. I promise you to give her up myself, if I am ever a soldier. Wait until then, I beg of you—just see how she cries!”

And in truth poor little Fédotia was weeping bitterly enough. The long braid of thick hair turned up once and bound with a wide ribbon, as is the habit of the young peasant-girls, lay on her shoulders, and now moved and quivered like a living thing, with the violence of the child's sobs.

“So be it, then,” replied Iérémeï. “But if you should become a soldier, remember that you will never have her!”

“Agreed!” answered Savéli. “Father, we thank you.” And the betrothed, taking the hands of each other, again prostrated themselves; but this time a faint, pale joy had crept to life in their sad hearts.

Savéli's manner had attracted the attention of all about him.

“He seems sure of what he says!” said one.

“Perhaps he has money enough to buy himself off!” said another.

“It is witchcraft!” murmured several more, in subdued voices.

Ah! if witchcraft would have killed their master, what enormous price would they not have paid any sorcerer who would have sold them the necessary charm? The hour grew late, the fires were out in the cabins, and the men stretched themselves on the still warm stoves. Cold is the only misery unknown to the Russian peasant. However poor he may be, or however devastated his village by famine—even where it has been by no means uncommon to find the peasants dead of starvation in their cabins—fuel has never failed them, and the stove never ceased to impart the warmth of spring to their homes.

The village was buried in slumber, but Savéli slept not. His brain seethed with the events of the day, and he deliberated not only on his plan of escape, but on another plan, which he had communicated to no one. And this last became so persistent, and crushed every other idea so entirely, that the young peasant sprang to the floor, put on his pelisse and fur cap, and stole from the cabin. He

soon reached Iérémeï's house, and went to a window which was very low, and where Fédotia usually sat all the day long, bending over the marvellous embroidery which she was putting on some towels in preparation for her marriage.

Savéli tapped softly on the glass. At the second tap, the little sash was softly raised, and Fédotia's pretty head appeared. She had not been asleep either; she knew that no one but her betrothed would come at that hour, and, in fact, she was expecting him.

"Fédotia," said the young man, standing on tip-toe, that he might speak into the girl's very ear, "I have something to say to you."

"Say it, then, my beloved Savéli."

"Will you go with me? I will marry you, I swear it before God!" and the young man made the sign of the cross; "but you must go with me secretly this very night, so that I shall not be made a soldier of. Say, will you?"

"Oh, Savéli, ask me anything but that!" said the young girl, much startled. "To go away, and leave my father! He would refuse me his blessing upon his death-bed! He would say that I was a bad, wicked girl! No, Savéli, ask me to die for you, but not to leave his house! No, I cannot! I cannot!" she repeated, with a sigh.

"Very well!" answered the young man, without much apparent surprise. "I knew very well that you would not consent. It would have been a good thing, though, and I really do not see any other way."

"What shall we do, then?" said Fédotia, whose heart throbbed with anguish. She drew in her head and listened.

Everybody was soundly sleeping. The pretty blonde head, scarcely covered with a handkerchief, again reappeared.

"I cannot tell," replied Savéli, gravely shaking his head. "But I shall find some way."

"Suppose some one should go to the Seigneur?" said Fédotia, timidly.

"It would be time and trouble thrown away," answered Savéli, disdainfully. "Besides, he was never known to do a favor to any one. Only a miracle would move him. No! some other way must be found. Good-night! Give me one kiss."

The young girl leaned out of the window, and the lips of the betrothed met.

"Good-night!" repeated Savéli, and he turned back to his *isba*.

Fédotia watched him as he went. His manly form and determined stride were thrown out upon the whiteness of the snow. The poor little girl's heart swelled with tenderness for the lover so nearly torn from her arms.

"A miracle!" she repeated, as she closed the window with a shiver. "He said that a miracle only could touch the Seigneur's heart. O Saviour of the world! O mother of God! protect me, inspire me! A miracle! Ah! if God would but perform one!"

She fell asleep. In her agitated dreams she passed through a hundred different scenes. Toward morning it seemed to her that a voice whispered in her ear: "Go you, and find Bagrianof."

She woke with a start and looked around her. All was

quiet. The lamp before the Images burned but feebly. She rose and threw herself before the shrine, and prayed with her whole soul to the Virgin. She prayed for a long time. Her heart whispered to her, repeated to her, over and over again—"Go you, and find Bagrianof!"

"It is a voice from heaven," she said, at last, to herself; "and it would be a sin not to obey it. I will see this terrible Seigneur myself. I will say nothing to any one; they would all hinder me. And if he should refuse?" she thought, with a deadly sinking of her heart. "But," she resumed, brightening up again, "if he does, it will all be the same as it was yesterday; and then Savéli will find some way, because he said he would."

Much comforted and strengthened by this resolution to which she had thus arrived, she slept so soundly that her father was obliged to summon her at daybreak to go for water for the samovar.

## CHAPTER VIII.

“TURN BACK! INNOCENT DOVE, TURN BACK!”

THE broad, deep river was covered with ice and snow. The low banks, sparsely wooded, were all one dead level under their white winding-sheet. The tow-path on the side was covered with ice, but it was, nevertheless, easier to obtain water for domestic purposes from the river than to toil through the ever drifting snow to the wells in the next village. When Fédotia—bearing on her shoulders the wooden hoop which balanced the two buckets—reached the river side, she saw a group of peasants at work cutting blocks of ice.

“What on earth are you doing?” she asked, in astonishment.

“The Seigneur used so much ice last summer that the ice-house is empty,” answered one of the men, in a sulky voice; “and consequently we are sent here to freeze to-day.” And as he spoke he struck the ice a blow with his pickaxe which would have felled an ox.

Fédotia watched the huge block of ice, clear as crystal, which two men were sliding upon a hurdle. A smart cut with a whip sent the horse at a rapid pace toward the manorial dwelling.

In the place where the block of ice had been, was now a deep basin of clear, blue water.

The rising sun touched with its oblique rays the opposite bank, where every shrub and twig was an icicle, and now glowing with light and fire.

"How beautiful!" said Fédotia, involuntarily.

Her heart was full of hope; with so fair a sky, and with such a glorious sun, who could be hard-hearted enough to refuse her supplications?

"Beautiful! Yes, I suppose so! to look at out of a window! Go home, my pretty girl," said an old peasant, as he finished loosening a new block which still further enlarged the basin. "Go home, or Savéli will complain of the frost biting the cheeks of his betrothed!"

The old man smiled and winked at Fédotia. She was the joy and the pride of the whole village. When she was a wee thing, her pretty, dainty ways had made her a universal pet; and as she grew up her beauty had made her as precious as a rare pearl to these rough, hard-working people. The fierce dogs followed her about, happy if they were allowed to put their damp muzzles into her slender brown hands. She was the one ray of sunshine in this dreary corner of the world.

The young girl colored, hastily filled her buckets, and then hastened homeward with a measured step which spilled scarcely a drop of water from the vessels filled almost to the brim. She went swiftly along, hardly feeling the weight she carried.

As she passed the garden hedge she saw Bagrianof, who was taking a little exercise to give him an appetite for his breakfast. This meeting seemed to the child a

good omen; instead of slackening her pace, therefore, until he was out of sight, she continued to move on with the same light step, her slender figure thrown slightly forward; and the undulations of her hips were scarce concealed by the wadded garment she wore. The grace of her movements was really remarkable, and reminded one of a swaying lily in the fields.

At the sound of her foot-fall on the frozen snow, Bagrianof turned. As she passed him she bent her head slightly, with a musical "Good-morning." She went on her way inwardly rejoicing, while wondering at her own audacity: but she wished to propitiate the master on whom so much depended. Bagrianof watched her the whole length of the garden hedge.

"She is quite grown up," he said to himself; "and a very pretty girl she is, too!"

The morning seemed endless to Fédotia. This meeting with the Seigneur was the last of a series of happy omens, and determined her to accomplish without delay the project she had formed the night before. When the noon-day meal was over, therefore, the pots and wooden spoons carefully washed and restored to their places, and old Iérémeï gone out again, the little girl found herself at liberty to do what she pleased. She took then from a little box her comb and her Sunday kerchief; she arranged her hair with great care, tied her kerchief under her chin, crossed her quilted jacket over her breast, put on shoes instead of the low slippers she habitually wore, and went out with her heart fluttering like a timid bird about to take wing.

"Where are you going, Fédotia?" cried the first peasant she met. "Your Savéli is not there. He is at the other end of the village—at Procofi's, where they are beating flax."

"I am not looking for Savéli," replied the girl.

"Where are you going, then, all dressed so fine?"

"To attend to important business!" said Fédotia, with an air of triumph, and she began to run with a merry laugh.

But as she entered the court-yard of the Seigneur's house, she was suddenly chilled with a strange fear. The dogs gathered around her, and the child was sorely tempted to retreat, but a man-servant was looking at her from the kitchen-door.

"Can I see the master?" she said to this servant as she approached him.

He was an old man with a discontented air. Born under his master's roof, he had become accustomed to most things, and yet Bagrianof's yoke seemed to him sometimes insufferably heavy. "My dead master was not a very good man," he would say sometimes to his brothers in misfortune; "but he was much better than his son. I know no one as wicked as he," he added, with a sigh. "He is worse than a demon!"

At the young girl's question, old Timothy shook his head sadly enough. Many young girls had come to that door, but never without being summoned; but this girl had not been sent for. How times had changed! Modesty had departed this world, then, with decency!

"Yes," he answered, "you can go in."

"But please ask him!"

"What is the good? A pretty girl is welcome there. Go in the door on the right; that is his dressing-room. Go on, ma belle!"

Fédotia looked at the old man with her sweet blue eyes opened wide in wonder. The innocence of her sixteen years was so unmistakably to be read in their blue depths that Timothy saw his mistake.

"What do you want of the master?" he said, in a softened tone.

"I want to ask him to have compassion on Savéli, and not to send him off to the army; he is my betrothed; we are to be married at Easter, if the Seigneur permits."

"And you expect to obtain mercy from him! Turn back! innocent dove, turn back! Go not through that door, my child."

"But it was the voice of God which sent me here," said Fédotia, her sweet voice trembling, and her innocent blue eyes misty with unshed tears. "Last night an angel came to me in my dreams and said to me, 'Go and find Bagrianof.' I fell on my knees, and again I heard the same voice. May the Holy Virgin aid me!"

The girl made a sign of the cross, and her smile was full of trusting faith as she looked into the sad eyes of the old servant, who was moved to the very depths of his cast-iron heart.

"Go away, dear child," he said; "your guardian angel would be displeased to see you cross this threshold," and

the man laid his hand on the girl's shoulder. "Say! does Savéli know that you were coming to see the master?"

"Oh, no, he knows nothing about it!"

"Very well, then; go ask his advice, and if he gives his consent I will make no objection. Now, go away!"

His hard hand pushed the young girl gently toward the gate.

With a troubled heart and eyes filled with tears, Fédotia went a step or two, then hesitated, unwilling to desert the house wherein possibly Savéli's pardon might be obtained. At this moment Bagrianof appeared at his dressing-room window, and beckoned her to approach.

"The Seigneur is calling to me!" she exclaimed joyously to the old servant; "I must go and speak to him."

She passed him, running lightly, her feet scarce touching the earth. She sprang up the six steps of the broad porch, and entered the house.

Timothy made with the fingers of his right hand that indescribable Russian gesture, which signifies discouragement, weariness and indifference, and returned to the kitchen very much disturbed.

"Such a pretty girl!" he grumbled between his teeth, "and so young—a mere baby! But stupid, very stupid!"

On reaching the vestibule Fédotia stood for a moment, puzzled and uncertain where to go. The waxed and shining floor, polished swords and fire-arms fastened against the walls, a huge mirror which reflected her figure from head to foot, and made her fancy that another person was coming to meet her—all these things, in short, were so

entirely new to her, that they inspired her with a sort of terror. She turned, and her hand was on the latch ready to fly, when Bagrianof looked out of his dressing-room.

"Ah!" he said, "where are you going? Come in here."

He opened the door still further.

"Do you want anything? What were you saying to Timothy?"

"I was asking if I might see you."

"Well, you find you can," answered the Seigneur, blandly; "and pray, what answer did he give you?"

"He said—that I had much better go home!"

"Much better go home, indeed!" replied Bagrianof, grimly; and then added, with a smile: "But what do you want of me?"

"I want— Oh, master, pray pardon Savéli, and I will bless you to the end of my days!" cried little Fédotia, with a sob, at the same time throwing herself at the Seigneur's feet, and touching the ground three times with her brow.

"Savéli? Savéli? Is he the hound who answered me so insolently yesterday in the presence of the whole village?"

"Yes, master, that was Savéli. But he will never—no, never do the same thing again!" exclaimed the girl, eagerly. "Forgive him; do not send him off to the army. It would kill me, master. You do not wish to kill a poor child who has never done you any harm!"

"You love him then very much?" asked Bagrianof, gravely.

"Yes, he is my betrothed. We want you to let us be married after Lent. Ah, Seigneur! be merciful to Savéli, and we can be married at Easter."

"Did he send you to me?"

"Oh, no! he did not know that I was coming."

"Ah! this is quite interesting; but tell me why do you expect me to pardon your betrothed? I have no great reasons for liking him."

Fédotia had no reply to make. She hesitated a moment; then, not being able to think of anything else, she returned to her first idea.

"We will bless you to the end of our days!" she repeated, with clasped hands.

"I am inclined to forgive him," said Bagrianof, with a wicked look; "but it is too cold to talk out here. Come in this room."

He bade her precede him into his dressing-room, as he called the large apartment, opening on the lawn by two long windows. The mahogany furniture was black with age, and was covered with dark green leather. A broad divan filled one corner of the room. A table in the centre was covered with newspapers. Bagrianof read much, and quite piqued himself on the liberality of his opinions in all that concerned the destiny of empires. He closed the door. Fédotia stood in the centre of the room, anxious and embarrassed.

"Listen!" he said, as he took both her hands in his firm grasp. "You think a great deal about Savéli? You love him very much? You are very anxious to obtain forgiveness for him?"

“Yes, Seigneur, more anxious than for anything in the world.”

“Very well; you shall have it!”

Fédotia, transported with joy, flung herself at Bagrianof's feet, laughing and crying as she kissed his garments.

“Do not kiss my feet,” continued Bagrianof; “it is throwing your kisses away. Your Savéli shall not be sent to the army. But you must say ‘thank you.’”

“May the good Lord cover you with blessings!” began the young girl, ready to pour out the protestations and phrases of which the Russian peasants are by no means sparing.

“That is not what I mean. Come, now, be good and don't make too much noise!”

He took her in his arms; and as she felt herself lifted from the ground, Fédotia uttered a piercing shriek.

“If you scream, I will put you out doors, and send Savéli to Siberia,” said the Seigneur, sternly. “Do you understand? Not one word!”

And Fédotia did not speak again.

## CHAPTER IX.

## BAGRIANOF'S KERCHIEF.

WHEN the child left Bagrianof's dressing-room she was as white as the snowdrifts outside, and moved like an automaton.

"Wait," said Bagrianof, as he was about to open the door. "Wait, I will give you a kerchief."

He took one from a wardrobe, unfolded it, and laid it across the arm of the young peasant, who was still and silent as death.

"Adieu, Fédotia," he said, with a careless wave of his hand as he closed the door of his dressing-room.

The young girl, standing alone in the vestibule, shuddered from head to foot. With a strange, mechanical movement she went down the steps and took the road to the village, absorbed in thought, and with the gay-colored kerchief still hanging on her arm. As she reached the cross-road she met a group of young men who had just left the *isba*, where they had been beating flax. Up to that moment she had seen nothing, but had walked on with her hands loosely folded, and her head bowed upon her breast. Suddenly, she lifted her eyes, and saw those of her lover fixed upon the kerchief hanging on her arm. She uttered a sharp cry of agony and started back, extending her hands as if to protect herself.

"Who gave you that?" said Savéli, in a voice of thunder.

"Do not touch me! do not touch me!" she exclaimed in a voice of despair, drawing back from him still further.

"Where have you been?" cried the young man, mad with rage and pain.

Fédotia looked at him for a moment; Savéli's eyes were fierce with anger. She turned and flew like the wind down the road to the river. The young men—Savéli in front—started in pursuit.

"Fédotia! Fédotia!" but Savéli's voice possibly never reached the girl's ears. The wind was blowing it from her. She still flew on, so lightly that her feet did not leave a print on the snow; like an arrow she darted over the low bank and threw herself into the basin, into the blue waters of which she had looked that very morning.

Savéli arrived just in time to clutch fruitlessly at the skirt of her dress; the gay-colored kerchief lay on the icy edge.

Without an instant's hesitation the young man threw off his fur pelisse and heavy boots, and sprang into the water. He disappeared under the thin ice which had skimmed over the surface, and then rising to breathe went down once more. His companions had begun to think that they should never see him again, when he appeared, exhausted, but living. They pulled him out, and with him Fédotia, whom he held tightly clasped in his arms; but her poor eyes would weep no more, nor would those

marble cheeks pale again under insult and wrong! Savéli soon came to himself, and insisted on carrying the frail form of the dead girl to her home. The funeral procession was joined on the route by many peasants, and finally reached Iérémeï's cabin.

“Father!” said Savéli, laying the dead body of his betrothed on the low couch, “here is your daughter. I am not to blame! I could not protect her, but I swear to you that I will avenge her!”

## CHAPTER X.

## A RUSSIAN PRIEST.

THE village was soon in commotion. Iérémeï, with tearless eyes and savage countenance, looked at his daughter in silence. Matrons gathered around Fédotia and did their best to restore her to life, but their efforts were of short duration; for they soon found that they were hopeless. The girl was cold and stiff. The men left the cabin, that the last sad duties to the child they all loved might be performed.

Not one word was spoken within the cabin or without. All the young people and children gathered around Iérémeï, who, seated on the wooden bench that ran around the exterior of the house, with his fur cap pulled down over his eyes, seemed absorbed in thoughts of vengeance.

Somebody had taken Savéli away to make him change his wet garments. The old man looked around as if he missed him, and one of the peasants hastened to explain the absence of the youth. Iérémeï signified that he understood, and relapsed into immovable silence.

The weather had changed: a storm and night were rapidly approaching. Lights appeared here and there among the cabins, and finally an aged woman came to the door of Iérémeï's desolated home, and invited the men to enter. The father was the first to cross the threshold. One by

one, with heads uncovered and bending slightly, that they might not strike the beams over the low door, the crowd passed in.

Fédotia, clothed in her choicest raiment, lay on a long oak table in the centre of the room, her feet to the East, so that her face should be turned toward the rising sun, and toward the sky in which the Three Kings saw the star which led them.

Her hair no longer fell in massive braids upon her shoulders, as was the custom with young, unmarried girls. The matrons had concealed it entirely with a fine kerchief carefully knotted about the head. The delicate hands had been clasped together, but not without difficulty, and were now tied with a ribbon; and a small crucifix was placed between them. The floor and the table were covered with evergreens brought hastily from the neighboring forest by the children. The lamp burning before the shrine shed over the whole scene a pale, flickering light.

Iérémeï looked at his daughter; his reddened eyelids quivered, but his worn-out eyes refused to shed one tear.

“Send for the priest,” he said.

The peasants looked at each other. Russian priests go to the homes of their Seigneurs to recite the prayers for the dead, but peasants never ask them to come to their cabins, for these prayers must be paid for.

“Send for the priest,” repeated Iérémeï.

No one moved. He looked about the crowded room.

“I will go myself,” he said; and, taking his stick, he went out.

The night was extremely dark. The sky, low and gray, threatened a snow storm, while the wind came in fitful gusts.

The old man hurried, with long, strong strides, toward the Rectory, in whose windows, as he could see while yet afar off, burned a bright light.

At the door he met Savéli, who was just going in.

"Why are you here?" said the old man.

"To ask the prayers of the priest for the martyr who is at rest," answered Savéli.

The old man went into the house without making any reply.

The priest was seated by the bed of his sleeping wife. A small, red, and wrinkled face was seen amid the linen of a cradle at her side. A young servant, with a startled air, came in on tip-toe.

"Master," she said, "some peasants are here who wish to speak to you."

"Who are they?" answered Vladimir Andréitch, turning toward her his worn face, still pale with the anxiety and suspense of the day.

"There has been an accident in the village," said the servant.

"Speak lower!" replied the priest, as he rose with evident fatigue from his low chair. "Remain here, near the child. Try and keep it from disturbing its mother while I am gone. Where are these people?"

"In the ante-room, master."

The priest went out and took the peasants into the

dining-room, which was but poorly furnished with a table, a sideboard, and a half-dozen straw-seated chairs. When he saw Savéli, he had a vague presentiment of the truth. The anxiety and fatigue of the day had kept him in ignorance of all that had happened in the village, but misfortunes seem to be wafted on the air sometimes, and the knowledge of them to come intuitively, as it were.

“What can I do for you?” asked the priest, gently.

“We ask your prayers,” answered Iérémeï. “My daughter lies dead in my house. A sin is on her soul, and your prayers must take it away.”

“Fédotia?”

“Yes, Fédotia.”

“What sin could that pure white dove have committed before God took her to himself?” asked the priest, with a sick feeling at his heart, so certain was he of what he was about to hear.

“She killed herself!”

Iérémeï looked the priest full in the face.

“You will say, perhaps, that you refuse to pray for her because she committed suicide. But you are a good man—a kind man—and you will not leave her sin on her soul? What do you say?”

As he uttered these words, Iérémeï's stick shook in his hands, not with weakness, but with rage.

“Why and how did she kill herself?” asked the priest, without answering directly.

“I do not know. I know only that she was brought

to me dead, and that she herself did the deed. If you wish to know more, ask this man; he will tell you."

Savéli stepped nearer the father. The light from a very poor candle was sufficient to show his pale, drawn features, and a look of age which was entirely new in that manly face.

"I left Procofi's, where we had been beating flax. I was with all the others." He named the peasants who accompanied him. "At the cross-roads I saw Fédotia coming down the road from the Seigneur's house. She moved as if she was asleep. Her eyes were wide open, but she did not seem to see anything. Suddenly I perceived that she had on her arm a bright kerchief—you know, father, the kerchiefs I mean—those that Bagrianof gives to the girls—I felt as if I had received a tremendous blow, as if an ox was trampling my heart out. I called, and I think I said, 'Where have you been?' Fédotia screamed, and started back as if she was frightened, and then said, twice over, 'Do not touch me!' Then I said again, 'Where have you been?' She did not answer, but began to run down the path to the river. We all of us followed her as soon as we could, but before we could overtake her she had jumped in. I jumped in after her, and pulled her out; but it was too late!" Here the youth was choked by a mighty sob.

"And what is your conclusion?" asked the priest, after a long, sad silence.

"My conclusion is, father, that the poor innocent went to Bagrianof to ask him to pardon me. And he, glad that

the lamb had come to him, devoured her like the wolf that he is."

"Ah! well, father, what have you to say?" growled Iérémeï, striking the floor with his stout cane. "What will you do?—I must have prayers."

"My wife was confined this morning; but that makes no difference, I will go with you. Go on—I will overtake you. I will only stop at the church a few minutes."

The two peasants left the Rectory. After a few moments Iérémeï suddenly stopped.

"Was it you who advised her to go to the Seigneur?" he asked, in a low, constrained voice.

"No, father, no! I swear before God that I knew nothing of it. She had spoken once of asking Bagrianof to pardon me, and I laughed at her, and told her that he never pardoned any one, and never would, unless some miracle took place."

"This is the miracle, then—I am childless!" sighed the old man, as he resumed his weary walk. A moment later, he spoke again. "It is fortunate for you that you did not send her, for I would have broken every bone in your body—and then broken his!"

The priest entered the cabin shortly after the arrival of those who had gone to find him. He handed to one of the men the censer and the incense which is always used at funeral prayers and assumed the stole. He had not brought the Deacon with him, judging it useless to involve him in the disgrace and punishment which would unquestionably follow the fulfilment of this duty.

The incense smoked upon the lighted charcoal, and the priest began his prayers. His rich, musical voice slowly recited the solemn verses. The peasant who swung the censer made the responses, all in the Slavonic dialect, as like Russ as the French of the fifteenth century is like the French spoken and written to-day. As he uttered the sacred words which speak of Life Eternal and the reception awaiting the pure in heart beyond the grave, the priest's voice grew louder and clearer; his eyes raised to heaven, looked beyond the low ceiling, blackened by the smoke of years, and saw the glorious blue sky set thick with stars, and the white soul of the martyred girl floating toward her blessed Saviour and Redeemer. With pious hands he wafted the incense over the body, and then, removing the stole, folded it with care, and placed it with the censer in a napkin, which he carefully tied together by the corners, and finally resumed his pelisse, and turned to depart.

"Thanks, kind father," said Iérémeï, kissing his hand.

"Thanks, father," said Savéli also. "When will you bury her?"

"Whenever you desire it, my children."

"Are you not afraid?"

The priest looked around slowly. He looked at the fair young thing lying dead before him. He looked at the crowd of dark, appealing faces, dimly seen in the pale, quivering candle-light.

"No," he said, in a calm, resolute voice; "the servant of God fears neither the snares of the wicked nor the devices of the devil!"

“Will you bury her then the day after to-morrow, in the morning, with masses? We will pay you whatever you say.”

“I do not want your money,” said the priest, who nevertheless thought as he spoke, of the destitution within his wall, and remembered how much his young wife needed nourishing food; “I will be ready whenever you summon me,” he continued.

The peasantry slowly dispersed, and were soon under their own roofs. The next day, all the whole morning, the peasant women besieged Vladimir Andréitch's house. Notwithstanding their poverty they each carried something—two or three fresh eggs, a chicken, a little of last year's honey, a bundle of wool, a couple of yards of linen, and even the poorest offered a little milk. Thus the village showed their gratitude to him who was running the risk of losing his daily bread by his support of their rights.

The following morning, Bagrianof was drinking his tea quietly, and reading the weekly papers, when the first stroke of a bell made him start. His wife turned pale under the interrogative look of her lord and master. She knew all that had happened, and had trembled since the previous evening in expectation of this very moment. She made a sign, and her little girl noiselessly disappeared. More courageous, now that her child was safe from the impending tempest, Madame Bagrianof awaited the question which could not be much longer delayed.

“Is it a fête day?” asked her husband. “What is the date?”

"The 22d," she answered; "but it is no fête-day, Daniel Loukitch."

"Why is there mass then?"

"For an interment," stammered the poor creature, shivering with dread.

"So the dead man ordered masses for his soul, did he? Much good may they do him! Well! they can't be so poor as they pretend—these good serfs of mine—if they can afford to pay for masses! Which of my souls is it who has taken flight for his celestial home?"

"It is not a soul, Daniel Loukitch," replied Madame Bagrianof. "It is a young girl."

It is necessary to explain here that at that time in Russia only men were called *souls*. As the women paid neither taxes nor rent, they were not enumerated in the population.

"A young girl!" repeated Bagrianof, with an offended air. He always objected to the death of the young girls in his herd; it was a clear loss, since they could marry and raise fine, stout children, who, if boys, were worthy to be called "souls."

"Who is it?" he asked, with a lazy interest, due solely to his proprietorship.

Madame Bagrianof gathered together all her strength. "Fédotia Iérémeïeva," she answered, slowly.

Her husband laid down his newspaper, and turned and looked at her.

"You are a fool," he said, coldly, "or you are mad! That girl was here the day before yesterday—how can she

be buried to-day? Pray, tell me," he added, with a sneer, as he resumed his newspaper, "what did she die of?"

Madame Bagrianof did not reply. Her husband laid down his paper and rang the bell furiously, which summons speedily brought old Timothy into the room, on tip-toe. The sound of the bell was still heard, but now it was tolling, instead of ringing for mass. The funeral procession must be nearing the church.

"Who are they burying?" asked Bagrianof, in a sharp, quick voice.

"Fédotia Iérémeieva, your honor," answered the old servant.

"That girl who was here yesterday?"

"The same, your highness."

"What did she die of?"

Madame Bagrianof and Timothy exchanged glances.

"What did she die of?" repeated Bagrianof, with compressed lips, indicative of a storm.

"She was drowned, my lord."

"By accident?"

There was no answer.

"Purposely?"

Again a second silence—broken within only by the ticking of the clock, while outside the bell still tolled. Timothy raised his head, looked at his master, and then one word fell slowly from his lips.

"Purposely," he said.

Bagrianof dashed his newspapers aside, rose from his chair, made one or two turns up and down the room. His

wife started to her feet, and stood stiff with terror, and uncertain what to do. He took her by the shoulder and reseated her roughly in her arm-chair.

“Be quiet!” he said, “you are always jumping round like a devil on springs!”

Madame Bagrianof moved no more.

“The fool!” muttered the Seigneur, between his close-shut teeth.

The church bell was silent, the body was within its walls.

Bagrianof took two or three more turns about the salon.

“What do they say about it in the village?” he asked, turning abruptly to Timothy.

“I do not know, your highness. I never go to the village.”

“Very well! Go now, then,” said the Seigneur, resuming his chair. “Give me a glass of tea, my dear,” he added calmly, turning to his wife. “Let it be very hot and well sweetened, if you please.”

Timothy left the manorial court-yard with his eyes fixed on the ground—going down the road where it seemed to him that he saw Fédotia gliding before him with the unfolded kerchief floating over her arm. He reached the square on which the church stood. Every house in the vicinity was empty. Some very young children, left alone in their cradles, cried out to him with joy as he opened the door. He hesitated. What should he do? To return to his master without carrying the intelligence he had been sent to seek, was to run a great risk. To enter

the church would perhaps be more dangerous still. Who knows if the enraged populace would not tear him limb from limb, in default of higher game? He decided on a middle course. He slipped into the vestibule of the church, accosted an old woman who was saying her prayers with great earnestness, making profound inclinations of the body and signs of the cross all around her.

“What do they say in the village, my good woman?” he whispered.

She looked at him sidewise.

“They say that it is a great pity that such a pretty girl should die so young!”

And she resumed her orisons. Timothy, well satisfied, returned to the house and repeated faithfully exactly what he had heard. Bagrianof, not being able to help himself, was obliged to seem content. He soon shut himself into his dressing-room, and there awaited the tolling of the bell which would soon begin again. It was not remorse which was his companion, as he paced the floor with a step which was as steady and regular as the swaying of the pendulum on the clock. Why should remorse enter the heart or brain of this great and powerful Seigneur? Remorse for what? For having committed once more an act that was by no means new to him. Had all the other girls gone from out his presence and drowned themselves? Had they not at the proper time and season married and become mothers of stout little boys, with flaxen hair tumbling into their eyes? Boys, which were many of them his sons in all probability; but of this he took care never to assure himself by any

questions. Why had not this little fool done like all the others? She had a husband all ready to take her. Who on earth would have supposed that she, instead of marrying decently and quietly like the rest of the world, should go and drown herself "purposely?"

He did not like this at all; in fact, he was quite displeased, and had she been still living he would have inflicted a severe punishment upon her. But she had escaped his vengeance!

The dull, heavy tolling began again. The body was being taken from the church to the cemetery. Why was it, he asked himself, that no one had spoken in his presence of this event? It would be naturally one of interest to him. They had evidently concealed it from him, and why? Did the people about him think that it would be disagreeable for him to hear that this girl had destroyed herself? But why should it affect him? Was it his fault? Would any one have the impudence to say that it was his fault? He would soon settle that, indeed!

Bagrianof went toward the door, as if to go out. The great church bell was still tolling with long, even strokes; the smaller bells were heard from time to time with a sound like sobs and sighs. Bagrianof turned away from the door, and resumed his walk.

His fault? How was he to blame? Not the least in the world! She had come to him, a brazen-faced creature; she had asked pardon for her lover, and who could have known that he was really her lover? He was probably only her betrothed. The girls in the village were not

generally so wonderfully virtuous. No, indeed! it was not his fault. She had no business to bother him, no business to come near him. But who was it he heard saying that it was a murder? that he was responsible?

He turned quickly to chastise the scoundrel.

He was alone!

Then he remembered that it was Timothy who used the word "purposely" to him, as if to brave him. She had drowned herself purposely—it was Timothy who had said so, and Timothy should pay for his words later on; and so should the priest, who buried this girl with all the honor due to a Seigneur!

Bagrianof stopped. The tolling had ceased. The silence, and the determination to which he had arrived, of punishing the old servant and the insolent priest, had done him much good. He seated himself at his desk, opened a drawer, took out the letter he had written so long before to the archbishop, laid it before him while he lighted his cigar, and then he took it up and read it over leisurely. But he failed to understand one word of its contents.

Fédotia had a superb funeral. Except the babies whose cries had bewildered old Timothy, not one human being in the village had remained in the house.

The bereaved father had asked for High Mass, with a full choir, and the priest consented, taking the entire responsibility upon himself. He knew that he did this at the cost of his position. The young mother was gaining strength rapidly, the infant seemed determined to live,

and no matter how cruel the Seigneur was disposed to be, he must at least give him a month's notice. In a month he would put all his treasures on a sledge, and go with them wherever his Heavenly Father and his Superiors should see fit to send him; to Siberia, if they deemed it advisable, to preach the Gospel to the savages. Was he not sure of bread at least? And was he not rich in the possession of an idolized wife and child?

While he recited prayers over the bier, the crowd was so dense that the heat was stifling, although there was no fire within the building.

The men, with downcast eyes, seemed to inhale an odor of vengeance mingled with the scent of the spruce and pines which they crushed under their feet. The dead girl, lying there with uncovered face, was to them their battle-flag, under which they would fight and conquer. It is not the old Romans alone, to whom a woman's frail form has been the symbol of insulted Liberty!

The funeral ceremonies nevertheless concluded without any outbreak. Four peasants lifted the bier. The old father and Savéli were either side of the head, and thus was little Fédotia borne from the church to the solemn tolling of that bell, which had so strangely affected the nerves of the Seigneur.

The entire village followed this funeral procession to the cemetery that occupied the centre of a thinned-out wood, and lay at but a short distance from the church. It was a spot where the graves in the spring-time were covered with wild flowers, and where hundreds of birds built their nests.

The snow now lay in one level surface over all the mounds. Fédotia's open grave was all that marred this immaculate whiteness. The procession, with the priest bearing the crucifix at the head, climbed the low hill and wound along the narrow paths until it reached the yawning grave, waiting to receive the youthful victim. The lid of the coffin was closed, and it was carefully and noiselessly lowered. The priest dropped upon it a handful of earth, while Iérémeï leaned over the grave for a last look of all that was left of their darling. The coffin of white pine was soon concealed by masses of frozen earth and snow.

Iérémeï, according to custom, invited his friends to return to his house. They followed him thither in profound silence, each person feeling, as is the phrase, "that something was about to happen."

## CHAPTER XI.

## WEIRD FUNERAL MEATS.

THE funeral repast began in profound silence. Invited by Iérémeï, the priest nevertheless excused himself from remaining, giving as a reason the illness of his wife. In reality, however, he too felt the storm in the air. The peasants began, according to custom, with hard-boiled eggs and rice cooked in water, the invariable foundation of meals served on these occasions. The women remained in another cabin. A large goblet of raw brandy made the rounds of the table at short intervals. By degrees conversation began, but it was not in any degree animated or interested; each felt that the words he uttered fell on unheeding ears, and every one assumed an attitude of expectation. The afternoon thus passed away; the sky grew darker, and night was near at hand, when suddenly Fédotia's father rose and began to speak. At the first sound of his voice utter silence prevailed. From all the corners of the *isba* attentive heads turned toward the old man.

“Brothers!” he said, “I had but one daughter—I have lost her. We have laid her in the earth; all that remains to us is an eternal memory.”

According to custom the assembly chanted three times

in chorus, "an eternal remembrance," and then relapsed into silence.

"My Fédotia never harmed any one," resumed the father, in a voice full of tears; "she was as gentle as a lamb, and as pure as a dove. She was betrothed, as you all know, to this brave fellow:" he pointed to Savéli, who sat at his right. "She would have been married, she would have been as good a wife as she had been daughter. She was young, she was healthy, and yet she is dead! How is this?"

He looked around the room: his hearers were listening intently, and several pairs of eyes, animated by the brandy, were riveted on him with the tenacity of incipient intoxication.

"How is this?" repeated Iérémeï. "How could a beautiful, young and healthy girl drown herself suddenly in the river, and leave her old father without a soul to close his eyes and lay him in his grave? Is it natural, I ask you again, for a young girl to prefer death to the kisses of her lover?"

The language of the old man was a singular combination of simplicity and Biblical phraseology, the latter unconsciously acquired by assiduous attention at the lengthy services of the church.

"Is it natural," he resumed, "for a young girl, when she sees her betrothed coming toward her, to cover her face, and cry out to him, 'Do not touch me!' Is it natural," he continued, becoming more excited, "that, covered with shame, she should run to the river and throw herself in—

thus seeking death, rather than look a man in the face? No, it is not natural," he cried, in a voice like distant thunder, as he struck the floor with his cane.

All started.

"My daughter is dead," he resumed, looking around him with an air of defiance. "She died because our Seigneur, who has no more honor than a low-lived cur, took her, my snow-drop, my white dove, to amuse himself with!— And she, not daring to meet the eyes of her betrothed, not daring to return to her old father, went and drowned herself in the cold river. And if any one should ever say to me, 'Your daughter killed herself: it was a deadly sin,' I should say to whomsoever said these words, 'You lie! my daughter committed no sin—my daughter did not kill herself—Bagrianof killed her!' Murderer! I say murderer!"

The old man in sublime wrath threw up his arms to Heaven. All the men rose to their feet with one common movement: "Murderer!" they cried, as with one voice.

They were no longer afraid; they were no longer timid sheep, meek in the hands of the shearer. Vengeance with one sweep of her huge wings had purified the atmosphere about them. They thirsted for revenge—they had freed themselves from bondage.

"He is a murderer!" repeated Iérémci, in a calmer tone, but striking the floor with his heavy stick as he spoke. "And this murder is not the first that he has committed. Have you forgotten our brethren whom he sent to Siberia barely three months ago? Have you forgotten

the lashes they received? Have you forgotten the blood that poured from their poor wounded backs, and the carts which bore our brethren far away to the East—have you forgotten them? And the women who were widowed, and the children who found themselves orphans—have they forgotten their husbands and their fathers? And do you not know that more than one of those men who started on that journey that day must have died by the roadside? And those who are still living must die far from their homes; when, we shall never know, and no one at their funerals will drink from the glass of brandy, the cup of bitterness which we empty at our funeral repast, and which we drink to-day for Fédotia, and to her eternal memory.”

The goblet of brandy circulated from hand to hand. Each person touched his lips to it, and the chorus again swelled to the dusky rafters, as they three times chanted the funeral responses—“Eternal memory.”

“Those who fell by the wayside, and those who will die in that distant land, have been killed by the same hand which killed my daughter. It is our Seigneur—Bagrianof—who has ruined our village; we are men no longer; and the people round about us call us ‘the wolves;’ they are right—we are wolves, we hate and are at war with the whole world; the whole world,” he repeated, with increasing rage, and grinding his teeth together; “the Seigneurs and their agents, the army and the judges and the courts.

“But there are agents and judges and soldiers everywhere, and all peasants do not hate them! We hate them

because of Bagrianof—because he is so cruel and so wicked that he compels us to doubt even the goodness of God! Forgive me, Heavenly Father!” he said, inclining himself deeply toward the Holy Images in the eastern corner of the cabin. “Forgive me, if my tongue has blasphemed! May this sin with others, with all our sorrows and our pangs, lie heavy on the soul of Bagrianof!”

The crowd was agitated like a tempestuous sea. A murmur of but half-restrained indignation ran through it, and reached Iérémeï. The old man had nothing more to say. Savéli now rose to speak.

“We have all of us suffered enough!” he said, in his clear, well-modulated tones. “Besides, I have sworn to avenge the wrongs of the girl who was to have been my wife! My brethren knew not what they did when they gave his life to this dog. Why did they not strangle him when they held the cord in their hands? But this time he shall not escape. What have you to say to this?”

A thrill of pleasure pervaded the assembled multitude; they seemed to feel the throat of their Seigneur in the grasp of their muscular hands. Night came on; the women entered to light the pine torches, which soon flamed in the iron braces by which they were fastened to the wall.

By their unsteady light, which filled the *isba* with a strong, resinous odor, the cadaverous faces and fierce eyes of the peasants looked more than ever terrible.

Suddenly the door opened, and a man scattered the crowd to the right and the left as he rushed in and

pushed his way up to Iérémeï, who sat on the further side of the table, upon which the new-comer threw himself with a loud, agonized shriek. Some one hurriedly held a torch toward his face to recognize him; it was old Timothy, Bagrianof's valet.

A roar of indignation filled the room.

"What are you doing here, dog of other dogs?" cried the peasants. "Do you come as a spy? Lick-spittle! knave!"

They continued to heap insulting epithets upon the old servant, who continued to writhe and groan. As they took him by the shoulders to thrust him outside, he uttered another shriek of pain.

"Justice!" he cried, lifting his left arm toward heaven. "Justice! In the name of Christ, brothers, aid and protect me!"

They saw then that his right arm hung helplessly at his side.

"What is the matter?" said Iérémeï to him. "Let him be; he is a guest under my roof."

A small space was left about Timothy. Groaning with pain, he, with the aid of his left hand, lifted his right and showed to the horrified men about him the tumefied, distorted member, where the flesh was burned away far below the nails. The sight was a sickening one.

"Who did that?" said Savéli, slowly, but with flashing eyes.

"Who? Why, who could have done it except that dog—that devil, Bagrianof!"

Insults and exclamations again recommenced ; but this time they were directed to the master, not to the servant. Iérémeï sent for the village nurse, who was in the next cabin, and who came at once. It was she who was in the habit of dressing all the wounds thereabouts. She immediately applied oil and proper bandages. The skin was gone ; the flesh hung in strips ; the nails had fallen away ; the arm would follow possibly—they could not tell—even amputation might be necessary ; but village science taught them nothing of surgery.

When Timothy's arm was bandaged, and supported by a handkerchief around the neck of the old man, Iérémeï bade the nurse depart.

“ Now tell us,” he said, turning to the unfortunate man, who was comforting himself with a glass of brandy ; “ tell us how he did this.”

“ Well,” said Timothy, “ the master wanted me— Do you know why this has happened ?” he said, interrupting himself suddenly, and turning toward Iérémeï. “ And you—do you know why ?” And Timothy turned toward Savéli, who was eagerly listening. “ It is because I tried to prevent the dead Fédotia from entering his house !”

“ Did you do that ?” said Savéli, in a doubting tone.

“ Yes ; when I saw her coming—so sweet, so young and so pretty—I felt a great pity for her. She asked me if she could see the master ; she wanted, she said, to ask him to forgive you, Savéli. I bade her go away ; I told her that the master was not a good sight for her eyes ; and she was going, when the master—that cursed beast—appeared at his window and called her.

“You know the rest as well as I. But he saw that I did not want her to come in, and he was angry with me. This morning he asked me what she died of, and I told him; this displeased him still more. He sent me to the village to find out what was said there; and I told him when I went back just what I heard said—that it was a great pity that such a pretty girl should die so young. Then he was more displeased than ever; and in the evening, when I carried in the samovar for his tea, just at five o'clock, he declared that the water was not boiling. But it was not true, brothers—the water boiled.”

Timothy involuntarily tried to make the sign of the cross to reinforce his assertion. But this instinctive movement of his maimed arm elicited from his lips a groan of pain. He was unable to speak for a few minutes. The silent audience waited patiently. He resumed his narration.

“It was boiling,” he repeated, “for the steam was coming out in clouds, and the charcoal was still burning. Then, to please him, I took the samovar away again, and put in new charcoal; and when it was all lighted, and the water bubbling up through the cover, I carried it in again and placed it on the table. When I went in, I noticed that Bagrianof was looking at me with that wicked expression of his—laughing, you understand! For twenty-five years I have served him, and yet I have never become accustomed to this look of his; and when I see it, I never know what I am doing. So, when I put down the samovar as it ought to have stood, with the handle of the

faucet toward the lady, I put it so that it was in front of my master."

"'Have you forgotten how to put a samovar on the table?' said the Seigneur, laughing. His white teeth, shining through his white moustache, were as sharp and pointed as those of a fox. 'You talk too much with pretty girls! your brain is turned, old man!'

"'Excuse me, master, I made a mistake,' said I, as meekly as possible. 'I spoke of the samovar, you understand.'

"'Turn it round,' he said, 'and place it as it ought to be.' I obeyed. If you knew, brothers, how that water boiled! it ran over the brim and down into the tray. Then Bagrianof said to me: 'Roll up your sleeve and let me see your arm.' I rolled up my sleeve without thinking any harm. Ah! if I had only ran out of the room. But I should not have got away. I had no sooner rolled up my sleeve than he caught me here, just above the elbow, with that grasp of steel which I have had occasion to know before this; he grasped my arm, as I say, and held it under the faucet and turned on the boiling water. Ah, brothers!" cried the poor creature, writhing on his seat at the memory of the agony, "he let that water run until every drop was gone. I wanted to fall on my knees and beg for mercy, but he held me up to the very end. No one can get away from him, I can tell you, if he chooses to keep you; his hand is like a vice, and then the pain was so horrible that I had only strength to scream."

“And the lady?” said Savéli: “was she there? what did she say?”

“Poor soul! she flung herself on the floor, embraced her husband’s knees, and said to him: ‘Burn me, but let that man go!’ He pushed her away, and she fell back in a dead faint!”

The peasants had listened breathlessly; their broad chests heaved. This man—this valet, hitherto despised, detested and condemned—had now by force of his martyrdom become one of themselves. They gathered around him, and these “wolves” found sweet words of consolation for their new brother.

“Well,” said Savéli, after a few moments, “why did you come to tell us all this?”

“To implore your aid in the vengeance I have sworn,” answered Timothy, in a voice of concentrated wrath. “I cannot do it alone, but I will avenge my wrongs! It seems to me that the Seigneur owes you something too, my brothers!”

A cry of rage broke from each breast. No one listened to what any one said; each had something to propose, and all spoke at once.

“No!” cried Timothy, above all the tumult, “no rope! That would not succeed. If he is allowed to speak, he will wheedle you all again; he could wheedle the very stones themselves, with his tender voice and his hypocritical eyes that he can make as sweet as honey. A knife! a hatchet! they are sure things!”

“And the blood!” said a voice from out the shadow; “and the punishment which will follow!”

They all listened to hear Timothy's reply.

"If the house should be burned, and if it were an accident?" he answered, quickly; "what then? In that way there would be no blood."

"He who has sinned by fire perishes by fire!" said Iérémeï, sententiously.

"When?" muttered Savéli through his teeth.

"This night! This very night! I shall never sleep again while he cumpers the earth."

"I shall wield the hatchet," said Savéli, quietly.

"Each of us shall have one!" whispered Iérémeï, hoarsely. "At what hour?"

"At midnight. All of you come. We shall not be too many. And the house must burn, you understand. I will set the fire."

"And the lady?" said Iérémeï, suddenly; "and the little girl?"

"They will be taken to the priest's," answered Timothy. "They are not wicked. When the flames burst out, I will waken them and take care of them."

## CHAPTER XII.

## VENGEANCE.

BAGRIANOF'S household was buried in slumber. Snow had been softly falling for several hours, and the roads, the trees and the walls were all white. The sky, gray and sullen, seemed almost to touch the roofs; the drifting masses were piling up as if they wished to swallow the houses. There was not a breath of wind, nor was there a light in the village, while in the Seigneur's house there were only two windows faintly illuminated. These were those in the master's dressing-room, and the light came from the lamp which burned day and night before the shrine.

Confiding in his strong locks and in his dogs, Bagrianof slept profoundly. The troublesome reflections of the morning had been dissipated by the flood of boiling water which he had poured upon his servant's arm.

He had thus properly punished, he said to himself, the insolence of the boor who had ventured to tell him to his face that Fédotia had drowned herself "purposely." Nevertheless, this word "purposely" had left on his mind a most disagreeable impression. To drive this impression away, therefore, he had recourse to a game of "patience," that unfailing distraction of provincial weariness. "*Petites patience*," with one pack of cards, not affording him suf-

ficient interest, he embarked in a "*grande patience*," with two complete packs, and in this game he had found so much amusement that he retired in a most comfortable state of mind, having made his eight little piles all complete.

The eight piles still lay on his table, ready in the morning to recall his triumph to his mind as soon as he opened his eyes. The victor was sleeping that good and righteous sleep which follows a well-fought battle, when the door opened gently, for the hinges and lock had been carefully oiled by Timothy.

One by one, closely following each other, the peasants crept noiselessly into the room. Their suppressed breathing even was scarcely to be heard. When the room was full the door was closed, and at this sound, slight as it was, Bagrianof started up.

Often, in his dreams—for his dreams had been the avengers of those whom he oppressed—he had seen his room full of hideous faces glaring at him with ferocious eyes. He had often waked with the rope about his neck—that rope which Ilioncha had held in his hands for a quarter of an hour and then removed—"the fool!" But ordinarily, these unpleasant sights disappeared when he opened his eyes, and Bagrianof would turn over, make the sign of the cross to drive away the evil one, and then fall asleep again. But to-night his dream had such a hideous suggestion of reality that he sat with his mouth and eyes wide open, without daring to move. His enemies surrounded him: all those whom he had wronged; all those at whom he had struck or in any way molested; those whose

daughters or sisters he had dishonored; those whose brothers or sons he had sent to Siberia—all were there, each with a knife or a hatchet in his hand, and nearest him, close at his bedside, were the father of Fédotia and her betrothed, looking at him with eyes wherein burned the baleful fire of hatred. One of the other peasants was busy lighting all the candles in the room, that they might have better light for the work before them.

By this time Bagrianof realized that he was not dreaming, and that his hour had come.

He had been told over and over again that his peasants would murder him; the parting words of the governor-general went through his mind like a flaming sword. "It is a great pity that they did not kill you!"

"Mercy!" he exclaimed, extending his hands in supplication.

"Mercy?" repeated Iérémeï, looking at him sternly, but calmly. "My poor daughter said 'mercy!' to you not much more than forty-eight hours ago, there, in that very spot, you miserable dog! where you have been sleeping calmly. Did you grant her mercy?"

"I pardoned Savéli!" stammered Bagrianof, seized with mortal terror.

"But I will never pardon you!" said Savéli, quietly, with no more apparent emotion than the old man had evinced. "You killed my betrothed: I loved her more than my life—you are about to die!"

"I will give you all my money if you will spare my life!" said the Seigneur, his tongue growing so thick in his mouth that he could hardly articulate a syllable.

“Listen, Seigneur, listen! We are all here—all the village—do you understand? We are about to kill you, because you are accursed of God!”

“Thou hast filled the measure of thine iniquity,” said Iérémeï. “Pray God to receive thy spirit, since the hour of thy death has arrived!”

Bagrianof started to his knees; two loaded pistols were on his night-table: he tried to reach them. As he extended his arm Savéli's hatchet struck him between the shoulders. He fell on the bed, crying, “Help! help!”

No one ever knew who struck the mortal blow, for ten hatchets flew through the air at the same moment.

A terrible silence followed. The peasants looked at each other. Bagrianof lay motionless; a stream of blood flowed along the linen until it dripped upon the carpet.

“There is no time to lose!” said one among them. ‘Set the fire. Quick!’”

Then, as if a sudden panic had seized them, the assassins piled the furniture upon the body; chairs, books, pictures, newspapers, clothing—any movable articles, in short, which would easily take fire; and soon the confused mass touched the ceiling. Some one then brought an armful of straw, and thrust it under the bed.

“Stand back!” said Iérémeï to the peasants. “It was you who struck the first blow,” he continued, addressing Savéli, “although mine was the first right. But no hand save mine shall light this fire!”

“So be it!” answered Savéli, taking his stand by the door.

Iérémeï took two candles, arranged them carefully in the centre of the bundle of straw, and blew them for a moment with his mouth as if he were lighting his fire in his stove at home. Smoke filled the room almost instantly; then a slender flame crept up and along the hangings of the bed, from which the red stream still ran, but more slowly. A pool of blood was gradually forming on the floor.

“Open the *vasistas!*” said Iérémeï, still standing by the bed.

A peasant threw open the two movable panes in the double sash, and suddenly the thick smoke was pierced by innumerable tongues of flame, which licked the muslin curtains and flashed over the pile of furniture. The eight little piles of cards lay intact upon the table. Savéli gathered them in one hand and tossed them upon the funeral pile; the cards curled and quivered like living things, and were then seized upon by the fire, which was gradually gaining strength.

“That will do!” said Savéli. “Now, let us lock the door, my friends. Farewell, *Seigneur!*”

With these parting words to Bagrianof, uttered with dismal gayety, Savéli closed the door and locked it; and then, going out upon the porch, tossed the key into a deep snow-drift. No one heard it fall.

The peasants were now all outside the house and gathered in the court-yard, where they watched the gathering fury of the flames within Bagrianof's dressing-room through the white linen shades; they could see their varying tints—sometimes a deep crimson, sometimes again

a vivid scarlet. Torrents of smoke were pouring also from the cellar-windows. Timothy had done his part of the work well, and had laid, along the foundation of the house, piles of light kindling-wood and pine knots; the wood-work, highly painted and varnished, began to blister and turn brown.

“And the Lady?” said Iérémeï. “Are we going to let her be burned alive with the Demoiselle?”

“Do not be troubled,” answered Timothy, who, standing a few paces off, was contemplating his work; “she is all right. The other wing will not take fire for some time yet; we must not wake her too soon, she will tell us to save her husband.”

“Go!” said Savéli. “The key is lost, and we will tell her that he has locked himself in. Make haste.”

And in good truth there was little time to lose. Awakened by the smell of smoke, the maids were rushing out-doors like a flock of frightened sparrows: not one of them had thought, however, of awakening her mistress. Timothy rushed into the house, but, with his arm in a sling, could do little. When he had found some heavy fur pelisses, he awakened Madame Bagrianof, and tried to lead her, with her child in her arms, out into the courtyard; but the floor of the ante-room at that moment burst into flames, and he was compelled to relinquish all idea of crossing it.

For a moment the old servant thought that he, with the two women he had come to rescue, must perish in the doomed house. Fortunately Savéli realized their danger;

and, climbing upon the ledge formed by the sub-basement of brick, he, with the same hatchet with which he had struck Bagrianof, broke in the glass and sashes of the windows of the bedroom, which were only ten or twelve feet above the ground, and swinging himself up into the room with his strong arms, he re-entered the blazing house.

It was time: the doors and curtains were all on fire. He went out once with the little girl, who clung in terror to her mother; a second time he bore Madame Bagrianof, who lost consciousness when she saw that her child was safe.

As he climbed up the third time to assist Timothy to escape he hesitated: was it worth while to risk his life for this valet, who had been so long a panderer to Bagrianof's cruel vices? The sight of the despairing old man, however, vainly endeavoring with the aid of one arm to climb up to the window, determined him to further efforts; he succeeded in helping Timothy through the window, placing him on the brick ledge, and then got him down upon the snow by the side of his mistress. Some of the peasants, moved by pity, carried the poor woman and her child to the priest's house. Vladimir Andréitch welcomed them with all the compassion of a generous heart, and exerted himself at once to restore Madame Bagrianof to consciousness.

When she opened her eyes, the first cry of this martyr to duty was:

“Save my husband!”

While the priest sought to calm the widow's terrors, the peasants stood watching the burning house. Flames issued from all the windows; the roof, half fallen in, permitted the escape of bursts of smoke, set thick with brilliant sparks, which were scattered over the snow like fire-works. As yet, no wind fanned this funeral pyre that consumed the body of their common enemy. The snow, softly flushed by the reflections of the flame, had a look almost of rejoicing; while the reddened sky hung low as if anxious to conceal from the people in the neighborhood the tragic event that was taking place.

The village was there in its entirety; all the women stood looking on, and no human being made the smallest effort to prevent the fire from completing the work it had begun.

The more sensible of the peasants, and some there were even in this band of wolves, were satisfied when they found that their Lady and the Demoiselle were in safety. The general sentiment was that of relief and deliverance. The peasants who appeared last on the scene asked in a whisper if the master was within. On receiving an affirmative answer, each of them stood still and waited.

And now the roof was one light blaze, and then sent suddenly up one superb mass of scarlet and yellow flames; the walls tottered and fell with a loud noise.

The snow, which for a time had ceased to fall, now again began; enormous feathery flakes floated along indolently like lazy butterflies, others again glittered and sparkled like spangles; then the storm thickened so that a veil fell as it were between the spectators and the dying flames.

“Well! children,” said a voice, “I think that we had best go to our beds.”

The crowd dispersed; scattering along the road in small groups. The servants and maids took refuge in some of the village houses, and there lamented the loss of their clothes and possessions.

“Hold your tongues!” said Timothy, as he turned away. “You have gained more this night than you could lose in a hundred years!”

This great truth struck them all, and they were comforted.

The ruin was but a reddened mass of ashes, when two loiterers turned back once more to look at it.

“How fast it burned!” said one.

“It was magnificent!” answered the other.

When Iérémeï entered his hut with Savéli still at his side, he stood still a moment and seemed to be buried in thought.

“Where are you going?” he said to the young man.

“To town. The peddler has a passport for me. And you?”

“I? I remain here, of course!”

“You are not afraid?”

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

“Afraid of what? Does not every one know that it is an accident?”

Savéli was silent; he was examining his hatchet; he wiped it several times upon the skin of his pelisse.

“Give it to me,” said Iérémeï. “I will clean it with

mine, and will replace it in your house. You had best go away: you are young—go and see the world; I am old, and if they should arrest me, what does it matter? I have no one but myself!”

He threw himself heavily upon the stove to sleep.

“Father!” said Savéli, after a silence.

“Well?”

“Give me your blessing. In the distant lands, where I am going, it will bring me good luck!”

Iérémeï rose, and made the sign of the cross over Savéli's bowed head. The youth kissed the old man's hand—that hand which had set the master's house on fire.

“May God be with thee,” said the old peasant. “We shall meet in another world.”

Savéli went to his own cabin, took a pair of boots, all the money he had, and harnessed his little horse to a low sledge, and departed. When he was two versts from the village, and upon a slight elevation, he turned, and looked back. The sky was still red above the ruin, which, at intervals, would glow with a stronger light. The falling snow quickly destroyed the tracks of his light sledge and the prints of his horse's hoofs. All was favorable for his purpose, and he continued his way hurriedly. Reaching the town before daybreak, he awoke his friend, the peddler. The explanation was brief, but to the point.

That same evening Savéli set forth for an unknown land, his pack upon his shoulders, and his heart full of the strange joy of knowing himself free from bondage.

## CHAPTER XIII.

“FOOLS! ARE YOU AFRAID?”

WHEN day broke over the still smoking ruins of Bagrianof's mansion, the trembling widow, supported by the priest, approached the spot which had been her home.

“He is there!” she said, pointing where the left wing had stood, and where only a few hours before her husband's windows had shone out into the night. “He must be looked for. He may be living,” she murmured, with a sigh. “If he is alive,” she continued, after a brief silence, “we must rescue him; if he be dead, we must render him the last rites.”

The priest was silent. If Bagrianof were living, how terribly swift would be the measures he would take of retaliation! for the good man was certain that the fire was no accident, and in his own mind he had even named the guilty parties.

“Call the staroste, I beg of you, Father Vladimir,” said the widow, calmly. “We must set men to work at once.”

This woman, so gentle and weak under marital control—almost stupefied, in fact, by ill-treatment—suddenly assumed all the rights of her position. Was it hope, or was it fear,

that spurred her on, and made her so unlike what the priest had known her?

Several curious women and anxious men were crowded about the entrance to the court-yard. The widow approached them as near as the heat would permit her, and looked at the place where her husband undoubtedly lay. The staroste's step behind her startled her. She turned quickly.

"Send the whole of the laborers here at once—every man of them," she said. "Let them bring hatchets, pick-axes and shovels without delay, and let them dig in this spot."

Several peasants, who were close behind the staroste, looked at each other with startled faces.

"Suppose Bagrianof should not be dead!" one whispered.

"Why do this, good Lady?" said the most courageous among them. "The fire was the will of God. He allowed us to save you, and you are here with the Demoiselle, God be thanked! But it is plain to see that it was not His will that the Seigneur should be saved—since—"

"We are not the judges of the will of God," interrupted Madame Bagrianof, with a haughtiness which surprised herself. "I am the mistress at present, and I insist on the men going to work at once!"

A great murmur of discontent was heard on all sides.

"But the fire is burning still—there is danger! No, we will not try!"

The crowd and the rebellion increased momentarily.

Madame Bagrianof's courage failed her; she extended her hands in supplication.

"My brothers, my friends," she said, "I know well that he has been to you a hard and inhuman master. But he is my husband—he is the father of my child. I have sworn to be faithful to him—even unto death!" She burst into tears. Duty was stronger than the sentiment even of self-preservation. The murmur continued.

"Fools!" cried a voice of thunder from a distance, "fools! I will go myself, if you are afraid!" Iérémeï pushed through the crowd, his stick in one hand, his hatchet—still the same hatchet—in the other. When he reached Madame Bagrianof, he lifted his fur cap. "You are a good woman, mistress, and we are ready to serve you," he said. "These fools here are afraid of dead bodies"—he looked around at the crowd—"but I am not afraid—only, mistress, you must not expect to find the Seigneur alive; but we will bring you all that remains of him. Bring water, some of you! Do you think that we wish to burn the soles of our feet? Well! snow, then, while we are waiting!" and setting the example, Iérémeï threw snow on the smoking ruin, and soon buckets and pails of water came from all sides.

The priest entreated Madame Bagrianof to go away with him while the search was going on, but she obstinately refused. Shivering with cold, her teeth chattering, notwithstanding all her furs, she sat on a low wooden chair, brought by some peasant from his dwelling, and watched every movement of the men at their task.

All the villagers toiled on with feverish anxiety; a few words whispered in the ear of the most backward by Iérémeï had done wonders. Water was poured on in such abundance, that, if Bagrianof had not been dead, he would have been drowned in this icy deluge.

After two hours thus spent, they were able to tread without danger on the brick sub-basement under the dressing-room; a half hour later they found fragments of furniture. Then came a long silence. The panelled arches of the cellars had sustained a portion of the flooring; and amid a heap of cinders they found some carbonized bones and charred flesh, which represented their master.

“Well?” cried Madame Bagrianof.

“May God grant him eternal repose,” said the peasants, uncovering their heads.

“You have done well, my children,” said the widow, gently. “I thank you!”

She drew her veil over her eyes, and meekly allowed herself to be led away by the priest. As she crossed the threshold of the father's house, her child ran to her and threw herself into her arms.

“I have only you, my darling,” said the widow, pressing her daughter to her heart. “Blessed be God who has preserved us one to another.”

An express was despatched at once to town, returning that same evening with a coffin lined with velvet, within which were deposited Bagrianof's remains.

The funeral services were as impressive as if subsequent events had been in no way unusual. The widow, however,

excused herself from offering a funeral feast by reason of having no home. The death of her husband had brought around her as many friends as there were estates within the circumference of ten leagues. Each Seigneur begged her to go with him to his home while the inquest was going on. From among all these offers, she selected and accepted those of the Marshal of the District. His wife and himself owned a superb domain, about sixty leagues distant, where children and grandchildren were growing up about them.

Just as Madame Bagrianof was about to drive away, Iérémeï brought to his mistress an iron box which had been found among the cinders, and which contained the lady's jewels. She wished to reward the old man, but he hurried away with enormous strides. A peasant overtook him.

"What was the use," said the man, discontentedly, "of returning that, as if we did not need it more than she?"

"We are assassins, I know," growled Iérémeï; "but we are not robbers!"

And he turned his back on the astonished peasant.

The inquest took place; a careful examination was made; but, naturally, nothing was discovered.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## FREEDOM!

IN the retreat which was thrown open to her, where she found so much sympathy, Madame Bagrianof gained also peace, and even happiness. Smiling faces, and that family union and affection, than which nothing is sweeter on this earth; kind words and loving attentions, of which she had been deprived since her youth—all were welcomed by her as the parched earth welcomes a gentle shower after weeks of fierce heat.

The child, happy in the society of other children, grew and developed wonderfully.

One day, after having contemplated for some time the rosy cheeks and bright eyes of her child, who was hourly expanding in the genial atmosphere of her present surroundings, Madame Bagrianof felt that a certain resolution, which had been for a long time ripening in her mind, was at last mature. She went to find the marshal, and asked him suddenly if she could free her peasantry.

The marshal looked at her in astonishment. At that time few serfs had been enfranchised belonging to private individuals. In vain had the government set the example. Few people were willing to thus sacrifice their services, and relinquish the taxes which made up a large part of their income.

“You have already made them a free gift of their indebtedness to you, my dear friend,” he said, kindly; “that was doing them a great charity. Remember, that you are by no means wealthy.”

“I know that,” replied the widow; “but I wish thus to render thanks unto the Lord for the life and health of my daughter; all my other children died when they were infants. I always believed that this child would die like the others, and I have been amazed at seeing her grow as if she were not a Bagrianof. During the time when I, each day, felt that I should lose her, I made a vow: I believed that my children died because of the sins of their father, and I promised that if this one were allowed to live, that I would seek in every way to repair the evil he had committed. How, then, can I do better than liberate those whom he made to suffer?”

“Very well; but if you relinquish their future taxes—if you give them their houses and land, you will have very little to live upon. Besides, your daughter is yet a minor; you cannot dispose of her share without permission from the courts.”

“I know it,” replied the widow; “but I can give up my portion, cede all my rights—and I do so gladly. Remember, that it was a solemn vow, and that my daughter has grown and flourished. If I do not keep my word, God will surely take my child from me; and if I should lose her!—”

The mother's voice was choked by tears.

“What do you wish me to do, then? I am ready

to obey you," said the marshal, touched by this tender maternal superstition.

"I do not know, for I am totally ignorant of business matters. Arrange everything as seems best to you. I only ask that we shall have the wherewithal to live in the simplest fashion; and that the peasants of Bagrianovka shall be liberated. I cannot enfranchise those of the other villages, for unfortunately they do not belong to me," she added, with a sigh; "but, then, they have suffered less than those close to us—those who were under the hand of—"

The widow shuddered, and closed her eyes at the recollection of the horrors which she had been forced to witness.

"Think no more of the Past; it is forever gone. I will do my best to carry out your wishes," said the marshal, "since you have fully decided. Give me a power of attorney, and you shall have no further trouble."

The marshal completed this affair to the entire satisfaction of all concerned. One fair summer's day he went to Madame Bagrianof, who sat at work on her embroidery upon a bench in the garden, watching her little girl, who was playing on the turf near by. The widow at once saw that her friend held a paper in his hand; she tried to rise and meet him, but her trembling limbs refused to bear her weight. She called her child to her side, and, with one arm about her, waited to hear the great news.

"I congratulate you, madame!" cried the marshal, all out of breath. "I congratulate you! Your serfs are liberated by yourself—voluntarily. You have done a noble deed!"

“God be praised!” she said, solemnly; “now I can sleep in peace. My darling!” she added, taking her child’s hands in hers, “do you understand? I have done this in fulfilment of a vow made unto the Lord, that He may spare you to your mother! that He may permit you to grow up a good woman, and serve Him in this world for many long years!”

And the mother’s tears fell in a plentiful shower on the fair head of the child cradled on her breast.

When the news reached Bagrianovka, the surprise was so great that every one was for a time incredulous. After suffering for so many years, under so heavy a yoke and implacable a master, could it be true that these men, after wearing chains, were liberated—that they were to go and come as they pleased—that they could marry and plant a vineyard—that they could establish themselves in trade, without asking permission of any one? It was impossible! Such happiness was incredible! By degrees, light came to their bewildered minds.

The priest read to them this act which enfranchised them. They heard it with apparent apathy and indifference; but after a time one and another began to come to the Rectory, to find out something of their rights or their duties.

At the end of some six months they fully appreciated the first, and were determined to ignore, as far as in them lay, the latter.

As ungrateful, though not more so, as the majority of men, they forgot the privileges, and thought only of

the disadvantages of the new condition of things. "If my cabin burns down, then it is I who must rebuild it!" said one with a shrug of his shoulders. But after all they finally decided that they were better off under the new régime.

Iérémeï alone refused, obstinately, to consider himself free.

"I do not choose," he muttered, "that the lady shall give me my liberty! A man, I suppose, can't be set free unless he chooses! Well, then, I am not free. I have lived a serf—I will die a serf; and it is not a paper more or less which will settle the thing."

Savéli thought very differently, and was enchanted to find himself at liberty—at liberty to come and go as he pleased. The wandering life he led as a peddler was to him simply delicious; for the village was too full of sorrowful memories to be as yet a pleasant place of abode. He applied for a license, therefore—in his real name this time—and had his regular route to travel.

Madame Bagrianof had not returned to Bagrianovka. Winter was near at hand—already the storks and cranes had taken flight to the south; when one day there was a knock at the door of the marshal's private room, and Madame Bagrianof appeared.

"I have come to take leave of you, my friend," said she. "You sheltered us as if we had been two wounded birds—you gave us hospitality and love, and with you I have spent the happiest days of my life; but it is now time for us to part. Saturday we leave for Moscow."

“What! already?” cried the old man; “if you have really determined to leave us, wait at least until spring. Why should you spend this winter in a new and unknown place? Remain with us!”

The widow shook her head sadly.

“You are too rich,” she said; “we are poor, and we must live in poverty all our lives.”

“Remain with us, then, and your child shall be as one of our own.”

“That cannot be,” replied Madame Bagrianof. “She must not acquire habits which she would find impossible, or, at all events difficult, to lay aside, if she marries; and the child will become only too easily accustomed to your luxurious life. Later she would suffer if obliged to relinquish it, and I cannot see her suffer,” added the mother, in a half whisper, as if interceding with some invisible enemy. The marshal pressed his lips respectfully on his guest’s hand, and ceased to urge her.

The following Sunday, the dumbfounded peasants at Bagrianovka saw the marshal’s Berlin draw up before the church door just before services began, and from the carriage stepped out their mistress and her daughter, both clad in the deepest mourning. The priest, bearing the cross, advanced to receive them, and services began.

During the prayers the poor peasants, with their eyes riveted on the gentle face of the lady, remembered the time when the Seigneur sat by her side. Some of them, the best among them, felt a certain pity, mingled with gratitude, toward her.

Mass over, the villagers assembled on the square and the staroste appeared, bringing to the mistress bread and salt in visible acknowledgment of the great gift she had bestowed upon them. At the sight of this tray bearing the emblems of wealth and hospitality, tears filled the eyes of this homeless woman; she was almost unable to take these symbols from the hands which proffered them to her first, and then to her daughter. In vain did she struggle to speak. At last, with a gesture she pointed to the ruin at the end of the avenue, and buried her face in her mantle.

The sight of this weeping woman softened these obdurate and selfish natures, and the women, speedily followed by the men, crowded around their mistress with words of encouragement, gratitude and benediction; for was she not now about to exile herself, after giving all her goods to them, her people? Their kind and tender words comforted the aching heart of their poor lady.

"I am on my way to Moscow, friends," she said. "You are now free. No cruel master can ever again be guilty of injustice towards you. Therefore, in memory of your enfranchisement, will you not sometimes pray for the repose of the soul of your dead Seigneur, and for the life of this innocent child?" she added, laying her hand upon her daughter's fair head.

"Where is Savéli? I wish to see him; it was he who saved our lives."

Savéli reluctantly went to her.

"I have brought to you this Image of Saint Serge," she said to him; "you will preserve it in memory of your

noble act. And now accept my blessing, and that of my child." She made the sign of the cross with the little Image over Savéli's bowed head, while he, deadly pale, made no motion to take the gift when she extended it to him.

"Take it," she said, surprised at his hesitation.

Iérémeï touched him lightly with his stick, and Savéli started, seized the Image, kissed the hand of his benefactress, and hastily retreated to his own cabin, where Iérémeï speedily followed him.

"Fool!" said the old man, "do you wish to ruin us all?"

Savéli shook his head.

"I could not help it," he murmured. "When I heard her speak to me of my noble act, and when she blessed me in the name of the orphan—"

"Well, are there not plenty of orphans among us? and who is the cause of that?"

"Yes, I know; but all the same it gave me a great shock!"

Iérémeï shrugged his shoulders.

"If you intended to repent, it would have been better if you had let the matter alone!"

"I do not repent!" cried Savéli, with flashing eyes. "I would do the same thing over again; but the orphan—Well, they are going away, and I am thankful."

"Amen!" said the old man, striking his stick upon the floor.

## CHAPTER XV.

## CONFESSION IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL.

SINCE the tragic death of his daughter, Iérémeï—at no time of a very genial disposition—had become doubly morose and unsociable. His meagre form was drying up, and looked by degrees as if a strong wind would blow it away. One fine morning, therefore, no one was surprised to find him lying dead upon his stove in his cabin. He was buried, and forgotten.

Lent was drawing to a close; when, among those who came to confession, preparatory to their Easter communion, the priest saw Savéli. The preceding year, at the same season, he had been away, which solved the difficulty; but a true Russian never misses his Christian duties for two successive Easters. The young man presented himself with an air of assurance, but his hands were nervously clenched, and betrayed more emotion than did his face. The priest, without appearing to do so intentionally, kept him until the others were all gone.

When they were alone in the church, Vladimir Andréitch rose from his chair, bolted the door, and reseated himself. It was growing dark. The lamps before the Images and a few candles, vowed by the faithful, but poorly lighted the sanctuary.

“Kneel,” said the priest to Savéli, who obeyed.

“Now begin,” said the confessor, solemnly.

Savéli enumerated his various peccadilloes. The priest listened without asking a question. Finally the young man seemed to have come to an end.

“And—” said the servant of the Lord.

“And?” stammered Savéli. “There is nothing more!”

“Nothing?” cried the confessor. “Nothing!” he repeated, more sternly. And rising he extended his hand toward the young man as if in wrath and malediction. “And what of the murder?”

“You know, then?” Savéli replied, with an angry flash of the eyes, which was speedily repressed.

“God knows all!” answered the priest, reseating himself. “Relate your crime; omit no detail—lest the God of vengeance strikes you dead at the foot of the altar you profane. Covered with blood you dare present yourself here; and dare to lie night and morning before your household Images. Tremble, for God Almighty in his wrath has punished criminals—guilty of less crimes than you have committed—who have dared to enter his holy place without repentance!”

Savéli, still on his knees, burst into tears.

“Ah! yes, it is true—I killed the master! But you, father, know only too well that he deserved it.”

“I am the God of vengeance. Vengeance belongs to me alone. Thou shalt not kill!”

These three distinct phrases fell on the criminal's ear like three thunder-claps. Then followed a long silence, broken only by Savéli's smothered sobs.

“I killed him!” he said, at last. “It is true, I killed

him. He had robbed me of my Fédotia. I could not bear it. My Fédotia—my betrothed! I had always loved her. She was young—she was beautiful. We should have been happy together. And—then—I killed him—not I alone—but—”

“Tell me nothing of the sins of others. Go on!”

“I killed him, and then we burned the house that no one might know of the murder. Forgive me! pardon me! O God Most High!” groaned Savéli, striking the ground with his forehead.

“Do you repent, then?” asked the priest, severely.

Savéli lifted his head, looked at the confessor, and hesitated.

“Do you repent?” repeated the priest.

“No,” said the young man; “if the same thing were to be done again, I would do it.”

The priest rose to his full height:

“Miserable sinner,” he said, in a low, deep voice, “you set divine mercy at defiance. Repent this day, or fear the anger of Heaven. He lies there—he whom you killed—there!” And the confessor pointed to the stone over the vault where the Bagrianofs were interred. “Do you not fear that he will rise from his grave, and accuse you before God?”

Savéli in horror began again to strike the earth with his brow.

“Forgive me, Lord,” he cried, making the sign of the cross over and over again. “Pardon my sins, and receive me into Thy kingdom.”

The priest saw that he had not exacted too much—that Savéli was trying to repent. Time and advancing years would do the rest of the work; would bring contrition to this unsubmissive spirit. He gave absolution to Savéli, who thanked him with tears, and walked from the church at his side. The darkness was almost palpable. Only a dim light before the altar was left burning in the church.

Savéli, after having said good-night to the priest at the door of the Rectory, turned and looked at this light, which faintly shone through the grated windows. Bagrianof was shut up in that tomb; he could not, in spite of the words uttered by the confessor—no—he could not appear and accuse him! But if he should rise and come to him with that devilish laugh of his—

“I should kill him again!” muttered the impenitent, through his firmly set teeth. He then crossed himself furiously, and went into his cabin.

When the spring opened, he started forth once more with his pack upon his shoulders. This wandering life suited him well, but he came back twice each year, and passed several weeks in the village.

During one of these sojourns he married. His business was increasing, and a home seemed necessary to him—a place where he could store his goods, and thus be enabled to profit by favorable opportunities for purchasing. He married a village girl, fair and fresh, not over wise perhaps, but she suited him. He continued his trade as a peddler with such success that in a few years he became one of the richest men in the vicinity. He had a number of

children, but only one lived : the eldest, a son, whom he adored, under an air of severity and almost with a protest as it were.

In the village all had prospered. The priest, whose family had increased more rapidly than his revenues, often thought that it was a strange thing that such a crime should have brought such happiness to Bagrianovka. His thoughts dwelt long on the past, on Divine Mercy, and he said to himself, that perhaps the murder had been expiated in advance, by all that these poor people had borne and suffered.

The owners of the neighboring estates were less anxious to encourage commerce than to secure their rents from these serfs ; therefore traders of all kinds gradually flocked to Bagrianovka ; where, provided they were obedient to the laws and customs of the Commune, they were allowed to do with their time and their money as they pleased.

Before long, white bread was plentiful at Bagrianovka ! A wineshop displayed its green boughs, and the women were learning to make lace. The peasants were happy and prosperous, and the old men, when they died, thanked God that their children would be better off than they had been.

Thus years passed away. Savéli's son grew apace ; one fine day his father called him : " Listen," he said, " you are eight years old, you have been running barefoot in the dirt quite long enough ; I choose you to be a man of learning, like the Seigneurs. I have money, God be thanked, and I will go about with my pack for ten years more, if it must be, rather than that you shall have no education.

They say down below in the great cities, that true nobility is education : how that may be I can't say, but we will try it at all events. You shall be stuffed with learning, my boy, as you will see! I did not even learn to read when I was a boy—I was quite thirty years old before I knew my letters; but you shall learn all that you can learn for money. You will go away with me this very week, my boy."

"What! you will take my only child?" cried the mother, with tears.

"Be quiet, woman!" replied Savéli, with the authority of the head of the house; "I choose that our son shall be like the Seigneurs in his book-knowledge. I mean, indeed, that he shall be wiser than they, if possible! There—no more—I have said it!"

After a year or two of preparation at a minor school, therefore, little Philippe Savélitch entered a seminary in Moscow and soon became one of the best pupils in the establishment.

His father often went to see him. Clothed in his long cloth cafetan, and wearing high, stout boots, he stalked into the parlor, summoned his son, and with his eyes fixed on the report of the year, he cross-examined him in regard to all he had learned, without sparing him one single detail.

He insisted on the child's replying quickly and succinctly; and Savéli's air, while accomplishing this paternal duty, was so absorbed and severe, that Philippe absolutely reached the age of manhood without the smallest suspicion that his father was entirely ignorant of the

studies and subjects upon which he had so rigidly catechised his son.

When Philippe had completed his studies and received his gold medal, his father took him home to the country. Since the commencement of his studies the young man had never been back to the village. Bagrianovka saw a handsome young man of eighteen, tall and slender, as if he had grown too fast in a dark cellar, with an intelligent face lighted by large, expressive eyes, which spoke too clearly perhaps of late vigils and assiduous application to his studies.

Emancipation had come to all the serfs in Russia; and many new ideas had burst into being in the most arid brains, consequently young Philippe found himself entirely at home in the village as well as in the paternal *isba*.

The ten years of his sojourn in Moscow had in no degree eradicated his rustic tastes and instincts, the growth of countless generations. That for which he had vainly longed with tears sometimes, when at twilight on a summer's night he had watched, from the small window of his close sleeping-room, the stars coming out one by one, was that wide, blue river, on which the moonlight was floating in rifts of light, that dense forest with its aromatic pungent odor, that hum of bees, that lowing of the cows, that dingy cabin, those wooden benches, the frugal fare, that rural indifference to externals: all pleased him now as when he was a child.

"It was useless for my father to try and make a Seigneur of me," he said to himself one night, as he lay vaguely dreaming and looking at the stars. "I may be a savant, but I shall always be a peasant."

## CHAPTER XVI.

## CHOOSING A CAREER.

SAVÉLI had waited and watched with much anxiety, impatient to know what his son would say when he returned to his father's poor home. But as Philippe said nothing, he found himself obliged to interrogate him.

He therefore seated himself on the bench outside the door and lighted his pipe, while the youth rolled his cigarette.

"Well!" said the elder man, looking afar off into the distance. "How does our house please you?"

"It is delightful, father, delightful," answered Philippe, smiling; "it is all exactly as it used to be; it seems to me that I am a little boy once more, and that I must go with the other lads and open the gates for the loaded hay-carts coming in from the country!"

"Do you not think," said Savéli, after a few moments silence, "that the house is too small and too black, and our clothes too coarse and too common?"

"Oh, father, how can you suppose such a thing?"

Savéli smoothed the young man's sleeve. The jacket, like the whole suit, was of a light summer cloth, suitable for a young man who has just laid aside his school uniform for citizen's clothing.

"You," said the father, "wear clothes made of

German cloth, while we are dressed like peasants, or like trades-people at the most; my cafetan is old and worn, your mother wears a sarafare—does not this disturb you?"

"I beg your pardon, dear father," answered the young man, misunderstanding this question. "I ought to have remembered that these gifts which you have bestowed upon me were entirely out of place here: I will only wear them in the town in future. With your permission I will, to-morrow, put on the shirt and full breeches like the village lad that I am," he added, laughing.

Savéli frowned to disguise the emotion which he felt, and did not speak for a moment, and then said:

"No, keep your clothes and wear them: that was not what I meant. We will talk this matter over again. And now what do you wish to make of yourself? Speak frankly and honestly to me. I carried my pack a long time after we were comfortably off, that I might give you an education. I am still strong and well, and intend to keep on for some time longer. If you wish to go to college, say so and you shall go. I will pay all your expenses cheerfully. If you decide on any honorable profession, if anything especially strikes your fancy, I am satisfied, provided that some day it will make a Seigneur of you: that is all I ask!"

Touched by so much kindness and consideration in a father whose exterior was so rough, the young man respectfully kissed the hard hand which lay on Savéli's knees.

“Well, my son, what do you say?” continued the peasant, with his impassible manner.

“I have often thought about this question,” answered Philippe; “and I have made up my mind, that with your permission, I should like to be a surveyor. I like mathematics; the profession is still, as one may say, in its infancy.”

“Surveyor? Do you mean one of those people who measure the fields with stakes, and carry about cups with water in them?”

“Precisely, my father.”

“What on earth can you find interesting in such a life as that?” answered the father, disdainfully; “it seems to me that it is not necessary to have spent so much time over your studies just to measure fields and roads!”

Philippe had never suspected the ignorance of the father, who had always been so strict in the examination of his acquirements. He looked now with new respect, or at all events with respect which was in no degree diminished, upon the man, who, uncultivated as he was, had yet been wise enough to watch over his son as he had done, with an infinite solicitude which no tutor could have shown. What wonderful determination! What extraordinary self-control must his father be possessed of, never to have betrayed himself! Philippe felt that he loved his father with a tenderness hitherto unsuspected by himself; before this time his fear had been stronger than his affection.

“Well!” said Savéli, between two puffs of smoke.

“That is a profession, father, which will lead to almost anything. Having obtained a gold medal I can secure a position immediately; and continuing my study of mathematics, I can in time become a savant, possibly a geometer—”

“And you would like it?” interrupted the father, struck by the idea that his son could at once obtain a position, and consequently be on the road to distinction without further delay.

“Yes, sir, if you have no objection; I should prefer it to anything else.”

Savéli smoked on in silence for a few moments, which seemed to his son very long ones.

“So be it!” he said, at last; “I consent. Tell me what I must do, and I will do it!”

The young man arose and prostrated himself at his father's feet, after the custom of his peasant ancestors. Savéli was touched by this adherence to old habits. He laid down his pipe, blessed his son, and resumed his smoking without another word.

Philippe, in great contentment of mind, wandered down the road by the river, and soon found himself close to the ruins of the manor house. Poppies and wild oats were growing in the brick basement, the seeds of which had been borne there by the winds; young, slender birches had found a place for their roots in the cracks, and were gradually pushing the calcined stones still further apart; while the soft evening breeze was blowing through this undergrowth with a gentle, rustling murmur.

The young man felt an emotion of pity for those who had once lived in that ruined home. The dreary tales of Bagrianof's reign had left no impression upon his memory, even if as a child he had ever heard them. He remembered only one thing, and that but vaguely—an account of the Lady and her little girl being saved from the flames by a peasant; it seemed to him, too, that this peasant was named Savéli. Could this man have been his father? He determined to ask him.

As he made the circuit of the ruin, he saw the priest a little way off. He ran to meet him. Father Vladimir was now a gray-bearded man; silvery hairs were mingling in his chestnut locks; age had slightly bowed his tall frame, but his eye was still keen and quick.

The sudden appearance of the young man aroused him from deep thought, and he greeted Philippe with a warm pressure of the hand and a smile that was twenty years younger than his face.

“Where were you?” he said. “I did not see you coming.”

“No, because I was behind this ruin. I was examining it,” answered the youth. “I went from here when I was so very young that I never heard its story. Was it not my father who saved the lives of those ladies?”

The priest looked at Philippe with profound pity and surprise.

“It was your father,” he answered, slowly, “with the assistance of an old servant named Timothy.”

“What has become of this Timothy? I should like to

hear his account of the part my father played that night. Do you know how kind and good my father is? I cannot imagine why I ever thought him harsh and severe!"

"Timothy is dead," answered Father Vladimir, turning away toward the Rectory.

The young man took him gently by the arm, and urged him to go back to the ruin. The priest hesitated for a moment, and then let the boy have his will.

"It is unfortunate that Timothy should be dead," continued Philippe, still lingering over the wish he had suddenly formed. "But you can tell me what my father did, can you not? You were here at the time, I believe."

"Yes, I was here," answered the priest, mechanically.

"Tell me about it, then, I beg of you," urged the youth.

They walked around the ruin. Father Vladimir stopped at the corner toward the right—the corner nearest the river.

"It was here," he said, slowly, "that he, having rescued the Lady and the child, went back into the flames a third time to save Timothy."

"My father did that!" cried Philippe, enraptured. "He returned three times into those flames! Why, Father Vladimir, he is a hero!" The priest gave an affirmative sign. "And how modest he is, too!" burst out Philippe, after a short silence. "He never alluded to it to me, and now I intend to surprise him. I will say to him—"

"Say nothing," said the priest, laying his hand on the

young man's shoulder. "Never say one word to him about that night. He never liked to remember those days when he was a serf. Take care that you do not hurt him by speaking of them to him."

"I do not understand," said Philippe, disturbed, and feeling somewhat aggrieved.

The priest hesitated. His position was most assuredly a difficult one. He nevertheless continued:

"The last Seigneur Bagrianof was a thoroughly bad man. Your father especially had much to suffer from his barbarous cruelty; you would therefore give him infinite pain by allowing him to suppose that you had heard anything—"

"What!" interrupted the youth, "am I never to tell him how much I admire his noble conduct? I worship my father!"

"Love your father, my child," said the priest, in a sad voice. "His children's affection is a crown upon an old man's head."

During the days which ensued, Philippe found it almost impossible to contain himself. Twenty times he was on the point of speaking in spite of the priest's prohibition. He looked at his father with eyes so full of tenderness and pride that Savéli said to himself:

"How happy he is that I allow him to do just as he pleases!"

The young man broached the subject to his mother, who earnestly entreated him to obey the injunction of Father Vladimir.

Once, just after she was married, she had attempted to speak to her husband of the old Seigneur, and of the fire, and trembled still when she recalled the terrible anger she had then unwittingly aroused. Philippe therefore kept to himself all the enthusiastic admiration of his eighteen years.

Soon after this the young man left the village, and six months later was deep in the abstract delights of mathematics.

## CHAPTER XVII.

## A NEW HOME AND A NEW CHARACTER.

THE spring which followed was a memorable epoch in the annals of Bagrianovka. Savéli was building a new house. One fine day the village was petrified with amazement at witnessing the arrival of workmen from the city, who went to work with extraordinary diligence; chimneys appeared to grow almost like mushrooms within a night, and in a few weeks a large house, almost manorial in its dimensions and appearance, with a high brick foundation, with wide steps upon the front and a high balcony at the back, rose by the river side.

When the young surveyor came back to his home for his six weeks' vacation, he was astonished to find his father waiting for him about a quarter of a league from the village. For the three previous days Savéli had seated himself in that same spot in expectation of his son's arrival, wishing to disclose to him himself, the great secret of this new house. He therefore climbed into the télégue in which the young man rode, and bade the coachman take the road by the river.

Philippe could not believe his eyes when he beheld his mother standing on the steps of this new and stately mansion. Her costume was equally astonishing, being dressed in German style, in a Moscovite silk and with a douchag-

réika or cloak of quilted damask wrapped around her; instead of the peasant's kerchief on her head she wore a silk turban.

"Look!" said Savéli, when his son entered the fine dining-room where the samovar of red copper smoked on a table covered with superb damask, spun in the village from designs which were so ancient that no one knew whence they came. "Look! this is the home I have built for you. You will be a Seigneur; a handsome house is necessary for you. Your mother is dressed like a lady, and she can do as she chooses. I, however, shall still wear my cafetan; you, my son, will be lodged like any lord in the land. Look!" he added, opening the door of a bedroom superbly furnished in European fashion.

Philippe was absolutely too astonished to speak; his father watched him with his usual impassive air, his delight betraying itself only in a certain twinkle about the eyes.

"It is all too handsome, father!" exclaimed the young man, "altogether too handsome! And you have done all this for me? You have left the dear little *isba*?"

"You liked it, then?" said the father, in a gratified voice.

"Do you ask if I liked it? Are you serious? I adored it. And you have done all this for me?"

"It is all for you when you become a Seigneur; only you must marry a Demoiselle, not a peasant," answered Savéli.

The young man was much moved by this evidence of

affection. He knew that his mother was uncomfortable in the unwonted splendor she had assumed to do honor to her son; he understood that each cent expended in the construction of this house had been amassed by the peddler by dint of long and weary journeys through drifting snow and drenching rain, or under a blazing July sun.

"You are then very rich, father?" said Philippe, involuntarily.

"You will have something, my lad, besides this house, after I am gone!" answered Savéli, lighting his unfailing companion—his locust-tree pipe. "I shall take no more long journeys: they begin to weary me. I am going to sell butter and wheat. I have made acquaintance with certain merchants in Moscow, and intend to collect these things in this neighborhood and send them there. Have you heard in the city of something that is to be done here soon?"

"No, father, I think not," answered Philippe, with some hesitation. "Ah! yes, I remember I heard that the new railroad was coming very near here, that the bridge would be thrown across the river only two miles below."

Savéli winked. "Well, you had best say nothing about it in the village; they are silly enough not to like railroads, and it is not worth while to contradict them. When it is done, they will get used to it and think no more about it. There will be a station, of course?"

"I really do not know," said the young man.

"Well, try and find out. I think myself there will be a station here. There ought to be. Bagrianovka is quite a

large village now. It was such a miserable place once," added Savéli, in so low a tone that he seemed to be talking to himself.

"Do you mean in Bagrianof's time?"

Savéli looked at his son with an air of displeasure, through which pierced a certain anxiety.

"Yes, in Bagrianof's time," he repeated, slowly, when he met Philippe's frank eyes.

The youth dared go no further, and Savéli said no more at that time of his new projects. He did not tell his son that he had made enormous contracts with the peasantry throughout the district for their entire agricultural products. The building of a railroad to Bagrianovka would, in consequence, make him one of the wealthiest merchants outside of Moscow.

Savéli went to Moscow with his son, and worked so hard and with such success that Philippe was employed by the company upon that part of the work which approached his village; and the station, in regard to which Savéli was so anxious, was granted at once on the faith of the excellent reasons which he advanced.

Toward the end of winter, while they were laying the tracks, other startling news reached Bagrianovka: their old mistress was coming thither. The railroad company had taken a portion of her land, and she was coming to find out for herself what they were doing. As she had no asylum, no place open to receive her, she had ordered a small frame house therefore to be built for her at once, on the spot which had once been her garden; the windows

looked across the river, and a path was made between her new home and the stream—a path which carefully avoided the ruins. This simple house was built of round logs, and was very much smaller and far less elegant than that of the former peddler.

At the beginning of the summer the inhabitants of Bagrianovka saw a boat come down the river and stop at the recently built wharf, at the foot of the garden. The water was so high that it was with great difficulty that the furniture with which the boat was laden was got on shore; a quantity of rare plants, cacti, rosebushes, myrtles and laurels, followed the furniture, and made the small salon radiant; then several days later an old calèche deposited on the lawn Madame Bagrianof and a very young girl.

Madame Bagrianof had changed very little in the twenty-four years which had elapsed since her people had last seen her. Her eyes were less bright perhaps, and her hair was now white, but the sweet face wore the same look of resignation and weariness that had been familiar to them all, years before.

Life had not been over-merciful to her. After some years of peace spent in watching over her daughter's education, a new sorrow came to her. A young officer in the army—a distant relative—who came often to the house, fell desperately in love with Marie; the girl returned this love, and the mother, with tears, gave her consent to the marriage. Eighteen months later the poor young wife died, leaving to her desolated mother an infant three months old—a frail little girl, whom no one thought could possibly live a week.

It was to prolong this life—just trembling in the balance—that Madame Bagrianof laid aside her own grief and took up the battle of life once more. She was a grandmother, as she had been a mother, with all the energy of a strong and unselfish nature, and she forgot to weep for the daughter she had lost in guarding the child this beloved daughter had bequeathed to her.

It was not until little Catherine, outliving all her childish maladies, was the picture of health, with her cheeks tinged with a blush like the petals of a wild rose, while her eyes were full of mischievous delight, that Madame Bagrianof had time to dwell long on all she had herself lost. The perpetual heartache she felt left its traces of melancholy in her voice and face, so that the child insensibly acquired the habit of laughing more softly and playing more gently in the presence of this grandmother—so sweet and resigned.

Catherine had, therefore, from this dear grandmother acquired a great serenity of manner and infinite gentleness of voice, which distinguishing characteristics were calculated to lead a stranger to believe that she was sad. It was something like the gray tone of the atmosphere on an autumnal evening after a glorious sunny day, when thick mists rise from the ground. She grew and developed in mind and body with extraordinary vigor; all domestic virtues seemed part of her nature, while her love for her father amounted to absolute adoration. She rarely saw him, for his regimental duties allowed him no more than ten days' vacation, and these scattered through the year,

when he hurried to kiss the little daughter who loved him so dearly.

She was just fifteen when she came to Bagrianovka with her grandmother. She was petite in form, but daintily made, while her hands were by no means as white as they should have been, for they were always at work, while her busy little feet moved noiselessly about the house all day long, doing first one thing and then another; the plants were her especial care, and her first thought on her arrival was to ask if they were safe.

The priest stood on the threshold to welcome Madame Bagrianof to her abode. When she saw him the poor woman could not restrain her tears; she greeted him with affection, which he as cordially returned.

The wife of the priest, surrounded by a half-dozen children of all ages, came forward at once, and together they entered the dining-room in search of tea.

"See! grandma," cried Catherine; "they are all here. Only one cactus died on the journey, and Father Vladimir, who saw them when they came, says it died from too much water!"

"I see that Father Vladimir and you have become excellent friends," answered Madame Bagrianof, with a smile; and then with a sigh she added, "and how many sad recollections come to me on seeing you!"

"Think no more of the past," he answered, kindly; "think only of the youthful heart that is expanding before you!"

Madame Bagrianof dried her eyes and looked at her

grandchild. The long windows were thrown widely open, allowing the delicious odors from the garden to steal in. The grass, too, in the meadow had been just mown, and the odor was delicious. A gleam of sunshine penetrating the shady avenue fell on Catherine leaning over a fuchsia in full bloom. Her fair hair, a little curling over her forehead and on her neck behind, looked like a golden haze about her head. Her long, silken lashes lay in a graceful curve upon her cheeks. Her rosy lips, half open like a rose-bud, smiled sweetly on her idolized plants. Herself a flower but half expanded, Catherine resembled a blushing wild rose.

"She is a great joy to me!" murmured the grandmother.

"She is pretty!" answered the priest, gently; "and she looks good!"

"Yes, she is a thoroughly good child. Ah! my poor eyes! Do you know that I can hardly see at all, only as through a thick veil!" and the Lady sighed sadly. "I shall be blind."

"No, do not think of such a thing: it will not amount to that. God will have compassion upon you. And have you not your granddaughter's eyes?"

Madame Bagrianof shook her head. Catherine saw that she was sad and came running toward her. Standing behind her she threw her arms around her grandmother's neck and said:

"It is pretty here, and we shall be perfectly happy, grandmother, shall we not?" and then the girl, sitting close to her grandmother, began to pour out tea.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

TOWARD the end of July, Philippe came to visit his parents. His father was away; he had left the village almost immediately after the arrival of Madame Bagrianof's furniture, under pretext of important business, but in reality, that he might postpone as long as possible, meeting the widow face to face.

The youth went to find the priest the very day he came home. Vladimir had always been a sympathetic friend to the young man, and in spite of the difference in their ages and pursuits, they were in the habit of talking with much freedom to each other.

As he stood at the window in the priest's house, Philippe saw Catherine in the avenue. She was dressed in the simplest fashion in white; on her arm hung a broad-brimmed hat, full of wild flowers, which she had just gathered in the woods and meadows.

"Is that Madame Bagrianof's granddaughter?" asked the youth.

"Yes," replied the priest.

"Is she pretty?" said Philippe, with a faint flutter at his heart.

Around this young girl, returning to the land of her forefathers so long after the catastrophe which had exiled

her family, hung a vague atmosphere of romance which delighted him with its air of mystery.

"She is not only pretty," replied Father Vladimir, "but she is good."

"How old is she?"

"A little more than fifteen, I should judge," and the priest relapsed into silent thought.

The rays of the sun became more and more level, and the earth seemed covered with a golden cloud. Alleging great fatigue, Philippe took an abrupt leave of Father Vladimir and started on his return to his father's house. But when he reached the end of the avenue and was certain that he could not be again seen by the priest, he took the path by the river which wound around the Lady's garden. He walked slowly, his eyes apparently riveted to the ground, but in reality from out their corners he was carefully scrutinizing this new house whose windows were filled with growing plants.

"Grandmother," said Catherine, "I see a young man going along the path."

"A peasant?" answered Madame Bagrianof, indulgently.

"Oh, no, a young man from the city, evidently."

"Oh! to be sure," replied the grandmother. "It is Savéli's son. He is a surveyor, and is said to be well educated. Call him here, child."

Philippe walked on slowly; he had heard Catherine's question, but her grandmother's reply had not reached his ears. The young girl's head reappeared at the window.

“Monsieur!” she cried.

Philippe stopped and looked around. At the sight of this bright, intelligent face, of those superb eyes turned full upon her, Catherine lost her self-possession.

“I will go and bring him in!” she said, as she ran swiftly from the house.

She reached the hedge which divided the garden from the path. Philippe was waiting for her. When she reached him she stopped to draw a long breath; her white dress fell from her hands and lay in rifts on the gravel-walk.

“Monsieur,” she said, “are you Savéli’s son?”

She stopped. To call thus unceremoniously by his Christian name the father of such a handsome young man, was a little difficult, but she was not one to hesitate long.

“Philippe Savélitch Petrof is my name, Mademoiselle,” answered the young man, with a profound bow.

“My grandmother wishes to see you,” she said, timidly.

Philippe bowed again and turned toward the garden gate. The sun had set; the river flowed on with a soft, continuous murmur. Above, the sky was clear, while below, along the horizon hung fleecy clouds. The last linden blossoms sent forth their faint, sweet fragrance. A belated bee buzzed hastily past the young people, who walked up the garden-path in embarrassed silence.

Philippe had never been so near to any other woman except his mother. And never before had Catherine felt any embarrassment in the society of a young man.

"Your father saved my mother's and my grandmother's life," said Catherine, delighted to have something pleasant to say to this youth.

"How did you know that?" asked Philippe, now entirely at his ease.

"Grandma tells me about it nearly every day. I knew it as soon as I knew my own name," she answered, with a gay, little laugh. "Come, quick! grandma, here he is!" she exclaimed, with an air of triumph, as they entered the house.

When her dim eyes fell on the young man's tall figure, Madame Bagrianof hesitated. "Savéli?" she said, slowly.

"No, madame. Philippe Savélitch."

"How like you are to your father!" she exclaimed. "Is he away? I have not seen him since my return, and I owe him my life. I have not forgotten it, I assure you. Come here, my child, and receive the blessing of a grateful old woman."

Philippe knelt, and on his head were laid the Lady's trembling hands.

"Sit there," she continued, "and let us talk of your father."

Philippe asked nothing better; and Madame Bagrianof listened with interest to the account of Savéli's wealth and industry, and to the manner in which he had brought up and educated his son. She, with the two young people, wondered at and praised this unwearied, indefatigable, and disinterested paternal devotion, and smiled benevolently upon the enthusiastic exclamations of Catherine,

and on the ardent affection for his father expressed by the young man.

The room was growing dark. Catherine lighted two candles behind her grandmother, who did not like to have them shining upon her eyes; and then, with much order and method, arranged the tea-tray, and in a few moments Philippe found himself accepting bread and salt under Madame Bagrianof's roof.

The Lady prided herself on having no aristocratic prejudices—none, at all events, which were apparent; but had any one said to her that Philippe, by force of education, was as good as a Bagrianof, she would have been immeasurably astonished, and would have felt profound pity for the speaker; but she had not the smallest repugnance in admitting to her table a peasant's son, provided that peasant had saved her life.

Besides, this young man was well educated. He spoke French better than Catherine. Poor Catherine had never been wealthy enough to have a French governess. And about him was no trace of the Russian peasant. It was really necessary to make an effort to recall his origin, and Madame Bagrianof did not make this effort.

Philippe had all the new books and papers, and speedily acquired the habit of coming in the evening to read aloud to Madame Bagrianof. In the beginning it was Catherine who read; but one day, when she was suffering from a severe cold, Philippe offered to take her place; and from that moment Madame Bagrianof would listen to no other person.

“He reads a hundred times better than you,” she said to her granddaughter. “Listen to him, and try to improve.”

And Catherine listened. The needlework she invariably held in her fingers at the beginning, soon fell from her hands. With her elbow upon the table and her cheek resting on her hand, she listened to the young man. Very soon she ceased to distinguish the words. This rich, sonorous voice was full of music to her ears, and the slight Russian accent—the lingering on certain syllables—added to the charm. The termination of the article, or her grandmother’s voice, would awake her from her dream. She returned then to life, and, with a timid smile toward the young man, apologized for her preoccupation. At night again, to lull herself to sleep, she endeavored to recall the subject of the article he had read aloud, but it was impossible for her to remember one word; all was drowned in the confused melody of that voice, and in her sleep she continued the dreams of the evening.

Philippe, in his turn, carried away with him the remembrance of that pure, sweet face, of those large, attentive eyes, of that fleeting smile, and timid grace, with which she met his eyes. He felt that life began for him only at night, when, near the grandmother’s arm-chair, he could look at Catherine, seated at the table, with her dainty work-basket at her side.

It was with a great wrench that he made up his mind that he must go back to his work. Under pretext of it being necessary to see his father, he lingered yet a day or

two longer, and then another day to finish a book that he had begun to read to Madame Bagrianof.

When the book was finished, when the tea-tray had disappeared, when the cuckoo clock struck nine, Philippe felt that his hour had come, and with evident reluctance he rose to take leave of his hostesses.

"Your father, I trust, will come and see us sometimes, now that you have deserted us," said Madame Bagrianof. "Tell him that I have never forgotten my debt of gratitude to him; tell him that I admire him for all that he has done for you. Your father is a most remarkable man. Say this to him, will you?"

Philippe hesitated. Catherine thought that she had best withdraw. Madame Bagrianof repeated her question.

"Excuse me," said Philippe, much embarrassed, "but I cannot say this to him. I have been told that my father's recollections of the old régime were intensely painful; and it is for that reason that he has forbidden any allusion to be made to him to the past."

"And to that noble act of his which saved our lives?"

"More particularly to that act," answered the young man. "Those who know him well, and my mother also, have implored me never to speak to him of those days. I have never had the great pleasure of saying to him how much I admire him," added Philippe, much agitated, as he touched on this regret of his life.

Madame Bagrianof was silent.

"I understand all this," she said, at last. "My husband was guilty of great injustice, of great wrongs toward

your father, greater than you can possibly imagine. God pardons sometimes," she added, with a tinge of bitterness marring the melody of her sweet voice, "but men, I sometimes think, never forgive! I thank you, young man, for not taking up your father's enmities," she added, with a little haughtiness in her manner.

"Forgive me, madame," stammered Philippe. "I had no intention of giving offence."

"I understand, my friend," replied Madame Bagrianof, kindly, having conquered her momentary anger. "You did well to speak frankly. I will never insist on your father's crossing the threshold of my house; but you, who have not similar reasons, you—"

"I shall consider myself only too happy, if you do not banish me," said Philippe, in French.

Madame Bagrianof was so charmed by the beauty of the accent and the elegance with which he spoke these words, that she extended her hand with a cordial smile.

Philippe left the house, sad at heart that he had not been able to say farewell to Catherine. He found her seated on the turf however, just below the ruined wall.

She was waiting for him, sad, and angry with herself that she could not impute her sadness to any other cause than the departure of the young man, whom she had known for so brief a time.

She rose to her feet as she saw Philippe approaching. It was very dark; but the sky was clear, and the stars were bright. The young girl was wrapped in a shawl, which she had thrown over her head after the manner of Russian servants.

"Farewell, Catherine Ivanovna!" he said, with a profound bow.

"You know me then in the darkness," she said, with a thrill of joy.

"Most assuredly. Is there any one in the world like you?"

Catherine colored; but the darkness gave her courage.

"I went away," she said, "because I thought there was some secret."

"No, there was no secret. But the past was a cruel time for us. And we peasants, you know, are an unforgiving race. My father has some grudge against your grandfather, and—"

"We peasants!" repeated Catherine, in astonishment.

Then reflecting for a moment:

"It is true!" she added, sadly.

"What?"

"That you are not of a noble race."

"It is true! And I am not ashamed of it. I am heartily proud of my father."

"And with reason!" cried Catherine, with enthusiasm.

"We are, therefore, of antagonistic races," she added, with a pretty smile, as she rested her hands on the brick wall of the ruin, whereon wild flowers rustled in the night breeze.

"There are no more races, Catherine Ivanovna; there are only men and brothers, who should love each other, and live in harmony one with another," said the young man, in a low, solemn voice. "Farewell, until next year!"

"Until next year!" repeated the girl, sadly, as her head drooped.

Suddenly she disengaged her hand from the folds of her shawl and extended it toward the young man. Philippe took it and held it firmly in both his own—he was tempted to press his lips upon it, but he did not dare—and stood still, unwilling to risk breaking the charm.

"No," he repeated, "we are not of antagonistic races. Farewell! may you be happy!"

He dropped the girl's hand, and slowly turned away.

"Did you say farewell to Philippe?" said Madame Bagrianof, when Catherine went in.

"Yes, grandmother, I met him as he was going away," said the girl. "I am very tired: may I retire?"

"Go, my darling!" answered the old lady.

Catherine embraced her, and took refuge in her own room.

She dismissed her maid, and threw herself upon the bed. The tears that she had restrained until now, burst their bounds; she wept without knowing why; but soon sleep came, and with it the sweet tones of the absent voice.

## CHAPTER XIX.

CATHERINE BAGRIANOF.

PHILIPPE found his father comfortably established in town, and apparently in no haste to return home.

"You have seen the ladies?" asked Savéli.

"Yes, father."

"Did they receive you kindly?"

"Most kindly," replied the young man, warmly.

"That is well. That is no more than they ought to do!" answered Savéli, thinking of the good manners, morals, and education of his son, who in his turn attributed these words to the consciousness felt by the peddler of having rendered so great a service.

Never had Philippe been so near disclosing to his father the intense admiration he felt for him. The slightest word, look, or gesture of Savéli's would have untied his son's tongue; but as neither word, look, nor gesture were there, the young man was still silent. And Savéli, not long afterward, returned to the village.

Life for Philippe had lost all its charm, and only mathematics had any attraction for him. To this study he now applied himself with vigor and industry.

Winter came on. At Christmas, Philippe was seized with an unconquerable longing. Impelled as he really believed by a strong desire to see his father, from whom

he had been separated almost entirely for a year, but in reality by another attraction, he started off for the village.

As soon as he had paid his respects to his father he went to see the priest.

“And the ladies: are you not going to call upon them?”

“Certainly, sir, if you have no objection,” replied the young man, coloring deeply.

“Go, then, of course! It is well that they should see that you know how to live like a Seigneur.”

Happy in this permission, Philippe ran in haste to Madame Bagrianof. He found no one to announce him; with some hesitation he was about to turn the handle when he heard a light step, and the door was suddenly opened. A little startled cry, and Catherine rushed back into the room, which he could now see wearing the same peaceful aspect as of yore—the windows full of blooming plants, the white curtains carefully drawn aside, and the Lady's chair near the window. He walked in.

“It is you, then! Philippe Savélitch,” said Catherine, in a sweeter, richer voice than he had ever heard from her before. “You startled me. Come in! We were speaking of you not an hour ago.”

The young man obeyed and paid his respects to Madame Bagrianof, and then turned toward the young girl; she was no longer there; she had disappeared, but in five minutes, which seemed to him a century, she returned with a blue ribbon in her hair and knots of blue ribbon upon her gray dress. She had made these additions to her toilette in honor of her unexpected guest.

In beholding her once more, a great peace settled down upon Philippe. All the asperities of life vanished; he saw only this harmonious interior, so pleasant to the eye, so filled with tender recollections—where Catherine's sunny face seemed to have attracted to itself all the light in the room. He felt himself all at once joyous and full of confidence; his gayety even infected the grandmother, who smiled, and almost laughed, more than once. Catherine, in her turn, was as light-hearted as a bird, and the house was filled with merry sounds.

“How long will you stay?” said Madame Bagrianof.

Catherine ceased to smile, a light cloud of anxiety rested on her face, and she leaned slightly forward, awaiting the reply.

“Only a week,” answered Philippe.

“Only a week!” repeated Catherine. “That is a very short time. Shall you come and read to us?”

“Most certainly,” answered the young man; then thinking of his father, he added more timidly, “I will try.”

“But you must come!” insisted Catherine. “Grandma says that I read much better than I did, but that I am still far inferior to you.”

That same evening Savéli, as was his custom, retired very early, and Philippe immediately hurried to Madame Bagrianof's.

The huge porcelain stove filled the room with spring-like warmth. Catherine was moving lightly to and fro, on household cares intent; everything was unchanged,

and Philippe felt that he loved this simple home with his whole heart.

“I shall read first to-night,” said Catherine, dropping on a chair by the young man’s side, like a linnet momentarily alighting on a branch. “You will tell me frankly if I have made any progress, and then you will read in your turn.”

She began. Philippe could hardly believe his ears; she had adopted his manner of reading, even to the most minute details. He listened and wondered, not daring to ask himself the cause of this subtle compliment.

“How is that?” asked Catherine, laying down the book at the end of the chapter, and looking at Philippe with the earnestness of a school-girl, eager for commendation.

Suddenly the expression of her eyes changed, her eyelids quivered and fell. The school-girl—the pupil—had given place to the woman.

“It is very well,” said the young man, not knowing in the least what words fell from his lips. “You read well—precisely as I do.”

Madame Bagrianof laughed at this naïveté, and the young people imitated her.

The week passed away like one long happy dream. Philippe departed at last, without having seen Catherine for one moment alone. And he went away dissatisfied with her, with himself and with all the world.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE FIRST KISS.

SIXTEEN months elapsed before Philippe could again return to his home. He kissed his mother, and immediately rushed to the Bagrianofs. The lilac bushes had grown enormously, as had Catherine's roses. The ruin, he noticed, as he made the short cut past it, was more and more covered by growing things. A birch, which two years before had been so small, now waved its feathery branches ten feet above the brick basement, and grass had grown over all the unsightly débris.

Philippe looked about, endeavoring to recall the old appearance of the places which were so inexplicably changed.

Behind the house, on the side nearest the old house, was a little acacia grove and other trees quick in growth, and here Catherine had ordered a bench to be placed; and here it was, during the long hours when her wearied, feeble grandmother repaired her strength by sleep, that Catherine came with her book and work-basket. The ruin was to her full of attractive mystery; it was an enigma which, with her eyes riveted upon it sometimes for an hour together, she sought to solve.

She knew that her grandfather had there perished in the flames; she knew that Philippe's father had saved her

mother and grandmother's lives that same night. Here the story ended, but Catherine was by no means satisfied with these barren details.

How, and why, had this fire taken place in the home of her ancestors? Why had her grandfather been so rich, and his descendants so poor? All these questions floated through Catherine's mind, and served to prevent her from thinking too much of "that young man, who is nothing to me," as she said to herself with melancholy reiteration. She was seated in the young acacia grove, when she saw Philippe coming up the avenue. Her heart seemed to make one violent leap to her throat—she turned pale—her joy, in fact, was so great that she felt ill. Her first movement was to start to her feet; but she reseated herself almost immediately—a little to keep up appearances, and more because she was trembling too violently to stand.

Philippe had caught a gleam of her light dress through the trees; he hurried to greet her, and stood before her in embarrassed silence.

How wonderfully she had grown! How dignified and beautiful she was! He endeavored to address her with the carelessness of other days, but the attempt was a failure.

"Good-morning, Mademoiselle," he murmured.

"Good-morning," she answered, with stately reserve. In a moment she added, impulsively, "Ah! how long it is since—" and then stopped involuntarily. "Grandma is asleep, but she will be awake before long, and I will go presently and see if she wants anything. Sit here;" and the girl pushed aside her work, and made room for the

young man at her side. In five minutes more the two had forgotten their long separation.

From this day henceforth Philippe came each afternoon to join Catherine in her acacia grove. The grandmother slumbered, overcome by the heat of the day; the whole house slumbered under the warm, June sunshine; the clover was blossoming and filling the air with its penetrating sweetness; the birds sang in full-throated triumph, and Catherine listened to Philippe, who talked to her of many things at first, of himself next, and finally of nothing. Silence reigned as within a deserted church; and Catherine, bending over her work, listened to what Philippe's eyes said to her—their gaze she dared not meet.

One day, after a long silence, Catherine felt compelled to raise her head; at that moment her hand was snatched by Philippe. She turned her eyes hastily away, and felt the young man press her slender fingers to his lips.

"Catherine, do you love me?—will you love me?" whispered Philippe, in a low voice. "I have loved you since the first moment I saw you!"

Catherine began to weep, and could not answer, and Philippe went on speaking, telling her all he had felt since he first saw her—how his love had acquired strength daily.

"I am but a peasant!" he added.

She interrupted him with a gesture. This word tore from her the truth, which she might have concealed for some time yet.

"A peasant!" she said, "and what noble Seigneur is better than a peasant like you?"

"I am worth something in your eyes?" said Philippe, humbly.

"More than the rest of the whole world!" murmured Catherine, concealing her face in her hands; and for that day Philippe was satisfied, and asked no more.

As yet they had no thought for the future—the past and the present sufficed to them. This epoch in a new-born love is the sweetest in human existence: those who have known it, and whose dream of happiness has stopped there, are perhaps happier still!

But after a brief season, Philippe was no longer content to dream of the past—his future must be more assured, to enable him to enjoy the present! How could he leave the village again, unless he took Catherine with him?

"No," answered the young girl, "I must remain here. My grandmother could not bear any change now—you must come here!"

"Your grandmother will not wish you to marry a simple peasant!" he said to her.

"Grandma! She always wishes anything that I wish, she loves me so dearly!"

"And your father?"

"He will be satisfied with anything of which grandma approves," said Catherine, with an air of entire conviction. "It is perhaps your father who will raise objections."

Philippe turned pale; this possibility had never before entered his mind. His father hated the Bagrianofs—of this his son had long been convinced—although he had shown no special animosity against "the Lady and the Demoiselle."

"I will ask him in such a way that he will never be able to refuse me," he replied, after a few moments of reflection. "My father is passionately attached to me: his ambition for me and his aspirations were very high, and yet he allowed me to embrace a career, which in his opinion could not by any possibility lead to distinction, and I am quite sure that now, when it is a question of my lifelong happiness, that he will not be less kind."

Reassured by this reasoning the two young people cast care to the winds and thought only of their love. Savéli could not return before the middle of July. Three weeks intervened between this time and then, and these three weeks were veritable weeks of paradise.

One evening Philippe ran to the house in great haste. He had not been able to find Catherine in the garden. He entered as noiselessly as possible; found his way into the dining-room, where sat Madame Bagrianof asleep in her arm-chair. She opened her eyes long enough to recognize him with a smile of welcome, and then fell off to sleep again.

Catherine beckoned him to the window where she sat.

The sun had set. The sky, blue as flax blossoms, was tender and pure as the caresses of a child; the trees and plants seemed sleeping, and the linden blossoms made the air deliciously fragrant.

"Catherine," said Philippe, in a low voice, "my father comes late to-night."

"You have no doubt of his consent?"

"No, none whatever. He will consent, of course, when

he realizes that without you, sweet Catherine, I might be unable to obtain the celebrity he craves for me, but I should never be a good man."

Catherine pressed his hand, but did not speak. Madame Bagrianof moved slightly.

"To-morrow then, my betrothed," murmured Philippe, softly, and he went out as discreetly as he had entered.

At the foot of the steps he turned and looked back. Catherine was still at the window watching him; he went toward the window.

"I cannot go away thus," he said, taking the girl's hands; "I want something more; one kiss, sweetheart? The first?"

"To-morrow," answered Catherine, "when you have seen your father."

"Not so; then I shall have a right to demand it as your betrothed: give it to me, to-day, as a voluntary gift, my beloved."

Catherine hesitated; he stood on the tips of his toes—the girl allowed herself to be drawn down toward him by the two hands he held—until her lips touched his.

Precisely thus, twenty-seven years before, had Savéli kissed Fédotia.

"Good-night, sweetheart," whispered Philippe. "Good-night, my wife."

Catherine watched her lover as long as she could see him, and then turned her eyes to the sky above. Her young heart, full of joy and tenderness, felt the need of prayer. She sank on her knees, and in the soft, dewy twilight prayed for God's blessing.

## CHAPTER XXI.

“AND THE SINS OF THE FATHER SHALL BE VISITED  
UPON THE CHILDREN.”

SAVÉLI never wished any one to meet him on his return home. His son heard him come in during the night; but did not dare to signify that he was awake lest his father should be displeased.

But in the morning he hastened at an early hour to find Savéli, who was smoking in the dining-room, and immediately set about making such arrangements for his father's comfort as were calculated to put him into the best of humors.

“He has incurred some heavy debt,” muttered Savéli, shrewdly, as he watched these manifestations of affectionate solicitude on the part of his son. “He means to ask for money!”

“Father!” said the young man, finally; “you have been to me a father such as I never before heard of—” Savéli nodded in approval and affirmation. “I have come to ask you to put the finishing touch to all your goodness to me—” he hesitated.

“In what way?” said Savéli, calmly. “Go on.”

“By permitting me to marry—”

“You wish to marry?” said his father, without showing the smallest surprise.

"Yes, father, if you are willing. I am young, I know, but—"

"That has nothing to do with it!" said Savéli. "It is best for a man to marry young. Do you wish me to find a wife for you?"

"No, father, I have found the girl I wish to marry."

"Not a peasant, I trust?" said Savéli, with a frown.

"No, sir, she is a lady—a girl of noble birth."

"Very good!" and Savéli nodded with a satisfied air.

"Very good! And her name?"

"Catherine Bagrianof."

"A Bagrianof!" cried Savéli, starting to his feet. He looked at his son with a terrible expression. "You love a Bagrianof? It is an impossibility, an absolute impossibility."

"I love her," replied Philippe; his face was as white as death.

The eyes of the two men met. Those of the son were full of stern determination. The father's expressed the most implacable rage. It was Savéli who first turned away.

"You love a Bagrianof?" he repeated, with increasing vehemence; "that accursed race, then, will never cease to pursue us. It is not true! It cannot be true! You do not love her, say?"

"I do love her; and I have asked her to become my wife, subject to your permission, of course, my dear father."

"And she consented?" said Savéli, with his teeth set hard.

"She consented!"

"That accursed race! That accursed race!" groaned the unhappy man. "No, it cannot be! It is impossible. I will never give you my blessing."

"Her race may be accursed," said Philippe, rising from his seat with flashing eyes, "but Catherine herself is an angel sent from Heaven to atone for the faults and crimes of her ancestors; you do not know her, dear father; those who know her, bless her and love her. See her, father; see her and know her! forget all your hatred—forgive—"

"Forgive!" almost screamed Savéli, desperate, and hardly knowing what he said. "Forgive her—I forgive her! Do not speak of it," he added, putting a strong constraint upon himself. "Never speak on the subject again to me, for you will never have my consent."

Philippe looked at his father; this obstinacy, this hard hatred which crushed his life and his happiness under foot, seemed to him so unreasonable, so inhumane, that, forgetting the respect and admiration he had felt for this father from his youth up, he turned away to leave the room with these words:

"You can refuse your consent," he said, in a low, concentrated voice, "but I can do without it—"

"Marry without it!" cried Savéli, raising his arm as if to strike his son; his arm fell at his side. "It is true," he said, in a dull voice, that had no ring in it. "It is true that you can marry without your father's consent—but—but you cannot marry a Bagrianof—you cannot!"

he repeated, with energy, "for God himself would interfere to prevent it!"

"I love her!" answered Philippe, "and love is stronger than hatred."

"But, unhappy boy, it is not hatred!" cried the father, in despair; "there is something stronger than hatred, and stronger than love. Go away! you will drive me mad!"

He dropped exhausted upon a chair, with his hands hanging helplessly by his side, in wild-eyed grief and despair.

He had kept his secret for twenty-seven years. The others, who were participants, were all dead. Father Vladimir was the one person living who knew it, and this priest, in the name of the God of Mercy, had given him absolution long since. The woman whom he had widowed had called him her preserver.

Wealth had come to him, visible pardon from the Lord, and peace and prosperity rested upon his family. Handsomer by far than the old Seigneurial mansion, his home overlooked the ruin; the Bagrianof family were extinguished in default of male heirs, while he, this low-born peasant, this criminal, had founded a new race in the person of this son—a race that would be called, possibly, to play a great part in the destiny of the world; and now this son, handsome, intelligent, noble, and good, full of generous impulses and high hopes, the pride and the joy of his declining years, was in love with and wished to marry—whom? The granddaughter of the man he, Savéli, had murdered. But Bagrianof would rise from

his grave to prevent the marriage, if, in that church where his calcined bones reposed, the son of the murderer should claim Catherine's hand!

Philippe had not left the room, but, leaning against the door, hoped on. The very violence of this refusal, which was insufficiently accounted for by any amount of wrong inflicted by the Bagrianofs, induced him to hope that his father's heart would soften.

"Philippe!" said Savéli, at last, in a weak, broken voice, "do you love this young girl?"

The young man bowed his head in silence.

"I implore you, my son, give her up. Take any other woman in the whole world for your wife, and I will offer no objection, not even if she were a beggar by the roadside; but do not marry a Bagrianof!"

"It is a Bagrianof whom I love," said Philippe, "and to whom I am affianced."

"You cannot marry a Bagrianof, nevertheless," said his father, pertinaciously. "It is simply impossible."

Philippe looked up. And for the first time a vague suspicion of the truth flashed across his mind. He rejected the horrible idea with instantaneous horror.

"And why?" he asked, after a few moments; impelled by the thought which he had dismissed, but which had returned with new strength.

"I am not responsible to you for any whys or where-fors," answered Savéli, haughtily.

"Then I shall marry Catherine," said Philippe, with his hand upon the door. "If you had any good reasons

to offer in explanation of your refusal, I might possibly understand them; but you seem to be actuated by a hatred that is both blind and unjust."

Savéli tried to speak, but his parched lips refused to utter one sound. He made the Russian sign, which is so significant, with the fingers of his right hand, and turned away.

Philippe opened the door; before closing it he turned once more to his father, who stood the image of desolation and despair, motionless as a marble statue, with drooping head and pendant arms. Philippe was profoundly touched by this silent agony. He shut the door and returned to his father's side.

Savéli turned upon his son eyes full of agony. "You think that it is from obstinacy that I object," he said, speaking with evident difficulty. "But, my poor boy, it is not I who refuse. I tell you that you cannot marry this young girl; not on her account, poor child; but because the curse of God would strike your son dead in his cradle, and cause your flesh to rot from your bones! It is utterly impossible, I repeat, and I say it over and over again—impossible!"

"What is this mystery, then?" cried Philippe, utterly out of patience. "If I am condemned to expiate some crime, the crime of some other person, let me at least know what that crime is! I will not be a silent lamb led to the sacrifice. If I am condemned to suffer, I will at least know why!"

Savéli looked at his son, and saw in the stern hard eyes,

and on that young face a new expression, and realized that the young man was thoroughly in earnest.

"Go find Father Vladimir," said the father, "and ask him whatever you wish to know."

Philippe bowed respectfully, and hastened to the Rectory. Savéli watched him as long as he could see him, and then went to his private room, where he prostrated himself before the Holy Images.

Father Vladimir was in his garden; Philippe opened the little gate, and went directly to him.

"I wish to speak to you, father," he said, in a low voice.

The priest looked at the young man long and earnestly.

"Come with me," he said, simply. He had a presentiment of what was coming. Philippe's long lingerings in the garden, his evening readings in the Bagrianof mansion, had occasioned him much secret anxiety. Any interference was of course impossible; and the priest could only stand aside and wait.

The two men turned silently into the path which led to the river; a thick wood ran nearly down to the water; and the grass grew thick and long by the shore. When they had reached this spot, far from all human ears, the priest seated himself on the trunk of a fallen tree, while Philippe leaned against a pine that had been blasted by lightning.

"How can I aid you?" asked the good priest.

During this brief walk the youth had had time to regain a portion of his natural calmness of manner.

"Why will not my father give his consent to my marrying Catherine?"

Vladimir did not reply.

“He told me to come to you for an explanation,” continued Philippe, inexpressibly alarmed by this appalling silence. “Am I accursed? Have I committed any crime? Has Catherine? Has my father? Answer—for I feel as if I were going mad!”

And pressing his hands upon his hot eyes, Philippe flung himself on the ground.

“Since your father bids me speak, I will speak,” began the priest, regretfully. “May God inspire me with words of wisdom, and may only words of truth fall from my lips!”

He rose and made the sign of the cross over the prostrate youth.

“Bagrianof,” he said, “was a wicked man. Your father loved a young village girl—”

“My mother?” interrupted Philippe.

“No, another young girl. Your father was passionate and haughty. Hot blood ran in his veins. Bagrianof found him insolent, and threatened to make a soldier of him. His young betrothed went to ask your father’s pardon, and obtained it, but at what a price! Coming away, she encountered your father. Not being able to meet his eyes, she ran down to the river, threw herself in, and was drowned. There is the very place,” and Vladimir pointed to the spot where Fédotia had disappeared.

Philippe followed this gesture with a mournful gaze.

“May God have mercy on her soul!” resumed the confessor. “This was her only sin. Her father and her

betrothed swore to be revenged, and the night after her burial Bagrianof's house was burned."

Philippe shuddered from head to foot, and buried his face in his hands.

"What of my father?" he murmured.

"Before setting the house on fire, impelled by the machinations of the devil, they killed Bagrianof with their hatchets."

"My father was one of them?" murmured Philippe, faintly, struggling against the frightful truth.

"Your father struck the first blow," answered the priest, solemnly.

The birds sang gayly among the trees, the locusts were heard in the meadow, the sun shone down on the river, the joy of nature in the month of July was heard and seen on all sides—while Philippe, lying prostrate on the turf, prayed for strength to bear this intolerable suffering.

The priest stood by him, his tall form relieved against the summer sky. His right hand was extended toward the youth, this innocent sacrifice to a father's crime. Philippe did not see it, or dared not take it.

"The stain of blood is upon me!" he said, with a shudder. He was silent again for some time.

"But Catherine? Catherine is innocent! Her hands are pure; those of her mother were without spot or blemish!"

"Catherine expiates the crimes of her guilty grandfather," said the priest, solemnly. "Thus are the words of the prophet fulfilled: 'The sins of the father shall be

visited upon the children, even unto the third and the fourth generation.'”

Philippe shook his head sadly.

“Oh, father,” he sighed, “can this be true? Is this the father whom I have loved and honored, of whom I had made a hero and an idol? Can it be that he is a murderer?”

He stopped, shocked at the plain words in which he had garbed the truth.

“May God forgive him. But God has forgiven him, Father Vladimir—forgiven him through you. God’s mercy is infinite. The sin is effaced.”

“But Savéli’s son cannot marry Bagrianof’s daughter,” interrupted the priest. “By what name could Catherine’s children salute Philippe’s father? Do you wish the blood of the murderer and that of his victim, to be mingled in the veins of your children?”

Philippe uttered a deep groan. His crumbling happiness crushed him under the weight of its fall. He had lived for months in a tender dream of enchantment, his soul basking in the warm sunshine of an honest, legitimate love, and now for evermore the memory of that ghastly night of crime would rise up between himself and his beloved. The very horror of his position gave him strength at last. He struggled to his feet, and to his astonishment found himself as weak as a child.

“What ought I to do, Vladimir?” he asked, in a dreary voice.

“Whatever your heart suggests,” answered the priest,

moved to tears by the sight of this happy life blasted by unmerited misfortune.

“My heart!” repeated Philippe, bitterly. “I have no heart. I have duties to fulfil, and that is all which is left to me in this world.”

The priest was silent.

“To abandon Catherine—to relinquish all thoughts of marriage, lest the crime— Ah, how can I use the word crime in connection with my father!” exclaimed the young man, in an agony of despair.

The priest was still silent.

“To abandon Catherine—who will learn to look upon me as a man without principle or honor. To abandon her after she has promised to become my wife. Oh, Catherine! Catherine!”

And again did Philippe throw himself upon the ground.

The priest bent over him. “My son,” he said, “take courage. This filial expiation may open the doors of heaven!—”

Ah! what mattered heaven then to Philippe, who had just lost all that this world could give!

“To leave Catherine this very day! No, to-morrow! Father, may I not wait until to-morrow?”

“No,” said the priest, sadly; “not to-morrow—”

“To-day, then? This moment?”

The priest bent his head in silence.

“And my father? what am I to say to him? I have done no wrong—I did not ask for life. Cursed be the day I was born!”

The priest raised one hand to heaven.

"Be calm," he said; "God will one day send healing to your wounds."

Philippe rose and walked up and down the turf, with long strides. He suddenly turned toward Father Vladimir.

"I must see Catherine!" he said.

"Wait a little! Wait until you are calmer."

"No, I shall never be calmer—all is over—until the sacrifice is complete."

"Shall I go with you?" asked Vladimir, anxiously.

"I am obliged to you, father, but I prefer to see her alone," replied Philippe. With bowed head the young man walked away, absorbed in the thought of the gulf wherein his hopes and youth were all swallowed.

Suddenly he recalled the fact that the priest must have suffered much in this terrible interview, and in recapitulating all the horrors of the past: he turned back again.

"I thank you, father," he said; "you have been most kind."

He extended his hand, hesitatingly. Was not that hand imbued with Bagrianof's blood? Vladimir understood him and opened his arms. Philippe threw himself into them without speaking. The embrace was long and solemn; they separated without one word.

Father Vladimir returned slowly to his home, while Philippe went with feverish haste toward the Bagrianofs.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## PARTING.

CATHERINE had wakened with the birds that morning, and looked forward to a long, happy day.

Toward noon, silence and heat pervaded all nature, and Madame Bagrianof slept in her arm-chair near the window. The blinds were closed, and the room was fresh and dark; Catherine yielded to these influences, and the girl laid her head on the window-sill and slept sweetly.

When she opened her eyes Philippe was before her; he had unclosed the blind, and was looking at her with eyes so full of love and sorrow, that she was soon wide awake. She rose from her chair and left the room with a swift, silent step; not so silent, however, but that her grandmother half opened her eyes and murmured:

“Don't go out, child; it is far too warm.” But Catherine went on unheeding, and went to the acacia grove, where Philippe had preceded her.

The young man fell on his knees before her; she seated herself on the bench, for she trembled from head to foot.

“Well!” she said, at last, seeing that he did not speak.

Philippe looked at her. And her heart was wrung by the agony she read in his eyes.

Philippe still knelt before her, wishing that he could

have died before inflicting such misery on that young, innocent soul.

"He refuses—I see;" said the girl, gently, letting her hands fall helplessly on her knees.

"Oh, Catherine!" whispered Philippe, "tell me once more that you love me. Give me courage."

Tears fell from Catherine's eyes.

"Give you courage! Ah, I have none to give! I do not know what courage is. I have never needed any. But I love you—you know I love you."

Philippe started forward, his arms extended as if to snatch her to his breast, then stopped. He could not touch Catherine with those hands!

"It is on account of my grandfather, is it not?" said the young girl, endeavoring to check her tears. "I cannot be forgiven for being a Bagrianof! It is not my fault. I have done no harm to any one."

Philippe had not removed his eyes from her face.

"I pay a heavy penalty for the crime of being a Bagrianof," continued the young girl; "but you will not despise me for it; I am innocent."

"I too am innocent," thought Philippe; "I have spilled no blood!"

He hesitated no longer, but pressed Catherine to his heart.

"Listen," he said, "I adore you. I will love no woman. But do you understand, sweetheart? we are antagonistic races—we can never marry. Do you remember one day, down there by the ruin, when you said that hereditary

enmity was in our blood? It is true. We may love each other, but we can never marry."

"I cannot understand," said Catherine, faintly.

"No matter; it is best that you should not understand," replied the young man, with his arms still around her. "We cannot spend our lives together. We cannot marry—we cannot be happy. There is not a corner of the earth which would receive us, should we dream of flying far from those who would here oppose our marriage. There is between us an unfathomable abyss which neither of us can bridge over with prayers or tears. We may love each other throughout our lives, but happiness can never be ours."

"Why? Tell me why?" persisted Catherine.

The whole story came to his mind.

"It was a crime!" she said. "It was a crime committed by my grandfather, I am sure!" and she shuddered from head to foot.

"There are so many crimes," replied the young man, hardly knowing what he said, "that the vengeance of the Lord knows not where first to strike. I will love you, Catherine, while I have life. Bid me now an eternal farewell!"

"No, no!" she cried, her arms clinging around his neck. "No, I cannot say farewell to you. I love you! Without you, life is nothing to me!"

"It is the lot that we are both called upon to endure. We two must spend our lives far apart, weeping and praying for forgiveness of crimes which we have not committed," answered Philippe, his heart swelling with

bitterness. "I am going away, never to return. Tell me first that you forgive me: that you know it is not my fault. You believe me, do you not?"

And he held the poor, shivering Catherine more closely still in his strong arms.

"I believe you," she murmured, "and I love you!"

"For ever and ever?"

"For ever and ever. But shall I never see you again?"

"Never, my beloved; never."

She embraced him fervently.

"Now go!" she said, "while I have strength to bid you depart. Farewell! May God bring you peace and happiness. I shall pray for you all my life through."

He still lingered!

"No," she said, "go now; my courage is fast leaving me. Go!"

Philippe turned and fled like a madman.

When alone, Catherine looked at that ruin bathed in sunlight and wrapped in silence—that profound noonday silence of midsummer. Her old childish dread of the spot returned to her. She remembered that she had always felt that there was a mystery about them—a mystery with which she was connected.

"Ah!" she said, as she went toward it with her eyes full of tears—tears which eyes too weary with weeping now refused to shed. "If these tears can wash away the stains of blood left by my grandfather on these old stones, they will be pure and clean before the end of my days!"

When Madame Bagrianof awoke, she found Catherine seated, as usual, in the embrasure of the window.

"You are here, then, dear?" she said.

"Yes, dear grandmother; will you have anything?"

"Your voice has a strange sound. Are you ill? Is anything the matter?"

"I have a frightful headache."

"I knew it. Another time, my child, you had best listen to me, and not go out in the heat." And Madame Bagrianof leaned her head on the back of her chair, while Catherine got a book for her customary reading.

"In this way," thought the girl, "are my days and years to be passed for the rest of my life?"

Philippe, on entering his dwelling, went to find his father in the dining-room. He was not there; and the son went on to his father's private apartment.

Since his son had left him, Savéli had lain prone before the Holy Images. Remorse for the first time had entered his soul. Seeing his idolized son thus struck down, he realized for the first time the full enormity of the crime he had committed. The countenance he turned toward Philippe was that of an old man. Hearty and hale the previous evening, his face had now deep wrinkles, and had the sad expression of those who feel weary of life and long to die; but Philippe did not see this. Savéli rose, and stood before his son like a criminal before his judge.

"Farewell, my father," said the son, in an icy tone.

"Are you going away?" stammered the unhappy man.  
"Where are you going?"

"To town—to work, and to pray!" added Philippe.

"And the Demoiselle?" said his father, with some hesitation.

"We have bidden each other an eternal adieu."

"Does she know?" asked the guilty man, in a spasm of mental anguish.

"No. Yesterday two persons in the world knew the truth; to-day there are three—that is all the difference to you! God has allowed honor and wealth to bless your house; you will remain rich and respected. My mother is a good woman; nothing must trouble her peace of mind."

Savéli bowed his head in acquiescence.

"And you?" he asked, more calmly.

"I! I shall try and do my duty! I have but duty before me now as a guiding star! Farewell, my father!"

"Philippe!" cried the unhappy man, "Philippe!" and he opened his arms to his son.

"Farewell, my father!" repeated Philippe, with a respectful obeisance.

An hour later, notwithstanding the entreaties of his mother, he left the village, never to see it again. Savéli sat with eyes riveted upon the door through which his son had passed—the door which had closed upon all his joy, his pride, and his hope. He started up with an angry gesture, and then his arms dropped by his side, and he locked himself into his room for the remainder of the day. Prostrate before the Images—grovelling on the ground; beating his head upon the floor—he remained for hours, entreating the pardon of his offended God.

The chastisement, so long deferred, had at last fallen upon his head; his victim had indeed risen from his grave

—not as the priest had once threatened, to accuse him before the world, but to laugh at him with that much-dreaded laugh, that sardonic sneer—to rejoice at the misery of his murderer. What suffering would not Savéli have endured, of mind and of body, to restore peace and happiness to his son!

“May he die!” he said to himself, more than once, “may he die in the flower of his youth, rather than bequeath to children a legacy of suffering—a heritage of my crime!”

On Sunday he saw at the church the Demoiselle, paler, thinner—changed already by sorrow—and horror upon horror!—with a new and strange resemblance to her grandfather! In vain did Savéli turn away his eyes; he was absolutely fascinated by that pale, sweet face, which day by day was becoming etherealized by pain and longing.

After some weeks, which seemed to him a taste of the tortures of that hell which the priest had threatened, Savéli suddenly found himself incapable of rising from his bed. Sharp autumnal winds were tearing the leaves from the trees, and whirling them through the air like strange wild birds. For some days he lay in silence, vouchsafing no answer to the entreaties of his despairing wife.

“Will you let me send for our son?” she said, at last.

Savéli started up with a gleam of joy in his haggard eyes, then sank back again listlessly.

“No,” he said, in a hoarse whisper, “no, he would not come. Send for the Demoiselle,” he added, after a short pause.

The people about him looked at each other. Savéli had never crossed the threshold of the Bagrianof mansion. The physician, seeing that the sick man had not many hours to live, signed to them to obey this mandate without delay. Father Vladimir went himself.

Catherine had laid aside her pretty light dresses; her golden hair no longer formed a halo around her sweet face, which had acquired a new expression of sadness, and almost of pain.

“Savéli asks to see you,” said the priest; “he is very ill, and has only a few hours in this world.”

The young girl flushed deeply; she rose at once. She and Vladimir did not open their lips on the way.

“I am here,” said Catherine, approaching the dying bed. “What do you wish?”

Savéli opened his eyes, already dimmed by approaching dissolution, and looked at her speechlessly. Presently he said, slowly:

“Are you the Demoiselle?”

“Yes; I am she.”

“Forgive me!” he murmured, trying to clasp his suffering hands.

“I forgive you,” answered Catherine.

She thought he referred to the opposition he had offered to her marriage.

“Forgive me everything—everything!” insisted the dying man.

“I forgive you everything,” repeated Catherine, wonderingly.

“Give me your blessing,” added Savéli, in a faint voice.

The young girl made a sign of the cross on the brow of the murderer of her grandfather. A strange joy irradiated Savéli's countenance; he breathed a long sigh of relief—and died.

Catherine has refused to marry, desirous that the Bagrianof race should perish with her. Philippe, too, will never marry—lest the sins of the father should be visited on the children, even unto the third and the fourth generation.

THE END.

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