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TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN BY
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RUDIN: A ROMANCE
A KING LEAR OF THE STEPPES

PHANTOMS
AND OTHER STORIES

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RÚDIN:

A ROMANCE

I

IT was a calm summer morning. The sun already stood quite high in the heavens, but the meadows were still glittering with dew; the recently awakened valleys breathed forth perfumed freshness, and in the forest, still damp and noiseless, the little early birds were singing blithely. On the crest of a sloping hill, covered from top to bottom with rye which had just burst into bloom, a tiny hamlet was visible. Along the narrow country road, in the direction of this hamlet, was walking a young woman, clad in a white cotton gown, a round straw hat, and with a parasol in her hand. A groom followed her at a distance.

She was walking in a leisurely way, and seemed to be enjoying her stroll. Round about, over the tall, waving rye, with a soft rustle, flowed long waves, shifting from a silvery-green to a reddish hue. High aloft, the larks were carolling. The young woman was walking from her own village, large enough to contain a church, which

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she owned, and which was distant not more than a verst from the hamlet whither she was directing her way; her name was Alexándra Pávlovna Lípin. She was a widow, childless and fairly wealthy, and she lived with her brother, retired captain of cavalry, Sergyéi Pávlicht Volýntzeff. He was not married, and managed her property.

Alexándra Pávlovna reached the hamlet, halted at the outermost cottage, a very aged and lowly hut, and calling up her groom, she ordered him to enter it and inquire after the health of the housewife. He speedily returned, accompanied by a decrepit peasant with a white beard.

“ Well, what news? ” inquired Alexándra Pávlovna.

“ She is still alive, ” said the old man.

“ May I enter? ”

“ Why do you ask? Certainly. ”

Alexándra Pávlovna entered the cottage. It was cramped, and stifling and smoky inside. Some one was tossing about and moaning on the oven-bench. Alexándra Pávlovna gazed about her and descried, in the semi-darkness, the yellow and wrinkled head of an old woman bound up in a checked kerchief. Completely covered, even her chest, by a heavy peasant coat, she breathed with difficulty, feebly throwing apart her scraggy arms.

Alexándra Pávlovna stepped up to the old woman and touched her fingers to the latter's brow it was fairly blazing with heat.

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“How dost thou feel, Matryóna?” she inquired, bending over the oven-bench.

“O-okh!” moaned the old woman, as she stared at Alexándra Pávlovna. “Badly, badly, my own! My hour of death has arrived, dear little dove!”

“God is merciful, Matryóna; perhaps thou wilt recover. Hast thou taken the medicine which I sent thee?”

The old woman moaned painfully, but did not reply. She had not fully heard the question.

“She took it,” said the old man, who was standing by the door.

Alexándra Pávlovna turned to him: “Is there no one with her except thee?” she asked.

“There is a little girl,—her grandchild,—but she is always going off. She cannot sit still; she’s such a fidgety creature. She’s too lazy even to give her grandmother a drink of water. And I am old; what can I do!”

“Would it not be well to bring her to me—to my hospital?”

“No! why to a hospital? she will die anyway. She has lived long enough; evidently that is pleasing to God. She will never leave the oven-bench. What’s the use of taking her to a hospital? As soon as you try to lift her up she will die.”

“Okh!” groaned the sick woman, “beautiful lady, don’t desert my orphan; our master and mistress are far away, but thou—”

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The old woman fell silent. She had talked beyond her strength.

“Don't worry,” said Alexándra Pávlovna; “everything shall be done. Here, I have brought thee some tea and some sugar. Drink some, if thou feelest like it. . . . Of course, you have a samovár?” she added, glancing at the old man.

“A samovár did you say? We have no samovár, but I can get one.”

“Then get it, or I will send my own. And give your granddaughter orders not to absent herself. Tell her that it is a shame.”

The old man made no answer, but took the package of tea and sugar in both hands.

“Well, good-bye, Matryóna!” said Alexándra Pávlovna. “I will come again to see thee, but thou must not get despondent, and thou must take thy medicine regularly. . . .”

The old woman raised her hand and stretched it toward Alexándra Pávlovna.

“Give me thy hand, my lady,” she whispered.

Alexándra Pávlovna did not give her her hand, but bent over and kissed her on the brow.

“See to it,” she said to the old man as she took her departure, “that you give her the medicine, without fail, as it is prescribed. And give her tea to drink. . . .”

Again the old man made no reply, and merely bowed.

Alexándra Pávlovna heaved a sigh of relief

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when she found herself in the open air. She opened her parasol and was on the point of setting out homeward, when, all of a sudden, round the corner of the wretched cottage, seated in a low-hung racing-drozhky, drove a man of thirty, clad in an old overcoat of grey variegated woollen homespun, with a cap of the same. On perceiving Alexándra Pávlovna he immediately drew up his horse and turned his face toward her. Broad, devoid of rosiness, with small, pale-grey eyes and a whitish moustache, it was in harmony with the hue of his clothing.

“Good morning,” he said, with a lazy smile; “permit me to inquire what you are doing here?”

“I have been visiting a sick woman. . . . And whence come you, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch?”

The man who was named Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch looked her straight in the eye, and laughed again.

“You do well,” he went on, “in visiting the sick; only would n’t it be better to take her to the hospital?”

“She is too weak; she cannot be touched.”

“And you do not intend to abolish your hospital?”

“Abolish it? Why!”

“Oh, because.”

“What a strange idea! What put that into your head?”

“Well, you are always consorting with Mme.

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Lasúnsky, and, apparently, you are under her influence. And, according to her, hospitals, schools—all that sort of thing—are nonsense, useless inventions. Benevolence must be personal, culture ditto; 't is all a matter of soul . . . that 's the way she expresses herself, it appears. Whose tune is she singing, I 'd like to know?"

Alexáandra Pávlovna burst out laughing.

"Dárya Mikhaílovna is a clever woman; I am very fond of her, and I respect her; but she may be mistaken, and I do not believe every word she utters."

"And it 's a splendid thing you don't," retorted Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch, still omitting to descend from his drozhky; "because she has n't much faith in her own words. But I am very glad to have met you."

"Why so?"

"A pretty question! As if it were not always pleasant to meet you! To-day you are just as fresh and charming as this morning itself."

Again Alexáandra Pávlovna began to laugh.

"What are you laughing at?"

"How can you ask? If you could only see with what a languid and chilly mien you uttered your compliment! I am surprised that you did not yawn over the last word."

"With a chilly mien! You always want fire; but fire is of no use. It flares up, creates a smoke, and dies out."

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“And it warms,” Alexándra Pávlovna caught him up.

“Yes . . . and it burns.”

“Well, what if it does! There’s no harm in that. Anything is better than”

“Well, I’m going to see whether you will say that after you have once been well burned,” Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch interrupted her with vexation, and slapped the reins on his horse’s back. “Good-bye!”

“Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch, wait!” cried Alexándra Pávlovna. “When are you coming to see us?”

“To-morrow; remember me to your brother.”

And the drozhky rolled off.

Alexándra Pávlovna gazed after Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch.

“What a meal-sack!” she said to herself. And, in fact, bent double, covered with dust, his cap on the nape of his neck, with tufts of yellow hair sticking out from under it, he did resemble a huge flour-sack.

Alexándra Pávlovna quietly wended her way homeward. She walked on with eyes bent on the ground. The trampling of a horse’s hoofs close by made her pause and raise her head. Her brother was coming toward her on horseback; alongside him walked a young man of short stature in a lightweight coat thrown open on the breast, a light tie, and a light grey hat, with a

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slender cane in his hand. He had already long been smiling at Alexándra Pávlovna, although he saw that she was walking along buried in thought, taking no notice of anything, and as soon as she halted he went up to her and joyfully, almost tenderly, exclaimed:

“Good morning, Alexándra Pávlovna, good morning!”

“Ah! Konstantín Diomíditch, good morning!” she replied. “You are coming from Dárya Mikhaílovna’s?”

“Exactly so, ma’am, exactly so, ma’am,” responded the young man, with a beaming countenance; “from Dárya Mikhaílovna’s. Dárya Mikhaílovna has sent me to you, ma’am; I preferred to go on foot. . . . It is such a magnificent morning, and the distance is only four versts. I arrive—you are not at home, ma’am. Your brother tells me that you have walked to Semyónovko, and he was on his way to the fields, so I walked along with him, ma’am, to meet you. Yes, ma’am. How pleasant it is!”

The young man spoke Russian with purity and correctness, but with a foreign accent, although it was difficult to determine with precisely what accent. There was something Asiatic about his features. A long nose with a hump, large motionless, goggle-eyes, thick red lips, a retreating brow, hair black as pitch,—all these things in him betokened an Oriental origin; but the young

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man's surname was Pandalévsky, and he called Odessa his native place, although he had been reared somewhere in White Russia at the expense of a wealthy and benevolent widow. Another widow had obtained a position for him in the government service. As a rule, middle-aged ladies were very fond of playing the part of protector to Konstantín Diomíditch; he understood how to render himself agreeable to them, to insinuate himself into their favour. He was at present living in the house of the wealthy Dárya Mikhaílovna Lasúnsky, in the capacity of an adopted son, or a visitor. He was very endearing in his manners, very obliging; susceptible and secretly sensual, he possessed an agreeable voice, played quite well on the piano, and had a habit, when he was talking with any one, of fairly riveting his eyes on him. He dressed with great neatness, and wore his clothing an extremely long time, shaved his broad chin with care, and made every hair on his head lie in its appointed place.

Alexáandra Pávlovna listened to his speech to the very end, then turned to her brother.

“I keep meeting people to-day: just now I had a chat with Lezhnyóff.”

“Ah! with him? Was he on his way somewhere?”

“Yes; and just imagine, in a racing-drozhky, in some sort of a linen bag, all covered with dust. What an eccentric fellow he is!”

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“Yes, possibly; only he’s a splendid man.”

“Who is that—Mr. Lezhnyóff?” inquired Pandalévsky, as though in surprise.

“Yes, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch Lezhnyóff,” replied Volýntzeff. “But farewell, sister; it is time for me to ride to the fields; they are sowing thy buckwheat. Mr. Pandalévsky will escort thee home.”

And Volýntzeff started his horse into a trot.

“With the greatest pleasure!” exclaimed Konstantín Diomíditch, and offered Alexándra Pávlovna his arm.

She gave him hers, and both turned into the road which led to her home-farm.

Apparently it afforded Konstantín Diomíditch great satisfaction to walk arm in arm with Alexándra Pávlovna. He stalked along with mincing steps, smiled, and his Oriental eyes even became suffused with moisture, which, however, not infrequently was the case with him; it cost Konstantín Diomíditch no effort whatever to be overcome with emotion and to shed tears. And who would not have found it pleasant to walk arm in arm with a pretty, young, and graceful woman? Of Alexándra Pávlovna the whole of Government unanimously said that she was charming; and Government was not mistaken. Her straight little nose alone, with its almost imperceptibly tilted tip, was enough to

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drive any mortal out of his senses, not to mention her velvety-brown eyes, her ruddy-golden hair, the dimples in her plump cheeks, and other beauties. But the best thing of all about her was the expression of her lovely face: trustful, good-natured, and gentle, it touched and attracted. Alexándra Pávlovna's glance and laugh were those of a child; the ladies thought her rather simple-minded. . . . Could anything further be desired?

"Dárya Mikhaílovna sent you to me, you said?" she asked Pandalévsky.

"Yes, ma'am, she sent me, ma'am," he replied, pronouncing the letter *s* like an English *th*.¹ "They desired me and commanded me, without fail, urgently to request you to do them the honour to dine with them to-day. . . . They" (when Pandalévsky spoke of a third person, especially of a lady, he strictly kept to the plural number)—"they are expecting a new guest with whom they wish, without fail, to make you acquainted."

"Who is it?"

"A certain Muffel, a baron, a gentleman of the Bedchamber from Petersburg. Dárya Mikhaílovna made his acquaintance not long ago at Prince Gárin's, and expresses herself with re-

¹ This *s* is a respectful addition at the end of a word, representing *sudárynya* (Madam), like the abbreviated "ma'am": or, in the case of address to men, of *gosudár*, sir. Pandalévsky also uses the third person plural of the verbs and pronouns, with the same object: that of showing ingratiating respect.—TRANSLATOR.

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gard to him in the most laudatory terms, as an amiable and cultured young man. The Baron also occupies himself with literature, or, to speak more accurately akh, what a charming butterfly! permit me to call your attention to it to speak more accurately, with political economy. He has written an article about some very interesting question, and he wishes to submit it to the judgment of Dárya Mikhaílovna.”

“An article on political economy?”

“From the point of view of the language, ma’am, Alexándra Pávlovna, from the point of view of the language, ma’am. I think you are aware that Dárya Mikhaílovna is an expert in that direction, ma’am. Zhukóvsky was wont to take counsel with her, and my benefactor who resides in Odessa, the venerable Roksolán Mediaróvitch Ksandryka, all-worthy in good deeds surely, the name of that person is known to you?”

“I have never so much as heard it.”

“You have not heard of such a man? Amazing! What I set out to say was, that Roksolán Mediaróvitch has always entertained a very high opinion of Dárya Mikhaílovna’s information concerning the Russian language.”

“But is not that Baron a pedant?” asked Alexándra Pávlovna.

“Not in the least, ma’am. Dárya Mikhaílovna declares that, on the contrary, the man of

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the world is immediately perceptible in him. He talked about Beethoven with such eloquence that even the old Prince experienced raptures. . . . I should have liked to hear it, I confess; for that is in my line. Permit me to offer you this beautiful wild flower.”

Alexáandra Pávlovna took the flower, and after proceeding a few paces dropped it in the road. . . . Her house was distant a couple of hundred paces, not more. Recently erected and whitewashed, it peeped with an air of welcome from amid the dense verdure of ancient lindens and maples with its broad, bright windows.

“And so, ma’am, what do you bid me report to Dárya Mikhaílovna,” began Pandalévsky, slightly nettled at the fate meted out to his flower; “will you come to dinner? She invites you and your brother.”

“Yes, we will certainly come. And how is Natásha?”

“Natálya Alexyéevna, thank God, is well, ma’am. But we have already passed the turn to Dárya Mikhaílovna’s estate. Allow me to make my adieux.”

Alexáandra Pávlovna stopped.—“And will you not come in?” she asked, in an undecided tone.

“I should be heartily glad, ma’am, to do so, but I am afraid of being late. Dárya Mikhaílovna wishes to hear a new *Étude* by Thalberg;

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so I must prepare myself and practise it. Moreover, I must confess I have some doubts as to whether my conversation would afford you any pleasure."

"Yes, indeed why not?"

Pandálevsky sighed, and dropped his eyes expressively.

"Farewell for the present, Alexándra Pavlovna!" he said, after a brief pause, bowed, and retreated a pace.

Alexándra Pavlovna turned and went home.

Konstantín Diomíditch also wended his way homeward. All sweetness instantly vanished from his countenance; a self-confident, almost harsh expression made its appearance thereon. Even the gait of Konstantín Diomíditch underwent a change; he now took longer strides, and trod more heavily. He had traversed a couple of versts, flourishing his cane in a free-and-easy manner, when, all of a sudden, he again began to smirk; he had caught sight, by the roadside, of a young, tolerably comely peasant lass, who was driving the calves out of the oats. Konstantín Diomíditch, as warily as a cat, approached the girl and entered into conversation with her. At first she made no answer, then flushed up and began to laugh, and at last covered her lips with her sleeve, turned away, and said:

"Go along, master, really"

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Konstantín Diomíditch menaced her with his finger and ordered her to bring him some corn-flowers.

“What dost thou want with corn-flowers? art thou going to weave wreaths?” retorted the girl; “come now, go along, I mean it”

“Hearken, my amiable little beauty,” began Konstantín Diomíditch

“Come now, be off with you,” the girl interrupted him; “yonder come the young gentlemen.”

Konstantín Diomíditch glanced round. In fact, Ványa and Pétya, the sons of Dárya Mikhaílovna, were running along the road; they were followed by their teacher, Basístoff, a young man twenty-two years of age, who had only just finished his studies. Basístoff was a well-grown young fellow, with a foolish face, a large nose, huge teeth, and pig’s eyes, homely and awkward, but kind, honourable and upright. He was carelessly dressed, wore his hair long,—not out of foppishness, but out of laziness,—was fond of eating, fond of sleeping, but also fond of a good book, a heated argument, and hated Pandalévsky with all his soul.

Dárya Mikhaílovna’s children adored Basístoff, and also feared him not a little; he was on intimate terms with all the other members of the household, which did not particularly please the

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mistress of the house, descant as she might on the theme that no such thing as prejudices existed for her.

“Good morning, my dears!” began Konstantín Diomíditch; “how early you have set out for your walk to-day! But I,” he added, addressing Basístoff, “went out long ago; my passion is to enjoy nature.”

“We saw how you were enjoying nature,” muttered Basístoff.

“You are a materialist; God only knows what you were thinking just now. I know you!”

Pandalévsky, when he conversed with Basístoff or persons like him, became somewhat irritated, and pronounced the letter *s* quite clearly, even with a slight hiss.

“You don’t mean to say that you were inquiring your way of that girl, do you?” remarked Basístoff, rolling his eyes to right and left.

He felt that Pandalévsky was staring him straight in the face, and this was extremely disagreeable to him.

“I repeat, you are a materialist, and nothing else. You insist on beholding only the prosaic side in everything. . . .”

“Children!” Basístoff suddenly issued his command, “do you see the silver willow yonder in the meadow; let’s see which of you will run to it the more quickly . . . one, two three!”

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And the boys set off, at the top of their speed, for the willow-tree. Basístoff flew after them.

“Peasant!” thought Pandalévsky; “he is spoiling these horrid boys. . . . A regular peasant!”

And, casting a glance of satisfaction over his own neat and elegant little figure, Konstantín Diomíditch tapped the sleeve of his coat with his wide-spread fingers a couple of times, shook his collar, and went his way. On reaching his own room he donned an old dressing-gown, and with anxious countenance seated himself at the piano.

II

THE house of Dária Mikhaílovna Lasúnsky was considered to be almost the leading one in the Government of A vast stone structure, erected after drawings by Rastrelli in the taste of the past century, it rose majestically on the crest of a hill, at whose foot flowed one of the chief rivers of central Russia. Dária Mikhaílovna herself was a distinguished and wealthy noblewoman, the widow of a privy councillor. Although Pandalévsky was wont to narrate of her that she knew all Europe, and that Europe also knew her, yet Europe knew very little about her. Even in Petersburg she did not play a prominent part; on the other hand, in Moscow every one knew her and frequented her house. She belonged to the highest society, and bore the reputation of being a rather peculiar woman, not particularly amiable, but extremely clever. In her youth she had been very handsome. Poets had written verses to her, the young men had fallen in love with her, men of importance had dangled in her train. But since that time twenty-five or thirty years had elapsed, and not a trace of her former charms remained. "Is it possible," every one who beheld her only for the first time

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involuntarily asked himself—"is it possible that that gaunt, sallow, sharp-nosed, though not yet elderly woman ever was a beauty? Can she be the one about whom the lyres tinkled?" And every one was amazed within himself at the mutability of all things earthly. Pandalévsky, it is true, thought that Dárya Mikhaílovna's magnificent eyes had been marvellously well preserved; but then, that same Pandalévsky asserted that all Europe knew her.

Dárya Mikhaílovna came every summer to her country place with her children (she had only three: a daughter, Natálya, aged seventeen, and two sons, respectively ten and nine years of age) and kept open house—that is to say, she received men visitors, especially bachelors; country ladies she could not endure. In consequence, she caught it from those same ladies. Dárya Mikhaílovna, according to them, was both proud and immoral, and a frightful tyrant; but the principal thing was—she permitted herself such freedom of speech that it was downright shocking. As a matter of fact, Dárya Mikhaílovna was not fond of putting any restraint on herself in the country, and in the free simplicity of her demeanour there was perceptible a slight tinge of the scorn of the fashionable dame from the capital toward the decidedly uncultured and petty persons who surrounded her. . . . She behaved to her town acquaintances, also, in a very free-and-easy, even

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scoffing manner, but there was not a trace of scorn.

By the way, reader, have you noticed that a person who is unusually absent-minded in the society of his inferiors never is absent-minded with persons of a higher standing? Why is this? However, such questions lead to nothing.

When Konstantín Diomíditch, having at last learned the Thalberg Étude by heart, descended from his clean and cheerful little chamber to the drawing-room, he found the entire domestic circle already assembled there. The salon had already begun. The mistress of the house had settled herself on a broad couch, with her feet tucked up under her, and was twirling a new French pamphlet in her hands; by the window, over their embroidery-frames, sat, on one side, the daughter of Dárya Mikhaïlovna, and, on the other, Mlle. Boncourt, the governess, a dried-up old spinster, sixty years of age, with scratch-wig of black hair under a motley-hued cap, and cotton-wool in her ears; in the corner near the door Basístoff had taken up his post, and was reading a newspaper; beside him, Ványa and Pétya were playing at draughts; and leaning against the stove, with his arms folded behind his back, stood a gentleman short of stature, with rumpled grey hair, a swarthy face, and shifty little black eyes—a certain Afrikán Semyónitch Pigásoff.

A strange man was this Mr. Pigásoff. Em-

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bittered toward everything and everybody, especially toward women, he scolded from morning until night, sometimes very pertinently, sometimes quite stupidly, but always with enjoyment. His irritation went to the point of childishness; his laugh, the sound of his voice, his whole being, seemed permeated with gall. Dárya Mikháilovna gladly welcomed Pigásóff; he diverted her with his sallies. They really were rather amusing. It was a passion with him to exaggerate everything. For example: no matter what calamity was mentioned in his presence,—whether he was told that a village had been set on fire by the lightning, or that a peasant had chopped his hand off with an axe,—on each occasion he inquired with concentrated exasperation, “And what is her name?”—that is to say, what was the name of the woman who was the origin of the catastrophe; because, according to his conviction, a woman is the cause of every misfortune, and all that is necessary is to investigate the matter thoroughly. One day he flung himself on his knees before a lady with whom he was barely acquainted and who was pressing her hospitality upon him, and began tearfully, but with fury depicted on his countenance, to entreat her to spare him, that he was guilty of no offence toward her, and never would be. On one occasion a horse ran away down hill with one of Dárya Mikháilovna’s laundresses, hurled her into

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a ditch, and came near killing her. From that day forth Pigásoff never mentioned that horse otherwise than as "the good, good little horse," and considered the hill and the ditch as particularly picturesque localities. Pigásoff had not been lucky in life, and he had assumed this whim. He had sprung from poor parents. His father had discharged divers petty duties, hardly knew how to read and write, and took no heed for the education of his son; he fed and clothed him, and that was all. His mother had spoiled him, but had died early. Pigásoff had educated himself, entered himself in the school of the district, then in the gymnasium, had taught himself French, German, and even Latin, and, on leaving the gymnasium with an excellent certificate, had betaken himself to Dorpat, where he had waged an incessant struggle with want, but had gone through the three years' course to the end. Pigásoff's abilities were not above the ordinary; he had distinguished himself by his patience and perseverance, but that which was especially strong in him was his sense of ambition, the desire to get into good society, not to get left behind, in despite of fate. Hence he had studied diligently, and had entered the University of Dorpat out of ambition. His poverty enraged him, and developed in him observation and cunning. He expressed himself in a way peculiar to himself; from his youth up

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he had made his own a special sort of bitter and irritable eloquence. His thoughts did not rise above the general level; but he spoke in such a way that he might have appeared to be not only a clever, but even a very clever man. On receiving the degree of bachelor of arts Pigásoff decided to devote himself to the profession of teaching; he comprehended that, on any other road, he could not, in any possible manner, overtake his comrades (he had endeavoured to select them from the highest circles, and had understood how to curry favour with them; he even flattered them, though he grumbled all the while). But at this point, to speak plainly, his material gave out. A self-taught man, not out of love for learning, Pigásoff, as a matter of fact, knew too little. He broke down grievously in the disputation, while another student, who lived in the same room with him, and at whom he had constantly jeered, a very shallow-brained man, but one who had received a regular and substantial education, won a complete triumph. This failure drove Pigásoff into a fury; he flung all his text-books and notebooks into the fire, and entered the government service. At first matters did not go badly; he was a fairly good official, not very active, but, on the other hand, extremely self-confident and dashing; but he wanted to become a person of importance at one bound. He got entangled, stumbled, and was compelled to resign. For

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three years he kept quiet in a village which he had acquired, and suddenly married a wealthy, half-educated woman who owned landed property, and whom he had caught with the bait of his free and easy, scoffing manners. But Pigássoff's disposition had become too irritable and acidulated; family life weighed heavily on him. His wife, after living with him for several years, went off in secret to Moscow, and sold her estate to some clever speculator, just as Pigássoff had built a farm-house on it. Shaken to the very foundation by this last blow, Pigássoff entered into a law-suit with his wife, but gained nothing thereby. He was living out his life alone; roamed about among the neighbours, whom he reviled behind their backs and even to their faces, and who received him with a certain constrained half-laugh, although he did not inspire them with any serious alarm; and he never took a book into his hand. He owned about one hundred souls; his peasants were not in distress.

“Ah! *Constantin!*” said Dárya Mikhaílovna, as soon as Pandalévsky entered the drawing-room; “will *Alexandrine* come?”

“Alexáandra Pávlovna bade me thank you, and she will deem it a particular pleasure to do so,” replied Konstantín Diomíditch, bowing graciously on all sides, and touching his beautifully arranged hair with his plump but white little hand.

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“ And will Volýntzeff come, too? ”

“ Yes, ma'am.”

“ And so, Afrikán Semyónitch,” went on Dárya Mikhaílovna, turning to Pigásoff, “ in your opinion, all young ladies are unnatural? ”

Pigásoff's lips curled on one side, and he nervously twitched his elbow.

“ I say,” he began in a deliberate voice—he always spoke slowly and distinctly, even in a violent fit of anger—“ I say that young ladies in general—as to present company, of course, I hold my peace. . . . ”

“ But that does not prevent your thinking of them,” interrupted Dárya Mikhaílovna.

“ I hold my peace concerning them,” repeated Pigásoff. “ All young ladies in general are unnatural in the highest degree—unnatural in the expression of their feelings. If a young lady, for instance, is frightened or delighted or grieved at anything, she will infallibly, in the first place, communicate to her body some sort of elegant curve, like this ” (and Pigásoff bent his form and spread out his hands in the most hideous manner), “ and then she will shriek, ‘ Akh!’ or she will fall to laughing or weeping. But I once succeeded ” (here Pigásoff smiled in a self-satisfied way) “ in getting a genuine, unfeigned expression of sentiment out of one remarkably unnatural young lady.”

“ How did you do it? ”

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Pigássoff's eyes flashed.

"I hit her in the side with an aspen stake, from behind. She fairly yelled, and I said: 'Bravo! bravo! There, that was the voice of nature, that was a natural shriek. Do you always act in that way henceforth!'"

Every one in the room burst out laughing.

"What nonsense you do talk, Afrikán Sem-yónitch!" exclaimed Dárya Mikhaílovna. "As if I would believe that you would strike a girl in the side with a stake!"

"By heaven, it was with a stake—with a very big stake, like those which are used for the defence of a fortress!"

"*Mais c'est une horreur ce que vous dites là monsieur,*" cried Mlle. Boncourt, as she gazed sternly at the children, who were convulsed with laughter.

"But do not believe him," said Dárya Mikhaílovna; "do not you know him?"

But it was a long time before the indignant Frenchwoman could regain her composure, and she kept on muttering something to herself.

"You need not believe me," continued Pigássoff in an indifferent voice; "but I affirm that I have told the actual truth. Who should know it, if not I? After this, I suppose you will not believe, either, that our neighbour, Mme. Tche-púzoff, Eléna Antónovna, herself—observe,

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herself—told me how she tortured her own nephew?”

“That ’s another invention of yours!”

“Permit me, permit me! Listen, and judge for yourselves. Observe that I have no desire to calumniate her; I am even fond of her—as fond as one can be of a woman; in her whole house she has not a single book, except an almanac, and she cannot read in any other way than aloud—she goes into a perspiration with the exertion, and complains afterward that her eyes have swelled out in lumps. . . . In short, she is a fine woman, and has plump maids. Why should I calumniate her?”

“Well,” remarked Dárya Mikhaílovna, “Afrikán Semyónitch has mounted his hobby and he will not dismount from it until evening.”

“My hobby! . . . But women have three hobbies, from which they never dismount—unless they are taken off.”

“And what are those three hobbies?”

“Reproaches, hints, and rebukes.”

“Do you know, Afrikán Semyónitch,” began Dárya Mikhaílovna, “it is not for nothing that you are so embittered against women. Some woman or other must have. . . .”

“Offended me, you mean to say?” Pigásoff interrupted her.

Dárya Mikhaílovna became somewhat con-

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fused; she recalled Pigásoff's unhappy marriage, and merely nodded her head.

"One woman did, in fact, offend me," remarked Pigásoff; "although she was kind, very kind. . . ."

"Who was she?"

"My mother," ejaculated Pigásoff, dropping his voice.

"Your mother? In what way could she offend you?"

"By giving me birth. . . ."

Dárya Mikhaílovna contracted her brows in a frown.

"It seems to me," she began, "that your conversation is taking a melancholy turn. . . . *Constantin*, play us Thalberg's new *Étude*. Perchance the sounds of music will tame Afrikán Semyónitch. . . . For Orpheus tamed the wild beasts."

Konstantín Diomíditch seated himself at the piano, and played the *Étude* in a very satisfactory manner. At first Natálya Alexyéevna listened with attention, then betook herself again to her work.

"*Merci, c'est charmant*," said Dárya Mikhaílovna; "I love Thalberg. *Il est si distingué*. What have you been thinking about, Afrikán Semyónitch?"

"I have been thinking," began Pigásoff slowly, "that there are three classes of egoists: the egoists who enjoy life themselves and let

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others live also; the egoists who enjoy life themselves and do not let others live also; and, lastly, the egoists who do not live themselves nor let others live. . . . Women, for the most part, belong to the third class."

"How amiable of you! There is only one thing which surprises me, Afrikán Semyónitch, and that is the self-confidence of your verdicts; just as though you could never make a mistake."

"Who says so! I make mistakes also; a man, also, may err. But do you know what the difference is between an error on the part of one of us men and the error of a woman? You do not know? It is this: a man may, for instance, say that twice two does not make four, but five or three and a half; but a woman will say that twice two makes a stearine candle."

"It strikes me that I have already heard that remark from you. . . . But allow me to inquire what connection has your thought about the three sorts of egoists with the music which you have just been listening to?"

"None whatever, and I was not listening to the music."

"Well, thou, my good fellow, art incorrigible. I see, one may as well drop it," retorted Dárya Mikhaílovna, slightly distorting Griboyedoff's verse. "And what do you love, if music does not please you? Literature, pray?"

"I love literature, only not that of the present day."

RÚDIN

“Why not?”

“This is why. Not long ago I was crossing the Oká on a ferry-boat with some gentleman or other. The ferry-boat made a landing at a steep place: the carriage had to be dragged up by hand. The gentleman had a very heavy calash. While the ferrymen were straining themselves and dragging the carriage ashore, the gentleman grunted so, as he stood on the boat, that one even felt sorry for him. . . . Here, I said to myself, is a new application of the system of the division of labour! And that's the way with the literature of the present day: others drag, do the work, and it grunts.”

Dárya Mikhaílovna smiled. “And that is called the reproduction of contemporary existence,” went on the irrepressible Pigásoff; “and a profound sympathy with social problems, and something else besides. . . . Okh, I have no patience with those big words!”

“But the women, whom you assail so,—they, at least, do not use big words.”

Pigásoff shrugged his shoulders.

“They don't use them, because they don't know any.”

Dárya Mikhaílovna blushed slightly.

“You are beginning to utter impertinences, Afrikán Semyónitch!” she remarked, with a constrained smile.

Complete silence reigned in the room.

RÚDIN

“Where is Zolotonósha?” one of the little boys suddenly inquired of Basístoff.

“In the Government of Poltáva, my dearest,” put in Pigásoff; “in the very heart of Khokhlándia.”¹ (He was delighted at the opportunity to change the subject.) “We were speaking of literature just now,” he went on; “if I had any spare money, I would immediately become a Little Russian poet.”

“What do you mean by that, too? A fine poet you would make!” retorted Dárya Mikhaílovna; “do you mean to say that you understand Little Russian?”

“Not in the least; and it’s not necessary.”

“Why not?”

“Because it is n’t. All one has to do is to take a sheet of paper and write at the top, ‘Meditation’; then begin thus, ‘Hey, thou my fate, fate!’ or, ‘The little kazák Naliváiko is sitting on the mound!’ And then, ‘Under the mountain, under the greenwood, grae, grae, voropae, hop! hop!’ or something in that style. And there you have it. Print it and publish it. The Little Russian will read it, will prop his cheek on his hand, and will infallibly fall a-weeping,—such a sentimental soul is he!”

“Good gracious!” exclaimed Basístoff. “What’s that you are saying? There’s no sense

¹ “Khokhól” (topknot) is an ironical nickname for Little Russians. Hence Khokhlándia, Little Russia.—TRANSLATOR.

RÚDIN

to it. I have lived in Little Russia, I love it, and I know its language. . . . 'Grae, grae, voropae' is perfect nonsense."

"Possibly, but the Topknot will fall a-weeping, all the same. You say, 'language.' . . . But does such a thing as a Little Russian language exist? I once asked a Little Russian to translate the following phrase—the first one that came into my head: 'Grammar is the art of reading and writing correctly.' Do you know how he translated it? 'Khrammyr ais the aiert of ryeading ynd wryaiting corrayctly.' . . . Is that a language, in your opinion,—an independent language? Why, sooner than agree to that, I'm ready to let my best friend pound me up in a mortar. . . ."

Basístoff was on the point of retorting.

"Let him alone," said Dárya Mikhaílovna. "Surely you know that you will hear nothing but paradoxes from him."

Pigásoff smiled sarcastically. A lackey entered and announced the arrival of Alexándra Pávlovna and her brother.

Dárya Mikhaílovna rose to welcome her guests.

"How do you do, *Alexandrine!*" she said, as she advanced to meet her. "How clever of you to come! . . . How do you do, Sergyéi Pávlitch!"

RÚDIN

Volýntzeff shook Dárya Mikhaílovna's hand, and went up to Natálya Alexyéevna.

"And how about that Baron, your new acquaintance—is he coming to-day?" inquired Pigásoff.

"Yes, he is coming."

"He's a great philosopher; they say he fairly squirts Hegel."

Dárya Mikhaílovna made no answer, seated Alexándra Pávlovna on the couch, and placed herself beside her.

"Philosophy," went on Pigásoff, "is the highest point of view. That will be the death of me also; those highest points of view. And what can be seen above them? If you want to buy a horse, you would n't inspect it from a watch-tower, would you?"

"That Baron was to bring you some article or other, was he not?" asked Alexándra Pávlovna.

"Yes," replied Dárya Mikhaílovna, with exaggerated carelessness; "an article about the relations between trade and industry in Russia. . . . But have no fears; we will not read it here. . . . I did not invite you for that. *Le baron est aussi aimable que savant.* And he talks Russian so well! *C'est un vrai torrent . . . il vous entraîne.*"

"He talks Russian so well," remarked Pigásoff, "that he deserves to be praised in French."

"Grumble on, Afrikán Semyónitch, grumble

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on. It suits your dishevelled hair admirably. But why does not he come? Do you know, *messieurs et mesdames*?" added Dárya Mikhaílovna, glancing around her. "Let us go into the garden. . . . There is still an hour before dinner, and the weather is splendid. . . ."

The whole company rose and went into the garden.

Dárya Mikhaílovna's garden extended clear to the river. It contained many ancient linden avenues, with golden shadows and fragrant with emerald openings at the ends, many arbours of acacias and lilacs.

Volýntzeff, with Natálya and Mlle. Boncourt, betook themselves to the densest thickets of the garden. Volýntzeff walked by the side of Natálya and maintained silence. Mlle. Boncourt followed at a little distance.

"What have you been doing to-day?" inquired Volýntzeff at last, twisting the tips of his very handsome, dark chestnut moustache.

His features greatly resembled those of his sister; but their expression had less vivacity and life, and his handsome, caressing eyes had a somewhat melancholy look.

"Why, nothing," replied Natálya. "I have been listening to Pigásoff scold, embroidering on canvas, and reading."

"And what have you been reading?"

RÚDIN

“ I was reading the ‘ History of the Crusades,’ ” said Natálya, with some hesitation.

Volýntzeff looked at her.

“ Ah! ” he ejaculated at last; “ that must be interesting.”

He broke off a branch and began to twirl it in the air. They walked on another twenty paces.

“ Who ’s that Baron with whom your mama has become acquainted? ” Volýntzeff put another question.

“ A gentleman of the Imperial Bedchamber, a newcomer; *maman* praises him highly.”

“ Your mama is capable of being carried away by her feelings.”

“ That proves that she is still very young in heart,” remarked Natálya.

“ Yes. I shall soon send you your horse. It is almost trained. I want to have it set out on a gallop on the instant, and I shall accomplish that.”

“ *Merci!* But I feel ashamed. You are training it yourself they say that is very difficult.”

“ In order to afford you the slightest gratification, you know, Natálya Alexyéevna, I am ready I to do more than such trifles.”

Volýntzeff stopped short.

Natálya cast a friendly glance at him, and again said, “ *Merci!* ”

RÚDIN

“ You know,” went on Sergyéi Pávlitch after a prolonged pause, “ that there is nothing. . . . But why do I say this? Surely you know it all!”

At that moment a bell rang in the house.

“ *Ah! la cloche du dîner!*” cried Mlle. Boncourt; “ *rentrons.*”

“ *Quel dommage!*” said the old Frenchwoman to herself, as she mounted the steps of the balcony behind Volýntzeff and Natályya; “ *quel dommage que ce charmant garçon ait si peu de ressources dans la conversation. . . .*” Which may be translated into Russian thus: “ Thou art very nice, my dear fellow, but rather a sorry figure.”

The Baron did not arrive for dinner. They waited half an hour for him. The conversation at table flagged. Sergyéi Pávlitch did nothing but gaze at Natályya, beside whom he sat, and diligently pour water into her glass. Panda-lévsky vainly endeavoured to interest his neighbour, Alexándra Pávlovna; he was all bubbling with sweetness, but she almost yawned in his face.

Basístoff rolled little balls of bread and thought nothing; even Pigásóff held his peace, and when Dárya Mikhaílovna observed to him that he was very far from amiable to-day, he replied crustily: “ When am I ever amiable? That ’s not my business. . . . And, with a bitter laugh, he added: “ Wait a bit. You see, I ’m kvas,

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du prostói¹ Russian kvas; but there 's your Gentleman of the Bedchamber. . . .”

“Bravo!” exclaimed Dárya Mikhaílovna. “Pigásoff is jealous—jealous in anticipation!”

But Pigásoff made her no reply, and only cast sidelong glances.

Seven o'clock struck, and all again assembled in the drawing-room.

“Evidently he is not coming,” said Dárya Mikhaílovna.

But lo! the rumble of an equipage resounded, a small tarantás² drove up to the door, and a few moments later a footman entered the drawing-room and presented a letter on a silver salver to Dárya Mikhaílovna. She ran her eye over it to the end, and, turning to the lackey, inquired:

“And where is the gentleman who brought this letter?”

“He is sitting in his carriage, madam. Do you command that he shall be received, madam?”

“Ask him in.”

The footman left the room.

“Just imagine—how vexatious!” went on Dárya Mikhaílovna; “the Baron has received orders to return at once to Petersburg. He has

¹ Plain kvas is a sort of small beer, made by pouring water on sour, black rye bread, or the rye meal, letting it ferment, and flavouring with raisins, straw, watermelon-juice, etc.—TRANSLATOR.

² The Russian posting carriage; springless, shaped like a barrel split lengthwise, filled with straw or hay. Sometimes there is a seat, sometimes not.—TRANSLATOR.

RÚDIN

sent me his article by a certain Mr. Rúdin, his friend. The Baron wished to introduce him to me—he praised him highly. But how annoying this is! I was in hopes that the Baron would spend some time here.”

“Dmítry Nikoláevitch Rúdin,” announced the footman.

III

THERE entered a man of thirty-five, tall, somewhat round-shouldered, curly-haired, swarthy of complexion, with an irregular but expressive and clever face, with a faint gleam in the quick, dark blue eyes, a straight, broad nose, and finely chiselled lips. His garments were not new, and were too tight for him, as though he had outgrown them.

He walked briskly up to Dária Mikhaílovna, made her a brief inclination, told her that he had long wished to have the honour of being presented to her, and that his friend the Baron greatly regretted that he was unable to take leave of her in person.

The shrill tone of Rúdin's voice did not correspond to his stature and his broad chest.

"Be seated. . . I am very glad," said Dária Mikhaílovna, and, after introducing him to the entire company, she inquired whether he belonged in the neighbourhood or had just arrived.

"My estate is in the T . . . Government," replied Rúdin, holding his hat on his knees. "I have not been here long. I came hither on business, and have settled down, for the time being, in your county town."

RÚDIN

“At whose house?”

“The doctor’s. He was an old comrade of mine in the university.”

“Ah! at the doctor’s. . . People speak highly of him. They say he understands his business. And have you known the Baron long?”

“I met him last winter in Moscow, and now I have just been spending about a week with him.”

“He is a very clever man—the Baron.”

“Yes, madam.”

Dárya Mikhaïlovna sniffed at a knot in her pocket-handkerchief which was saturated with eau de Cologne.

“Are you in the service?” she inquired.

“Who? I, madam?”

“Yes.”

“No. . . I am on the retired list.”

A brief pause ensued. The general conversation was resumed.

“Permit me to be so curious as to inquire,” began Pigásoff, addressing Rúdin, “are you acquainted with the contents of the article which the Baron has sent?”

“I am.”

“That article deals with the relations of trade or no, what’s its name?—of industry to trade in our fatherland. . . I believe that was the way you were pleased to express it, Dárya Mikhaïlovna?”

RÚDIN

“ Yes, it does deal with that . . . ” said Dárya Mikhaílovna, and laid her hand on her brow.

“ I am, of course, a poor judge of such matters,” went on Pigásóff; “ but I must confess that the very title of the article strikes me as extremely . . . how can I say it most delicately? . . . extremely obscure and confused.”

“ Why does it seem so to you? ”

Pigásóff grinned, and cast a fleeting glance at Dárya Mikhaílovna.

“ And is it clear to you? ” he said, again turning his foxy little face toward Rúdin.

“ To me? Yes.”

“ H'm! . . . Of course you must know best about that.”

“ Have you a headache? ” Alexándra Pávlovna inquired of Dárya Mikhaílovna.

“ No. It's a way I have . . . *c'est nerveux*.”

“ Permit me to inquire,” began Pigásóff again, in his thin, nasal voice—“ your acquaintance, Mr. Baron Muffel . . . I believe that is his name? ”

“ Yes, exactly.”

“ Does Mr. Baron Muffel make political economy his special study, or does he merely devote to that interesting science the hours of leisure which are left in the midst of worldly amusements and the duties of the service? ”

Rúdin stared intently at Pigásóff.

“ The Baron is a dilettante in this matter,”

RÚDIN

he replied, flushing slightly; "but his article contains much that is both just and original."

"I cannot dispute your statement, as I know nothing of the article. . . . But I will venture to inquire whether the composition of your friend Baron Muffel does not, in all probability, stick more closely to general arguments than to facts?"

"It contains both facts and arguments founded on facts."

"Just so, sir; just so, sir. I must inform you that, in my opinion and I may be allowed, on occasion, to say a word of my own: I spent three years in Dorpat all these so-called general arguments, hypotheses, systems excuse me, I am a rustic, I blurt the truth straight out . . . are of no earthly use. The whole thing is mere reasoning, and serves only to mystify people. Hand over your facts, gentlemen, and that's all we ask of you."

"Really!" retorted Rúdin. "Well, but the meaning of the facts should be set forth?"

"General arguments," pursued Pigásoff; "those general arguments, surveys, deductions, will be the death of me. That whole business is founded on so-called convictions; everybody prates about his convictions and demands respect for them to boot."

And Pigásoff brandished his clenched fist in the air. Pandálevsky smiled.

RÚDIN

“Very fine, indeed!” remarked Rúdin; “so, according to you, there are no such things as convictions?”

“No—and they don’t exist.”

“That is your conviction?”

“Yes.”

“How can you say that there are none? There’s one for you, the very first thing.”

All the persons in the room smiled and exchanged glances.

“But permit me, permit me,” Pigásoff was beginning. . . .

But Dária Mikhaïlovna clapped her hands, cried, “Bravo, bravo, Pigásoff is vanquished!” and quietly took Rúdin’s hat from his hands.

“Wait a bit before you rejoice, madam; you’ll have plenty of time,” put in Pigásoff, with vexation. “It is not enough to utter a keen word, with an air of superiority; one must prove, refute. . . . We have digressed from the subject under discussion.”

“Very well,” remarked Rúdin, coldly; “it is a very simple matter. You do not believe in the advantage of general arguments, you do not believe in convictions. . . .”

“I do not believe in them. I do not. I do not believe in anything!”

“Very good. You are a sceptic.”

“I see no necessity for using so learned a word. However”

RÚDIN

“Do not keep interrupting continually!” interposed Dárya Mikhaílovna.

“Bite him, Towser, bite him!” said Panda-lévsky to himself, at that moment, and grinned to the full extent of his mouth.

“That word expresses my thought,” continued Rúdin. “You understand it; then why not use it? You do not believe in anything. . . . Then why believe in facts?”

“Why? that’s excellent! Facts are definite things; everybody knows what facts are. . . . I judge them by experience, by my own instinct.”

“But may not your instinct be deceiving you? Your instinct tells you that the sun goes round the earth or, perhaps, you do not agree with Copernicus? You do not believe him, either?”

Again a smile flitted across all faces, and the eyes of all present were riveted on Rúdin. “Come, he’s not a stupid man,” thought each one.

“You are pleased to do nothing but jest,” began Pigásoff. “Of course it is very original, but it does not suit the subject.”

“In what I have said so far,” retorted Rúdin, “there has been, unfortunately, but too little that is original. All that has been known for a very long time, and has been said a thousand times. The question is. . . .”

“What?” inquired Pigásoff, not without impertinence.

RÚDIN

In a dispute he was wont first to jeer at his opponent, then he became rude, and, finally, sulked and retreated into silence.

“This,” went on Rúdin. “I must confess that I cannot help feeling sincere pity when clever people attack, in my presence. . . .”

“Systems?” interrupted Pigásoff.

“Yes, if you like, call it systems. Why does that word alarm you so? Every system is founded upon knowledge of the fundamental laws—the principles of life. . . .”

“But it is impossible to know them, to discover them . . . good gracious!”

“Pardon me. Of course they are not accessible to every one, and it is natural to man to err. But you will, in all probability, agree with me that, for example, Newton discovered at least a few of those fundamental laws. He was a genius, let us admit that; but the discoveries of geniuses are great precisely because they become the property of all men. The effort to discover general principles in partial phenomena is one of the radical properties of the human mind, and the whole of our civilisation.”

“So that’s what you’re after!” interrupted Pigásoff, in a drawling tone. “I am a practical man, and I do not enter into, and have no wish to enter into, all those metaphysical subtleties. . . .”

“Very good! That depends on your will.

RUDIN

But observe that your very desire to be a practical man is, in its way, a system, a theory. . . .”

“Civilisation, you say!” put in Pigásoff; “a pretty thing you’ve taken it into your head to surprise us with! Who cares for it, that much-lauded civilisation! I would n’t give a copper farthing for your civilisation!”

“But how improperly you are arguing, Afrikán Semyónitch!” remarked Dárya Mikhaïlovna, inwardly delighted to the last degree with the composure and elegant courtesy of her new acquaintance. “*C’est un homme comme il faut,*” she thought, casting a glance of approving attention at Rúdin’s face. “I must attract him by friendly treatment.” She mentally uttered these last words in Russian.

“I will not undertake to defend civilisation,” went on Rúdin, after a brief pause; “it does not stand in need of my protection. You do not love it . . . every one has his own taste. Moreover, that would lead us too far. Permit me merely to remind you of an ancient adage: ‘Jupiter, thou waxest wroth; therefore, thou art in the wrong.’ What I wished to say was that all these attacks upon systems, upon general arguments, and so forth, are particularly vexatious because, together with the systems, people reject knowledge in general, science and faith therein, consequently, also, faith in themselves, in their powers. But people need that faith; they can-

RÚDIN

not live on impressions alone, it is a sin for them to fear thought and not to believe it. Scepticism has always been distinguished by sterility and impotence. . . .”

“All that is mere words!” muttered Pigásoff.

“Possibly. But permit me to call your attention to the fact that by saying, ‘All that is mere words!’ we frequently desire to rid ourselves of the necessity of saying anything more pertinent than mere words.”

“What do you mean, sir?” asked Pigásoff, and screwed up his eyes.

“You have understood what I meant to say to you,” retorted Rúdin, with involuntary but instantaneously repressed impatience. “I repeat, if a man has no strong principle in which he believes, no ground whereon he stands firmly, how can he understand the details, the significance, the future of his nation? How can he know what he ought to do himself if”

“Honour to whom honour is due!” said Pigásoff abruptly, bowed, and retired to one side, without looking at any one.

Rúdin looked at him, laughed slightly, and fell silent.

“Aha! he has beaten a retreat!” said Dárya Mikhaílovna. “Do not disturb yourself, Dmítry. . . . Excuse me,” she added, with an affable smile, “what is your patronymic?”

“Nikoláitch.”

RÚDIN

“Do not disturb yourself, my dear Dmítzy Nikoláitch. He has not deceived any of us. He wants to pretend that he does not *wish* to argue any more. He is conscious that he *cannot* argue with you. But you had better take a seat nearer to us and we will have a chat.”

Rúdin moved his chair closer.

“How is it that we have not made acquaintance before?” went on Dárya Mikhaílovna. “I am amazed! . . . Have you read this book? *C’est de Tocqueville, vous savez.*”

And Dárya Mikhaílovna handed Rúdin the French pamphlet.

Rúdin took the thin little book in his hand, turned over a few pages, and, laying it on the table again, replied that he had not read that particular work of M. Tocqueville, but had often meditated on the subject which the latter dealt with therein.

A conversation arose. At first Rúdin seemed to waver, seemed unable to make up his mind to speak out, could not hit upon words, but at last he warmed up and began to talk. At the end of a quarter of an hour his voice alone resounded in the room. All present clustered in a circle around him.

Pigásoff alone remained at a distance in the corner near the fireplace. Rúdin talked cleverly, fervently, judiciously; he displayed much learning, much reading. No one had expected

RÚDIN

to find in him a man of great parts. . . He was so ordinarily dressed, so few rumours about him had been in circulation. It struck them all as strange and incomprehensible that such a clever person could suddenly make his appearance in country parts. All the more did he surprise and, we may say, enchant them all, beginning with Dárya Mikhaílovna. . . . She was proud of her discovery, and began to plan ahead how she would introduce Rúdin to society. In her first impressions there was much that was childish, despite her years. Alexándra Pávlovna, to tell the truth, understood very little of all that Rúdin said, but she was greatly amazed and delighted; her brother, also, was astonished. Pandalévsky watched Dárya Mikhaílovna and waxed envious. Pigásóff said to himself, 'I'll give five hundred rubles, and I'll get a still better nightingale!' . . . But Basístoff and Natálya were the most dumfounded of all. Basístoff was almost deprived of breath; he sat the whole time with gaping mouth and eyes protruding from their sockets, and listened, listened as he had never listened to any one since he was born, while Natálya's face became overspread with a brilliant crimson hue, and her gaze, immovably riveted upon Rúdin, both darkened and shone radiantly. . .

"What magnificent eyes he has!" Volýntzeff whispered to her.

"Yes, they are nice."

RÚDIN

“ Only it ’s a pity that his hands are large and red.”

Natálya made no reply.

Tea was served. The conversation became more general, but from the mere suddenness with which all fell silent the moment Rúdin opened his mouth, one could judge of the strength of the impression he had produced. All of a sudden Dárya Mikhaílovna was seized with a whim to tease Pigásoff. She approached him, and said in an undertone, “ Why do you remain silent, and merely smile maliciously? Just make an effort, grapple with him again,” and, without awaiting his reply, she beckoned Rúdin up with her hand.

“ There is still one thing which you do not know about him,” she said to him, pointing at Pigásoff; “ he is a terrible woman-hater, he is incessantly attacking women; please turn him into the paths of truth.”

Rúdin looked at Pigásoff involuntarily looked down on him: he was the taller by two heads. Pigásoff almost curled up with wrath, and his sallow face became pallid.

“ Dárya Mikhaílovna is mistaken,” he began in an unsteady voice. “ I do not attack women alone. I am not very fond of the human race as a whole.”

“ What can have given you such a poor opinion of it?” asked Rúdin.

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Pigásoff looked him straight in the eye.

“Probably the study of my own heart, in which I discover, day by day, more trash. I judge of others by myself. Perhaps that is unjust, and I am a great deal worse than other men; but what am I to do? ’T is a habit!”

“I understand you and sympathise with you,” returned Rúdin. “What noble soul has not experienced the thirst for self-depreciation? But one must not remain in that helpless position.”

“I humbly thank you for issuing a certificate of nobility to my soul,” retorted Pigásoff; “but my position is all right, it is n’t a bad one, so that even if there is any issue from it—why, I don’t care! I shall not seek it.”

“But that means—pardon the expression—that you give the preference to the satisfaction of your self-love over your desire to be and to live in the truth. . . .”

“Most certainly!” exclaimed Pigásoff; “self-love I can understand, and you, I hope, understand it, and every one understands it; but the truth—what is truth? Where is it, that truth?”

“You are repeating yourself, I warn you,” remarked Dárya Mikhaílovna.

Pigásoff hunched his shoulders.

“Where’s the harm in that? I ask; where is truth? Even the philosophers do not know what it is. Kant says, ‘This is it’; but Hegel says, ‘No, you are mistaken; this is it.’”

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“But do you know what Hegel says about it?” asked Rúdin, without raising his voice.

“I repeat,” went on Pigásóff, who was now in a rage, “that I cannot understand what is truth. In my opinion, it does not exist in the world at all—that is to say, the word exists, but the thing itself does not.”

“Fie! Fie!” cried Dárya Mikhaílovna. “Are n’t you ashamed to say that, you old sinner! There is no truth? After that, what is there in the world to live for?”

“Why, I think, Dárya Mikhaílovna,” retorted Pigásóff, with irritation, “that, in any case, you would find it easier to live in the world without truth than without your cook, Stepán, who is such a master-hand at making beef broth! And tell me, for mercy’s sake, what do you want of truth? Why, you cannot make a mob-cap out of it!”

“A jest is not an answer,” remarked Dárya Mikhaílovna; “especially when it runs into aspersions.” . . .

“I do not know what the truth is like, but, as a matter of fact, evidently it puts your eyes out,” muttered Pigásóff, and stepped aside in wrath.

But Rúdin began to talk about self-love, and talked very sensibly. He demonstrated that man without self-love is a cipher, that self-love is the lever of Archimedes, wherewith the earth may be moved from its place, but that, at the

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same time, only he deserves the appellation of man who understands how to control his self-love as a rider controls his horse, who sacrifices his personality to the general welfare. . . .

“Selfishness,” he wound up, “is suicide. The selfish man withers up like an isolated, sterile tree; but self-love, in its quality of an effective effort toward perfection, is the origin of everything great. . . Yes! a man must break the obstinate egoism of his individuality in order to give it a right to announce its meaning!”

“Cannot you lend me a pencil?” Pigásoff asked Basístoff.

Basístoff did not immediately understand what Pigásoff had asked him.

“What do you want of a pencil?” he said at last.

“I want to write down, at least, that last phrase of Mr. Rúdin’s. If I don’t write it down, I shall certainly forget it! And you must admit that such a phrase is equivalent to taking all the tricks in the game.”

“There are things at which it is a sin to laugh and sneer, Afrikán Semyónitch!” said Basístoff, with heat, and turned his back on Pigásoff.

In the meanwhile, Rúdin had stepped up to Natálya. She rose; her face expressed perplexity.

Volýntzeff, who was sitting beside her, rose also.

“I see a pianoforte,” said Rúdin, softly and

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affably, like a prince on his travels. "Do not you play on it?"

"Yes, I play," said Natálya; "but not very well. Konstantín Diomíditch, yonder, plays much better than I do."

Pandalévsky thrust forward his face and showed his teeth.

"You have no reason to say that, Natálya Alexyéevna; you play quite as well as I do."

"Do you know Schubert's 'Erlkönig'?" inquired Rúdin.

"He does, he does!" interposed Dárya Mikhaílovna. "Sit down, *Constantin*. . . And you love music, Dmítry Nikoláitch?"

Rúdin merely bent his head slightly, and passed his hand over his hair, as though preparing to listen. . . . Pandalévsky began to play.

Natálya stood by the piano, directly opposite Rúdin. At the first sound his face assumed a very beautiful expression. His dark blue eyes slowly roved about, now and then halting on Natálya. Pandalévsky finished.

Rúdin said nothing, and walked to the open window. A fragrant mist lay in a soft veil over the park; the near-by trees breathed forth a slumberous coolness. The stars glowed softly. The summer night lulled itself and soothed. Rúdin gazed out into the obscure park and turned round.

"This music and this night," he said, "have

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reminded me of my student days in Germany—our reunions, our serenades. . .”

“And have you been in Germany?” asked Dárya Mikhaílovna.

“I spent a year at Heidelberg and about a year in Berlin.”

“And did you dress in student fashion? I am told that they dress rather peculiarly there.”

“In Heidelberg I wore big boots with spurs, and a braided hussar jacket, and my hair grew down to my shoulders. . . . In Berlin the students dress like everybody else.”

“Do tell us something about your student life?” said Alexándra Pávlovna.

Rúdin began to narrate. He was not quite successful in his narration. His descriptions lacked colour. He did not understand how to excite laughter. However, Rúdin speedily passed from stories of his foreign adventures to general reflections upon the significance of learning and science, upon the universities and university life in general. In broad, bold outlines, he sketched a vast picture. All listened to him with profound attention. He talked in a masterly manner, fascinatingly, not quite clearly . . . but this very lack of clearness imparted a certain charm to his speech.

The abundance of his thoughts prevented Rúdin from expressing himself definitely and accurately. Images followed images; compari-

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sons, now unexpectedly daring, again strikingly faithful, succeeded each other. His impatient improvisation breathed forth not the conceited refinement of an experienced chatterer, but inspiration. He did not seek his words; they came obediently and freely of their own accord to his lips, and every word seemed to pour forth straight from his soul, glowing with all the fire of conviction. Rúdin possessed what is almost the highest mystery—the music of eloquence. He understood how, by thrumming upon one of the heart's chords, to make it emit a troubled sound and set all the others to quivering. Any given hearer might not be able to understand precisely what the speech was about; but his breast heaved high, some curtains or other parted before his eyes, something radiant blazed up in front of him.

All of Rúdin's thoughts seemed to be directed toward the future; this imparted to them an impetuous, youthful character. Standing at the window, looking at no one in particular, he talked on; and, inspired by the universal sympathy and attention, by the proximity of young women, by the beauty of the night, carried away by the flood of his own sensations, he rose to eloquence, to poetry. . . The very sound of his voice, concentrated and quiet, heightened the spell; it seemed as though something lofty, unexpected by himself, were being uttered by his

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mouth. . . Rúdin spoke about that which gives eternal significance to the temporal life of man.

“I remember a Scandinavian legend,” he said in conclusion; “a king is sitting with his warriors in a long, dark shed, around the fire. It is night—winter. All at once a tiny bird flies in through one open door and flies out through another. The king remarks that the bird is like man in the world: he has flown in from the darkness, and he flies forth into the darkness, and has not remained long in the warmth and the light. . . . ‘King,’ returns the oldest of his warriors, ‘the bird will not get lost in the darkness, and will find its nest.’ . . . Exactly so, our life is swift and trivial; but everything great is effected through the agency of men. The consciousness that one is the tool of those higher powers ought to requite a man for all other joys; in death itself he will find his life, his nest. . . .”

Rúdin paused, and lowered his eyes with a smile of involuntary confusion.

“*Vous êtes un poète,*” said Dárya Mikhaílovna, in a low voice.

And they all inwardly agreed with her,—all, with the exception of Pigásoff. Without waiting for the end of Rúdin’s speech, he had quietly taken his hat, and as he departed he had remarked in a wrathful whisper to Pandalévsky, who stood near the door:

“No! I’m going to the fools.”

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But no one detained him or noticed his absence.

The servants brought in the supper, and half an hour later all had driven or walked away. Dárya Mikhaílovna requested Rúdin to stay overnight. Alexándra Pávlovna, as she was returning home in the carriage with her brother, several times began to exclaim and to admire Rúdin's remarkable mind. Volýntzeff agreed with her, but remarked that he had sometimes expressed himself rather obscurely . . . that is to say, not quite intelligibly, he added, being desirous, probably, of making his own thought clear; but his face clouded over, and his gaze, riveted upon one corner of the carriage, seemed to have become more melancholy than ever.

Pandalévsky, as he prepared himself for bed and took off his silk-embroidered suspenders, said aloud, "A very adroit man!" and all of a sudden, with a stern glance at his youthful valet, ordered him to leave the room. Basístoff did not sleep all night long, and did not undress until morning dawned; he wrote a letter to a comrade of his in Moscow, while Natálya, although she undressed and got into bed, did not sleep for a single minute, and did not even close her eyes. With her head resting on her hand, she stared intently into darkness; her pulse beat feverishly, and her breast heaved, from time to time, with a heavy sigh.

IV

THE next morning, Rúdin had just finished dressing when a man-servant presented himself from Dárya Mikhaílovna, with an invitation to be so good as to come to her boudoir and drink tea with her. Rúdin found her alone. She bade him good morning in a very amiable manner, inquired whether he had passed a good night, poured him out a cup of tea with her own hands, even asked whether there was enough sugar, offered him a cigarette, and twice repeated that she was surprised that she had not made his acquaintance long before. Rúdin made a movement to seat himself at some distance; but Dárya Mikhaílovna pointed to a softly stuffed *pâté* which stood beside her arm-chair, and, bending slightly in his direction, began to question him concerning his family, his plans and projects. Dárya Mikhaílovna talked carelessly, listened abstractedly; but Rúdin understood quite well that she was paying court to him, almost cajoling him. Not for nothing had she arranged this matutinal meeting, not for nothing had she gowned herself simply but elegantly, à la Madame Récamier! However, Dárya Mikhaílovna soon

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ceased to question him; she began to tell him about herself, about her youth, about the people with whom she was acquainted. Rúdin listened with sympathy to her idle prattle, although, strange to say, no matter what person Dárya Mikhaílovna talked about, she still remained constantly in the foreground,—she alone,—and the other individual somehow crept away and vanished. On the other hand, Rúdin learned in detail precisely what Dárya Mikhaílovna had said to such and such a noted dignitary, what influence she had exerted upon such and such a famous poet. Judging from Dárya Mikhaílovna's stories, one might have thought that all the celebrated people of the last quarter of a century had dreamed of nothing else but how to try and see her, how to gain her favour. She talked about them simply, without especial raptures and praises, as of members of her own family, calling some of them eccentrics. She talked about them, and, like a costly setting round a jewel, their names were ranged in a brilliant border around the chief name—around Dárya Mikhaílovna. . . .

But Rúdin listened as he smoked his cigarette, and maintained silence, only now and then interjecting small remarks into the discourse of the loquacious lady. He knew how to talk and was fond of talking himself; he was not only strong at conducting a conversation, but he knew how to

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listen also. Every one whom he did not alarm at the start unbosomed himself confidentially in his presence, so readily and approvingly did he follow the thread of the other person's narrative. There was much good nature in him,—that special sort of good nature wherewith people who are accustomed to feel themselves superior to others are filled. In argument he rarely gave his adversary a chance to have his say, and overwhelmed him with his impetuous and passionate dialectics.

Dárya Mikhaílovna explained herself in Russian. She liked to show off her proficiency in her native language, although Gallicisms and small French words often occurred in her speech. She deliberately employed ordinary, vernacular terms, but not always with success. Rúdin's ear was not offended by the strange medley of language on the lips of Dárya Mikhaílovna, and the probability is that he lacked the ear for that.

Dárya Mikhaílovna became fatigued at last, and, leaning her head against the cushion at the back of her chair, she fixed her eyes on Rúdin and relapsed into silence.

“I understand now,” began Rúdin in a deliberate tone—“I understand why you come to the country every summer. This repose is indispensable for you; the rustic tranquillity, after the life of the capital, refreshes and strengthens

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you. I am convinced that you must be profoundly sensitive to the beauties of nature."

Dárya Mikhaílovna cast a sidelong glance at Rúdin.

"Nature . . . yes . . . yes, of course. . . I am awfully fond of it; but you know, Dmítry Nikoláitch, that one cannot get along in the country without people. And there is hardly any one here. Pigásoff is the cleverest man in these parts."

"The choleric old fellow of last evening?" inquired Rúdin.

"Yes, that man. . . However, in the country, even he is useful—if only to raise a laugh now and then."

"He is far from a stupid man," returned Rúdin; "but he is on the wrong road. I do not know whether you agree with me, Dárya Mikhaílovna, but in negation—in complete and universal negation—there is no blessing. Deny everything, and you may easily pass for a clever person; that is a familiar bait. Good-natured people are ready to conclude on the spot that you stand higher than the thing you deny. And this is frequently untrue. In the first place, a flaw may be discovered in everything; and, in the second place, even if you are stating a fact, you are only the worse off; your mind, directed only toward negation, becomes poverty-stricken, withers away. By satisfying your self-love you deprive yourself of the true joys of contempla-

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tion; life—the essence of life—escapes from your petty and splenetic observation, and you will end by snarling and exciting laughter. Only he who loves has a right to censure, to chide.”

“*Voilà M—r. Pigásóff enterré!*” remarked Dárya Mikhaílovna. “What a master-hand you are at defining a man! However, Pigásóff, in all probability, did not understand you. He loves only his own person.”

“And reviles it, with the object of having a right to revile others,” chimed in Rúdin.

Dárya Mikhaílovna laughed.

“‘He judges the sound’—how is it the proverb runs ‘he judges the sound by the sick.’ By the way, what do you think of the Baron?”

“Of the Baron? He is a nice man, with a kind heart, and well informed but he lacks force of character . . . and all his life long he will remain half a learned man, half a man of the world—that is to say, a dilettante; that is to say, to express it point-blank—nothing. . . . But ’t is a pity!”

“I am of that opinion myself,” replied Dárya Mikhaílovna. “I have read his article. . . *Entre nous . . . cela a assez peu de fond. . . .*”

“Whom else have you in the neighbourhood?” inquired Rúdin, after a pause.

Dárya Mikhaílovna flicked the ashes from her tiny, straw-covered cigarette with her little finger.

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“Why, there is hardly any one else. Mme. Lípin, Alexándra Pávlovna, whom you saw yesterday; she is very charming—but that is all. Her brother is also a very fine man—*un parfait honnête homme*. Prince Gárin you know. That is all. There are two or three other neighbours, but they count for absolutely nothing. Either they are capricious—their airs are dreadful—or they are shy, or else they are unduly free and easy. I do not receive ladies, as you know. There is still one other neighbour, a very cultured, even a learned man, they say, but a frightfully eccentric person—fantastic. *Alexandrine* knows him, and, apparently, is not indifferent to him. . . . There, now, you ought to study her, Dmítzy Nikoláitch; she is a lovely creature; all she needs is to be developed a little. She must be developed, without fail!”

“She is very sympathetic,” remarked Rúdin.

“A perfect child, Dmítzy Nikoláitch, a real child. She was married—*mais c’est tout comme*. . . . If I had been a man I would have fallen in love with no other sort of women.”

“Really?”

“Absolutely. Such women, at all events, are fresh, and freshness cannot be counterfeited.”

“And everything else can?” inquired Rúdin, and laughed, which very rarely happened with him. When he laughed his face assumed a

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strange, almost senile, expression, his eyes grew small, his nose wrinkled up. . .

“And who is the man whom you called an eccentric, and to whom Mme. Lípin is not indifferent?” he asked.

“A certain Lezhnyóff, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch, a landed proprietor of this neighbourhood.”

Rúdin was surprised, and raised his head.

“Lezhnyóff, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch?” he asked; “is he a neighbour of yours?”

“Yes. And do you know him?”

Rúdin did not reply for a space.

“I used to know him before . . . long ago. He is a wealthy man, I believe?” he added, plucking at the fringe of the arm-chair with his hand.

“Yes, he is wealthy, although he dresses horribly, and drives about in a racing-gig, like a clerk. I would have liked to attract him to my house; he is clever, they say, and I have a matter of business to settle with him. . . . You are aware, of course, that I manage my own estate.”

Rúdin inclined his head.

“Yes, I do it myself,” went on Dárya Mikhaílovna. “I do not introduce any foreign nonsense; I hold to my own way,—the Russian way,—and matters, as you see, appear to proceed not altogether badly,” she added, with a circular movement of her hand.

“I have always been convinced,” remarked

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Rúdin, courteously, "of the extreme injustice of those people who deny that women have practical sense."

Dárya Mikhaílovna smiled pleasantly.

"You are very condescending," she said; "but what in the world was it that I wanted to say? What were we talking about? Yes! About Lezhnyóff. I have business with him in regard to our boundary lines. I have invited him to my house several times, and I am even expecting him to-day; but he does not come, God knows why . . . he is such a queer fellow!"

The portière was gently parted, and the butler entered, a man of lofty stature, grey-haired and bald, clad in a black dress-suit, a white necktie, and a white waistcoat.

"What dost thou want?" inquired Dárya Mikhaílovna, and, turning slightly toward Rúdin, she added in an undertone, "*n'est ce pas, comme il ressemble à Canning?*"

"Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch Lezhnyóff has arrived," announced the butler. "Do you command that he be received?"

"Akh, good heavens!" cried Dárya Mikhaílovna; "speak of the devil! Ask him in."

The butler withdrew.

"He's such a queer fellow; he has come at last, but inopportunately. He has interrupted our chat."

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Rúdin rose from his seat, but Dárya Mikhaílovna stopped him.

“Where are you going? We can talk in your presence. And I wish to have you define him, as you did Pigásóff. When you speak—*vous gravez comme avec un burin*. Stay.”

Rúdin was about to say something, but changed his mind and remained.

Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch, with whom the reader is already acquainted, entered the boudoir. He wore the same grey surtout, in his hands he held the same old cap. He bowed with composure to Dárya Mikhaílovna, and approached the tea-table.

“At last you have done us the honour to come to us, Monsieur Lezhnyóff!” said Dárya Mikhaílovna. “Pray take a seat. You are acquainted, I hear,” she continued, pointing to Rúdin.

Lezhnyóff glanced at Rúdin, and smiled in a rather singular manner.

“I do know Mr. Rúdin,” he said, with a slight inclination.

“We were at the university together,” remarked Rúdin, in a low tone, and dropped his eyes.

“And we met afterward,” said Lezhnyóff, coldly.

Dárya Mikhaílovna stared at both of them in considerable surprise, and invited Lezhnyóff to be seated.

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“ You wished to see me,” he began, “ about the survey?”

“ Yes, about the survey; but I wanted to see you anyway. For we are near neighbours, and almost related to each other.”

“ I am very much obliged to you,” returned Lezhnyóff; “ but, so far as the boundary-line is concerned, your manager and I have settled that matter definitely; I agree to all his propositions.”

“ I knew that.”

“ Only he told me that, without a personal interview with you, the papers could not be signed.”

“ Yes; I have established that rule. By the way, permit me to ask,—I believe all your peasants are on quit-rent, are they not?”

“ Just so.”

“ And you are taking charge of the boundary-line matter yourself? That is praiseworthy.”

Lezhnyóff made no reply for a moment.

“ So I have presented myself for the personal interview,” he said.

Dárya Mikhaílovna laughed.

“ I see that you have presented yourself. You say that in a tone as though. . . You must have been extremely unwilling to come to me.”

“ I go nowhere,” returned Lezhnyóff, phlegmatically.

“ Nowhere? But you go to Alexandra Pávlovna’s?”

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“ I have known her brother for a long time.”

“ Her brother! However, I force no one. . . . But, pardon me, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch, I am older than you and may lecture you a little; what makes you avoid society like a solitary wolf? Or is it my house, in particular, that does not please you? Am I displeasing to you?”

“ I do not know you, Dárya Mikhaílovna, and therefore you cannot be displeasing to me. Your house is very fine; but I will confess to you frankly that I do not like to stand on ceremony, and I do not possess a decent dress-suit; I have no gloves; and, moreover, I do not belong to your circle in society.”

“ By birth, by education, you do belong to it, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch!—*vous êtes des nôtres.*”

“ Set birth and education aside, Dárya Mikhaílovna! That is not the point. . . .”

“ A man should live with men, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch! What pleasure do you find in sitting, like Diogenes, in a cask?”

“ In the first place, he was very comfortable there; and, in the second place, how do you know that I do not live with men?”

Dárya Mikhaílovna bit her lip.

“ That is another matter. All that is left for me to do is to regret that I was not considered worthy to fall into the number of people with whom you consort.”

“ Monsieur Lezhnyóff,” interposed Rúdin,

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“appears to exaggerate a very laudable sentiment—love of liberty.”

Lezhnyóff made no reply, and merely glanced at Rúdin. A brief pause ensued.

“So then, madam,” began Lezhnyóff, rising, “I may regard our affair as completed, and tell your manager to send me the documents.”

“You may . . . although, I must confess, you are so unamiable . . . that I ought to refuse.”

“But, you see, this survey is far more advantageous for you than for me.”

Dárya Mikhaílovna shrugged her shoulders.

“You are not willing even to breakfast with me?” she asked.

“I thank you sincerely. I never breakfast, and I am in haste to get home.”

Dárya Mikhaílovna rose.

“I will not detain you,” she said, as she walked to the window. “I dare not detain you.”

Lezhnyóff began to take leave.

“Good-bye, Monsieur Lezhnyóff! Pardon me for having disturbed you.”

“Not at all, I assure you,” returned Lezhnyóff, and withdrew.

“What do you think of that?” inquired Dárya Mikhaílovna of Rúdin. “I had heard that he was an eccentric person, but this passes all bounds.”

“He is suffering from the same malady as Pigásoff,” said Rúdin— “from a desire to be

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original. Pigásoff feigns to be a Mephistopheles, this one a cynic. In all this there is much egotism, much self-conceit, and little truth, little love. You see, there is a calculation, of a sort, in this also; a man has donned a mask of indifference and laziness, saying to himself: ‘Perchance, some one will think, “There’s that man—how many talents he has wasted!”’ But when you come to look more closely, he possesses no talents at all!”

“*Et de deux!*” said Dárya Mikhaílovna. “You are a terrible man at definitions. One cannot hide from you.”

“Do you think so?” . . . said Rúdin. “However,” he went on, “to tell the truth, I ought not to talk about Lezhnyóff; I loved him,—loved him as a friend,—but later on, in consequence of various misunderstandings. . . .”

“You quarrelled?”

“No. But we parted—and parted, apparently, forever.”

“Exactly so. I noticed that during the whole of his visit you did not seem to be quite yourself. . . . But I am very grateful to you for this morning. I have passed the time in an extremely agreeable manner. But I must not abuse your kindness. I will release you until breakfast, and will go and attend to business myself. My secretary—you have seen him—*Constantin, c’est lui qui est mon secrétaire*—must be already waiting

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for me. I recommend him to your favour; he is a very fine, very obliging young man, and is in perfect raptures over you. Farewell for a while, *cher* Dmítzy Nikoláitch! How grateful I am to the Baron for having introduced you to me!" And Dárya Mikhaílovna offered her hand to Rúdin. He first pressed it, then raised it to his lips, and went out into the music-room, and from the music-room to the verandah. On the verandah he encountered Natálya.

V

DÁRYA MIKHAÍLOVNA'S daughter, Natályá Alexyéevna, might not strike one as pleasing at first sight. She had not yet completed her growth, was thin and swarthy, and held herself in rather a stooping attitude. But her features were beautiful and regular, although too large for a girl of seventeen. Especially fine was her pure and smooth forehead above slender brows which seemed to have been broken apart in the middle. She spoke little, but listened and looked attentively, almost insistently, as though she wished to account to herself for everything. She often remained motionless, with drooping hands, and meditated; on her countenance, at such times, the inward travail of thought was expressed. A barely perceptible smile made its appearance of a sudden on her lips and vanished; her large, dark eyes were slowly raised. . . . "Qu'avez-vous?" Mlle. Boncourt would ask her, and would begin to chide her, saying that it was not proper for a young girl to meditate and assume an air of abstraction. But Natályá was not abstracted; on the contrary, she studied diligently; she read and worked will-

ingly. She felt deeply and strongly, but secretly; even in her childhood she had rarely cried, and now she rarely even sighed, and only turned slightly pale when anything annoyed her. Her mother considered her a good-tempered, sensible young girl, called her, jestingly, "*Mon honnête homme de fille,*" but entertained none too high an opinion as to her mental abilities. "My Natásha, fortunately, is cold," she was wont to say; "she does not take after me . . . so much the better. She will be happy." Dárya Mikhaílovna was in error. However, very few mothers understand their daughters. Natályá loved Dárya Mikhaílovna, and did not entirely trust her.

"Thou hast nothing to hide from me," Dárya Mikhaílovna once said to her, "otherwise thou wouldst hide it; apparently, thou thinkest for thyself. . . ."

Natályá looked her mother in the eye, and said to herself: "Why should n't one think for herself?"

When Rúdin met her on the verandah she had gone into the house, in company with Mlle. Boncourt, to put on her hat and go into the garden. Her morning occupations were already finished. They had ceased to treat Natályá like a little girl; for a long time past Mlle. Boncourt had not given her any lessons in mythology and geography, but Natályá was bound to read his-

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torical books and other edifying works every morning in her presence. Dárya Mikhaílovna selected them, apparently in consonance with a special system of her own. As a matter of fact, she simply handed over to Natálya everything which the French bookseller in Petersburg sent her, with the exception, of course, of the novels of Dumas fils, and Co. These novels Dárya Mikhaílovna read herself. Mlle. Boncourt glared through her spectacles with particular severity and acidity when Natálya was perusing historical books. According to the ideas of the old Frenchwoman, all history was filled with unpermissible things, although she herself, for some reason or other, was acquainted with Cambyses alone among the great men of antiquity; and, among those of recent times, only with Louis XIV and Napoleon, whom she could not abide. But Natálya also read books whose very existence Mlle. Boncourt did not suspect: she knew the whole of Púshkin by heart. . . .

Natálya blushed slightly on encountering Rúdin.

“Are you going for a stroll?” he asked her.

“Yes. We are going into the garden.”

“May I go with you?”

Natálya glanced at Mlle. Boncourt.

“*Mais certainement, monsieur, avec plaisir,*” the old spinster made haste to say.

Rúdin took his hat and went with them.

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At first Natálya felt awkward at walking by the side of Rúdin on one path; afterwards she was more at her ease. He began to question her with regard to her occupations, and as to how she liked the country. She replied, not without timidity, but without that hurried bashfulness which is frequently passed off and mistaken for modesty. Her heart beat fast.

“You do not get bored in the country?” inquired Rúdin, taking her in with a sidelong glance.

“How can one be bored in the country? I am very glad that we are here. I am very happy here.”

“You are happy! . . . That is a great word. However, that is comprehensible: you are young.”

Rúdin uttered this last word in a rather strange manner, not precisely as though he envied Natásha, nor yet precisely as though he pitied her.

“Yes! Youth!” he added. “The whole aim of science is consciously to attain to that which is bestowed gratuitously.”

Natálya gazed attentively at Rúdin; she did not understand him.

“I have spent this whole morning conversing with your mother,” he went on; “she is a remarkable woman. I understand why all our poets have prized her friendship. And are you fond of poetry?” he added, after a brief silence.

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“He is putting me through an examination,” thought Natálya, and said: “Yes, I am very fond of it.”

“Poetry is the language of the gods. I myself love verses. But there is no poetry in ordinary verses; it is disseminated everywhere, it is all around us. . . . Look at these trees, at this sky—from every direction emanate life and beauty; and where life and beauty are, there poetry is also.”

“Let us sit down here, on this bench,” he continued. “That’s right. Somehow or other, it seems to me that when you shall have got accustomed to me” (and he looked into her face with a smile), “we shall become friends. What do you think?”

“He is treating me like a little girl,” thought Natálya again, and, not knowing what to say, she asked him whether he intended to remain long in the country.

“All the summer, the autumn, and perhaps the winter also. As you know, I am far from being a wealthy man; my affairs are in disorder, and, moreover, I am tired of roaming about from place to place. It is time to rest.”

Natálya was surprised.

“Is it possible that you think it is time for you to rest?” she asked him timidly.

Rúdin turned his face toward Natálya.

“What do you mean by that?”

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“ I mean to say,” she returned, with some confusion, “ that others may rest; but you . . . you ought to toil, to try to be of use. Who, if not you. . . .”

“ I thank you for your flattering opinion,” Rúdin interrupted her. “ It is easy to say ‘ to be of use.’ ” (He passed his hand across his face.) “ To be of use!” he repeated. “ Even if I bore within me a firm conviction how I might be of use,—even if I had faith in my powers,—where am I to find sincere, sympathetic souls?”

And Rúdin waved his hand in so hopeless a manner, and drooped his head so sorrowfully, that Natálya involuntarily asked herself:—Was it really his rapturous speeches, breathing forth hope, which she had listened to on the preceding evening?

“ But no,” he added, suddenly shaking his long mane; “ this is nonsense, and you are right. I thank you, Natálya Alexyéevna, I thank you sincerely.” (Natálya decidedly did not know what he was thanking her for.) “ That one word of yours has recalled me to my duty, has pointed out to me my path. . . . Yes, I must act. I must not hide my talent, if I possess it; I must not waste my powers in empty chatter, useless chatter, in mere words. . . .”

And his words flowed forth in a stream. He talked very finely, fervently, convincingly, about

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the disgrace of cowardice and laziness, about the indispensability of doing deeds. He showered reproaches on himself, demonstrated that to argue beforehand about what one wants to do is as injurious as to stick a pin into a fruit overflowing with juice,—that this was only a vain waste of powers and of juices. He declared that there is no noble thought which does not win sympathy, that only those people remain misunderstood who either do not know themselves what they wish or are not worth understanding. He talked for a long time, and wound up by thanking Natálya Alexyéevna once more, and quite unexpectedly pressed her hand, saying: “You are a very beautiful, noble being!”

This liberty startled Mlle. Boncourt, who, in spite of her forty years’ residence in Russia, understood Russian with difficulty, and merely admired the beautiful swiftness and fluency of the language in Rúdin’s mouth. However, in her eyes he was something in the nature of a virtuoso or an artist; and from that sort of people, according to her ideas, it was impossible to demand the observance of decorum.

She rose, and, abruptly adjusting her gown, announced to Natálya that it was time to go home, that *Monsieur Volinsoff* (that was what she called Volýntzeff) was intending to come for breakfast.

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“Yes, and there he is!” she added, glancing down one of the avenues which led to the house.

In fact, Volýntzeff made his appearance a short distance away.

He approached with an undecided gait, bowed to them all while still at a distance, and, addressing Natályya with a pained expression on his face, he said:

“Ah! Are you taking a stroll?”

“Yes,” replied Natásha, “we are just going home.”

“Ah!” ejaculated Volýntzeff. “Well, let us start.”

And they all set off for the house.

“How is your sister’s health?” Rúdin asked Volýntzeff, in a rather peculiarly caressing voice. He had been very amiable to him on the preceding evening also.

“I am obliged to you. She is well. Perhaps she will come hither to-day. . . . I think you were discussing something when I came up.”

“Yes. Natályya Alexyéevna and I had been having a chat. She said a word to me which has had a powerful effect upon me.” . . .

Volýntzeff did not inquire what the word was, and all returned, in profound silence, to the house of Dárya Mikhaílovna.

Before dinner the salon was formed again. But Pigásoff did not come. Rúdin did not ap-

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pear to advantage; he kept making Pandalévsky play selections from Beethoven. Volýntzeff maintained silence and stared at the floor. Natálya clung persistently to her mother's side, now immersed in thought, now devoting herself to her work. Basístoff never took his eyes from Rúdin, in the momentary expectation that the latter would say something clever. Three hours passed thus, rather monotonously. Alexándra Pávlovna did not come to dinner, and Volýntzeff, as soon as they rose from table, immediately ordered his calash to be brought round, and slipped away without taking leave of any one.

He felt heavy at heart. He had long loved Natálya, and was always on the verge of making her an offer of marriage. . . . She favoured him,—but her heart remained calm; he perceived that clearly. He had no hope of inspiring in her a more tender sentiment, and was only awaiting the moment when she should become thoroughly accustomed to him—should draw nearer to him. What could have perturbed him? What change had he observed during those two days? Natálya had treated him exactly as heretofore. . . .

Whether his soul was choked with the thought that, perhaps, he did not understand Natálya's character at all, that she was more alien to him than he had imagined, whether jealousy had awakened within him, whether he felt a dim fore-

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boding of something evil, . . . at all events, he suffered, argue with himself as he might.

When he entered his sister's house, Lezhnyóff was sitting with her.

"What made you come home so early?" asked Alexándra Pávlovna.

"Because—I was bored."

"Is Rúdin there?"

"Yes."

Volýntzeff flung aside his cap and sat down.

Alexándra Pávlovna turned to him with vivacity:

"Please, Seryózha, help me to convince this obstinate man" (she pointed at Lezhnyóff) "that Rúdin is remarkably clever and eloquent."

Volýntzeff muttered something.

"Why, I'm not disputing your statement in the least," began Lezhnyóff. "I have no doubt whatever as to Mr. Rúdin's cleverness and eloquence; all I say is that I do not like him."

"And do you mean to say that you have seen him?" asked Volýntzeff.

"I saw him this morning at Dárya Mikhaílovna's. You see, he is now her grand vizier. The time will come when she will part with him,—Pandalévsky is the only one with whom she will not part,—but he is reigning at present. Saw him? Of course I did! There he sat, and she pointed me out to him. 'Look, my dear sir,' says she, 'see what eccentric fellows we grow here.' I'm not a stud-horse—I'm not accus-

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tomed to be trotted out on show, so I took and marched off."

"But why wast thou at her house?"

"About the survey of the boundary-line; but that's nonsense. She simply wanted to have a look at my physiognomy. She's a fine lady—every one knows what that means!"

"His superiority offends you. That's what's the matter," said Alexándra Pávlovna, with ardour. "That is what you cannot pardon him. But I am convinced that, in addition to his mind, he must also have an excellent heart. Just look at his eyes when he"

"Of lofty uprightness he prates," interposed Lezhnyóff.

"You will provoke me, and I shall begin to cry. I regret, from my soul, that I did not go to Dárya Mikhaïlovna's, and remained here with you. You are not worthy of it. Do stop teasing me," she added, in a plaintive voice. "You had better tell me about his youth."

"About Rúdin's youth?"

"Yes, certainly. You know, you told me that you knew him well, and had been acquainted with him for a long time."

Lezhnyóff rose and paced the room.

"Yes," he began; "I do know him well. You want me to tell you about his youth? Very well. He was born in T, of poor parents of the landed gentry class. His father soon died. He was left alone with his mother. She was an ex-

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tremely kind-hearted woman, and was perfectly infatuated with him; she subsisted on nothing but dried oatmeal, and used all the little money she possessed on him. He received his education in Moscow, first at the expense of some uncle or other, and later on, when he was grown and got his feathers, at the expense of a certain wealthy petty prince with whom he had sniffed up some sort of understanding well, pardon me, I will not do it again! with whom he had made friends. Then he entered the university. I knew him at the university, and became very intimate with him. Concerning our manner of life together at that epoch I will speak with you at some future time. At present I cannot. Then he went abroad.”

Lezhnyóff continued to stride up and down the room; Alexándra Pávlovna followed him with her eyes.

“From abroad,” he went on, “Rúdin wrote to his mother very rarely, and never visited her but once, for about ten days. The old woman died in his absence—in the arms of strangers; but until the very moment of her death she never took her eyes from his portrait. I used to call on her when I lived in T She was a good woman, and extremely hospitable. She loved her Mítya passionately. Gentlemen of the Petchórin¹

¹ The hero of Lérmontoff's famous novel: “A Hero of Our Times.”—TRANSLATOR.

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school will tell you that we always love those who themselves possess very little capacity for loving; but it seems to *me* that all mothers love their children, especially those who are absent. Then I met Rúdin abroad. There a gentlewoman had tacked herself on to him—one of our Russian women, a sort of blue-stocking, no longer either young or pretty, as is fitting for a blue-stocking. He bothered about with her for quite a long time, and then abandoned her, or, no what am I saying? pardon me!—she abandoned him. And then I dropped him. That is all.”

Lezhnyóff relapsed into silence, passed his hand across his brow, and sank into an arm-chair as though fatigued.

“Do you know what, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch?” began Alexándra Pávlovna. “I perceive that you are a malicious man; really, you are no better than Pigásoff. I am convinced that everything you have said is true, that you have invented nothing, and yet in what an unfavourable light you have represented it all! That poor old woman, her devotion, her lonely death! That lady! What is the use of all that? Do you know that it is possible to depict the life of the best of men in such colours, and, without adding anything, observe, that any one would be horrified! Really, that also is calumny, in its way.”

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Lezhnyóff rose, and again began to pace the room.

“I had not the slightest desire to make you feel horrified, Alexándra Pávlovna,” he said at last. “I am not a calumniator. However,” he added, after a little reflection, “there really is a certain amount of truth in what you say. I have not calumniated Rúdin; but—who knows?—perhaps he has succeeded in effecting a change in himself since then; perhaps I have been unjust toward him.”

“Ah! There, you see! . . . So now promise me that you will renew your acquaintance with him, that you will learn to know him well, and then you shall tell me your definitive opinion of him.”

“So be it. . . . But why are you silent, Ser-gyéi Pávlitch?”

Volýntzeff started and raised his head, as though he had been awakened from sleep.

“What is there for me to say? I do not know him. And, besides, my head aches to-day.”

“Thou really art rather pale to-day,” remarked Alexándra Pávlovna; “art thou well?”

“My head aches,” repeated Volýntzeff, and left the room.

Alexándra Pávlovna and Lezhnyóff gazed after him and exchanged a glance, but said nothing to each other. What was going on in Volýntzeff’s heart was no secret either to him or to her.

VI

MORE than two months elapsed. During the whole course of that time Rúdin hardly left Dárya Mikhaílovna's house. She could not get along without him. It had become a necessity for her to talk to him about herself, to listen to his arguments. One day he made an attempt to depart, on the pretext that all his money was exhausted. She gave him five hundred rubles. He also borrowed a couple of hundred rubles from Volýntzeff. Pigásoff called upon Dárya Mikhaílovna much more rarely than before. Rúdin overwhelmed him with his presence. However, Pigásoff was not the only one to experience this sense of being overwhelmed.

“I don't like that clever fellow,” he was wont to say; “he expresses himself unnaturally—for all the world like a personage in a Russian novel. He will say ‘I,’ and pause with emotion. . . . ‘I,’ says he, ‘I . . .’ He always uses such long words. If you sneeze, he will immediately begin to demonstrate to you precisely why you sneezed and why you did not cough. . . . If he praises you, it's exactly as though he were promoting you in rank. . . . He will begin to revile him-

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self, and will besmear himself with mud. Well, you think to yourself, now he will not look at God's daylight. Not a bit of it; he will even get jolly, as though he had been treating himself to bitter vodka."

Pandalévsky was afraid of Rúdin, and courted him cautiously. Volýntzeff found himself on strange terms with him. Rúdin called him a knight, and lauded him to his face and behind his back; but Volýntzeff could not bring himself to like Rúdin, and on every occasion experienced an involuntary impatience and vexation when the latter undertook, in his presence, to discuss his merits. "Is n't he laughing at me?" he thought, and his heart stirred within him with animosity. Volýntzeff tried to master his feelings, but he was jealous of him and Natálya. And Rúdin himself, although he always greeted Volýntzeff noisily, although he called him a knight and borrowed money from him, could hardly be said to be well disposed toward him. It would be difficult to define precisely what these two men felt when, as they shook each other's hands in friendly wise, they gazed into each other's eyes. . . .

Basístoff continued to worship at Rúdin's shrine, and to catch every word of his on the fly. Rúdin paid very little attention to him. It happened, once, that he spent a whole morning with him, discussed with him the most important

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world-questions and -problems, and aroused in him the most lively enthusiasm; but then he dropped him. . . . It was obvious that in words only did he seek pure and devoted souls. With Lezhnyóff, who had begun to frequent Dárya Mikhaílovna's house, Rúdin did not even enter into argument, and seemed to shun him. Lezhnyóff also treated him coldly, and had not yet pronounced a definitive opinion about him, which greatly disturbed Alexándra Pávlovna. She bowed down before Rúdin; but she also trusted Lezhnyóff. Every one in Dárya Mikhaílovna's house submitted to Rúdin's whims; his slightest wish was fulfilled. The order of the daily occupations depended upon him. Not a single *partie de plaisir* was made up without him. However, he was not very fond of all sorts of sudden trips and projects, and took part in them as adults take part in children's games, with affable and somewhat bored benevolence. On the other hand, he entered into everything: he discussed with Dárya Mikhaílovna the arrangements about the estate, the rearing of children, management of property, business affairs in general; he listened to her suggestions, was not annoyed even by details, proposed reforms and innovations. Dárya Mikhaílovna went into raptures over them,—in words,—and there it ended. In the matter of managing her estate she stuck to the counsels of her steward, an elderly, one-eyed little Russian,

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a good-natured and crafty knave. "Old things are fat, young things are lean," he was wont to say, grinning composedly, and blinking his single eye.

With the exception of Dárya Mikhaílovna herself, Rúdin chatted with no one so often or so long as with Natályya. He gave her books on the sly, confided to her his plans, read her the first pages of his projected articles and works. The sense of them frequently remained inaccessible to Natályya. But Rúdin did not appear to trouble himself much about her understanding him, so long as she listened to him. His intimacy with Natályya was not quite to the taste of Dárya Mikhaílovna. But, she thought, let her chatter with him in the country. She amuses him, like a little girl. There's no great harm in it, and she will grow cleverer. . . . In Petersburg I will change all that. . . .

Dárya Mikhaílovna was mistaken. Natályya did not prattle like a little girl with Rúdin; she eagerly drank in his speeches; she tried to penetrate their meaning; she submitted all her thoughts, her doubts, to his judgment: he was her mentor, her guide. So far, only her head was seething but a young head does not seethe long alone. What sweet moments did Natályya live through when, in the park on a bench, in the light, transparent shadows of an ash-tree, Rúdin would begin to read aloud to her Goethe's

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“Faust,” Hoffmann, or the Letters of Bettina, or Novalis, pausing constantly and explaining that which seemed obscure to her! She spoke German badly, like nearly all of our young ladies, but understood it well, and Rúdin was completely immersed in German poetry, in the German romantic and philosophical world, and drew her after him into those interdicted regions. Novel, very beautiful, did they lie outspread before her attentive gaze; from the pages of the book which Rúdin held in his hands wondrous images, new, brilliant thoughts, fairly poured forth in tinkling streams into her soul and into her heart, agitated by the noble joy of grand sensations; the sacred spark of ecstasy quietly flashed up and grew into a blaze. . . .

“Tell me, Dmítzy Nikoláitch,” she began one day, as she sat at the window over her embroidery-frame; “you will go to Petersburg for the winter, will you not?”

“I do not know,” replied Rúdin, dropping upon his knees the book whose pages he was turning over. “If I collect the means, I shall go.”

He spoke languidly; he felt weary, and had remained indolent since the morning.

“It seems to me that you cannot fail to find the means?”

Rúdin shook his head.

“So it seems to you!”

And he glanced significantly aside.

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Natálya was on the point of saying something, but restrained herself.

“Look,” began Rúdin, and pointed with his hand out of the window; “you see that apple-tree? It has broken down with the weight and multitude of its own fruit. It is the true emblem of genius.”

“It broke because it had no support,” replied Natálya.

“I understand you, Natálya Alexyéevna; but it is not so easy for a man to find that support.”

“It seems to me that the sympathy of others in any case, isolation”

Natálya became slightly entangled, and blushed.

“And what shall you do in the country during the winter?” she hastily added.

“What shall I do? I shall complete my great article, you know, about the tragic in life and in art,—I narrated to you the plan of it day before yesterday,—and I shall send it to you.”

“And you will print it?”

“No.”

“Why not? For whom shall you toil?”

“How about toiling for you?”

Natálya dropped her eyes.

“That is beyond me, Dmítry Nikoláitch!”

“Permit me to ask, what is the article about?” modestly inquired Basístoff, who was sitting at a distance.

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“About the tragic in life and in art,” repeated Rúdin. “And Mr. Basístoff here shall read it also. However, I have not quite got the fundamental thought into shape yet. I have not yet rendered sufficiently clear to myself the tragic significance of love.”

Rúdin gladly and frequently talked of love. At first, at the word “love” Mlle. Boncourt started and pricked up her ears, like an aged regimental horse who hears a bugle, but later on she got used to it, and only pursed up her lips and took snuff at intervals.

“It seems to me,” remarked Natálya, timidly, “that the tragic thing about love is unhappy love.”

“Not at all,” returned Rúdin; “that is, rather, the comic side of love. . . . That question must be posed in an entirely different manner . . . one must go down deeper. . . . Love!” he continued, “everything about it is a mystery: how it comes, how it develops, how it disappears. Now it makes its appearance suddenly, indubitably, joyous as the day; again it smoulders like fire under the ashes, and makes its way like a flame in the soul, when everything is already destroyed; now it creeps into the heart, like a serpent; again, it suddenly slips out of it. . . . Yes, yes; it is a weighty question. Yes, and who loves in our day, who dares to love?”

And Rúdin relapsed into meditation.

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“Why have we not seen Sergyéi Pávlitch this long time?” he suddenly asked.

Natálya flushed up, and bent her head over her embroidery-frame.

“I do not know,” she whispered.

“What an extremely fine and noble man he is!” remarked Rúdin, rising. “He is one of the very best specimens of the genuine Russian nobleman.” . . .

Mlle. Boncourt gazed at him askance with her little French eyes.

Rúdin strolled about the room.

“Have you observed,” he asked, making a sharp turn on his heels, “that on the oak—and the oak is a sturdy tree—the old leaves fall off only when the young ones begin to force their way through?”

“Yes,” replied Natálya, slowly; “I have observed it.”

“Exactly the same thing takes place with the old love in a strong heart; it is already dead, but it still hangs on; only another, a new love, can dislodge it.”

Natálya made no reply.

“What does this mean?” she thought.

Rúdin stood still, shook his hair, and withdrew.

And Natálya went to her own room. For a long time she sat in perplexity on her little bed; for a long time she meditated on Rúdin’s last words, and suddenly clasped her hands and fell

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to weeping. What she was weeping about God only knows. She did not know herself why her tears had flowed forth so suddenly. She wiped them away, but they streamed down afresh, like water from a spring which has long been accumulating.

On that same day a conversation about Rúdin took place, also, between Alexándra Pávlovna and Lezhnyóff. At first he maintained an obstinate silence, but she was determined to obtain a categorical answer.

“I see,” she said, “that you do not like Dmítiry Nikoláitch any more than before. I have deliberately refrained from interrogating you hitherto; but now you have had an opportunity to convince yourself whether any change has taken place in him, and I wish to know why you do not like him.”

“Very well,” retorted Lezhnyóff, with his wonted coolness; “if you cannot endure the present state of things; only, see here, you must not get angry.” . . .

“Come, begin, begin.”

“And you must let me say my say to the end.”

“Very well, very well; begin.”

“Well, then, ma’am,” began Lezhnyóff, sinking down slowly on the divan. “I must inform you that I really do not like Rúdin. He is a clever man.” . . .

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“ I should think so! ”

“ He is a strikingly clever man, although, in reality, frivolous. ” . . .

“ It is easy to say that! ”

“ Although, in reality, frivolous, ” repeated Lezhnyóff; “ but that ’s no harm; we are all frivolous people. I do not even blame him for being a despot in soul, lazy, not very well informed. ” . . .

Alexáandra Pávlovna clasped her hands.

“ Not very well informed! Rúdin! ” she exclaimed.

“ Not very well informed, ” repeated Lezhnyóff, in precisely the same tone as before; “ he is fond of living at the expense of others, he is playing a part, and so forth . . . all that is in the common order of things. But the ugly thing about it is that he is as cold as ice. ”

“ He, that fiery spirit, cold! ” interrupted Alexáandra Pávlovna.

“ Yes, cold as ice, and he knows it and pretends to be fiery. The bad part of it is, ” continued Lezhnyóff, gradually becoming animated, “ that he is playing a dangerous game,—not dangerous for himself, of course; he would not stake a kopék or a hair on a card himself, but others stake their souls. ” . . .

“ Of whom—of what are you talking? I do not understand you, ” said Alexáandra Pávlovna.

“ The bad point is that he is not honest; for

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he is a clever man. He must know the worth of his own words; but he utters them as though they cost him something. He is eloquent, there is no disputing that; only his eloquence is not Russian. Yes, and, in conclusion, it is pardonable for a youth to talk eloquently, but at his age it is disgraceful to take pleasure in the sound of his own speeches. It is disgraceful to show off!"

"It seems to me, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch, that for the hearer it makes no difference whether one shows off or not. . . ."

"Pardon me, Alexándra Pávlovna, it does make a difference. One person will say a word to me and it will pierce me through and through; another person will say the same word, or one even more eloquent, and I will not care a jot about it. Why is it thus?"

"That is to say, *you* will not care a jot," interrupted Alexándra Pávlovna.

"Yes, I will not care a jot," retorted Lezhnyóff. "I will not even prick up my ears, although, perhaps, I do possess large ears. The fact is that Rúdin's words remain mere words, and they never will become deeds; and, in the meanwhile, those same words may agitate, may ruin a young heart."

"But of whom—of whom are you speaking, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch?"

Lezhnyóff paused.

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“ You wish to know of whom I am speaking? Of Natálya Alexyéevna.”

Alexáandra Pávlovna was disturbed for a moment, but immediately laughed.

“ Good gracious!” she began, “ what strange ideas you always have! Natálya is still a child; and, after all, if there should be anything in it, can you possibly suppose that Dárya Mikhaílovna”

“ Dárya Mikhaílovna, in the first place, is an egoist, and lives for herself; and, in the second place, she is so confident of her skill in rearing children that it would never enter her head to feel uneasy about them. Fie! How can that be! One moment, one majestic glance, and all will be reduced to servile obedience. That’s the idea of that lady, who imagines that she is a female Mæcenas, and a clever person, and God knows what besides; while, as a matter of fact, she is nothing but a horrid, worldly old woman. And Natálya is not a baby; believe me, she meditates more frequently and more profoundly than you and I do. And she—that honest, passionate, and fiery nature—must needs run up against such an actor, such a flirt! But that is the way things go.”

“ A flirt! Is it he that you are calling a flirt?”

“ Of course it is he. . . . Come, now, tell me yourself, Alexáandra Pávlovna, what sort of part is he playing at Dárya Mikhaílovna’s? To be an idol, an oracle in a house, to meddle with the

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arrangements, in the family scandals and gossip—is that worthy of a man?”

Alexáandra Pávlovna gazed into Lezhnyóff's face with amazement.

“I do not recognise you, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch,” she said. “You have grown crimson; you are agitated. Really, there must be something else concealed under this.”

“Well, and so there is! Just tell a woman something according to your conviction, and she will not rest easy until she devises some petty, irrelevant cause or other which makes you talk in precisely that way and not otherwise.”

Alexáandra Pávlovna waxed angry.

“Bravo, Monsieur Lezhnyóff! You are beginning to attack women to match Mr. Pigásoff; but, say what you please, however penetrating you may be, all the same it is difficult for me to believe that you can have understood everybody and everything in so brief a space of time. It seems to me that you are mistaken. According to you, Rúdin is a sort of Tartuffe.”

“The point is that he is not even Tartuffe. Tartuffe at least knew what he was aiming at; but that fellow, with all his cleverness”

“What of him? What of him? Finish your sentence, you unjust, hateful man!”

Lezhnyóff rose.

“Listen, Alexáandra Pávlovna,” he began; “it is you who are unjust. It is not I. You are

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vexed with me for my harsh judgment of Rúdin; I have a right to speak sharply about him. It is possible that I have purchased that right at anything but a small cost. I know him well; we lived together for a long time. Remember that I promised to narrate to you some time the story of our life in Moscow. Evidently it must be done now. But will you have the patience to hear me out?"

"Speak, speak!"

"Well, at your service."

Lezhnyóff began to pace the room with deliberate strides, halting from time to time and bending his head forward.

"Perhaps you know," he began, "and perhaps you do not know, that I was early left an orphan, and already in my seventeenth year I had no older person in authority over me. I lived in my aunt's house in Moscow, and did what I pleased. I was rather a frivolous and selfish youngster, was fond of showing off and of bragging. On entering the university, I behaved like a school-boy, and soon got into a row. I will not tell you about that; it is not worth while. I lied, and lied in a pretty odious way. . . . The matter was brought to light; I was convicted and disgraced. . . . I lost my self-control, and cried like a child. This took place in the rooms of one of my acquaintances, in the presence of many comrades. All began to laugh loudly at me—all, with the

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exception of one student, who, take note, had been more indignant at me than the rest so long as I was stubborn and would not confess my lie. Whether he felt sorry for me, or for what reason, at all events he put his arm in mine and led me to his own quarters."

"That was Rúdin?" asked Alexándra Pávlovna.

"No; it was not Rúdin. . . . It was a man; he is dead now . . . it was a remarkable man. His name was Pokórsky. I am not able to describe him in a few words, but if one once begins to talk about him he does not care to talk about any one else. Pokórsky lived in a small, low-ceiled chamber, in the upper story of a tiny, ancient wooden house. He was very poor, and eked out his slender means, after a fashion, by giving lessons. There were times when he could not treat a guest even to a cup of tea, and his only couch was so broken down that it resembled a boat. But, in spite of these inconveniences, a great number of persons visited him. Every one loved him; he drew hearts to him. You will not believe how sweet and merry it was to sit in his poverty-stricken little chamber. At his quarters I made acquaintance with Rúdin. He had already dropped his petty prince."

"What was there so peculiar about that Pokórsky?" asked Alexándra Pávlovna.

"How shall I explain it to you? Poetry and

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truth—those were what attracted every one to him. Though possessed of a clear, broad mind, he was as amiable and amusing as a child. To this day, the sound of his limpid laughter rings in my ears; and, at the same time, he

“Blazed like the midnight taper
Before the shrine of good . . .

That was the way one half-crazy and most charming poet of our circle expressed himself about him.”

“But how did he talk?” Alexándra Pávlovna put another question.

“He talked well when he was in the right mood, but not astonishingly. Even then, Rúdin was twenty times more eloquent than he.”

Lezhnyóff halted and folded his arms.

“Pokórsky and Rúdin did not resemble each other. There was a great deal more brilliancy and crash about Rúdin, and, if you like, more enthusiasm. He appeared to be far more gifted than Pokórsky, but, as a matter of fact, he was a wretched creature in comparison with him. Rúdin could develop any idea in a superior manner; he argued in a masterly way, but his ideas did not have their birth in his own head; he took them from others, especially from Pokórsky. In aspect, Pokórsky was quiet and gentle, even weak, was madly fond of women and of going on

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sprees, and allowed no one to affront him. Rúdin appeared to be full of fire, boldness, life: but in his soul he was cold, and almost timid, until his self-love was wounded; then he became raving mad. He tried in every way to conquer people for himself, but he conquered them in the name of general principles and ideas, and really exercised a powerful influence on many. No one loved him, it is true; I was the only one, perhaps, who became attached to him. They endured his yoke. . . . All surrendered themselves to Pokórsky of their own accord. On the other hand, Rúdin never refused to talk and argue with the first person who came to hand. . . . He had not read any too many books, but, at all events, many more than Pokórsky had, and than all the rest of us had; he had, in addition, a systematic mind, a vast memory, and you know that that takes effect on young people. 'Hey there, give me deductions, sum totals, no matter if they are incorrect, only give me totals!' A thoroughly conscientious man is not suited to that. Try to tell young people that you cannot give them the whole truth, because you yourself are not in possession of it, and the young people will not even listen to you. . . . But neither can you deceive them. It is indispensable that you yourself should at least half believe that you are in possession of the truth. . . . That is why Rúdin acted so powerfully on us fellows. You see, I just told you that he

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had read a little, but he had read philosophical books, and his head was so constructed that from what he had read he immediately extracted all the generalities, grasped the very root of the matter, and then traced straight, brilliant lines of thought from it in all directions, and threw open spiritual perspectives. Our circle then consisted, to speak the honest truth, of boys. Philosophy, art, science, life itself, were all mere words to us, if you like,—even illusory,—very beautiful, but scattered, isolated conceptions. We did not recognise any common bond between these conceptions, any common law of the universe. We felt none, although we talked about it in an obscure way, and endeavoured to form an idea of it. . . . In listening to Rúdin, it seemed to us, for the first time, that we had grasped that common bond, that the curtain had at last been lifted. Let us admit that he did not utter his own ideas. What of that? Yet harmonious order was installed in all we knew, all the scattered facts suddenly became united, ranged themselves in order, waxed great before our eyes, like a building. Everything shone brightly, spirit breathed everywhere. . . . Nothing remained senseless, fortuitous; in everything an intelligent necessity and beauty were expressed, everything acquired a clear and, at the same time, mysterious significance; every separate phenomenon of life rang out in harmonious accord; and we ourselves, with a certain

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holy fear of adoration, with sweet quaking at the heart, felt ourselves to be living vessels of the eternal truth, its instruments, bound to something grand. . . . You do not find all this ridiculous?"

"Not in the least!" replied Alexándra Pávlovna, slowly. "Why do you think so? I do not entirely comprehend you, but I do not find it ridiculous."

"Of course we have succeeded in gaining sense since those days," went on Lezhnyóff; "all that may now strike us as childish. . . . But, I repeat it, we were then indebted to Rúdin for a great deal. Pokórsky was incomparably, indisputably above him; but he sometimes felt slothful, and held his peace. He was a nervous, sickly man; on the other hand, when he did unfold his wings—my God! whither did he not soar! Into the very depths and azure of heaven! But in Rúdin, in that handsome and stately young fellow, there was a lot of pettiness; he even indulged in gossip; he had a passion for meddling with everything, defining and explaining everything. His bustling activity never ceased . . . a political nature, ma'am. I am speaking of him as I knew him then. But, unhappily, he has not changed. On the other hand, he has not altered his beliefs . . . in thirty years! . . . Not every one can say that of himself."

"Sit down," said Alexándra Pávlovna, "why

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do you stalk back and forth in the room like a pendulum?"

"I feel better so," replied Lezhnyóff. "Well, ma'am, when I got into Pokórsky's set, I must inform you, Alexándra Pávlovna, I was completely regenerated: I became humble, I asked questions, I studied, I worshipped—in a word, it was exactly as though I had entered some temple or other. Yes; and, in fact, when I recall our meetings—well, by heavens! there was a great deal that was good, even touching, about them. Just imagine for yourself: five or six young fellows have gathered together; one tallow candle is burning, very bad tea is served, and with it ancient—very ancient—rusks; and you ought to have seen all our faces, you ought to have heard our speeches! In every man's eyes there is rapture, his cheeks flame, his heart beats, and we talk about God, about truth, about the future of mankind, about poetry. We sometimes talk nonsense, we wax enthusiastic over trifles; but where's the harm in that? . . . Pokórsky sits, with his feet tucked up, with his pale cheek propped on his hand; but his eyes fairly flash. Rúdin stands in the middle of the room, and talks,—talks most beautifully,—precisely like the young Demosthenes before the roaring sea; the dishevelled poet, Subbótin, gives vent, from time to time, and as though in his sleep, to abrupt ex-

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clamations; a student of forty, the son of the German pastor Scheller, who bore among us the reputation of a profound thinker, thanks to his everlasting silence, which was never broken by anything whatever, holds his peace somehow in a peculiarly solemn way; even the jolly Shstchítóff, the Aristophanes of our assemblies, is quiet and merely grins; two or three novices are listening with triumphant enjoyment. . . . And the night flies on softly and smoothly, as on wings. And now the grey morning begins to appear and we disperse, moved, cheerful, honest, sober (liquor was not even mentioned among us then), with a certain agreeable languor in the soul . . . and we even gaze at the stars in a confiding sort of way, as though they had become nearer and more comprehensible. . . . Ekh! that was a glorious time, and I am not willing to believe that it was wasted. And it was not wasted—it was not wasted, even for those whom life rendered commonplace later on. . . . How many times has it been my lot to encounter such men, my former comrades! It seems as though a man had become a perfect wild beast, but no sooner do you mention Pokórsky's name in his presence than all the remnants of nobility begin to stir within him, just as though you had uncorked a forgotten phial of perfume in a dark, dirty room. . . .”

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Lezhnyóff ceased; his colourless face had become flushed.

“But why? When did you quarrel with Rúdin?” said Alexándra Pávlovna, gazing at Lezhnyóff in surprise.

“I did not quarrel with him, but I parted from him when I came to know him definitively abroad. But I might have quarrelled with him even in Moscow. He played me a nasty trick even then.”

“What was it?”

“It was this: I . . . how shall I express it to you? . . . it does not suit my figure . . . but I was always greatly inclined to fall in love.”

“You?”

“Yes, I. It is strange, is it not? Nevertheless, so it is. . . . Well, ma’am, so at that time I fell in love with a very charming young girl. . . . But why do you look at me in that way? I might tell you a far more surprising thing about myself.”

“What is that thing, permit me to ask?”

“Well, it was this sort of thing. In those Moscow days, I used to go to nocturnal rendezvous . . . with whom do you suppose? . . . with a young linden-tree at the end of my garden. I embraced its slender, shapely bole, and it seemed to me that I was embracing all nature, and my heart swelled and melted, as though, in actual fact, all nature were merged in it. . . . That’s the sort of fellow I used to be! . . . But what

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of that? Perhaps you think that I did not write verses? I did, ma'am, and even composed a whole drama in imitation of 'Manfred.' Among the acting personages there was a spectre with blood on its breast,—and not its own blood either, observe, but the blood of mankind in general. . . . Yes, ma'am; yes, ma'am; pray be not amazed. . . . But I began to tell you about my love. I had made the acquaintance of a certain young girl. . . .”

“And you ceased to go to the tryst with the linden-tree?” asked Alexándra Pávlovna.

“I did. The girl was a very amiable and very pretty creature, with clear, merry little eyes and a ringing voice.”

“You describe well,” remarked Alexándra Pávlovna, with a smile.

“And you are a very severe critic,” retorted Lezhnyóff. “Well, ma'am, this young girl lived with her old father. . . . But I will not enter into details. I will merely tell you that the girl was, in reality, extremely amiable—she was forever pouring out three or four glasses of tea for you, when you had asked for only half a glass. . . . On the third day after I had first met her I was already aglow, and on the seventh day I could contain myself no longer and made a clean breast of it all to Rúdin. It is impossible for a young man in love not to babble, and I confessed the whole thing to Rúdin. I was then completely

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under his influence, and that influence I will say, without circumlocution, was beneficial in many respects. He was the first one who did not scorn me, who rubbed the corners off me. I loved Pokórsky passionately, and felt a certain awe of his spiritual purity; but I stood nearer to Rúdin. On learning of my love, he went into indescribable raptures; he congratulated me, embraced me, and immediately set to work to instruct me, to explain to me the full importance of my new situation. I pricked up my ears. . . . Well, you already know how he can talk. His words had a remarkable effect on me. I suddenly conceived an amazing respect for myself; I assumed a serious aspect, and ceased to laugh. I remember that I even began to walk more cautiously, as though I had in my bosom a vessel filled with precious liquid which I was afraid of spilling. . . . I was very happy; the more so, as I was openly favoured. Rúdin expressed a desire to make the acquaintance of the object of my affections; and I myself almost insisted on introducing him."

"Well, I see—I see now what the point is," interrupted Alexándra Pávlovna. "Rúdin robbed you of the object of your affections, and you have not been able to forgive him for that to this day. . . . I will wager that I am not mistaken."

"And you would lose your wager, Alexándra Pávlovna. You are mistaken. Rúdin did not

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rob me of the object of my affections, and he did not try to do so; but, nevertheless, he ruined my happiness,—although, judging the matter coolly, I am now ready to express my thanks to him for that. But at that time I nearly went crazy. Rúdin had not the slightest desire to injure me. On the contrary. But, as a consequence of his cursed habit of pinning down every movement in life—in his own life and in that of others—with a word, as one does a butterfly with a pin, he undertook to explain to both of us our selves, our relations, how we ought to behave; despotically made us render him an account of our feelings and thoughts; praised us, reproved us, even entered into correspondence with us. Just imagine! . . . Well, he completely disconcerted us. I would hardly have married my young lady at that time (I had enough common sense left in me for that), but at least she and I might have passed a few glorious months together, after the fashion of Paul and Virginia; and then misunderstandings would have arisen, and all sorts of strained relations,—all sorts of nonsense would have come along, in short. It ended thus—that one fine morning Rúdin argued himself into the conviction that it was his most sacred duty, as a friend, to inform the old father of everything,—and he did it.”

“You don’t say so!” exclaimed Alexándra Pávlovna.

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“ Yes, and observe that he did it with my consent—that ’s the remarkable thing about it! I remember to this day what a chaos I carried about then in my head; everything was simply whirling round and presenting itself as though in a camera-obscura; white appeared to be black, and black white; falsehood seemed truth, and fantasy seemed duty. Eh! Even now I am ashamed to recall it. As for Rúdin, he was not cast down not a bit of it; he used to soar along, like a swallow over a pond, through all sorts of misunderstandings and complications.”

“ And so you parted from your young girl?” inquired Alexándra Pávlovna, ingenuously inclining her head on one side and elevating her eyebrows.

“ I did and did it in a bad way, with insulting awkwardness, publicly, and that without any necessity for publicity. . . . I wept myself, and she wept, and the devil knows what took place. Some sort of a Gordian knot had got tied, and it was necessary to cut it,—and it hurt. But everything in the world settles itself for the best. She married a fine man, and is thriving now. . . .”

“ But confess, you cannot yet pardon Rúdin ,” Alexándra Pávlovna began.

“ Not a bit of it!” interrupted Lezhnyóff. “ I cried like a child when I saw him off

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on his way abroad. But, to tell the truth, the seed was planted in my soul at that time. And when I met him afterward abroad, . . . well, I had grown older then, . . . Rúdin appeared to me in his true light."

"What, precisely, was it that you discovered in him?"

"Why, everything which I have been saying to you for about an hour past. But enough of him. I only wished to prove to you that if I judge him severely, it is not because I do not know him. . . . As for Natálya Alexyéevna, I shall waste no superfluous words on her; but do you direct your attention to your brother."

"To my brother! What do you mean?"

"Why, look at him. Do you notice nothing?" Alexándra Pávlovna dropped her eyes.

"You are right," she said; "it is quite true . . . for some time past . . . my brother has not been like himself. But is it possible that you think . . ."

"Hush! I think he is coming this way," ejaculated Lezhnyóff, in a whisper. "But Natálya is not a child, believe me, although, unfortunately, she is as inexperienced as a child. You will see, that young girl will astonish us all."

"In what way?"

"In this way . . . do you know that it is precisely that sort of girls who drown themselves, take poison, and so forth? Never mind if she is

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quiet; her passions are strong, and her character—is the same, óï, óï!”

“Well, it strikes me that you are dropping into poetry. To such a phlegmatic man as you I appear like a volcano, I suppose.”

“Well, no!” replied Lezhnyóff, with a smile. “And as for character,—you have no character at all, thank God!”

“What sort of impertinence is *this*?”

“This? It is the greatest compliment, I assure you. . . .”

Volýntzeff entered and looked suspiciously at Lezhnyóff and his sister. He had grown thin of late. Both of them began to talk to him, but he hardly smiled in response to their jests, and looked—as Pigásóff had once expressed himself concerning him—like a sorrowful hare. But, probably, there never yet has existed in the world a man who, at least once in his life, has not looked still worse than that. Volýntzeff felt that Natálya was receding from him, and, along with her, it seemed that the earth was slipping out from under his feet.

VII

THE next day was Sunday, and Natálya rose late. On the previous day she had been very taciturn until evening, being secretly ashamed of her tears, and she had slept very badly. As she sat, half dressed, before her little piano, she now struck chords which were barely audible in order not to awaken Mlle. Boncourt, now leaned her brow against the cold keys and remained motionless for a long time. She kept thinking all the while, not of Rúdin himself, but of some word which he had uttered, and was completely absorbed in her meditation. From time to time, Volýntzeff recurred to her mind. She knew that he loved her. But her thought instantly deserted him. . . . She felt a strange agitation. In the morning she hastily dressed herself, went downstairs, and, after bidding her mother good morning, seized advantage of an opportunity and went off alone into the garden. . . . The day was a hot, bright, radiant day, in spite of showers at intervals. Athwart the blue sky low-hanging, smoke-coloured clouds floated swimmingly without concealing the sun, and from time to time dropped upon the fields abundant streams of a

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sudden and momentary downpour. The large, glittering drops showered down swiftly, with a certain sharp sound, like diamonds; the sun sparkled through the fine meshes of their network; the grass, shortly before agitated by the breeze, did not stir, thirstily drinking in the moisture; the soaked trees languidly trembled through all their little leaves; the birds did not cease singing, and it was a joy to hear their voluble chirping in the fresh rustle and murmur of the passing rain. The blazing roads smoked, and became somewhat streaked under the sharp blows of the frequent sprinklings. But now the thunder-cloud passed over, a little breeze began to flutter its wings, the grass began to be suffused with hues of emerald and gold, the leaves of the trees, clinging one to another, became transparent. A powerful odour arose everywhere around.

The sky had almost completely cleared when Natálya went into the garden. It breathed forth freshness and tranquillity—that gentle and happy tranquillity which reacts upon the heart of man with the sweet languor of mysterious sympathy and undefined desires.

Natálya walked along the edge of the pond, down the long avenue of silvery poplars. Suddenly, in front of her, as though from the earth, Rúdin started up.

She became confused. He gazed into her face.

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“ You are alone? ” he asked.

“ Yes, I am alone, ” replied Natályá; “ but I came out only for a minute. . . . I must go back to the house. ”

“ I will accompany you. ”

And he walked by her side.

“ You seem to be sad? ” he said.

“ I? And I was about to remark to you that you seem to be out of sorts. ”

“ Perhaps. . . . I am that way sometimes. It is more excusable in me than in you. ”

“ Why? Do you think that I have nothing to feel sad about? ”

“ At your age one must enjoy life. ”

Natályá advanced several paces in silence.

“ Dmítiry Nikoláitch! ” she said.

“ What? ”

“ Do you remember do you remember the comparison which you made yesterday? You remember about the oak? ”

“ Well, yes; I remember it. What of it? ”

Natályá cast a stealthy glance at Rúdin.

“ Why did you what did you mean to say by that comparison? ”

Rúdin bowed his head, and fixed his eyes on the distance.

“ Natályá Alexyéevna! ” he began, with that repressed and significant expression peculiar to him, which always made the hearer think that Rúdin was not uttering the tenth part of that

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which was oppressing his soul.—“ Natálya Alexyéevna! you may have observed that I speak very little of my past. There are some strings which I do not touch at all. My heart what need is there for any one to know what has taken place in it? To expose that on show has always seemed to me a sacrilege. But with you I am frank: you arouse my confidence. . . . I cannot conceal from you that I have lived and suffered like every one else. . . . When and how? It is not worth while to talk about that; but my heart has experienced many joys and many sorrows.”

Rúdin paused for a little.

“ What I said to you yesterday,” he went on, “ may be, in some degree, applied to me—to my present position. But, again, this is not worth mentioning. That side of my life has already vanished. All that remains for me now is to drag myself along the sultry, dusty road, from post-ing-station to station, in a jolting peasant’s cart. . . . When I shall arrive, and whether I shall arrive,—God knows. . . . Let us, rather, talk about you.”

“ Is it possible, Dmítry Nikoláitch,” Natálya interrupted him, “ that you expect nothing from life? ”

“ Oh, no! I expect a great deal—but not for myself. . . . Activity, the bliss of activity, I shall never renounce; but I have renounced en-

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joyment. My hopes, my dreams, and my own personal happiness have nothing in common. Love" (at this word he shrugged his shoulders) —"love is not for me. I . . . am not worthy of it. The woman who loves has a right to demand everything from a man, and I can no longer give everything. Moreover, pleasing is an affair of youth; I am too old. How should I turn other people's heads? God grant that I may keep my own on my shoulders!"

"I understand," said Natálya; "he who is striving toward a grand goal must no longer think of himself; but is not a woman capable of valuing such a man? It seems to me, on the contrary, that a woman will sooner turn her back on an egoist. All young men—those youths, according to you, are egoists—all are engrossed only with themselves, even when they love. Believe me, a woman is not only capable of understanding self-sacrifice: she herself understands how to sacrifice herself."

Natálya's cheeks flushed slightly, and her eyes sparkled. Until her acquaintance with Rúdin, she would never have uttered such a long speech and with such fervour.

"You have more than once heard my opinion as to the vocation of women," returned Rúdin, with a condescending smile. "You know that, in my opinion, Jeanne d'Arc alone could have saved France. . . . But that is not the point. I

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wanted to have a talk with you. You are standing on the threshold of life. . . . To discuss your future will be cheerful and not unfruitful. . . . Listen! You know that I am your friend; I take in you almost the interest of a blood-relation . . . and, therefore, I hope you will not consider my question indiscreet. Tell me, is your heart perfectly calm so far?"

Natálya blushed all over and said nothing. Rúdin halted, and she halted also.

"You are not angry with me?" he asked.

"No," she said; "but I did not in the least expect . . ."

"However," he went on, "you need not answer me. Your secret is known to me."

Natálya glanced at him almost with terror.

"Yes . . . yes; I know who pleases you. And I must say that you could not have made a better choice. He is a very fine man; he will know how to prize you. He is not ruffled with life—he is simple and transparent of soul—he will make you happy."

"Of whom are you speaking, Dmítý Nikolaítch?"

"As if you did not understand of whom I am speaking! Of Volýntzeff, of course. Well, now, is that incorrect?"

Natálya turned away a little from Rúdin. She was completely disconcerted.

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“Does not he love you? Good gracious! He never takes his eyes off you; he watches your every movement; yes—and, after all, can love be concealed? And can you be ill disposed toward him? So far as I can see, your mother also is pleased with him your choice. . . .”

“Dmítiry Nikoláitch,” Natályya interrupted him, in her confusion extending her hand to a bush which stood near by, “really, I find it so awkward to talk about this; but I assure you . . . you are mistaken.”

“I am mistaken?” repeated Rúdin.
“I think not. It is not long since I made your acquaintance; but I already know you well. What is the meaning of the change which I perceive in you—which I clearly perceive? Are you the same as I found you six weeks ago? No, Natályya Alexyéevna, your heart is not at ease.”

“Possibly,” replied Natályya, in a hardly audible tone; “but you are mistaken, nevertheless.”

“How so?” inquired Rúdin.

“Leave me; do not ask me!” returned Natályya, and with swift steps she took her way homeward.

She was terrified at all which she suddenly felt within her.

Rúdin overtook and stopped her.

“Natályya Alexyéevna!” he began. “This conversation cannot end thus; it is too important

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for me also. . . . How am I to understand you?"

"Leave me!" repeated Natálya.

"Natálya Alexyéevna, for God's sake!"

Agitation was depicted on Rúdin's countenance. He had turned pale.

"You understand everything; you must understand me, too!" said Natálya, tore her hand from him, and walked on without glancing back.

"Only one word!" cried Rúdin after her.

She paused, but did not turn round.

"You asked me what I meant to say by my comparison of yesterday. Know then—I will not deceive you. I was speaking of myself—of my past—and of you."

"What? Of me?"

"Yes, of you; I repeat it, I will not deceive you. . . . You know now of what feeling—of what new feeling I was speaking then. . . . Until to-day I could never have made up my mind"

Natálya suddenly covered her face with her hands, and ran toward the house.

She was so shaken by the unexpected outcome of the conversation with Rúdin that she did not notice Volýntzeff, past whom she ran. He was standing motionless, with his back resting against a tree. A quarter of an hour earlier he had arrived at Dárya Mikhaílovna's, and had found her in the drawing-room; he had said a word or two,

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then had retreated unobserved and set out in search of Natálya. Guided by the instinct peculiar to people in love, he had gone straight into the garden, and had hit upon her and Rúdin at the very moment when she tore her hand from him. Everything went dark before Volýntzeff's eyes. After following Natálya with his glance, he separated himself from the tree and took a couple of steps, not knowing whither he was going or why. Rúdin caught sight of him as he came on a level with him. Each man looked the other in the eye, bowed, and parted in silence.

“This shall not end so,” both said to themselves.

Volýntzeff walked to the very end of the garden. He felt bitter and disgusted, and on his heart lay a burden of lead, and from time to time his blood rose viciously. A fine rain again began to patter down. Rúdin returned to his own room. And he was not at ease; his thoughts were circling round in a whirlwind. Unexpected contact with a young, honourable, trustful soul will perturb any one.

At table everything went wrong somehow. Natálya, ghastly pale, could hardly hold herself on her chair, and did not raise her eyes. Volýntzeff, as usual, sat beside her, and from time to time made a constrained remark to her. It so happened that Pigásoff was dining on that day with Dárya Mikhaílovna. He talked more at table

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than any one else. Among other things, he undertook to prove that men, like dogs, can be divided into bob-tailed and long-tailed. "People are bob-tailed," he said, "both by birth and through their own fault. The bob-tailed are badly off; nothing succeeds with them; they have not confidence in themselves. But the man who has a long, bushy tail is the happy man. He may be both worse and weaker than the bob-tailed man, but he has confidence in himself; he spreads out his tail and everybody admires it. And just that is deserving of amazement, for the tail is an utterly useless part of the body, you must admit; of what use can a tail be? But every one judges of your merits by your tail.

"I," he added, with a sigh, "belong to the category of the bob-tailed, and the most vexatious part of it all is that I cut off my own tail."

"That is, you mean to say," remarked Rúdin, carelessly, "that which La Rochefoucauld said long before your day: 'Believe in yourself, and others will believe in you.' What the object is in mixing a tail up with it, I do not understand."

"You must permit every one," began Volýntzeff, sharply— "you must permit every one to express himself as he sees fit. People talk about despotism. In my opinion, there is no worse despotism than that of the so-called clever people. May the devil take them!"

Volýntzeff's sally astonished everybody; all re-

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lapsed into silence. Rúdin tried to look at him, but could not sustain his gaze, turned away, smiled, and did not open his mouth.

“Ehe! and you’re a bob-tailed one also!” thought Pigásoff; but Natálya’s soul sank within her for terror. Dárya Mikhaílovna stared at Volýntzeff for a long time in amazement, and at last was the first to speak. She began to tell a story about some remarkable dog or other belonging to Minister N. N.

Volýntzeff went away soon after dinner. As he was bidding farewell to Natálya, he could endure it no longer, and said to her:

“Why are you so confused, as though you were guilty? You cannot be guilty in any one’s eyes!”

Natálya understood nothing, and only followed him with her eyes. Before tea, Rúdin approached her, and, bending over the table as though he were examining the newspapers, he whispered:

“All this is like a dream, is it not? I must see you alone, without fail, if only for a moment.” He turned to Mlle. Boncourt. “Here,” he said to her, “is the *feuilleton* which you were looking for.” And, again bending toward Natálya, he added in a whisper: “Try to be by the terrace in the lilac arbour about ten o’clock. I shall be waiting for you.”

Pigásoff was the hero of the evening. Rúdin

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yielded the field to him. He greatly amused Dárya Mikhaílovna; first he told a story about one of his neighbours who, after having been hen-pecked by his wife for thirty years, had become so effeminate that one day, when he was crossing a small puddle in Pigásoff's presence, he put his hand behind him and pulled aside the skirts of his coat, as women do with their petticoats. Then he turned to another landed proprietor who had at first been a Freemason, then a misanthrope, and then had wanted to become a banker.

"How did you come to be a Freemason, Philipp Stepánitch?" Pigásoff asked him.

"Every one knows how: I wore a long nail on my fifth finger."

But Dárya Mikhaílovna laughed most of all when Pigásoff set out to argue about love, and to assert that women had sighed after him; also, that one fiery German girl had even called him "appetising little Afrikán" and "my dear little falcon." Dárya Mikhaílovna laughed, but Pigásoff was not lying; he really had a right to boast of his conquests. He declared that nothing can be easier than to make any woman you like fall in love with you. All that is necessary is to repeat to her, for ten days in succession, that paradise is in her lips and bliss in her eyes, and that all other women are simple rags in comparison with her; and on the eleventh day she herself will say that paradise is in her mouth and bliss

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in her eyes, and will fall in love with you. All sorts of things happen in the world. Who knows? Perhaps Pigásoff was right.

At half-past nine Rúdin was already in the arbour. The little stars had just come forth in the pale and distant depths of the sky; the west was still aglow—there the horizon seemed both clearer and purer; the crescent moon gleamed like gold athwart the black network of the weeping birch. The other trees either stood like surly giants, with a thousand apertures after the fashion of eyes, or were merged into dense, gloomy masses. Not a single leaf was stirring; the topmost branches of the lilacs and acacias seemed to be listening to something and stretching themselves out into the warm air. The house rose in a dark mass hard by; the long, illuminated windows in it were depicted as spots of reddish light. The evening was mild and still, but a repressed, passionate sigh seemed to hover in this stillness.

Rúdin stood with his arms folded on his breast and listened with strained attention. His heart beat violently, and he involuntarily held his breath. At last light, hurried footsteps became audible, and Natályá entered the arbour.

Rúdin rushed toward her, and seized her hands. They were as cold as ice.

“Natályá Alexyéevna!” he began, in an agitated whisper, “I wanted to see you . . . I could not wait until to-morrow. I must tell you

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—what I did not suspect—what I was not even conscious of this morning—I love you!”

Natálya’s hand trembled weakly in his hands.

“I love you,” he repeated; “and how could I so long deceive myself—how could I have failed long ago to divine that I love you! And you? Tell me, Natálya Alexyéevna, you?”

Natálya scarcely drew her breath.

“You see, I have come hither,” she said at last.

“No; tell me, do you love me?”

“It seems to me that I do” she whispered.

Rúdin clasped her hands still more firmly, and tried to draw her to him.

Natálya cast a swift glance around her.

“Let me go!—I am afraid—It seems to me that some one is listening to us. . . . For God’s sake, be cautious. Volýntzeff divines the truth.”

“Never mind him. You saw that I did not answer him to-day. . . . Akh, Natálya Alexyéevna, how happy I am! Now nothing shall part us.”

Natálya looked into his eyes.

“Release me,” she whispered; “it is time for me to go.”

“One moment—” began Rúdin.

“No; release me—release me!”

“You appear to be afraid of me?”

RÚDIN

“No; but I must go”

“Then repeat at least once more that”

“You say that you are happy?” inquired Natálya.

“I? There is no happier man in the world than I! Can you doubt it?”

Natálya raised her head. Very beautiful was her pale face, so noble, youthful, and agitated, in the mysterious shadows of the arbour, in the faint light which fell from the nocturnal skies.

“Do you know,” she said—“I will be yours!”

“Oh, God!” . . . exclaimed Rúdin.

But Natálya evaded him and departed. Rúdin stood still for a little while, then slowly emerged from the arbour. The moon brightly illuminated his face; over his lips strayed a smile.

“I am happy,” he ejaculated in an undertone. “Yes, I am happy,” he repeated, as though desirous of convincing himself.

He drew his body up erect, shook his curls, and walked briskly into the garden, joyously flourishing his arms.

But meanwhile the bushes were quietly parted in the lilac arbour, and Pandalévsky made his appearance. He glanced cautiously around, shook his head, compressed his lips, ejaculated significantly: “So that’s how it is, sir. This must be brought to the knowledge of Dárya Mikháilovna,” and disappeared.

VIII

ON reaching home Volýntzeff was so downcast and gloomy, answered his sister so unwillingly, and so promptly locked himself up in his study, that she decided to send a mounted messenger for Lezhnyóff. She had recourse to him on all perplexing occasions. Lezhnyóff bade the man say to her that he would come to her on the morrow.

By morning, Volýntzeff had not cheered up. After tea he was on the point of setting out for his work, but stayed at home, lay down on the divan, and began to read a book, which infrequently happened with him. Volýntzeff did not feel attracted to literature, and he was simply afraid of poetry. "That is as incomprehensible as poetry," he was wont to say, and in support of his words he quoted the following lines from the poet Aibulat:

"And till the end of sorrowful days
Nor trial proud, nor reasoning,
Shall crumple with its hand
The life of bloody forget-me-nots."

Alexáandra Pávlovna surveyed her brother with alarm, but did not disturb him with questions. A

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carriage drove up to the porch. "Well," she thought, "thank God! there is Lezhnyóff." . . . A servant entered and announced the arrival of Rúdin.

Volýntzeff flung his book on the floor and raised his head.

"Who has come?" he asked.

"Rúdin, Dmítry Nikoláitch," repeated the servant.

Volýntzeff rose.

"Ask him in," he said; "and do thou leave us, sister," he added, turning to Alexándra Pávlovna.

"But why?" she began. . . .

"I know why," he interrupted irritably; "I entreat thee."

Rúdin entered. Volýntzeff bowed coldly to him as he stood in the middle of the room, and did not offer him his hand.

"You did not expect me; confess it," began Rúdin, and laid his hat on the window-sill.

His lips quivered slightly. He felt awkward, but he endeavoured to conceal his confusion.

"I did not expect you, that is true," returned Volýntzeff; "after yesterday, I should sooner have expected some one—with a commission from you."

"I understand what you mean to convey," said Rúdin, seating himself; "and I am greatly delighted at your frankness. It is much better so.

RÚDIN

I have come to you as to a man of noble character.”

“ Cannot we dispense with compliments? ” remarked Volýntzeff.

“ I wish to explain to you why I have come.”

“ You and I are acquaintances; why should you not come to my house? Moreover, this is not the first time that you have favoured me with a visit.”

“ I have come to you as to a noble man—as to a noble man,” repeated Rúdin, “ and I now wish to submit myself to your judgment. . . . I have entire confidence in you. . . . ”

“ But what is the point? ” said Volýntzeff, who was still standing in his former position and staring gloomily at Rúdin, now and then tugging at the tips of his moustache.

“ Permit me. . . . I have come in order to have a definitive explanation; but, nevertheless, that cannot be done in an instant.”

“ Why not? ”

“ A third person is concerned here.” . . .

“ What third person? ”

“ Sergyéi Pávlitch, you understand me.”

“ Dmítrey Nikoláitch, I do not understand you in the least.”

“ It suits you. . . . ”

“ It suits me to have you speak without circumlocution! ” put in Volýntzeff.

He was beginning to be seriously angry.

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Rúdin frowned.

“Very well we are alone. . . . I must tell you—however, you probably already divine” (Volýntzeff shrugged his shoulders impatiently)—“I must tell you that I love Natályá Alexyéevna, and have the right to assume that she loves me also.”

Volýntzeff turned pale, but made no reply, walked to the window, and turned away.

“You understand, Sergyéi Pávlitch,” went on Rúdin, “that if I were not convinced”

“Upon my word,” interrupted Volýntzeff, hastily, “I have not the slightest doubt of it. . . . Very well! My good wishes! The only thing I am surprised at is, what the devil you should have taken it into your head for to favour me with a call to tell me this piece of news. What have I to do with it? What business is it of mine whom you love and who loves you? I simply cannot understand.”

Volýntzeff continued to stare out of the window. His voice sounded dull.

Rúdin rose.

“I will tell you, Sergyéi Pávlitch, why I decided to come to you, why I did not even consider that I had a right to conceal from you our our mutual affection. I esteem you too profoundly—that is why I came. I did not wish neither of us wished—to play a comedy before you. Your sentiments toward Natályá

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Alexyéevna were known to me. . . . Believe me, I know my own value; I know how little worthy I am to usurp your place in her heart; but if it was fated to occur, can it possibly be better to use cunning, to deceive, to dissimulate? Can it possibly be better to subject one's self to misunderstandings, or even to the possibility of scenes like the one which took place yesterday at dinner? Tell me, Sergyéi Pávlitch?"

Volýntzeff folded his arms on his breast, as though striving to subdue himself.

"Sergyéi Pávlitch!" went on Rúdin, "I have grieved you; I feel it. . . . But understand us . . . understand that we had no other means of proving to you our esteem—of proving that we know how to value your straightforward nobility. Frankness—complete frankness—with any other man would be out of place; but with you it becomes a duty. It is pleasant to us to think that our secret is in your hands."

Volýntzeff laughed in a constrained way.

"Thanks for your confidence!" he exclaimed; "although I beg you to note that I did not wish to know your secret, or to betray my own to you; you are making use of it as though it were your own. But pardon me; you speak as though on behalf of both. Consequently, I may assume that Natálya Alexyéevna is aware of your visit, and of the object of your visit?"

Rúdin became slightly confused.

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“No; I did not communicate my intention to Natálya Alexyéevna; but I know that she shares my manner of thought.”

“All that is very fine,” began Volýntzeff, after a brief silence, during which he had drummed on the window-pane with his fingers; “although I must confess that it would have been a great deal better had you displayed less esteem for me. To tell the truth, I don’t care a devil’s rap for your respect; but what do you want of me now?”

“I want nothing or, no! I do want one thing: I want you not to regard me as a wily and crafty man; that you should understand me. . . . I hope that you already have no doubt as to my sincerity. . . . I wish, Sergyéi Pávlitch, that we should part as friends that you should offer me your hand as heretofore.” . . .

And Rúdin stepped up to Volýntzeff.

“Excuse me, my dear sir,” said Volýntzeff, turning away and retreating a pace. “I am ready to do full justice to your intentions; all that is very fine, we will assume,—even lofty,—but we are simple folks; we eat our gingerbread without decorations; we are not in a condition to follow the flight of such lofty intellects as yours. . . . That which seems sincere to you, strikes us as intrusive and indiscreet. . . . That which is simple and clear to you, is intricate and obscure to us. . . . You make your boast that we dissemble; how are we to understand you?”

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You must excuse me. I can neither regard you as a friend, nor will I give you my hand. . . . This may be petty; but then I am petty myself."

Rúdin took his hat from the window-sill.

"Sergyéi Pávlitch!" he said sorrowfully, "farewell; I have been deceived in my expectations. My visit, in reality, is rather strange; but I did hope that you" (Volýntzeff made an impatient gesture) "Pardon me, I will say no more about that. Taking everything into consideration, I see that it is true. You are in the right, and you could not have acted otherwise. Farewell, and permit me at least once more, for the last time, to assure you of the purity of my motives. . . . I am convinced of your discretion. . . ."

"This is too much!" exclaimed Volýntzeff, and shook with rage. "I have not asked you for your confidence in the least, and therefore you have no right to rely on my discretion!"

Rúdin wanted to say something, but merely flung his hands wide apart, bowed, and withdrew; while Volýntzeff threw himself on the couch and turned his face to the wall.

"May I come in?" Alexándra Pávlovna's voice made itself heard at the door.

Volýntzeff did not immediately reply, and stealthily drew his hand across his face. "No, Sásha," he said, in a slightly unnatural voice; "wait a little longer."

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Half an hour later Alexándra Pávlovna again came to the door.

“ Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch has come,” she said; “ wouldst thou like to see him? ”

“ Yes,” replied Volýntzeff; “ send him hither.” Lezhnyóff entered.

“ What ’s the matter—art thou ill? ” he asked, as he seated himself in an arm-chair beside the couch.

Volýntzeff raised himself, leaned on his elbow, gazed for a long, long time into the face of his friend, and then and there imparted to him his entire conversation with Rúdin, word for word. Up to that time he had never given Lezhnyóff even a hint as to his feelings with regard to Natályya, although he had divined that they were no secret to him.

“ Well, my dear fellow, thou hast amazed me,” said Lezhnyóff, as soon as Volýntzeff had finished his narration. “ I expected many queer things of him, but this is quite too. . . . However, I recognise him even here.”

“ Good heavens!” said the excited Volýntzeff; “ this is downright insolence! Why, I came near flinging him out of the window! Did he want to brag to me, or has he turned coward? And on what grounds? How could he bring himself to go to a man!”

Volýntzeff threw his arms behind his head and relapsed into silence.

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“No, my dear fellow, that’s not it,” returned Lezhnyóff, calmly. “Thou wilt not believe me, but he did it from a good motive. Really, . . . it is noble and frank, thou seest,—well; and an opportunity presents itself to talk, to launch into eloquence; and that’s what we require, that’s what we are not capable of living without. . . . Okh, his tongue is his enemy, . . . Well; and, on the other hand, it is his servant.”

“Thou canst not imagine the triumph with which he entered and talked!”

“Well, he could n’t get along without that. He buttons up his coat as though he were fulfilling a sacred duty. I’d like to put him in an uninhabited prison, and watch him from round the corner, to see how he would manage there. And he prates of simplicity!”

“But tell me, my dear fellow, for God’s sake,” asked Volýntzeff, “what this is? Is it philosophy?”

“How shall I explain it to you? On the one hand, if you like, philosophy is precisely what it is; but, on the other hand, it is not that at all. It is not proper to unload all sorts of trash, even on philosophy.”

Volýntzeff cast a glance at him.

“And was he lying, think you?”

“No, my son; he was not lying. But dost thou know what? We have talked enough about this. Come on, my dear fellow; let’s smoke our pipes

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and invite Alexándra Pávlovna hither. . . . In her presence it will be pleasanter to talk and easier to hold our tongues. She will give us some tea."

"Very well," returned Volýntzeff. "Sáša, come in!" he shouted.

Alexándra Pávlovna entered. He seized her hand and pressed it firmly to his lips.

Rúdin returned home in a confused and strange state of mind. He was vexed with himself; he reproached himself for unpardonable rashness, for boyish behaviour. Some one has truthfully said: There is nothing more painful than the consciousness that one has just perpetrated a piece of stupidity.

Repentance gnawed Rúdin.

"The devil possessed me," he whispered through his teeth, "to go to that country squire. A pretty inspiration I had, truly. I merely invited insolence!"

But something unusual had taken place in Dárya Mikhaílovna's house. The mistress of the house herself had not made her appearance during the entire morning, and she did not come out to dinner. According to the assertion of Pandalévsky, the sole person who was admitted to her presence, she had a headache. Of Natályá, also, Rúdin hardly caught a glimpse; she sat in her own room with Mlle. Boncourt. . . . When she met him in the dining-room she looked at him so

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sadly that his heart shuddered. Her face was distorted, as though a calamity had befallen her since the preceding day. The anguish of ill-defined forebodings began to torment Rúdin. In order to distract his thoughts in some manner, he busied himself with Basístoff, chatted a great deal with him, and found in him an ardent, vivacious young fellow with enthusiastic hopes and a faith as yet unshaken. Toward evening, Dárya Mikhaílovna showed herself for a couple of hours in the drawing-room. She treated Rúdin amiably, but held herself, in some sort, aloof, and smiled and frowned by turns, talked through her nose, and chiefly in hints. . . . She fairly reeked with the atmosphere of the court lady. Of late she had, as it were, grown rather cool toward Rúdin. "What enigma is this?" he said to himself, as he gazed askance at her, with her head erect and even thrown backward.

He had not long to wait for the solution of this enigma. On his way to his room, at midnight, he passed along a dark corridor. Suddenly some one thrust a note into his hand. He glanced round. A young girl—Natálya's maid, it seemed to him—was retreating. He reached his room, dismissed his man, opened the note, and read the following lines traced by Natálya's hand:

"Come to-morrow morning, not later than seven o'clock, to Avdiúkh's pond, behind the oak forest. No other time is possible. This will be our last meeting;

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everything will be at an end if. . . . Come. We must reach a decision. . . .

“P.S.—If I do not come it will mean that we shall not meet again; in that case I shall let you know.”

Rúdin became thoughtful, turned the note about in his hands, laid it under his pillow, undressed, got into bed but did not soon fall asleep, slept lightly, and it was not yet five o'clock when he awoke.

IX

ΑΝΔΙÚΚΗ's pond, beside which Natálya had fixed the meeting with Rúdin, had long since ceased to be a pond. Thirty years before the dam had given way, and since that time it had been abandoned. Only from the flat, even bottom of the ravine, formerly covered with greasy slime, and from the remains of the dam, could it be divined that a pond had once existed there. There had, also, once been a farm-house there. It had long since disappeared. Two huge pine-trees called it to remembrance; the wind was forever rustling and humming in their lofty, sparse verdure. Mysterious rumours were in circulation among the country-people about a terrible crime which was said to have been perpetrated at their base. It was even asserted that neither of them would fall without causing the death of some one; that a third pine had once stood there in former days, which had fallen during a tempest and had crushed a little girl. The whole locality round about the ancient pond was regarded as accursed: empty and bare, but obscure and gloomy even on a sunny day, it seemed still more obscure and gloomy from the vicinity of the de-

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crepit oak forest, which had long since died out and dried up. The sparse grey skeletons of the vast trees rose aloft like melancholy spectres above the low undergrowth of bushes. It was painful to look at them; they seemed like malicious old men who had met together and were plotting something evil. A narrow, barely indicated path wound about on one side. No one passed Avdiúkh's pond without special necessity. Natálya had deliberately selected this isolated place. It was not more than half a verst distant from Dárya Mikhaïlovna's house.

The sun had long been up when Rúdin arrived at Avdiúkh's pond; but it was not a cheerful morning. Dense clouds of a milky hue covered the whole heavens; the wind, whistling and moaning, was driving them swiftly onward. Rúdin began to pace to and fro along the dam, which was covered with adhesive burdock and blackened nettles. These meetings, these new sensations, engrossed yet also agitated him, especially after the note of the night before. He perceived that a catastrophe was approaching, and he was secretly perturbed in spirit, although no one would have thought so on observing the concentrated decision wherewith he folded his arms upon his breast and rolled his eyes about. Pigásoff had once observed, quite justly, concerning him, that his head was incessantly nodding about, like that of a Chinese idol. But from the head alone, no

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matter how powerful it may be, it is difficult for a man to find out what is taking place within himself. . . . Rúdin—clever, penetrating Rúdin—was not in a position to say with certainty whether he really loved Natálya, whether he were suffering, whether he would suffer on parting with her. Why, without pretending to be a Lovelace,—one must render him that justice,—had he led astray a poor young girl? Why was he waiting for her with secret trepidation? To this there is but one answer: No one is so easily carried away as the unimpassioned people.

He walked on the dam, but Natálya hastened toward him, straight across the meadow, on the damp grass.

“ My lady! My lady! you will wet your feet,” said her maid Másha, who could hardly keep up with her.

Natálya paid no heed to her, and ran on without looking back.

“ Akh, if only no one sees us!” Másha kept repeating. “ And ’t is a wonder how we got out of the house. If only mam’zell does not wake up! Luckily, it is n’t far. . . . And there he is already—waiting,” she added, suddenly catching sight of Rúdin’s stately form, standing in a picturesque attitude on the dam. “ Only, he ought n’t to stand so on the mound; he ought to have descended into the ravine.”

Natálya halted.

RÚDIN

“Wait here, Másha, by the pine-trees,” she said, and descended to the pond.

Rúdin approached her, and stopped short in amazement. Never yet had he beheld such an expression on her face. Her brows were contracted, her lips were tightly compressed, her eyes gazed straight forward, and sternly.

“Dmítzy Nikoláitch,” she began, “we have no time to lose. I have come for five minutes. I must tell you that mama knows all. Mr. Pandalévsky was watching us day before yesterday, and has told her about our meeting. He always has been a spy for mama. Last night she summoned me to her.”

“My God!” exclaimed Rúdin. “This is terrible! . . . What did your mother say to you?”

“She was not angry with me; she did not scold me—she only upbraided me for my giddiness.”

“Is that all?”

“Yes; and she announced to me that she would rather see me dead than your wife.”

“Can she have said that?”

“Yes; and she added that you yourself were not in the least desirous of marrying me; that you had only been paying court to me idly, out of ennui, and that she had not expected this of you; that, moreover, she herself was to blame for having permitted me to see so much of you . . . that she had had confidence in my good sense,—that I had greatly astonished

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her and I do not remember all she said to me."

Natálya uttered all this in a certain even, almost toneless voice.

"And you, Natálya Alexyéevna, what reply did you make to her?" asked Rúdin.

"What reply did I make to her?" repeated Natálya. . . . "What do *you* mean to do now?"

"My God! My God!" returned Rúdin. "This is cruel! So soon! such a sudden blow! And your mother went into such a rage?"

"Yes yes, she will not hear of you."

"This is dreadful! So there is no hope?"

"None whatever."

"Why are we so unhappy! That abominable Pandalévsky! You ask me, Natálya Alexyéevna, what I intend to do? My head is in a whirl—I can make no plans. . . . I am conscious only of my misfortune. . . . I am amazed that you can preserve your coolness!"

"Do you think I find it easy?" said Natálya.

Rúdin began to pace the dam. Natálya never took her eyes from him.

"Your mother did not question you?" he said at last.

"She did ask me whether I loved you."

"Well and you?"

Natálya remained silent for a little. "I did not tell a falsehood."

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Rúdin took her hand.

“Always, in everything, noble and magnanimous! Oh, the heart of a young girl is pure gold! But did your mother really announce to you so decisively her will in regard to the possibility of our marriage?”

“Yes, decisively. I have already told you; she is convinced that you yourself are not thinking of marrying me.”

“So she regards me as a deceiver! How have I deserved this?”

And Rúdin clutched at his head.

“Dmítiry Nikoláitch,” said Natályya, “we are wasting time to no purpose. Remember, we are seeing each other for the last time. I have not come hither to weep, to complain—you see, I am not weeping—I came for advice.”

“But what advice can I give you, Natályya Alexyéevna?”

“What advice? You are a man. I am accustomed to trust you, I shall trust you to the end. Tell me, what are your intentions?”

“My intentions? Your mother will, in all probability, turn me out of the house.”

“Possibly. She announced to me yesterday that I must break off acquaintance with you. . . . But you do not answer my question.”

“What question?”

“What do you think we ought to do now?”

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“What ought we to do?” returned Rúdin. “Submit, of course.”

“Submit!” repeated Natályya, slowly, and her lips paled.

“Submit to fate,” went on Rúdin. “What is there to do? I know but too well how bitter, painful, intolerable it is; but judge for yourself, Natályya Alexyéevna. I am poor. . . . I can work, it is true; but even were I a wealthy man, would you be capable of enduring the enforced rupture with your family, the wrath of your mother? No, Natályya Alexyéevna; that is not to be thought of. Obviously, we are not fated to live together, and the happiness of which I dreamed is not for me!”

Natályya suddenly covered her face with her hands, and fell to weeping. Rúdin approached her.

“Natályya Alexyéevna! Dear Natályya!” he began, with fervour. “Do not weep, for God’s sake! Do not torture me; cheer up.”

Natályya raised her head.

“You tell me to cheer up,” she began, and her eyes flashed through her tears. “I am not weeping over that which you suppose. . . . That does not pain me; what pains me is, that I have been deceived in you. . . . What! I come to you for advice, and at what a moment!—and your first word is—‘Submit.’ Submit! So that is the way you apply to practice your explanations of freedom, of sacrifices which. . . .”

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Her voice broke.

“But, Natálya Alexyéevna,” began the disconcerted Rúdin, “remember I do not renounce my words only. . . .”

“You asked me,” she went on, with renewed force, “what answer I made to my mother when she declared to me that she would sooner consent to my death than to my marriage with you. I answered her that I would sooner die than marry any one else. . . . But you say, ‘Submit’! So she was right; you really have been making sport of me, through the lack of something to do, because you were bored. . . .”

“I swear to you, Natálya Alexyéevna, I assure you. . . .” repeated Rúdin.

But she did not listen to him.

“Why did not you stop me? Why did you yourself. . . . Or did you not anticipate any obstacles? I am ashamed to speak of this—but, you see, everything is at an end now.”

“You must calm yourself, Natálya Alexyéevna,” Rúdin began. “We must consider together what means. . . .”

“You have talked so often of self-sacrifice,” she interrupted; “but, do you know, if you had said to me to-day, just now, ‘I love thee, but I cannot marry thee; I cannot answer for the future. Give me thy hand and follow me’—do you know that I would have gone with you; do you know that I had made up my mind to everything? But, in truth, it is a long way from words to

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deeds, and you have lost courage now, just as you did day before yesterday, at dinner, in the presence of Volýntzeff."

The colour flew to Rúdin's face. Natályá's unexpected enthusiasm had astounded him; but her last words had stung his self-love.

"You are too much irritated now, Natályá Alexyéevna," he began. "You cannot understand how cruelly you are wounding me. I hope that, in time, you will do me justice; you will understand what it has cost me to reject that happiness which, as you yourself have said, imposed upon me no obligations. Your peace of mind is more precious to me than anything in the world, and I should be the vilest of men if I could make up my mind to take advantage of"

"Perhaps, perhaps," interrupted Natályá; "perhaps you are right; I do not know what I am saying. But hitherto I have trusted you, I have believed your every word. . . Henceforth, be so good as to weigh your words, do not utter them to the winds. When I told you that I loved you, I knew what that word meant: I was ready for anything. . . . Now, all that remains for me to do, is to thank you for the lesson—and to bid you farewell!"

"Stop, for God's sake, Natályá Alexyéevna, I entreat you. I do not deserve your scorn, I swear to you that I do not. Put yourself in

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my position. I am responsible for you to myself also. If I did not love you with devoted affection—yes, my God! I would, myself, have immediately proposed to you to elope with me. . . Sooner or later, your mother would forgive us . . . and then . . . But before thinking of my own happiness . . .”

He paused. Natálya’s gaze, fixed straight upon him, confused him.

“You are trying to prove to me that you are an honest man, Dmítry Nikoláitch!” she said:—“I do not doubt it. You are not capable of acting from calculation; but did I wish to convince myself of that, was it for that that I came hither. . . .”

“I did not expect, Natálya Alexyéevna . . .”

“Ah! There you have made a slip of the tongue! Yes, you did not expect all this—you did not know me. Do not disturb yourself . . . you do not love me, and I force myself on no one.”

“I do love you!” exclaimed Rúdin.

“Possibly; but how do you love me! I remember all your words, Dmítry Nikoláitch. Remember, you said to me: ‘without complete equality, there is no love. . You are too high for me, we are not mates. . . . I am rightly punished. Occupations more worthy of you are awaiting you. I shall not forget this day. . . Farewell . . .’”

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“Natálya Alexyéevna, you are going? Can we part thus?”

He stretched out his arms toward her. She halted. His beseeching voice, it seemed, had made her waver.

“No,” she said at last:—“I feel that something within me is broken. . . I came hither, I talked with you, in a sort of fever; I must recover my senses. You yourself have said that this must not be, and it shall not be. My God, when I came hither, I mentally bade farewell to my home, to my past,—and what then? whom have I encountered here? a cowardly man. . . . And how did you know that I would be not capable of enduring the separation from my family? ‘Your mother does not consent . . . this is terrible!’ That is all that I have heard from you. Is this you, is this you, Rúdin? No! farewell. . . . Akh! if he had loved me, I should have felt it now, at this moment. . . . No, no, farewell!”

She turned swiftly round, and ran to Másha, who had long since begun to be uneasy, and to make signs to her.

“It is *you* who have lost courage, not I!” Rúdin shouted after Natálya.

She no longer paid any attention to him, and hastened, across the field, in the direction of home. She reached her own bed-chamber in safety; but no sooner had she crossed the thresh-

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old, than her forces deserted her, and she fell senseless into Másha's arms.

But Rúdin remained for a long time standing on the dam. At last he started, reached the path with short strides, and walked quietly along it. He was greatly mortified . . . and embittered. "Is that the sort of girl she is?" he said to himself. "At eighteen years of age! No, I did not know her. . . . She is a remarkable girl. What strength of will! She is right; she is worthy of a different sort of love from that which I felt for her Felt? . . ." he asked himself. "Is it possible that I no longer feel love? So this is how it was all bound to end! How pitiful and insignificant I was in her presence!"

The light rumble of a racing-gig caused Rúdin to raise his eyes. Lezhnyóff was driving toward him, with his inevitable trotter. Rúdin made him a silent bow, and, as though struck by a sudden thought, turned aside from the road, and walked swiftly in the direction of Dárya Mikhaílovna's house.

Lezhnyóff allowed him to depart, gazed after him, and after a brief reflection, also turned his horse round—and drove back to Volýntzeff, with whom he had spent the night. He found him asleep; gave orders that he was not to be wakened, and while waiting for tea, seated himself on the balcony, and smoked his pipe.

X

VOLÝNTZEFF rose about ten o'clock, and on hearing that Lezhnyóff was sitting on his balcony, was greatly amazed, and gave orders that he should be invited to his room.

“What has happened?” he inquired of him. “Surely, thou didst intend to drive home?”

“Yes, I did, but I met Mr. Rúdin. . . He was walking alone in the fields, and his face was so disturbed. I took and came back.”

“Thou hast returned, because thou hast met Rúdin?”

“That is, to tell the truth, I do not know myself why I turned back; probably, because I recalled thee to mind; I wanted to sit a while with thee; and I shall get home in good season. . . .”

Volýntzeff smiled haughtily.

“Yes, it is impossible to think of Rúdin now, without also thinking of me Servant!” he shouted loudly,—“give us some tea.”

The friends began to drink tea. Lezhnyóff undertook to talk about farming, about a new method of roofing storehouses with paper. . . .

Suddenly, Volýntzeff sprang from his chair, and brought his fist down on the table, with so much force, that the cups and saucers rattled.

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“No!” he exclaimed:—“It is beyond my power to endure this any longer! I will challenge that clever man, and let him shoot me, or I will try to lodge a bullet in his learned forehead!”

“What ails thee, what ails thee, for heaven’s sake!” muttered Lezhnyóff:—“how canst thou yell so! I have dropped my pipe! . . . What’s the matter with thee?”

“The matter is, that I cannot listen to his name with indifference: all the blood in my body fairly boils.”

“Enough of that, brother, enough of that! art not thou ashamed of thyself!” returned Lezhnyóff, picking his pipe up from the floor. “Drop it!—Devil take him!”

“He has insulted me,” went on Volýntzeff, striding about the room. . . “yes! he has insulted me. Thou must agree to that. At first, I did not have command of myself: he stunned me; and who could have expected that? But I’ll show him that he cannot jest with me. I’ll shoot him down like a partridge, the cursed philosopher!”

“Much wilt thou gain by that, certainly! I am not speaking of thy sister now. Of course, thou art tempest-tossed with passion . . . how can one expect thee to think of thy sister! And so far as the other person is concerned, thinkest

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thou that, by killing the philosopher, thou wilt set thine own affairs right?"

Volýntzeff flung himself into an easy chair.

"Then I'll go off somewhere! For her my heart is overwhelmed with anguish; I simply cannot find a place anywhere."

"Thou wilt go off . . . that is quite another matter! I agree to that. And dost thou know what I would like to propose to thee. Let us go together—to the Caucasus, or simply to Little Russia, to eat dumplings. That's splendid, my dear fellow!"

"Yes; but with whom shall we leave my sister?"

"And why should not Alexándra Pávlovna go with us? By heavens, that's a capital expedient. As for looking after her—I'll undertake to do that! She shall not want for anything; if she takes a fancy, I will arrange a serenade under her window every evening; I'll scent the postilions with eau de cologne, I'll stick flowers all along the roads. And thou and I, brother, will simply begin life over again; we'll enjoy ourselves so, we'll come back with such fat paunches, that no love whatever will pierce us!"

"Thou art always jesting, Mísha!"

"I'm not jesting at all. That was a brilliant thought that occurred to thee."

"No! nonsense!" cried Volýntzeff again;—"I want to fight, to fight with him!" . . .

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“What, again! Well, brother, thou certainly hast the blind staggers to-day!” . . .

A man-servant entered with a letter in his hand.

“From whom?” inquired Lezhnyóff.

“From Rúdin, Dmítzy Nikoláevitch. The Lasúnskys’ man brought it.”

“From Rúdin?” repeated Volýntzeff:—“to whom?”

“To you, sir.”

“To me? . . . give it heré.”

Volýntzeff seized the letter, hastily broke the seal, and began to read. Lezhnyóff watched him attentively: a strange, almost joyful surprise was depicted on Volýntzeff’s face; he dropped his hands.

“What is it?” asked Lezhnyóff.

“Read it,” said Volýntzeff in a low voice, and handed him the letter.

Lezhnyóff began to read. This is what Rúdin had written:

“Dear Sir, SERGYÉI PÁVLOVITCH!

“To-day I leave Dárya Mikhaílovna’s house, and I leave it forever. This will, probably, surprise you, especially after what took place yesterday. I cannot explain to you precisely what causes me to act thus; but it seems to me that, for some reason or other, I ought to inform you of my departure. You do not like me, and you even regard me as a bad man. I have no in-

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tention of justifying myself: time will justify me. In my opinion, it is both unworthy and useless for a man to demonstrate to a prejudiced person the injustice of his prejudice. He who wishes to understand me, will pardon me, and he who will not, or cannot understand—that person's accusations do not affect me. I have been mistaken in you. In my eyes, you will remain, as heretofore, a noble and honourable man; but I had supposed that you would know how to stand on a higher level than the sphere in which you have grown up I was in error. What is to be done? It is not the first, and it will not be the last time. I repeat to you: I am going away. I wish you happiness. You must agree with me, that that wish is thoroughly disinterested, and I hope, that you will now be happy. Perhaps, in the course of time, you will change your opinion about me. Whether we shall ever meet again, I know not, but, in any case, I remain, yours with sincere respect—

“D. R.”

“P.S. I will send you the two hundred rubles which I owe you, as soon as I reach my own home, in the country, in the Government of T*** I will also request you not to mention this letter in the presence of Dárya Mikhaílovna.

“P.P.S. One last, but important request: as I am now going away, I trust that you will not mention my visit to you, in Natálya Alexyéevna's presence. . . .”

“Well, what hast thou to say?” inquired Vol-ýntzeff, as soon as Lezhnyóff had finished the letter.

“What is there to say!” returned Lezh-

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nyóff,—“exclaim, in Oriental fashion: ‘Allah! Allah!’ and thrust your finger into your mouth with amazement—that is all that one can do. He is going away Well! May his path be as smooth as a table-cloth! But here’s the curious part of it: he regarded it as *his duty*, to write you this letter, and he presented himself to you, from a sense of duty. It is duty at every step, with these gentlemen,—and duty,” added Lezhnyóff, pointing, with a grin, to the postscript.

“And what phrases he gets off!” exclaimed Volýntzeff.—“‘He has been mistaken in me: he expected that I would stand on a higher level than the sphere. . .’ What nonsense, oh, Lord! it’s worse than poetry!”

Lezhnyóff made no reply; only his eye smiled. Volýntzeff rose.

“I wish to go to Dárya Mikhaílovna’s,” said he:—“I want to find out what all this means”

“Wait, brother: give him a chance to take himself off. What’s the use of thy coming into collision with him again? He’s going to vanish, you see, and what more dost thou want? Better lie down and take a nap; for thou hast been tossing from side to side all night long. But now, thy affairs are mending”

“From what dost thou draw that conclusion?”

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“Why, it seems so to me. Really, it will be better to take a nap; and I will go to thy sister, and sit with her.”

“I have not the slightest desire to sleep. Why should I sleep? I had better go and survey the field,” said Volýntzeff, adjusting the skirts of his coat.

“All right, go along, my dear fellow, go along, survey the field.” . . .

And Lezhnyóff betook himself to Alexándra Pávlovna’s part of the house. He found her in the drawing-room. She greeted him amiably. She was always delighted at his arrival; but her face remained sad. Rúdin’s visit of the day before had disquieted her.

“Do you come from my brother?” she asked Lezhnyóff:—“how is he to-day?”

“All right, he is going to survey the field.”

Alexándra Pávlovna said nothing for a while.

“Tell me, please,” she began, attentively inspecting the border of her handkerchief:—“do not you know, why”

“Rúdin came?” interpolated Lezhnyóff:—“Yes, I know: he came to say farewell.”

Alexándra Pávlovna raised her head.

“What—to say farewell?”

“Yes. Have n’t you heard? He is leaving Dárya Mikhaílovna’s.”

“He is leaving?”

“Forever: at all events, so he says.”

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“But, good gracious, how am I to understand that, after all that”

“But that’s another matter! It is impossible to understand it, but so it is. Something must have happened there. He drew the chord too tight—and it broke.”

“Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch!” began Alexándra Pávlovna:—“I understand nothing; it seems to me, that you are laughing at me”

“But I am not, God is my witness. . . . I tell you, that he is going away, and he has even announced it by letter to his acquaintances. It’s not a bad thing, if you like, from certain points of view; but his departure has prevented the realisation of one astonishing enterprise, which your brother and I had begun to discuss.”

“What is that? What enterprise?”

“Why, this. I suggested to your brother to go away, for diversion, to travel, and to take you with him. I took it upon myself to attend upon you”

“Very fine, indeed!” exclaimed Alexándra Pávlovna:—“I can imagine how you would attend upon me. You would starve me to death.”

“You say that, Alexándra Pávlovna, because you do not know me. You think that I am a perfect booby, or some sort of a wooden thing; but are you aware, that I am capable of melting like sugar, of spending whole days on my knees?”

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“ I must confess, I should like to see that! ”

Lezhnyóff suddenly rose.—“ Then marry me, Alexándra Pávlovna, and you shall see it all.”

Alexándra Pávlovna blushed to her very ears.

“ What do you mean, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch? ” she repeated, in confusion.

“ Why, what I said,” replied Lezhnyóff:—“ what has already been on the tip of my tongue a thousand times. I have blurted it out at last, and you may act as you see fit. But, in order not to embarrass you, I will withdraw now. If you will be my wife . . . I will retire. If it is not repulsive to you, only have me called: I shall understand. . . ”

Alexándra Pávlovna tried to detain Lezhnyóff, but he briskly left the room, and went into the garden, without his hat, where he leaned his arms on the wicket-gate, and began to stare off somewhere in the distance.

“ Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch! ” rang out the maid’s voice behind him:—“ Please come to my lady. She has ordered me to summon you.”

Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch turned round, took the maid’s head in his hands, to her great amazement, kissed her on the brow, and went to Alexándra Pávlovna.

XI

ON reaching home, immediately after his encounter with Lezhnyóff, Rúdin locked himself up in his chamber and wrote two letters:—one to Volýntzeff (which is already known to the reader), and the other to Natálya. He sat for a long time over this second letter, crossed out and re-wrote a great deal of it, and after carefully copying it on a thin sheet of note-paper, folded it into as small a compass as possible, and placed it in his pocket. With sorrow in his face, he walked back and forth several times through the room, sat down in an arm-chair near the window, and propped himself on his elbows; the tears started softly out upon his eyelashes. . . He rose, buttoned his coat to the throat, summoned a man-servant, and ordered him to inquire of Dárya Mikhaílovna, whether she could see him.

The man speedily returned and announced, that Dárya Mikhaílovna had given commands that he should be invited to come to her. Rúdin went to her.

She received him in her boudoir, as on the first occasion, two months previously. But this time,

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she was not alone; Pandalévsky was sitting by her side, modest, fresh, neat and full of emotion, as usual.

Dárya Mikhaílovna greeted Rúdin with amiability, and Rúdin saluted her amiably, but, at the first glance into the faces of both, a person of any experience whatever, would have understood, that something unpleasant had taken place between them, even if it had not been put into words. Rúdin knew that Dárya Mikhaílovna was angry with him. Dárya Mikhaílovna suspected that he was already informed of everything.

Pandalévsky's denunciation had disturbed her greatly. Worldly pride had begun to stir within her. Rúdin, poor, without official rank, and, so far, an unknown man, had dared to make an appointment for a meeting with her daughter—the daughter of Dárya Mikhaílovna Lasúnsky! ! !

“Let us admit that he is clever, that he is a genius!” she had said:—“Yet, what does that prove? After this, any man may hope to become my son-in-law?”

“For a long time, I could not believe my eyes,” Pandalévsky had interpolated. “I am amazed that he should not know his place!”

Dárya Mikhaílovna had been extremely agitated, and she had made Natálya smart for it.

She invited Rúdin to take a seat. He sat down, but no longer in the manner of the for-

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mer Rúdin, almost as though he were the master of the house, not even like a close acquaintance, but like a visitor, and not even like an intimate visitor. All this had been accomplished in one instant. . . . Just so does water become converted into firm ice.

“I have come to you, Dárya Mikhaílovna!” began Rúdin:—“to thank you once more for your hospitality. I have received news to-day from my little country place, and must go thither this very day, without fail.”

Dárya Mikhaílovna gazed intently at Rúdin.

“He has forestalled me; it must be, that he divines the truth,” she thought. “He is relieving me of a painful explanation; so much the better! Long live the clever people!”

“Really?” she said aloud. “Akh! how disagreeable! Well, what is to be done? I shall hope to see you next winter in Moscow. We shall soon leave here ourselves.”

“I do not know, Dárya Mikhaílovna, whether I shall manage to be in Moscow; but if my means admit of that, I shall regard it as my duty to call upon you.”

“Aha, my good fellow!” thought Panda-lévsky in his turn: “it was n’t so very long ago that thou wert playing the master here, and now see how thou art forced to express thyself!”

“So you have received unsatisfactory news

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from your village?" he said, with his habitual drawl.

"Yes," returned Rúdin curtly.

"A bad harvest, perhaps?"

"No . . . something else. . . Believe me, Dárya Mikhaílovna," added Rúdin:—"I shall never forget the time I have spent in your house."

"And I, Dmítiry Nikoláitch, shall always recall with pleasure my acquaintance with you. . . . When do you set out?"

"To-day, after dinner."

"So soon! . . . Well, I wish you a prosperous journey. But, in case your affairs do not detain you, perhaps you will still find us here."

"It is hardly likely that I shall have time," replied Rúdin and rose. "Pardon me," he added:—"I cannot repay my debt to you at the present moment; but as soon as I reach my estate"

"Stop, Dmítiry Nikoláitch!" Dárya Mikhaílovna interrupted him:—"are n't you ashamed of yourself! . . . But what time is it?" she asked.

Pandalévsky pulled a gold enamelled watch from his waistcoat pocket, and looked at it, cautiously, leaning his rosy cheek upon his firm, white collar.

"Thirty-three minutes past two," he said.

"It is time to dress," remarked Dárya Mikhaílovna. "Farewell for the present, Dmítiry Nikoláitch!"

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Rúdin rose. The whole conversation between him and Dárya Mikhaílovna had borne a peculiar imprint. In this fashion do actors rehearse their parts, in this fashion do diplomats at conferences exchange phrases which have been agreed upon in advance. . .

Rúdin left the room. He knew now, by experience, how society people do not even cast aside, but simply drop a man, who has become unnecessary to them: like a glove, after a ball, like the wrapper from confects, like a ticket in a society lottery, which has not drawn a prize.

He hastily packed his things, and began impatiently to await the moment of departure. Every one in the household was greatly surprised, on learning his intention; people even stared at him in astonishment. Basístoff did not hide his grief. Natálya openly shunned Rúdin. She tried to avoid meeting his gaze; nevertheless, he succeeded in thrusting his letter into her hand. After dinner, Dárya Mikhaílovna once more repeated, that she hoped to see him again before their departure for Moscow, but Rúdin made her no reply. Pandalévsky addressed him more frequently than any one else. More than once, Rúdin felt strongly inclined to fling himself upon him, and cleave open his blooming, rosy face. Mlle. Boncourt cast frequent glances at Rúdin, with a crafty and strange expression in her eyes; that sort of expression can sometimes be seen in aged, very in-

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telligent setter dogs. . . . “Ehe!” she appeared to be saying to herself:—“you’ve caught it now!”

At last, six o’clock struck, and Rúdin’s tarantás was brought round to the door. He began hastily to take leave of them all. His spirit was in a very evil plight. He had not anticipated that he would make his exit from that house after this fashion: it was as though he were being expelled. . . . “How has all this come to pass! and what need was there for me to hurry? However, it’s all the same in the end”—that is what he was thinking, as he bowed on all sides, with a constrained smile. For the last time, he looked at Natálya, and his heart was stirred within him: her eyes were fixed upon him in sorrowful, farewell reproach.

He ran briskly down the steps, and sprang into his tarantás. Basístoff had offered to escort him to the railway station, and took his seat beside him.

“Do you remember,” began Rúdin, as soon as the tarantás had emerged from the courtyard upon the broad road, bordered with fir-trees:—“do you remember what Don Quixote said to his squire, when he emerged from the Duchess’s palace? ‘Liberty,’ said he, ‘my friend Sancho, is one of man’s most precious possessions, and happy is he on whom heaven hath bestowed a morsel of bread, who is not compelled to be in-

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debted for it to any one!’ What Don Quixote felt then, I feel now. . . . God grant, my good Basístoff, that you may some day experience this feeling!”

Basístoff squeezed Rúdin’s hand, and the heart of the honest young fellow beat violently in his deeply affected breast. Rúdin discoursed all the way to the railway station, on the dignity of man, on the significance of genuine freedom,—discoursed fervently, nobly and justly—and when the moment of parting came, Basístoff could endure it no longer, flung himself on his neck, and burst out sobbing. Tears streamed down Rúdin’s face also; but he did not weep because he was parting with Basístoff, and his tears were the tears of self-love.

Natálya went to her own room and read Rúdin’s letter.

“My dear Natálya Alexyéevna—” he had written to her—“I have decided to go away. There is no other issue for me. I have decided to go away, before I am told, in plain terms, to begone. With my departure, all misunderstandings will come to an end; and it is hardly likely that any one will pity me. What else could I expect? . . . All this is so; but why should I write to you?”

“I am parting from you, probably forever, and it would be too bitter to leave you a memory of myself still worse than that which I merit. That is why I am writing to you. I do not wish either to defend myself,

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or to blame any one except myself: I wish, so far as possible, to explain myself The events of the last few days have been so unexpected, so sudden. . . .

“ Our meeting of to-day will serve me as a memorable lesson. Yes, you are right: I did not know you, but I thought I knew you! In the course of my life, I have had to deal with all sorts of people, I have been closely acquainted with many women and young girls; but when I met you, I met, for the first time, a *perfectly* honourable and upright soul. I was not accustomed to this, and I did not know how to appreciate you. I felt drawn towards you, from the very first day of our acquaintance—you may have noticed it. I passed hours and hours in your society, and yet I did not learn to know you; I hardly even tried to know you and I could imagine that I had fallen in love with you!! For that sin I am now punished.

“ Once before, I loved a woman, and she loved me. . . . My feeling for her was complicated, as was hers for me; but, as she herself was not simple, it was fitting. The truth did not make itself felt by me then: I did not recognise it, and now, when it stood before me, I recognised it, at last, but too late. . . . The past cannot be brought back. . . . Our lives might have been merged in one—and they will never be merged. How can I prove to you, that I might have loved you with real love—with the love of the heart, not of the imagination—when I myself do not know whether I am capable or not of such a love!

“ Nature has endowed me with much—that I know, and I will not assume an air of modesty to you, out of false shame, especially now, in moments so bitter, so

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shameful for me. . . . Yes, nature has given me much; but I shall die, without having done anything worthy of my powers, without having left behind me a single beneficent trace. All my wealth will perish in vain; I shall behold no fruits from my seeds. I lack . . . I myself cannot say precisely what is lacking in me. . . . What I lack is, in all probability, that without which it is as impossible to move the hearts of men, as it is to subdue the hearts of women; and sovereignty over minds alone is both uncertain and useless. Strange, almost comic is my fate: I surrender the whole of myself, eagerly, completely—and cannot surrender myself. I shall end by sacrificing myself for some nonsense or other, in which I shall not even believe. . . . My God! the idea of being still engaged, at the age of thirty-five, in preparing to do something! . . .

“I shall never again speak out my sentiments to any one—this is my dying confession.

“But enough about me. I wish to speak about you, to give you a few counsels: I am fit for nothing else you are still young, but no matter how long you may live, always follow the intuitions of your heart, do not surrender yourself to your own mind, nor to the mind of any one else. Believe me, the more simple, the more restricted the circle in which life flows on, the better; the important point does not lie in seeking out new sides of it, but in having all its transitions accomplished in their proper season. ‘Blessed is he, who has been young from his youth’ . . . But I observe, that these counsels apply much more to me, than they do to you.

“I will confess to you, Natálya Alexyéevna, that I am very heavy at heart. I have never deceived myself,

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as to the character of the feeling which I inspired in Dárya Mikhaílovna; but I hoped, that I had found, at least a temporary harbour. . . . Now, once more, I must roam about the world. What will compensate to me for your conversation, your presence, your attentive, and intelligent gaze? . . . I myself am to blame; but you must agree with me, that fate has seemed deliberately to mock at us. A week ago, I hardly suspected that I loved you. . . Day before yesterday evening, in the garden, I heard, for the first time, from you . . . but why recall to you that which you then said—and now, to-day, I am going away, going away in disgrace, after a cruel explanation with you, and bearing with me not the slightest hope. . . And even yet, you do not know to what an extent I am to blame towards you. . . There is in me a certain stupid frankness, a certain loquacity. . . . But why speak of that? I am going away forever.”

(Here Rúdin had an idea of recounting to Natálya his visit to Volýntzeff, but changed his mind, and erased all that passage, but added the second postscript to his letter to Volýntzeff).

“ I shall remain alone on earth, in order to devote myself, as you said to me this morning, with a cruel sneer, to occupations more suited to me. Alas! if I could really devote myself to those occupations, conquer my indolence at last. . . . But no! I shall remain the same incomplete creature as I have been hitherto. . . . At the very first obstacle—I am completely scattered to the winds; the affair with you has demonstrated that to me. If I had, at least, but offered my love as a sacrifice

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to my future occupation, to my vocation; but I was simply frightened at the responsibility, which had fallen upon me, and therefore, in very truth, I am unworthy of you. I am not worthy of your wresting yourself out of your sphere for me. . . . And, after all, perhaps it is all for the best. Perhaps I shall emerge from this trial purer and stronger.

“I wish you the fulness of happiness. Farewell! Think of me, now and then. I hope that you will yet hear of me.

“RÚDIN.”

Natálya dropped Rúdin's letter on her lap, and sat for a long time motionless, with her eyes riveted on the floor. This letter, more clearly than all possible arguments, proved to her how thoroughly in the right she had been when, on parting from Rúdin that morning, she had involuntarily exclaimed, that he did not love her! But she felt none the more at ease for that. She sat motionless; it seemed to her, as though some sort of dark waves were closing in, without a splash, above her head, and she was sinking to the bottom, growing stiff and dumb as she went. Every one finds the first disillusionment painful; but for the sincere soul, which does not wish to deceive itself, which is alien to frivolity and exaggeration, it is almost beyond endurance. Natálya recalled her childhood, when, during her evening strolls, she was always striving to go in the direction of the bright rim of the sky,

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thither where the glow of sunset burned, and not toward the dark. Life now stood dark before her, and she had turned her back on the light. . . .

Tears sprang to Natálya's eyes. Tears are not always beneficent. They are consoling and healing, when, after having, for a long time, seethed in the breast, they flow at last—first violently, then more and more gently, more sweetly; they dissolve the dumb torture of grief. . . . But if they be cold tears which flow sparingly: the woe which lies like a heavy, immovable burden on the heart, crushes them out, drop by drop; they are devoid of consolation, and they bring no relief. Want weeps with such tears as these, and he has not yet been unhappy who has not shed them. Natálya made acquaintance with them on that day.

Two hours elapsed. Natálya mustered her courage, rose, wiped her eyes, lighted a candle, burned Rúdin's letter to the end in its flame, and flung the ashes out of the window.

Then she opened Púshkin at haphazard, and read the first lines which met her eye (she often told her fortune in this manner with him). This is what turned up:

He who hath felt, that man doth trouble
The wraith of days forever gone. . . .
For there is no witchery more, . . .
Him doth memory's serpent,
Him doth repentance gnaw.

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She stood, and gazed at herself in the mirror, with a cold smile, and after making a small movement with her head, downwards from above, she went to the drawing-room.

Dárya Mikhaïlovna, as soon as she saw her, bade her come into her boudoir, seated her by her side, tapped her affectionately on the cheek, and in the meantime, peered attentively, almost curiously, into her eyes. Dárya Mikhaïlovna felt a secret perplexity: for the first time it had entered her head, that, in reality, she did not know her own daughter. On hearing from Panda-lévsky about her meeting with Rúdin, she had felt not so much incensed as amazed, that sensible Natálya could make up her mind to such a step. But when she had summoned her to her, and had undertaken to scold her—not in the least as might have been expected from a European woman, but in a decidedly shrill and inelegant manner—Natálya's firm replies, the decision of her glances and movements, had disconcerted, even alarmed, Dárya Mikhaïlovna.

Rúdin's abrupt and not entirely comprehensible departure, had removed a great weight from her heart; but she had expected tears, hysterical attacks. . . . Natálya's outward composure again baffled her.

“ Well, my child,” began Dárya Mikhaïlovna: —“ how art thou to-day? ”

Natálya looked at her mother.

“ He has gone, you know, the object of your

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affections. Dost thou not know, why he made ready so hastily?"

"Mama!" began Natálya, in a quiet voice:—"I pledge thee my word, that if thou thyself wilt not mention his name, thou wilt never hear anything from me."

"So thou acknowledgest, that thou wert to blame toward me?"

Natálya drooped her head, and repeated:

"Thou wilt never hear anything from me."

"Well, see that I do not!" returned Dárya Mikhaílovna, with a smile. "I believe thee. But day before yesterday, dost thou remember how. . . . Well, I will not do it again. It is ended, settled and buried. Is n't it? Here now, I recognise thee again; but I was pretty nearly at an utter loss. Come, kiss me, my wise one!" . . .

Natálya raised Dárya Mikhaílovna's hand to her lips, and Dárya Mikhaílovna kissed her on her bowed head.

"Always heed my counsels, do not forget that thou art a Lasúnsky and my daughter," she added:—"and thou wilt be happy. And now go."

Natálya withdrew in silence. Dárya Mikhaílovna gazed after her, and thought: "She takes after me—she also will fall in love: *mais aura moins d'abandon.*" And Dárya Mikhaílovna immersed herself in memories of the past of the distant past

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Then she ordered Mlle. Boncourt to be summoned, and sat for a long time with her, the two locked in together. On dismissing her, she called in Pandalévsky. She insisted upon knowing the real cause of Rúdin's departure . . . but Pandalévsky completely reassured her. That was part of his business.

On the following day Volýntzeff came with his sister to dinner. Dárya Mikhaílovna was always very amiable to him, and on this occasion, she treated him in a particularly caressing manner. It was intolerably painful to Natályá: but Volýntzeff was so respectful, talked to her so timidly, that she could not but thank him in her soul.

The day passed quietly, in a rather tiresome way, but all, on separating, felt that they had got back into their ordinary rut; and this means a great deal, a very great deal.

Yes, all had got back into their former rut . . . all, except Natályá. When, at last, she was alone, she dragged herself, with difficulty, to her bed, and weary, broken, fell face down upon the pillows. Living seemed to her so bitter, and repulsive, and insipid, she felt so ashamed of herself, of her love, of her sorrow, that, at that moment, she would, probably, have consented to die. . . . Many painful days still lay before her, many sleepless nights, of torturing agitation, but she was young—life was only

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just beginning for her, and sooner or later, life asserts itself. Whatever blow has been dealt to a man, on the very same day, or on the next day at latest—pardon the vulgarity of the comparison—he will begin to eat, and there you have the first consolation. . . .

Natálya suffered tortures, she was suffering for the first time. . . But first sufferings, like first love, are not repeated,—and God be thanked for that!

XII

ABOUT two years have elapsed. The first days of May had arrived. On the balcony of her house sat Alexándra Pávlovna, only no longer Lípin but Lezhnyóff; it was more than a year since she had married Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch. As in the past, she was charming, but had grown stout of late. In front of the balcony, from which steps led into the garden, a nurse was walking, holding in her arms a baby, in a little white cloak, and with a white pompon on its hat.

Alexándra Pávlovna kept glancing at it. The baby was not crying, but was sucking its thumb with dignity, and staring about it. The worthy son of Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch was already asserting itself in him.

Beside Alexándra Pávlovna, on the balcony, sat our old acquaintance, Pigásóff. He has grown noticeably grey, since we parted from him, has become bent and thin, and hisses when he talks; the hissing imparts still more venom to his speeches. . . His spite has not diminished with the years, but his witticisms have lost their point, and he repeats himself more frequently than of yore. Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch was not at

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home; they were expecting him for tea. The sun had already set. In the place where it had gone down, a strip of pale-gold, of lemon colour, stretched along the horizon; in the opposite quarter, there were two streaks: one, the lower, blue, the other, the higher up, brilliant purple. Light clouds were melting into the zenith. Everything foreboded steady weather.

All at once, Pigásoff broke out laughing.

“What are you laughing at, Afrikán Sem-yónitch?” inquired Alexándra Pávlovna.

“Oh, because . . . Yesterday, I heard a peasant say to his wife—she, the fool, was chattering:—‘Don’t squeak!’ . . . That pleased me greatly. Don’t squeak! Yes, and as a matter of fact, what can a woman argue about? You know, that I never talk about present company. Our elders were wiser than we. In their fairy-tales, the beauty sits at the window, on her brow is a star, but she never utters a sound. That’s the way it ought to be. But otherwise, judge for yourself: day before yesterday, the wife of our marshal of the nobility, as good as fired a pistol into my brains: she said to me, that she did not like my *tendency!* Tendency! Come now, would n’t it be better for her, and for everybody, if somehow, by some beneficent arrangement of nature, she could have suddenly been deprived of the use of her tongue?”

“You are just the same as ever, Afrikán

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Semyónitch: you are always attacking us poor women. . . . Do you know, that really is a misfortune, in its way. I am sorry for you."

"A misfortune? What are you pleased to mean by that? In the first place, in my opinion, there are only three misfortunes in the world: to live in cold lodgings in the winter, to wear tight boots in summer, and to spend the night in a room where a baby is screaming, which cannot be put to sleep with Persian powder; and, in the second place, I have become the most peaceable of men now. You might even use me as a model in a copy-book! I behave in such a moral way."

"You do behave well, there's no denying it! Not longer ago than yesterday evening, Eléna Antónovna complained of you to me."

"You don't say so, ma'am! And what did she tell you, permit me to inquire?"

"She told me, that during the whole course of the morning, the only reply you had made to her questions, was, 'What, ma'am? what, ma'am?' and that in such a squeaking voice, to boot."

Pigásoff broke into a laugh.

"And that was a fine idea, you must agree, Alexándra Pávlovna hey?"

"Remarkably! How can you be so impolite to a woman, Afrikán Semyónitch?"

"What? Is Eléna Antónovna a woman, in your opinion?"

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“What is she, then, in yours?”

“A drum, good gracious, a common drum, the sort that is thumped with sticks.” . . .

“Akh, yes!” interrupted Alexándra Pávlovna, wishing to change the conversation:—“I am told that you are to be congratulated?”

“On what?”

“On the ending of your law-suit. The Glinóvsky meadows remain your property.”

“Yes, they do,” returned Pigásoff gloomily.

“You have been trying to accomplish this for years, and now you seem to be dissatisfied.”

“I will inform you, Alexándra Pávlovna,” said Pigásoff deliberately:—“that nothing can be worse and more offensive than happiness which comes too late. It cannot afford you any satisfaction, and, on the other hand, it deprives you of a precious right,—the right to scold and to curse fate. Yes, madam, belated happiness is a bitter and offensive thing.”

Alexándra Pávlovna merely shrugged her shoulders.

“Nurse,” she began:—“I think it is time to put Mísha to bed. Bring him hither.”

And Alexándra Pávlovna busied herself with her son, while Pigásoff took himself off, growling, to another corner of the balcony.

All at once, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch made his appearance, in his racing-gig, a short distance off, on the road which skirted the garden. In

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front of his horse ran two huge yard-dogs: one yellow, the other grey; he had lately provided himself with them. They were incessantly fighting, and dwelt in inseparable friendship. An aged mastiff emerged from the gate to meet them, opened his mouth, as though preparing to bark, and wound up by yawning and returning, wagging his tail in a friendly way.

“Look, Sásha,—” shouted Lezhnyóff from afar to his wife;—“see whom I am bringing to thee.” . . .

Alexáandra Pávlovna did not, on the instant, recognise the man, who was sitting with his back to her husband.

“Ah! Mr. Basístoff!” she cried, at last.

“’T is he, ’t is he,” replied Lezhnyóff:—“and what splendid news he has brought. Just wait, thou wilt hear directly.”

And he drove into the yard.

A few moments later, he made his appearance with Basístoff on the balcony.

“Hurrah!” he exclaimed, and embraced his wife.—“Seryózha is going to be married!”

“To whom?” asked Alexáandra Pávlovna, with agitation.

“To Natályá, of course. . . . Our friend, here, has brought the news from Moscow, and there is a letter for thee. . . Dost thou hear, Mishúk!” he added, catching his son in his arms;—“thine uncle is to be married! . . . Ekh, what

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villainous apathy! he does nothing but blink his eyes!”

“He is sleepy,” remarked the nurse.

“Yes, madam,” said Basístoff, approaching Alexándra Pávlovna:—“I have arrived from Moscow to-day, with a commission from Dárya Mikhaílovna—to audit the accounts of the estate. And here is the letter.”

Alexándra Pávlovna hastily broke the seal of her brother’s letter. It consisted of a few lines. In his first transport of joy, he informed his sister, that he had offered himself to Natálya, had received her consent and Dárya Mikhaílovna’s, and promised to write further with the first post, and, though absent, he embraced and kissed them all. It was evident that he had written under a sort of spell.

Tea was served, and Basístoff was made to sit down. He was pelted with a hail of questions. Every one, even Pigásoff, was delighted at the news he had brought.

“Tell me, please,” said Lezhnyóff, among other things:—“Rumours have reached us concerning a certain Mr. Kortchágín,—of course, it was nonsense?”

(Kortchágín was a handsome young man—a society lion, extremely inflated with pride and importance: he bore himself in a remarkably majestic manner, as though he were not a live man,

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but his own statue, erected by public subscription.)

“Well, no, it’s not entirely nonsense,” returned Basístoff, with a smile. “Dárya Mi-khaílovna favoured him greatly; but Natályá Alexyéevna would not hear to him.”

“Yes, and I know him,” interpolated Pigásoff: “he’s a double-flowered blockhead, a thundering blockhead . . . good gracious! Why, if all people were like him, it would be necessary to demand a lot of money, before one would consent to live . . . upon my word!”

“Perhaps so,” replied Basístoff:—“but he plays a far from insignificant part in society.”

“Well, that makes no difference!” exclaimed Alexáandra Pávlovna:—“I want to have nothing to do with him! Akh, how glad I am for my brother! . . . And is Natályá cheerful, happy?”

“Yes, madam,—she is composed, as usual—you know her, of course—but, apparently, she is contented.”

The evening passed in pleasant and vivacious conversation. They sat down to supper.

“Yes, by the way,” inquired Lezhnyóff of Basístoff, as he poured him out some claret:—“do you know where Rúdin is?”

“I do not know for certain, at present. He came to Moscow last winter, for a short time, then he went off to Simbírsk with a family; he

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and I corresponded for a time: in his last letter, he informed me, that he was leaving Simbírsk—he did not say whither he was going—and since then, I have heard nothing about him.”

“He won’t get lost!” interpolated Pigásoff:—“he’s sitting somewhere, and preaching. That gentleman will always find two or three worshippers, who will listen to him, with gaping mouths, and lend him money. You’ll see, he’ll end by dying somewhere in Tzarevokokosháisk, or in Tchukhlóm, in the arms of a very aged spinster, in a wig, who will think of him as the greatest genius in the world. . .”

“You express yourself very harshly with regard to him,” remarked Basístoff in an undertone, and with displeasure.

“I’m not in the least harsh!”—retorted Pigásoff:—“but perfectly just! In my opinion, he’s nothing more than a lickspittle. I had forgotten to tell you,” he continued, addressing Lezhnyóff:—“you see, I made the acquaintance of that Terlakhóff, with whom Rúdin went abroad. I should think I did! I should think I did! You cannot imagine what he told me about him—it was enough to make you die with laughing, simply! It is a notable fact, that all Rúdin’s friends and followers become, in time, his enemies.”

“I beg that you will except me from the number of those friends,” interrupted Basístoff, hotly.

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“ Well, you—that ’s another matter! We are not talking about you.”

“ But what was it that Terlakhóff told you?” inquired Alexándra Pávlovna.

“ Why, he told me a great deal: I cannot recall all of it. But the very best anecdote of all that happened to Rúdin, is this. Uninterruptedly developing himself (that sort of gentleman always develops: others, for example, simply sleep, or eat—but they find themselves in the moment of development of sleeping or of eating; is n’t that so, Mr. Basístoff?”—Basístoff made no reply). . . “ And so, constantly developing, Rúdin arrived, by the road of philosophy, at the argument, that he ought to fall in love.

“ He began to look up an object, who should be worthy of such a remarkable syllogism. Fortune smiled upon him. He made the acquaintance of a French woman, a very pretty little milliner. The affair took place in a German town, on the Rhine, please to note. He began to call on her, to carry her various books, to talk to her about Nature and Hegel. Can you imagine the situation of the milliner? She took him for an astronomer. But, you know, he ’s a fairly good-looking young fellow; well, he was a foreigner, a Russian, and he caught her fancy. So, at last, he appointed a tryst, and a very poetical tryst: in a gondola, on the river. The

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French woman consented; she dressed herself in her best, and set off with him in the gondola. Thus they rowed about for a couple of hours. And how do you think he spent all that time? He kept stroking the French woman on the head, gazing meditatively at the sky, and repeating, several times, that he felt a paternal affection for her. The French woman returned home in a rage, and told the whole thing herself, afterwards, to Terlakhóff. That's the sort of gentleman he is!"

And Pigásóff laughed.

"You are an old cynic!" remarked Alexándra Pávlovna, with vexation:—"and I am more and more convinced that even those who revile Rúdin, can say nothing bad of him."

"Nothing bad? Upon my word! and how about his forever living at the expense of other people, his borrowing? . . . Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch, he certainly must have borrowed money from you?"

"See here, Afrikán Semyónitch!" began Lezhnyóff, and his face assumed a serious expression:—"listen to me: you know, and my wife knows, that I have not felt particularly well disposed toward Rúdin of late years, and that I have even frequently condemned him. Nevertheless" (Lezhnyóff poured champagne into the glasses), "this is what I propose to you: we have just drunk the health of our dear brother

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and his affianced bride; I now propose to you that we shall drink the health of Dmítiry Rúdin!”

Alexáandra Pávlovna and Pigássoff stared at Lezhnyóff with amazement, but Basístoff gave a great start, flushed crimson with delight, and opened his eyes wide.

“I know him well,” pursued Lezhnyóff:—“his defects are well known to me. They are the more apparent, because he, himself, is not a petty man.”

“Rúdin has the temperament of a genius,” interpolated Basístoff.

“There is some genius in him, I admit,” returned Lezhnyóff;—“but as for temperament Therein lies his whole misfortune, that there is no temperament whatever about him. . . . But that is not the point. I wish to speak of that which is good and rare in him. He has enthusiasm; and that, believe me, for a phlegmatic man, is the most precious quality of all in our day. We have all become intolerably reasonable and languid: we have fallen asleep, we have congealed, and we owe thanks to any man who will, even for an instant, move us and warm us up! It is high time! Dost thou remember, Sásha, how I once was talking to thee about him, and reproached him with coldness? I was both right and wrong then. That coldness is in his blood—he is not to blame for that—but not in his

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head. He is not an actor, as I termed him, he is not a deceiver, nor a rogue; he lives at other people's expense not like an intriguer, but like a child. . . . Yes, he really will die somewhere in poverty and need; but can one hurl a stone at him for that? He will do nothing himself, precisely because he has no temperament, no blood; but who has a right to say, that he will not be, has not already been, of use? that his words have not sown many good seeds in young souls, to whom nature has not denied, as it has to him, the power of action, the capacity for carrying out their own projects? Yes, I myself, I was the first to undergo all that experience on myself. . . . Sáscha knows what Rúdin was to me in my youth. I remember, that I, also, asserted that Rúdin's words could not affect people; but I was talking then about people like myself, at my present age, of people already elderly and broken by life. A single false tone in a speech—and all its harmony has vanished for us; but in a young man, happily, the ear is not yet so highly developed, not so spoiled. If the essence of what he hears seems fine to him, what cares he for the tone! He will find the right tone within himself."

"Bravo! bravo!" exclaimed Basístoff:—"how justly that was said! As far as Rúdin's influence is concerned, I swear to you, that that man not only understood how to shake you to

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the depths, he moved you from your place, he did not let you halt, he converted you from the very foundations, he set you on fire!"

"Do you hear that!" went on Lezhnyóff, turning to Pigásóff:—"what more proof do you need? You attack philosophy; in speaking of it, you cannot find words sufficiently scornful. I do not favour it much myself, and understand very little about it: but our principal misfortunes do not arise from philosophy! The artful devices and ravings of philosophy will never get inoculated into the Russian: he possesses too much sound sense for that; but attacks upon every aspiration toward the truth and knowledge, under the name of philosophy, cannot be permitted. Rúdin's misfortune consists in the fact, that he does not know Russia, and that, really, is a great misfortune. Russia can get along without any one of us, but no one can get along without her. Woe to him who thinks so, twofold woe to him who really does get along without her. Cosmopolitanism is nonsense, the cosmopolite is a cipher, worse than a cipher; outside of nationality, there is neither art, nor truth, nor life, there is nothing. Without physiognomy, there is not even an ideal face; only a commonplace face is possible without physiognomy. But I will say it again, that is not Rúdin's fault: it is his fate, a bitter and heavy fate, for which we will not blame him. It would lead us very far

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afield, if we were to undertake to examine into the question—why do Rúdins make their appearance among us. But let us be grateful to him for what good there is in him. That is easier than it is to be unjust to him, and we have been unjust to him. It is not our business to punish him and it is not necessary: he has punished himself far more harshly than he has deserved. . . . And God grant, that unhappiness has expelled all evil from him, and left in him only what is fine! I drink to the health of Rúdin! I drink to the health of the comrade of my best years, I drink to youth, to its hopes, to its aspirations, to its truthfulness and honesty, to everything which made our hearts beat high at the age of twenty, and anything better than that we have not known and we never shall know in life. . . . I drink to thee, O golden age, I drink to the health of Rúdin!”

All clinked glasses with Lezhnyóff. Basístoff, in his fervour, came near smashing his glass, and drained it off at one draught, while Alexándra Pávlovna pressed Lezhnyóff's hand.

“I did not suspect you, Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch, of being so eloquent,” remarked Pigásoff:—“you are fairly the equal of Mr. Rúdin himself; it even penetrated me.”

“I am not in the least eloquent,” replied Lezhnyóff, not without vexation;—“and I think it would be difficult to penetrate you. However, enough of Rúdin; let us talk of something else. . . .”

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What what the deuce is his name? . . . Is Pandalévsky still living at Dárya Mikhaíl-ovna's?" he added, turning to Basístoff.

"Of course he is still with her! She has procured a very good position for him."

Lezhnyóff grinned.

"There 's a fellow who will not die in poverty, you may bet on that."

Supper came to an end. The guests separated. When she was left alone with her husband, Alexándra Pávlovna looked into his face with a smile.

"How fine thou wert to-day, Mísha," she said, caressing his brow with her hand,—“how cleverly and nobly thou didst speak! But confess, that thou wert a little carried away in favour of Rúdin, just as, formerly, thou wert carried away against him.”

"One does not strike a man who is down but I was afraid, then, that he might turn thy head."

"No," answered Alexándra Pávlovna ingenuously:—"he always seemed to me too learned. I was afraid of him, and did not know what to say in his presence. But Pigásóff sneered at him quite maliciously to-day, did n't he?"

"Pigásóff!" said Lezhnyóff. "That is exactly why I stood up so hotly for Rúdin, because Pigásóff was there. He dares to call Rúdin a lickspittle! But in my opinion, his rôle, the rôle

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of a Pigásoff, is a hundred times worse. He is in independent circumstances, he jeers at everybody, and how he clings to the distinguished and the rich! Do you know, that that Pigásoff, who reviles everything and everybody with so much rancour, and attacks philosophy and women,—do you know, that he, when he was in the service, took bribes, and did other things of that sort? Ah! And that is precisely the reason!”

“Is it possible?” exclaimed Alexándra Pávlovna. “I did not expect that in the least! . . . Listen, Mísha,” she added, after a brief silence:—“I want to ask thee something.” . . .

“What is it?”

“What dost thou think? Will my brother be happy with Natályá?”

“How can I tell . . . there is every probability that he will. . . She will command—there’s no use in making a secret of that between ourselves—she is cleverer than he; but he’s a splendid fellow, and loves her with all his soul. What more would you have? Why, here are we—we love each other and are happy, are n’t we?”

Alexándra Pávlovna smiled, and pressed Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch’s hand.

On that same day, when all that we have narrated took place in Alexándra Pávlovna’s house,—in one of the distant governments of

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Russia, a wretched basket *kibítka*¹ was jogging along, in the very sultriest part of the day, on the highway, drawn by a *tróika*¹ of peasants' horses. On the box, with his legs braced slantwise against the whiffletree, towered up a miserable, grey-haired peasant in a tattered coat, who incessantly jerked at the rope reins, and flourished his small whip; and in the *kibítka*, on a lean trunk, sat a man of lofty stature, in a foraging cap, and an old, dusty cloak. It was Rúdin. He sat with drooping head, and with the visor of his cap pulled down over his eyes. The uneven jolts of the *kibítka* tossed him from side to side; he seemed entirely insensible, as though in a doze. At last he straightened himself up.

“When shall we reach the station?” he asked the peasant, who was sitting on the box.

“Why, dear little father,” replied the peasant, and tugged more vigorously than ever at the reins:—“when we get up the hill, there will be two versts left, not more. . . Come, thou beast! use thy brains. . . I'll use them for thee!” he added in a shrill voice, and began to lash the off horse.

“It seems to me, that thou drivest very badly,” remarked Rúdin:—“we have been dragging along ever since early morning, and cannot reach

¹ A team of three horses abreast: the middle horse, a trotter, is between the shafts, connected by a wooden arch over his head. The side horses, attached by traces, gallop, with heads bent downward and backward. *Kibítka*, a covered travelling waggon.—TRANSLATOR.

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our destination. Thou hadst better sing something."

"Why, what's to be done, dear little father! the horses, as you see for yourself, are starved to death . . . and then again, there's the heat. And we can't sing: we're not a postilion. . . . You snipe, hey there, you snipe," the peasant suddenly exclaimed, addressing a passer-by in a grey smock and patched bast slippers:—"get out of the way, snipe!"

"A pretty sort of coachman thou art!" muttered the wayfarer after him, and halted. "Vile little Moscow bone!" he added, in a voice filled with censure, shook his head, and hobbled onward.

"What art thou about?" put in the wretched little peasant, with pauses, pulling at the shaft-horse:—"Akh, thou art a sly one! truly, a sly one. . . ."

The exhausted nags finally managed to crawl to the posting-station. Rúdin got out of the *ki-bitka*, paid the peasant (who did not salute him, and who turned the money over in his palm for a long time—which meant, that he had not received enough for liquor), and himself carried his trunk into the posting-house room.

One of my acquaintances, who has roamed a great deal about Russia in his time, once made the remark, that if on the walls of the station-room hang pictures representing scenes from the "Prisoner of the Caucasus," or Russian Gener-

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als, then one can promptly procure horses; but if the pictures present the life of the well-known gambler, Georges de Germanie, then the traveller need not hope for a speedy departure: he will have an opportunity to admire the curled crest, the white, open-breasted waistcoat, and the extremely tight and short trousers of the gambler in his youth, and his fanatical physiognomy when he, now already an old man, slays his own son, with a chair brandished aloft, in a hovel with a steep roof. In the room which Rúdin entered, hung precisely these pictures from "Thirty Years, or the Life of a Gambler." At his shout, the superintendent made his appearance, sleepy (by the way—has anyone ever beheld a superintendent who was not sleepy?), and, without even awaiting Rúdin's question, announced, in a languid voice, that there were no horses.

"How can you tell that there are no horses," said Rúdin:—"when you do not even know whither I am going? I came hither with peasant horses."

"We have no horses for any direction," replied the superintendent. "But whither are you going?"

"To * * * sk."

"There are no horses," repeated the superintendent, and left the room.

Rúdin, in irritation, stepped to the window, and flung his cap on the table. He had not changed

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much, but had grown sallow during the last two years; silver threads gleamed here and there among his curls, and his eyes, which were still very handsome, seemed, somehow, to have grown dull; tiny wrinkles, the traces of bitter and agitating emotions, lay around his mouth, on his cheeks, and on his temples.

His clothing was threadbare and old, and no linen was anywhere visible. Evidently, the time of his bloom was past: as the gardeners express it, he had gone to seed.

He set about reading the inscriptions on the walls the familiar diversion of bored travellers when, all of a sudden, the door squeaked, and the superintendent entered.

“There are no horses for * * * sk, and there will not be any for a good while,” he began, “but there are some going back to * * * off.”

“To * * * off?” said Rúdin. “But, good heavens, that is not on my road at all. I am on my way to Pénza, but * * * off lies in the direction of Tambóff, I think.”

“What of that? Then you can cross over from Tambóff, or, if not, you can turn off from * * * off, somehow or other.”

Rúdin reflected.

“Well, all right,” he said at last:—“order them to harness the horses. It’s all the same to me; I will go to Tambóff.”

The horses were soon brought round. Rúdin

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carried out his trunk, got into the peasant cart, seated himself, drooped his head as before. There was something helpless and sadly submissive in his bent figure. . . . And the *tróïka* crawled along at a leisurely trot, spasmodically jingling its bells.

EPILOGUE

(Several more years have elapsed.)

IT was a chill, autumnal day. A travelling calash drove up to the porch of the chief inn in the Government capital S***; from it, slightly stretching and yawning, alighted a gentleman, who was not yet elderly, but who had already succeeded in acquiring that corpulence of body which it has become the custom to designate as respectable. Ascending the stairs to the second storey, he halted at the entrance to a broad corridor, and seeing no one in front of him, he asked for a room, in a loud voice. A door somewhere banged, a long lackey sprang out from behind a small screen, and advanced with a brisk, sidelong gait, flashing through the half-dark corridor with his shining back and tucked-up sleeves. On entering his room, the newcomer immediately threw off his overcoat and scarf, seated himself on the divan, and resting his closed fists on his knees, first took a look around him, then gave orders that his servant should be called. The lackey made an evasive movement, and vanished. The traveller was no other than Lezh-

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nyóff. The recruiting had called him forth from his country estate to S * * *.

Lezhnyóff's servant, a curly-headed and rosy-cheeked young fellow, with a sky-blue girdle, and soft felt boots, entered the room.

"Well, here now, brother, we have arrived," went on Lezhnyóff:—"but thou wert in constant fear lest the tire should fly off the wheel."

"We have arrived!" returned the servant, trying to smile, through the upturned collar of his overcoat;—"but why that tire did n't fly off. . . ."

"Is there no one here?" sang out a voice in the corridor.

Lezhnyóff started, and began to listen.

"Hey, there! Who's there?" repeated the voice.

Lezhnyóff rose, went to the door, and hastily opened it.

Before him stood a man of lofty stature, almost completely grey and bent, in an old velvet coat with bronze buttons. Lezhnyóff instantly recognised him.

"Rúdin!" he exclaimed with emotion.

Rúdin turned round. He could not distinguish the features of Lezhnyóff, who was standing with his back to the light, and he gazed at him in perplexity.

"Don't you know me?" said Lezhnyóff.

"Mikhaílo Mikhaílitch!" cried Rúdin, and stretched out his hand, but was smitten with con-

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fusion, and was on the point of drawing it back again. . . .

Lezhnyóff hastily grasped it in both of his.

“Come in, come in to my room!” he said to Rúdin, and led him in.

“How you have changed!” ejaculated Lezhnyóff, after a pause, and involuntarily lowering his voice.

“Yes, they tell me so!” returned Rúdin, as his gaze roamed about the room. “It is the years. . . . But here are you—the same as ever. How is Alexándra your wife?”

“Thanks,—she is well. But how do you chance to be here?”

“I? It would take a long time to tell the story. To tell the truth, I came hither quite by accident. I was looking up an acquaintance. However, I am very glad. . . .”

“Where are you going to dine?”

“I? I don’t know. In some eating-house or other. I must leave here to-day.”

“You must?”

Rúdin smiled significantly.

“Yes, sir, I must. I am being sent home, to my country estate, for residence.”

“Dine with me.”

Rúdin, for the first time, looked Lezhnyóff straight in the eye.

“You are proposing that I should dine with you?” he said.

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“ Yes, Rúdin, in our old way, in comradely fashion. Will you? I had not expected to encounter you, and God knows when we shall see each other again. You and I must not part thus! ”

“ Very well, I accept.”

Lezhnyóff shook Rúdin by the hand, called the servant, ordered dinner, and gave orders that a bottle of champagne should be put on the ice.

During the dinner, Lezhnyóff and Rúdin, as though by common consent, talked constantly of their student days, recalled many things, many persons—both dead and living. At first, Rúdin was reluctant to talk, but he drank several glasses of wine, and his blood began to warm up. At last, the lackey carried out the last dish. Lezhnyóff rose, locked the door, and returning to the table, seated himself directly opposite Rúdin, and quietly rested his chin on both hands.

“ Well, now,” he began:—“ tell me everything that has happened to you, since I saw you last.”

Rúdin looked at Lezhnyóff.

“ My God!—” Lezhnyóff said to himself once more—“ how he has changed, poor fellow! ”

Rúdin’s features had undergone little change, especially since we saw him at the posting-station, although the stamp of approaching old age had already become imprinted on them; but their expression had become different. His eyes had an-

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other look; in all his being, in his movements, now leisurely, now incoherently abrupt, and in his chilled, as it were, broken speech, weariness spoke, a secret and quiet grief, very different from that semi-assumed sadness, of which he had been wont to make a display, as youth in general does while full of hope and of confident self-love.

“Tell you everything that has happened to me?” he said. “I cannot tell you all, and it is not worth the while. . . I have worn myself out greatly, I have wandered not with the body alone, I have roamed with the soul also. In what and in whom have I not been disenchanted, my God! with whom have I not come in contact! Yes, with whom!” repeated Rúdin, observing that Lezhnyóff was looking into his face with a certain special sympathy. “How many times have not my own words become repulsive to me—I am not speaking of them in my own mouth, but on the lips of people who shared my views! How many times have not I passed from the irritability of a baby, to the dull insensibility of a horse, which no longer twitches its tail when it is cut with the whip. . . How many times have not I rejoiced, hoped, grown hostile and humbled myself in vain! How many times have I soared with the flight of a falcon—and returned crawling, like a snail, whose shell has been crushed! . . . Where have I not been, by what roads have I not wandered! . . . And the roads are some-

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times dirty," added Rúdin, and slightly turned aside. "You know," he went on. . . .

"See here," Lezhnyóff interrupted him;—"once on a time, we used to call each other 'thou' Wouldst thou like it? let us resume our old habit. . . Let's drink to *thou!*"

Rúdin started, half rose, and in his eyes flashed something which words cannot express.

"Let us drink!" said he:—"I thank thee, brother, let us drink!"

Lezhnyóff and Rúdin drank off a glass.

"*Thou* knowest," began Rúdin once more, with emphasis on 'thou' and with a smile:—"there is some sort of a worm within me, which gnaws me, and swallows, and will give me no peace to the end. It brings me into contact with people—at first, they yield to my influence, and later on"

Rúdin waved his hand in the air.

"Since I parted from you . . . from thee, I have experienced and learned much. . . . I began to live, I undertook something new twenty times—and here I am!—thou seest!"

"Thou hadst no staying power," remarked Lezhnyóff, as though to himself.

"How canst thou say, that I had no staying power! . . . I have never known how to construct anything; yes, and 't is difficult to construct, brother, when there is no ground under one's feet, when one is compelled to create one's own

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foundation! I will not describe to thee all my peregrinations, that is, properly speaking, all my failures. I will give thee two or three instances . . . those incidents in my life when, apparently, success was smiling on me, when I had begun to have hopes of success,—which is not quite the same thing. . . .”

Rúdin tossed back his grey hair, already thin, with the same movement of the hand wherewith, in days gone by, he had been wont to throw aside his thick, dark curls.

“Well, listen,” he began. “In Moscow, I became connected with a decidedly peculiar gentleman. He was very wealthy, and owned extensive estates; he was not in government service. His chief, his sole passion, was a love for science, for science in general. Up to this moment, I cannot comprehend how that passion made its appearance in him! It was as suitable for him as a saddle is for a cow. By dint of exertion alone did he keep himself on the heights of mind, and he hardly knew how to talk, but merely rolled his eyes expressively, and shook his head significantly. I have never met, my dear fellow, any one less gifted and poorer by nature than he was. . . . In the Government of Smolénsk, there are spots where there is sand—and nothing else, save here and there grass, which not a single animal will eat. He did easily nothing, everything regularly crawled away from him as far as possi-

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ble: he was crazy over making everything easy difficult. Had it depended on his management, people would have eaten with their heels, indeed they would. He worked, wrote and read indefatigably. He courted science with a certain obstinate persistency, with strange patience; his self-love was huge, and he had a character of iron. He lived alone, and bore the reputation of an eccentric. I made his acquaintance . . . well, and he liked me. I must confess, that I soon saw through him; but his zeal touched me. Moreover, he possessed such great means, so much good could be done through him, so much real service could be rendered. . . I settled down in his house, and, at last, went off with him to his country place. My plans, brother, were vast: I dreamed of various improvements, innovations. . . .”

“As at Mme. Lasúnsky’s, thou wilt remember,” remarked Lezhnyóff, with a good-natured smile.

“The idea! there, I knew in my own soul, that nothing would come of my words; but in this case . . . a totally different field opened out before me. . . I took with me agronomical books . . . it is true, . . that I had never read a single one of them through to the end . . . well, and I set to work. At first, things did not go just as I had expected; but afterwards, they did seem to be moving. My new friend continued to hold his tongue, and to look on; he did not interfere with

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me,—that is to say, to a certain degree he did not interfere with me. He accepted my suggestions, and carried them out, but obstinately, stiffly, with secret distrust, and gave everything a turn of his own. He set especial value on every thought of his own. He would climb up it, with an effort, as a lady-bug crawls up a blade of grass; and he would sit and sit on it, as though he were pluming his wings, and getting ready to fly—and, all of a sudden, he would tumble down, and then crawl up again. . . . Be not surprised at all these comparisons: they fairly seethed in my soul even then. Well, so I struggled along in that way for two years. Matters were progressing badly, despite all my pains. I began to grow weary, my friend bored me, I began to say caustic things to him, he smothered me, like a feather-bed; his distrust passed into dull irritation, an unpleasant feeling took possession of both of us, we could no longer converse about anything; he was underhandedly but incessantly trying to prove to me, that he was not submitting to my influence, my arrangements were either distorted or entirely set aside. . . . I noticed, at last, that I stood toward Mr. Landed Proprietor in the quality of a hanger-on in the department of mental exercises. It was bitter for me to waste my time and strength in vain, it was bitter to feel that I had again and again been deceived in my expectations. I knew

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very well what I should lose by going away; but I could not conquer myself, and one day, as the result of a painful and exciting scene, of which I was a witness, and which showed me my friend from an altogether too unfavourable side, I quarrelled with him definitively and went away, abandoning the gentleman-pedant moulded of common prairie flour, with an admixture of German molasses. . . .”

“That is to say, thou didst fling away thy bit of daily bread,” remarked Lezhnyóff, and laid both hands on Rúdin’s shoulders.

“Yes, and found myself again light and naked in empty space. ‘Fly whithersoever thou wilt,’ said I . . . Ekh, let’s have a drink!”

“To thy health!” said Lezhnyóff, rising and kissing Rúdin on the brow.—“To thy health, and in memory of Pokórsky. . . . He, also, knew how to remain poor.”

“There’s number one, for you, of my peregrinations,” began Rúdin, after a little.—“Shall I go on?”

“Go on, pray.”

“Ekh! but I don’t feel like talking. I am weary, I tell thee, brother. . . . Well, however, so be it. After knocking about in various places—by the way, I might tell thee how I came near getting the post of secretary to a well-intentioned dignitary, and what came of it; but that would take us too far. . . . After knocking about in

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various places, I decided, at last, to become don't laugh, please . . . a man of business, a practical man. It happened in this way: I got connected with a certain perhaps thou hast heard of him with a certain Kurbyéeff no?"

"No, I have not heard of him. But, good gracious, Rúdin, how is it, that, with thy intelligence, thou didst not guess that it was no business of thine to be pardon the pun . . . a man of business?"

"I know, brother, that it is not; besides, in what does it consist? But if thou hadst only seen Kurbyéeff! Please do not imagine that he was a sort of empty babbler. People used to say that I was eloquent, in days gone by. But, in comparison with him, I count for nothing. He was wonderfully learned, well informed, with a head, brother, a creative head, in matters of industry and commercial enterprises. His brain was fairly swarming with the boldest, the most unexpected projects. He and I joined company, and decided to use our forces for a matter of public benefit. . . ."

"What was it, may I ask?"

Rúdin dropped his eyes.

"Thou wilt laugh."

"Why? No, I will not laugh."

"We decided to convert one of the rivers in the

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Government of K * * * into a navigable stream," said Rúdin, with an awkward smile.

"You don't say so! Then that Kurbyéeff must have been a capitalist?"

"He was poorer than myself," returned Rúdin, and softly hung his grey head.

Lezhnyóff burst out laughing, but suddenly stopped, and took Rúdin's hand.

"Forgive me, brother, pray do," he said to him:—"but I did not, in the least, expect that. Well, and so that enterprise of yours remained on paper?"

"Not altogether. There was a beginning of fulfilment. We hired labourers . . . well, and they set to work. But then we encountered divers obstacles. In the first place, the proprietors of mills would not understand us, and, in addition to that, we could not deal with the water without machinery, and we had not the money for machinery. Six months we lived in earth huts. Kurbyéeff subsisted on bread alone, and I did not eat my fill either. However, I do not regret that: nature is wonderful there. We struggled and struggled, exhorted the merchants, wrote letters and circulars. It ended in my spending my last copper on that project."

"Well!" remarked Lezhnyóff:—"I do not think it was difficult to spend your last copper."

"It was not difficult, exactly so."

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Rúdin stared out of the window.

“But the project, by heaven, was not a bad one, and might have produced enormous profits.”

“And what became of Kurbyéeff?” inquired Lezhnyóff.

“Of him? He is in Siberia now, he has turned gold-miner. And thou wilt see, he will acquire a competence. He will not go to the wall.”

“Possibly; but thou wilt certainly not acquire a competence.”

“I? What is to be done! However, I know: I always have been an empty man in thine eyes.”

“Thou? Hush, brother! There was a time, really, when only thy dark sides were apparent to my eye; but now, believe me, I have learned to value thee. Thou wilt not acquire a fortune. . . Yes, and for that I love thee upon my word!”

Rúdin smiled faintly.

“Really?”

“I respect thee for that!” repeated Lezhnyóff;—“dost thou understand me?”

Both remained silent for a space.

“Well, shall we proceed to number three?” asked Rúdin.

“Do me that favour.”

“At your service. Number three, and the last. I have only just got rid of that number. But am not I boring thee?”

“Go on, go on.”

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“ Well, you see,” began Rúdin:—“ one day I was meditating at leisure. . . I have always had plenty of leisure—and I thought: I have considerable knowledge, my desires are good see here, thou surely wilt not deny that my desires are good? ”

“ I should think not! ”

“ On all other points, I have suffered more or less defeat . . . why should not I turn pedagogue, or, to put it more simply, teacher . . . rather than live thus in vain. . . ”

Rúdin paused and sighed.

“ Rather than live in vain, would it not be better to endeavour to communicate to others what I know: perchance, they will derive some benefit from my knowledge. My capacities are not ordinary, in short, I am a master of language. . . So I determined to devote myself to this new business. I had a good deal of trouble in finding a place; I did not wish to give private lessons; there was nothing for me to do in the lower schools. At last, I succeeded in obtaining the post of lecturer in the gymnasium here.”

“ Lecturer—on what? ” asked Lezhnyóff.

“ Lecturer on Russian literature. I will tell thee this,—never have I undertaken a single affair with so much zeal as in this case. The thought of acting on youth inspired me. Three weeks did I spend over the composition of my first lecture.”

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“Hast thou not got it with thee?” inquired Lezhnyóff.

“No; it got lost somewhere. It turned out quite well, and pleased people. I seem to behold, now, the faces of my auditors,—kind, young faces, with an expression of open-hearted attention, even of amazement. I mounted the tribune, read my lecture in a fever; I thought there was enough of it to last more than an hour, and in twenty minutes I had finished it. The inspector was sitting there—a dry old man, in silver-mounted spectacles, and a short wig,—he inclined his head in my direction from time to time. When I had finished, and had sprung from my chair, he said to me: ‘Very good, sir, only a trifle high-flown, rather obscure, and, moreover, there was very little said about the subject itself.’ But the gymnasium pupils gazed after me with respect . . . really they did. That’s the precious thing about young people. I delivered my second lecture from manuscript, and the third in the same way . . . and after that, I began to improvise.”

“And wert successful?” inquired Lezhnyóff.

“I was very successful. I imparted to my hearers everything that was in my soul. Among them there were three or four lads, who were really remarkable; the rest did not understand me well. However, I must admit, that even those who did understand me sometimes disconcerted

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me by their questions. But I did not become despondent. As for loving me, they all did that. But then an intrigue was begun against me or no! there was no intrigue whatever; but I, simply, had got out of my sphere. I embarrassed the others, and they embarrassed me. I lectured to the gymnasium lads, in a manner different from that in which students are always lectured to; my hearers carried but little away from my lectures; . . . I was but badly acquainted with facts myself. Moreover, I did not content myself with the circle of action which had been prescribed for me thou knowest that that is my weakness. I wanted radical reforms, and I give thee my word of honour, that these reforms were practical and easy. I hoped to carry them out through the director, upon whom I at first had some influence. His wife helped me. I have met very few such women in the course of my life, brother. She was nearly forty years of age; but she believed in good, she loved everything that was excellent, like a young girl of fifteen, and was not afraid to speak out her convictions before any one whatsoever. I shall never forget her noble enthusiasm and purity. By her advice, I began to write out a plan. . . But at this point I was undermined, my reputation was blackened to her. I was particularly injured by the teacher of mathematics, a sharp, bilious little man, who believed in nothing, after the fashion of Pigásoff,

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only much more active than he. . . . By the way, what has become of Pigásoff, is he still alive?"

"Yes, and just imagine, he has married a woman of the petty burgher class, who beats him, they say."

"And serve him right! And is Natálya Alexyéevna well?"

"Yes."

"Is she happy?"

"Yes."

Rúdin said nothing for a while.

"What the deuce was I talking about? oh, yes! about the teacher of mathematics. He conceived a hatred for me; he compared my lectures to fireworks, he caught up on the fly every expression that was not entirely clear, he once even contradicted me about some monument or other of the XV century . . . but the chief point was, that he suspected my intentions; my last soap-bubble hit against him, as against a pin, and broke. The inspector, with whom I had not got on from the first, stirred up the director against me; a row ensued; I would not yield, I waxed angry, the matter was brought to the knowledge of the authorities; I was forced to resign. I did not stop there, I tried to prove that they could not treat me like that but they can treat me as they please . . . I am now compelled to leave this place."

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A silence followed. Both friends sat with drooping heads.

Rúdin was the first to speak.

“Yes, brother,” he began:—“now I can say with Koltzóff: ‘Whither hast thou led me, hounded me, O my youth, that no longer have I where to set my foot!’ . . . And, nevertheless, am I good for nothing, is there really no work for me on earth? I have frequently put that question to myself, and, strive as I might to humble myself in my own eyes, I nevertheless could not but be conscious of powers within myself, which are not given to all men! Then why do these powers remain sterile? And here is another thing: dost thou remember, when thou and I were abroad, I was self-conceited and false. . . . The fact was, that I had not then comprehended what I wished, I intoxicated myself with words, and believed in phantoms; but now, I give thee my word of honour, I can declare aloud, in the presence of all the world, everything which I desire. I positively have nothing to conceal: I am thoroughly, and in the most essential meaning of the word, a well-meaning man; I abase myself, I wish to adapt myself to circumstances, I wish for little, I wish to attain to a proximate goal, I wish to be of even the slightest use. No! I cannot succeed! What is the meaning of this? What is it that prevents my living and being active like other people? . . . That is the only thing I dream of

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now. But no sooner do I emerge into a definite position, no sooner do I halt at a fixed point, than fate fairly thrusts me off to a distance. . . . I have begun to fear it—my fate. . . . Why is all this? Solve this riddle for me!”

“Riddle!” repeated Lezhnyóff. “Yes, it is true. Thou hast always been a riddle for me also. Even in thy youth, when, after some petty sally or other, thou wouldst suddenly begin to talk in such a way that the heart quivered, and then wouldst begin again . . . well, thou knowest what I mean to say . . . even then, I did not understand thee: that was precisely the reason why I ceased to love thee—there was so much power in thee, so much indefatigable aspiration toward the ideal. . . .”

“Words, nothing but words! there were no deeds!” broke in Rúdin.

“There were no deeds! What deeds. . . .”

“What deeds? To support a blind peasant woman and all her family by my labours, as Pryázhentzoff did, thou wilt remember. . . . There’s a deed for thee.”

“Yes; but a good word is a deed also.”

Rúdin gazed in silence at Lezhnyóff, and slowly shook his head.

Lezhnyóff tried to find something to say, and passed his hand over his face.

“And so, thou art going to thy estate?” he asked, at last.

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“ Yes.”

“ But hast thou still an estate belonging to thee? ”

“ There is something of that sort left yonder. Two souls and a half. There is a corner wherein to die. Perchance, thou art thinking, at this moment: ‘ And even now, he could not get along without flowery phrases!’ Phrases, in point of fact, have been my undoing; they have devoured me to the very end, I have not been able to rid myself of them. But what I have just said is not a mere phrase. These white locks, these wrinkles, are not phrases, brother; these ragged elbows are not phrases. Thou hast always been stern with me, and thou wert just; but this is no time for sternness, when everything is already at an end, and there is no more oil in the lamp, and the lamp itself is shattered, and the wick is on the very verge of smoking itself out. . . . Death, brother, must reconcile, at last. . . . ”

Lezhnyóff sprang to his feet.

“ Rúdin!” he exclaimed, “ why dost thou say this to me? How have I deserved this from thee? What sort of a judge, and what sort of a man should I be, if, at the sight of thy hollow cheeks and wrinkles, the word ‘ phrases ’ could enter my mind? Dost thou wish to know what I think of thee? Very well! I think: here is a man . . . with his capacities, what might not he attain to, what earthly benefits might not he now possess, if

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he only willed it! but I meet him hungry, without a shelter.”

“I arouse thy pity,” said Rúdin in a dull voice.

“No, there thou art mistaken. Thou inspirest me with respect—that’s what I mean. Who prevented thy spending years and years with that landed proprietor, thy friend, who, I am fully convinced, if thou hadst but been willing to knuckle under to him, would have given thee a secure position? Why couldst thou not live in harmony at the gymnasium, why—O strange man!—with whatever designs thou didst begin a thing, hast thou, in every case, inevitably wound up by sacrificing thy personal interests, hast not struck root in evil soil, however rich it might be?”

“I was born a rolling stone,” continued Rúdin with a melancholy smile. “I cannot stop myself.”

“That is true; but the reason why thou canst not stop thyself is not, that in thee lives a worm, as thou hast said to me at the beginning of this conversation. . . . ’T is not a worm that lives in thee, ’t is not the spirit of idle uneasiness,—it is the fire of love for the truth, it burns within thee, and it is evident, despite all thy talk, that it burns in thee more powerfully than in many who do not even regard themselves as egoists, but, in all probability, call thee an intriguer. Yes, I would have been the first, had I been in thy place,

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to have forced that worm, long ago, to hold its peace within me, and I would have reconciled myself to everything; but in thee there has not even been an access of bile, and thou, I am convinced of it, art ready this very day, this very moment, to set about some new undertaking, like a young lad."

"No, brother, I am weary now," said Rúdin. "I have had enough."

"Weary! Any one else would have died long ago. Thou sayest that death reconciles; but does not life reconcile, thinkest thou? He who has lived long, and has not become lenient towards others, does not deserve leniency himself. And who can say, that he does not stand in need of leniency? Thou hast done what thou couldst, thou hast striven as long as thou wert able. . . . What more can be demanded? Our roads have lain apart"

"Thou art an entirely different man from me, brother," interposed Rúdin, with a sigh.

"Our roads have lain apart," pursued Lezhnyóff:—"perhaps, that is precisely the reason why, thanks to my position, to my cold blood, and to other fortunate circumstances, nothing has prevented my becoming a stay-at-home, and remaining a spectator, with arms folded; but thou hast been forced to go forth into the field, with sleeves stripped up, to toil and work. Our roads have lain apart . . . but observe, how near we

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are to each other. For we talk almost an identical language, we understand each other at half a hint; we grew up on the same sentiments. Not many of us are left now, brother; for thou and I are the last of the Mohicans! We might get angry, even quarrel, in the olden years, when we had a great deal of life ahead of us; but now, when the throng is thinning around us, when the new generations are sweeping past us, to goals which are not our goals, we must cling fast to each other. Let us clink glasses, brother, and let us sing, as of old: 'Gaudemus igitur!'"

The friends touched glasses, and sang in deeply moved, real Russian voices out of tune, the ancient student song.

"So, now thou art going to thy village," began Lezhnyóff again. "I do not think thou wilt remain there long, and I cannot imagine how, where and when thou wilt wind up. . . . But remember this: whatever may happen to thee, thou hast always a place, there is always a nest, where thou mayest take refuge. That is my house dost thou hear me, old fellow? Thought also has its invalid soldiers: they must have an asylum."

Rúdin rose.

"I thank thee, brother," he went on. "I thank thee! I will not forget this of thee. Only, I am not worthy of an asylum. I have ruined my own life, and I have not served thought as I should have done."

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“Hush!” continued Lezhnyóff. “Every one remains what nature made him, and nothing more can be demanded of him! Thou hast called thyself the Wandering Jew. . . . And how dost thou know, perhaps thou also must wander eternally thus, perhaps thou wilt, thereby, fulfil a higher destination, of which thou thyself knowest nothing: not for nothing has the wisdom of the people declared, that we all go as God wills.”

“Art thou going?” went on Lezhnyóff, perceiving that Rúdin was picking up his cap. “Wilt thou not spend the night here?”

“I am going! farewell. Thanks. . . . But I shall end badly.”

“God only knows about that. . . . Thou art determined to go?”

“Yes. Good-bye. Bear me no ill-will.”

“Well, and do thou bear me no ill-will . . . and do not forget what I have told thee. Good-bye. . . .”

The friends embraced. Rúdin swiftly left the room.

Lezhnyóff paced up and down the room for a long time, halted in front of the window, reflected, muttered, in an undertone: “Poor fellow!” and seating himself at the table, began to write a letter to his wife.

Outside, the wind rose, and howled with an ominous roar, beating heavily and spitefully

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against the rattling window-panes. The long, autumnal night closed in. It is well with him, who, on such nights is sitting under the shelter of a house, who has a warm nook. . . And may the Lord help all shelterless wanderers!

At the sultry noonday of July 26, 1848, in Paris, when the insurrection of the "national working-men" had been almost suppressed, in one of the narrow alleys of the Faubourg Saint Antoine a battalion of the line captured a barricade. It had already been shattered by several cannon-shots; those of its defenders who remained alive, had abandoned it, and were thinking only of their safety, when, all of a sudden, on its very crest, upon the crushed body of an overturned omnibus, there appeared a tall man in an old coat, girt about with a red scarf, and with a straw hat on his grey, dishevelled locks. In one hand he grasped a red flag, in the other, a curved, dull sword, and shouted something in a strained, shrill voice, as he scrambled upwards and waved the flag and the sword. A sharpshooter of Vincennes took aim at him,—and fired. . . . The tall man dropped the flag, and fell face downward, like a sack, exactly as though he were bowing down to some one's feet. . . . The bullet had passed straight through his heart.

"*Tiens!*" said one of the fleeing insurgents to another: "*On vient de tuer le Polonais.*"

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“ *Bigre!* ” replied the latter, and both flung themselves into the cellar of a house, all of whose shutters were closed, and its walls streaked with the traces of bullets and cannon-balls.

That “ Polonais ” was—Dmítry Rúdin.

END

A KING LEAR OF
THE STEPPES

(1870)

A KING LEAR OF THE STEPPES

SIX of us were assembled one winter evening at the house of an old comrade of university days. A discussion arose about Shakespeare, about his types, about the profundity and fidelity with which they have been delineated from the very inmost recesses of human "nature." We particularly admired their vivid truth, their everyday character; each of us enumerated the Hamlets, the Othellos, the Falstaffs, even the Richard the Thirds and the Macbeths—(these last, it is true, only as possibilities)—with whom he had happened to come in contact.

"And I, gentlemen,"—exclaimed our host, a man already elderly,—“have known a King Lear!”

“What do you mean?”

“Precisely that. If you like, I will tell you the story.”

“Pray do.”

And our friend immediately began his narrative.

I

MY entire childhood, and my early youth, up to the age of twenty, he began,—I spent in the country, on the estate of my mother, a wealthy landowner of the * * * Government. Perhaps the most clear-cut impression of that already distant epoch, which remains in my memory, is the figure of our nearest neighbour, a certain Martýn Petróvitch Kharlóff. And it would be difficult indeed to erase that impression: I have never, in all the course of my life since then, encountered anything like Kharlóff. Picture to yourselves a man of gigantic stature! On his huge trunk sat a monstrous head, somewhat awry, and without the slightest trace of a neck: above it rose a regular hay-cock of tangled, yellowish grey hair, starting almost from his bristling eyebrows. On the broad expanse of his bluish, as it were flayed face jutted forth a robust, wen-like nose, diminutive blue eyes glared arrogantly, and a mouth gaped, equally tiny, but crooked and cracked, of the same colour as the rest of the face. The voice emitted from this mouth, although hoarse, was extremely powerful and sibilant Its sound reminded the hearer of the clatter of iron

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bars which are being transported in a cart along a bad pavement—and Kharlóff talked as though he were shouting at some one on the other side of a broad chasm, in a high wind. It was difficult to say precisely what Kharlóff's face expressed, so vast was it. . . . It could not be taken in with a single glance! But it was not disagreeable—a certain majesty was even discernible in it, only it was prodigious and remarkable. And what hands he had—regular pillows! what fingers, what feet! I remember, that I could not gaze without alarm at Martýn Petróvitch's back, two arshíns¹ in length, at his shoulders, which resembled millstones; but his ears, in particular amazed me! regular kalátches² they were, with all the folds and turns: his cheeks fairly thrust them up on both sides. Martýn Petróvitch wore—both winter and summer—a coat, tightly fitted to his figure, of green cloth, girt with a narrow Tcherkessian belt of leather, and oiled boots; I never saw a neckerchief on him, and what was there for him to tie a neckerchief about? He breathed slowly and heavily, like an ox, but he walked noiselessly. One might have supposed that, when he happened to find himself in a room, he lived in constant terror of smashing and overturning everything, and therefore moved from place to place cautiously, chiefly sideways, as

¹ An arshín is twenty-eight inches.—TRANSLATOR.

² A favourite hot wheaten roll of peculiar shape.—TRANSLATOR.

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though by stealth. He was possessed of genuinely herculean strength, and in consequence enjoyed great respect in the neighbourhood: our people, down to the present day, worship epic heroes. Legends were even invented about him: it was narrated, that he had once encountered a bear in the woods, and almost vanquished him; that having caught a strange peasant among his beehives, he flung him, together with his cart and horse, over the wattled fence, and other things of the same sort. Kharlóff himself never bragged of his strength. "If I have a blessed right hand,"—he was accustomed to say,—“it is because such is the will of God!”—He was proud: only, he was not proud of his strength, but of his station, of his good birth, of his brains.

“Our family is Vshedish” (he always pronounced Swedish in that manner), “descended from the Vshede Kharlus,” he asserted:—“during the reign of Prince Iván Vasílievitch the Blind—(just think of that!) he came to Russia; and that Vshede Kharlus did not want to be a Finnish Count—but he wanted to be a Russian noble, and he inscribed himself in the Golden Book.¹ So that’s where we Kharlóffs come from! And, for the same reason, all we Kharlóffs are born with fair hair, with light eyes, and with clear skins! because we are snow-men!”

“But, Martýn Petróvitch,”—I tried to re-

¹ The official genealogy.—TRANSLATOR.

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tort,—“ Iván Vasílievitch the Blind never existed at all, but there was an Iván Vasílievitch the Terrible. The Blind was the appellation of a certain Prince Vasíly Vasílievitch.”¹

“ Go on with thine idle chatter! ”—Kharlóff answered me calmly:—“ if I say it, it was so! ”

Once upon a time, my mother took it into her head to praise Kharlóff, to his face, for his really remarkable disinterestedness.

“ Ekh, Natálya Nikoláevna! ”—he said, almost angrily,—“ a pretty thing you have found to praise me for! We gentle born cannot be otherwise: let no low-born rascalion, bee-keeper, or dependent dare to think ill of us! I am Kharlóff, yonder is the place whence I derive my descent” (here he pointed with his finger to some place very high above him—to the ceiling),—“ and the idea that there should not be honour in me! Why, how is that possible? ”

On another occasion a dignitary who was the guest of my mother, took it into his head to make fun of Martýn Petróvitch. The latter again began to talk about the Vshede Kharlus who had come to Russia.

“ In the days of Tzar Pea? ”²—interrupted the dignitary.

“ No, not in the days of Tzar Pea,—but in

¹ Literally: The Dark, 1425-1462. He was the first Grand Prince crowned at Moscow. —TRANSLATOR.

² Equivalent to “ King David,” or any other absurdly remote ancestor. —TRANSLATOR.

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the days of Grand Prince Iván Vasílievitch the Blind.”

“Why, I had supposed,”—went on the dignitary,—“that your race was much more ancient, and went back even to antediluvian times, when there were mastodons and megalotheriums. . . .”

These learned terms were totally unknown to Martýn Petróvitch; but he understood that the dignitary was ridiculing him.

“Perhaps it does,”—he burst out,—“our race is really very ancient: at the time when my ancestor arrived in Moscow, they say that a fool, the equal of your Excellency, dwelt there, and only one such fool is born in a thousand years.”

The dignitary flew into a rage, but Kharlóff threw back his head, thrust out his chin, snorted, and took himself off. Two days later, he made his appearance again. My mother began to reprove him. “Read him the lesson, madam,”—interrupted Kharlóff:—“don’t dash forward headlong, inquire, first of all, with whom you are dealing. He’s very young still, he needs teaching.” The dignitary was nearly of the same age as Kharlóff; but that giant had acquired the habit of looking upon everybody as a stripling. He had the greatest confidence in himself, and feared absolutely no one. “Can they do anything to me? Where in the world is there such another man”—he was wont to ask, and suddenly he would burst into a curt, but deafening laugh.

II

MY mother was very fastidious about her acquaintances, but she received Kharlóff with particular cordiality, and overlooked many things in him: five and twenty years before, he had saved her life, by holding her carriage on the brink of a deep abyss, into which the horses had already fallen. The traces and breech-straps gave way, but even then Martýn Petróvitch did not let go of the wheel which he had seized in his grasp—although the blood spurted from beneath his fingernails. My mother even arranged his marriage: she gave him to wife an orphan girl of seventeen, who had been reared in her house: he was over forty at the time. Martýn Petróvitch's wife was weak in health,—it was said that he had carried her into his house on his palms,—and she did not long survive the wedding; but she bore him two daughters. Even after her death, my mother continued to show her good-will to Martýn Petróvitch: she got the eldest daughter into one of the Government boarding-schools, then she found her a husband—and already had her eye on another for the second daughter. Kharlóff was an excellent farmer, his little estate consisted of about

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three hundred desyatínas,¹ and he had added to it somewhat; and as for the way in which his serfs obeyed him,—it simply is useless to discuss it! Owing to his obesity, Kharlóff hardly ever went on foot: he was too heavy. He rode about everywhere in a low racing-drozhky, and drove the horse himself, a raw-boned mare thirty years old, with the scar of a wound on her shoulder: that wound she had received in the battle of Borodinó, as the mount of the quartermaster in the Chevalier Guards regiment. This horse constantly limped, on all four feet simultaneously, it seemed: she could not go at a walk, but meandered along at a jog-trot, with a skip and a jump; she ate mugwort and wormwood from the grass strips between the cultivated fields, a thing which I have never observed any other horse do. I remember that I always wondered how that half-alive horse could draw about such a frightful burden. I dare not repeat how many puds² our neighbour weighed. Behind Martýn Petróvitch in the racing-gig his swarthy little page, Maxím, took his place. Cuddling his whole body and face up against his master, and bracing his bare feet against the hind axle of the drozhky, he seemed a tiny leaf, or a worm, which was leaning against the gigantic carcass that towered up in front of him. This same page, once a week, shaved Mar-

¹ A desyatína is 2.70 acres.—TRANSLATOR.

² A pud is 36 pounds.—TRANSLATOR.

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týn Petróvitch. For the accomplishment of this operation, he stood on the table, so they said: some jesters asserted, that he was forced to run around his master's chin. Kharlóff was not fond of staying at home for long at a time, and, therefore, he was quite frequently to be seen driving about in his inevitable equipage,¹ with the reins in one hand (the other, he deftly, with elbow crooked out, propped on his knee), with a tiny, old cap of military shape on the very apex of his head. He gazed alertly about him with his little, bear-like eyes, shouted in stentorian tones at all the peasants, petty burghers, and merchants whom he met: he launched strong epithets at the priests, whom he was very far from loving, and one day, as he came alongside me, (I had gone out for a stroll with my gun), he began to halloo so vociferously at a hare which was lying by the roadside, that the moaning and din stuck in my ears until evening.

¹ The racing-drozhky, used also for rough work in the country, consists of a board, with or without a cushion, attached without springs to four small wheels, all of the same size. The driver sits astride the board, with his feet braced against the shafts.—TRANSLATOR.

III

MY mother, as I have already said, was wont to give Martýn Petróvitch a cordial welcome; she knew what profound respect he cherished for her. “She’s a gentlewoman! a lady! one of our own sort!”—was the way in which he was accustomed to refer to her. He called her his benefactress, and she looked upon him as a devoted giant, who would not have hesitated to defend her single-handed against a whole horde of peasants:—and, although not even the possibility of such a clash was apprehended, still, according to my mother’s views, in the absence of a husband (she had been early widowed), such a defender as Martýn Petróvitch was not to be despised. Moreover, he was an upright man, he fawned on no one, he did not borrow money, he did not drink liquor—and neither was he stupid, although he had received no education whatever. My mother trusted Martýn Petróvitch. When she took it into her head to make her last will and testament, she summoned him as a witness, and he drove home for the express purpose of getting the circular, iron spectacles, without which he was unable to write; and with these spectacles

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on his nose, he barely contrived, in the course of a quarter of an hour, panting and puffing, to jot down his rank, name, patronymic, and surname, and, withal, he made his letters huge, square, with flourishes and tails; and having completed his labour, he announced that he was weary, and that writing was, for him, as hard work as catching fleas. Yes, my mother respected him but he was not allowed any further than the dining-room in our house. A very strong odour emanated from him: he reeked of the earth, of forest thickets, of marsh mire. “A regular forest-demon!” my old nurse averred. At dinner, a special table was placed in the corner for Martýn Petróvitch—and he was not offended at this—he knew that it was awkward for others to sit beside him—and moreover, he himself could eat in greater comfort; and he ate as, I suppose, no one has eaten since the days of Polyphemus. By way of precaution, a pot of buckwheat groats, containing about six pounds, was always provided for him at the very beginning of the dinner: “otherwise, thou wilt certainly eat me out of house and home!”—my mother used to say. “Exactly, madam, I shall eat you out of house and home!” Martýn Petróvitch would answer, with a grin.

My mother loved to listen to his arguments on any point of domestic management; but she could not endure his voice very long.

“Well, good heavens!”—she would exclaim:

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—“you ought to get cured of that, I think! you have completely deafened me. What a trumpet!”

“Natálya Nikoláevna—Benefactress!”—Martýn Petróvitch generally replied:—“I have no control over my throat. And what medicine could I take?—please to judge for yourself. I had better hold my peace for a bit.”

As a matter of fact, I don't suppose that any medicine could have penetrated Martýn Petróvitch. He had never been ill.

He could not narrate, and did not like to do so. “Asthma is caused by long speeches,” he remarked reprovingly. Only when he was got upon the subject of the war of 1812, (he had served in the militia, and had received a bronze medal, which he wore with the ribbon of the Order of St. Vladimir on festive occasions), when he was interrogated about the French, did he impart a few anecdotes, although he kept asserting, at the same time, that no genuine Frenchmen had come to Russia; but that, impelled by hunger, marauders had made an incursion, and that he had administered a thrashing to many of that rabble.

IV

YET this invincible, self-reliant giant had his hours of melancholy and irresolution. Without any visible cause, he would suddenly begin to suffer from depression: he would lock himself up alone in his room and buzz—precisely that, buzz like a whole swarm of bees: or he would summon his page, Maxím, and order him either to read aloud from the only book which had strayed into his house, an odd volume of Nóvikoff's "The Labourer at Rest,"—or to sing. And Maxím, who, by a strange freak of fate, could read by spelling out, would set to work with the usual dislocation of words, and transference of the accent, to shout out phrases, in the nature of the following: "But a pas-siónate hu-mán being deducés from that empty place, which he finds in creatúres, utterly conflicting in-ferénces. Any creatúre se-par-átely, he says, has not the power of rendér-ing me hap-pý!" and so forth,¹ or he would strike up, in the shrillest sort of a little voice, some mournful ditty, of which nothing could be distinguished except: "I . . . i . . . e . . . i . . . e . . . i . . . Aa . . . ska! . . . O . . . ou . . . ou . . . bi . . . i . . . i . . . i . . .

¹ "The Labourer at Rest," a periodical publication, etc. Moscow, 1785, Part III., p. 23, line 11 from the top.

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la!" And Martýn Petróvitch would sway his head, to and fro, and allude to the instability of life, to the fact that everything will turn to dust, will wither like unto the grass of the field: it will pass away—and cease to exist! In some manner, there had fallen into his hands a picture which depicted a burning taper, on which the winds are blowing from all four points of the compass, with distended cheeks; underneath was the inscription: "Such is human life!" This picture pleased him greatly; he hung it up in his private study;—but in ordinary, non-mournful periods he was accustomed to turn it with its face to the wall, in order that it might not worry him. Kharlóff, that colossus, was afraid of death! Yet, even in his fits of melancholy, he rarely resorted to religion, to prayer, for aid: he placed more reliance on his own wits in that case also. He was not particularly devout; he was not often seen in church; to tell the truth, he said that he did not go there because, on account of the size of his body, he was afraid of crushing everybody out. The fit usually ended in Martýn Petróvitch's beginning to whistle—and, all at once, in a thundering voice, he would order his drozhky to be harnessed up, and he would drive off somewhere in the neighbourhood, waving his free hand with considerable dash above the visor of his cap, as though desirous of saying, "I don't care a rap about anything now!" He was a Russian man.

V

VERY strong men, like Martýn Petróvitch, are generally of a phlegmatic temperament; he, on the contrary, was rather easily irritated. The person who, in particular, drove him out of patience was the brother of his deceased wife, a certain Bytchkóff, who lived in our house, not precisely in the quality of a jester, nor yet quite in that of a hanger-on; having received the nickname of Souvenir in his earliest years, every one still called him so, even the servants who, it is true, addressed him as Souvenir Timoféitch. His real name was not even known to himself, apparently. He was a miserable little man, despised by every one: a parasite, in short. All his teeth were lacking on one side of his mouth, hence his tiny, wrinkled face appeared to be distorted. He was forever bustling and fidgeting about: he would drop in at the maids' hall, or the estate office, to see the priests in the village, or the village-elder in his cottage; he would be driven out everywhere, and would merely shrug his shoulders, and screw up his little eyes,—and emit a pitiful, thin little laugh, like the sound of a bottle being rinsed. It always seemed to me, that if

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Souvenir had had money, he would have turned out the worst possible sort of a man, immoral, vicious, even cruel. Poverty had "tamed" him down willy-nilly. He was allowed to drink liquor only on festive occasions. He was neatly clothed, in accordance with my mother's orders, as he played piquet or boston with her in the evenings. Souvenir kept incessantly reiterating: "Here, I, permit me, I will immejutly, immejutly." "But what is *immejutly*?" my mother would ask him with vexation. He would instantly fling back his hands, grow timid, and stammer: "What you please, madam!" He had no occupations, except to eavesdrop at doors, talk scandal, and, chief of all, "nag" or "tease"; and he "nagged" as though he had a right to do so, as though he were avenging himself for something or other. He called Martýn Petróvitch "brother," and bored him to death. "Why did you kill my sister Margaríta Timoféevna?"—he besieged him, capering about in front of him and snickering. One day, Martýn Petróvitch was sitting in the billiard-room, a cool apartment, in which no one had ever beheld a fly,—and which our neighbour, who detested heat and sunlight, was greatly addicted to for that reason. He was sitting between the wall and the billiard-table. Souvenir slipped hastily past his "paunch," jeered at him, and played antics. . . . Martýn Petróvitch wanted to brush him aside, and

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thrust out both hands in front of him. Luckily for Souvenir, he contrived to get out of the way—his dear brother's hands landed on the supports of the billiard-table,—and the heavy wooden table-top flew clear off its six screws. . . . What a pancake Souvenir would have been converted into, if he had fallen under those mighty hands!

VI

I HAD long been curious to see how Martýn Petróvitch had arranged his dwelling, what sort of a house he had. One day, I offered to escort him on horseback as far as Es'kovo (that was the name of his estate).—"Really now! Thou wishest to inspect my domain,"—said Martýn Petróvitch.—"All right! I'll show thee the garden, and the house, and the threshing-floor—and everything. I have lots of every sort of property!"—We set out. The distance from our village to Es'kovo was reckoned at not more than three versts.¹—"Here it is, my domain!"—suddenly thundered Martýn Petróvitch, endeavouring to turn his immovable head, and pointing to right and left.—"It's all mine!"—Kharlóff's manor-house lay on the crest of a sloping hillock; at the foot, clinging close to a small pond, were several miserable peasants' cots. At the pond, by the dam, an old peasant woman in a plaid petticoat of homespun was pounding clothes twisted into a roll, with a beater.

"Aksínya!"—roared Martýn Petróvitch, so that the daws rose in a flock from a neighbouring

¹ A verst is two thirds of a mile. — TRANSLATOR.

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field of oats. . . . “ Art washing thy husband’s trousers?”

The woman wheeled round instantly, and made a reverence to the girdle.

“ Yes, dear little father,”—her weak voice made itself heard.

“ Just so! See there,”—went on Martýn Petróvitch, making his way at a trot along a half-rotten wattled fence,—“ this is my hemp-patch; and that one, yonder, belongs to the peasants; thou perceivest the difference! And here is my garden; I set out the apple-trees myself, and the willow-trees also. There did not use to be any trees here. So look at that—and learn a lesson!”

We turned into the courtyard, enclosed in a hedge; directly opposite the gate stood a very, very aged little wing, with a straw thatch, and a tiny portico on pillars; on one side stood another, somewhat newer, and with a tiny partial second storey—but also on “ chicken’s legs.”—“ Here’s another lesson for thee,”—said Kharlóff:—“ thou seest, in what sort of little manor-houses our forefathers lived; but this is the sort of residence I have built for myself now.”—The residence resembled a house of cards. Five or six dogs, each more shaggy and hideous than the other, greeted us with howls.—“ Sheep-dogs!”—remarked Martýn Petróvitch.—“ Genuine Crimean sheep-dogs! Get out, you damned beasts! I’ll take and string you all up, one after

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the other, the first you know!" On the little porch of the new wing a young man in a long, peasant dust-coat of crash made his appearance, the husband of Martýn Petróvitch's eldest daughter. Skipping lightly to the drozhky, he respectfully supported his father-in-law by the elbow, as he alighted—and even made a motion with one hand, as though he were about to grasp the gigantic foot, which the latter, bending his body forward, threw over the seat with a flourish;—then he aided me to alight from my horse.

"Anna!" — shouted Kharlóff: — "Natálya Nikoláevna's little son has been so good as to visit us; we must entertain him. And where's Evlámpiushka?" (The eldest daughter was named Anna—the younger, Evlámpiya.)

"She's not at home; she has gone to the fields for corn-flowers,"—replied Anna, making her appearance at a tiny window by the door.

"Are there any curds?" asked Kharlóff.

"Yes."

"And is there cream?"

"There is."

"Well, fetch them to the table, and, meanwhile, I'll show him my study.—Please come this way—this way," he added, turning to me, and beckoning me on with his forefinger. In his own house, he did not address me as "thou"; the master of the house must be polite. He led me along a corridor.—"Here's where I live,"—he

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said, stepping sideways across the threshold of a broad doorway,—“and here’s my study. Please enter.”

This study proved to be a large room, unplastered and almost empty; along the walls, on nails driven in at irregular intervals, hung two Kazák riding-whips, a rusty three-cornered hat, a single-barrelled gun, a sword, a strange sort of horse-collar with metal discs, and the picture representing the candle attacked by the winds; in one corner stood a wooden couch, covered with a motley-hued rug. Hundreds of flies were buzzing thickly close to the ceiling; but the room was cool; only, it smelled particularly strong of the peculiar forest odour which accompanied Martýn Petróvitch everywhere.

“Well, is n’t my study nice?”—Kharlóff asked me.

“Very nice.”

“See, I have a horse-collar from Holland hanging up yonder,”—went on Kharlóff, again relapsing into “thou.”—“A splendid collar! I bought it of a Jew. Just take a good look at it!”

“It’s a good collar.”

“The most practical sort! Just smell of it. . . . What dost thou think of that for leather?”—I smelled the collar; there was an odour of rancid oil, nothing more.

“Come, sit down—yonder, on that little chair, be my guest,” said Kharlóff, and dropped down

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himself on the couch, and, as though he were dozing, closed his eyes, and even snored. I stared at him in silence, and could not recover from my amazement: he was a mountain—and that's all there was to be said! Suddenly he started up.

“Anna!”—he shouted, and therewith his huge paunch rose and fell, like a wave of the sea:—“what art thou about? Hurry up! Didst not thou hear me?”

“Everything is ready, dear father; pray come,”—resounded his daughter's voice.

I inwardly marvelled at the celerity with which Martýn Petróvitch's orders had been executed, and followed him to the dining-room, where, on the table, spread with a red table-cloth with white patterns, the luncheon stood ready: curds, cream, wheat bread, even powdered sugar with ginger. While I was vanquishing the curds, Martýn Petróvitch, after affectionately growling:—“Eat, my little friend, eat, my dear little dove, despise not our rustic viands,”—seated himself once more in the corner, and once more seemed to fall into a doze! In front of me, motionless, with downcast eyes, stood Anna Martýnovna, and through the window I could see her husband walking my cob up and down in the yard, wiping off the chain of the snaffle with his own hands.

VII

MY mother did not like Kharlóff's oldest daughter; she called her a haughty chit. Anna Martýnovna almost never came to call on us, and in my mother's presence she bore herself staidly and coldly, although she was indebted to her for having received her education in the boarding-school and got married, and on the wedding day had received from her a thousand rubles, and a yellow Turkish shawl,—somewhat worn, it is true. She was a woman of medium stature, thin, very vivacious and quick in her movements, with thick, reddish-blond hair, a handsome, dark-complexioned face, and narrow, pale-blue eyes; she had a thin, straight nose, her lips were thin also, and her chin was "spike-shaped." Any one, to look at her, would certainly have thought: "Well, you're a clever—and an ill-tempered woman!" And yet, there was something attractive about her; even the dark moles, scattered like grains of buckwheat over her face, were becoming to her, and augmented the feeling which she evoked. Thrusting her hands under her kerchief, she stealthily inspected me from above (I was sitting, she was standing); a malicious smile hovered over

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her lips, and over her cheeks, under the shadow of her long eyelashes.

“ Okh, thou spoiled little gentleman!” that smile seemed to be saying. Every time she drew a breath, her nostrils dilated slightly—that, also, was rather strange; but, nevertheless, it seemed to me, that if Anna Martýnovna would only fall in love with me, or merely wish to kiss me with her thin, hard lips,—I would leap up to the ceiling with rapture. I knew that she was very stern and exacting, that the peasant matrons and maids feared her like fire,—but what of that! Anna Martýnovna mysteriously excited my imagination. However, I was only fifteen years old at that time,—and at that age!

Again Martýn Petróvitch started up.—“ Anna!”—he shouted:—“ thou hadst better jingle the piano. Young gentlemen like that.”

I glanced round: a pitiful similitude of a piano stood in the room.

“ Very well, father,”—replied Anna Martýnovna.—“ Only, what shall I play to him? It will not interest him.”

“ Then why wert thou taught in the *pinsion*?”

“ I’ve forgotten it all completely and the strings are broken.”

Anna Martýnovna’s little voice was very pleasant, resonant and plaintive, as it were such a voice as birds of prey have.

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“ Well,”—said Martýn Petróvitch, and became thoughtful.—“ Well,”—he began again,—“ would n’t you like to inspect the threshing-floor, to satisfy your interest? Volódka will show you the way.—Hey, Volódka!”—he shouted to his son-in-law, who was still walking my horse up and down the yard,—“ here, escort this gentleman to the threshing-floor, . . . and, in general, . . . show him my farm. But I must have a nap! Ta-ta! Good luck to you!”

He left the room, and I followed him. Anna Martýnovna immediately began to clear the table, briskly and with a vexed sort of manner. On the threshold, I turned and bowed to her: but she appeared not to notice my salute, only she smiled again, and more maliciously than before.

I took my horse from Kharlóff’s son-in-law, and led it by the bridle. He and I went to the threshing-floor,—but as we found nothing particularly curious about it, and as he could not pre-suppose any special love for farming in me, a young lad, we returned through the garden to the highway.

VIII

I WAS well acquainted with Kharlóff's son-in-law: his name was Slétkin, Vladímir Vasílievitch; he was an orphan, the son of a petty official, my mother's attorney, and she had reared him. At first he had been placed in the county school, then he had entered the "office of patrimonial estates," then he had been inscribed in the service, in the department of government warehouses, and, finally, he had been married to the daughter of Martýn Petróvitch. My mother called him the little Jew, and, as a matter of fact, with his crisp curls, his black, eternally moist eyes, like stewed prunes, his hawk-like nose and wide, red mouth, he did recall the Hebrew type; only, his skin was white, and, altogether, he was a very good-looking fellow. He was of an obliging disposition, if only his own personal profit were not concerned. If that were the case, he immediately became frantic with greed, he even went as far as tears: he was ready to beg all day long for the sake of a rag, to recall a promise once given a hundred times, waxing indignant and shrieking shrilly if it were not immediately fulfilled. He loved to lounge across the fields with his gun; and when he

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succeeded in bagging a hare or a duck, he put his booty into his hunting-pouch with a peculiar feeling, saying the while: "Well, now frolic away, thou shalt not escape! Now thou shalt serve *me!*"

"That's a nice little nag of yours,"—he said, in his lisping voice, as he helped me to get into the saddle:—"I wish I had just such a horse! But where am I to get it! I have no such luck. You might ask your mamma . . . remind her. . . ."

"But has she made you a promise?"

"If she only had! No; but I thought, that in her benignity"

"You had better apply to Martýn Petróvitch."

"To Martýn Petróvitch!" repeated Slétkin, in a slow drawl. "In his eyes, I am of about as much consequence as that insignificant page Maxím. He keeps us under his thumb, and we never have even a peep at a reward from him for all our labours."

"Really?"

"Yes, God is my witness. When he says: 'My word is sacred!'—well, it's just like cutting you off with an axe. You may implore and implore,—it has no result. And there is Anna Martýnovna, my wife, she has no such advantage in his eyes as Evlámpiya Martýnovna.

"Akh, good heavens!" he suddenly interrupted himself, and wrung his hands in despair. "Look: what is that? Some scoundrel has cut a

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whole half-eighth¹ of oats—of our oats. What do you think of that? A pretty world this! Thieves! thieves! You see, people actually speak the truth when they say, there 's no trusting É's'kovo, Bés'kovo, Érino, Byéline!" (These were the names of the four neighbouring villages.) "Akh, akh! Just think of it! Here 's a loss of a ruble and a half—or, perhaps, even of two rubles!"

Something akin to sobs was audible in Slétkin's voice. I touched my horse's side, and rode away from him.

Slétkin's exclamations had not yet ceased to reach my ear when, suddenly, at a turn in the road, I came upon that same second daughter of Kharlóff, Evlámpiya, who, according to Anna Martýnovna's statement, had gone to the fields for corn-flowers. A thick wreath of those flowers encircled her head. We exchanged a silent greeting. Evlámpiya, also, was very pretty, quite as good-looking as her sister, but in another style. She was tall and stout; everything about her was large: her head, and her feet, and her hands, and her snow-white teeth, and especially her eyes, which were prominent, languishing, dark-blue, like glass beads; everything about her was monumental, even (not for nothing was she the daughter of Martýn Petróvitch), but handsome. Evidently, she did not know what to do with her

¹ An "eighth" is equal to 11.55 pecks.—TRANSLATOR.

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thick, flaxen hair, and had wound it thrice round her head. Her mouth was charming, fresh as a rose, of a deep-crimson colour, and when she spoke, the centre of her upper lip was lifted in a very pretty way. But in the gaze of her huge eyes there was something wild and almost harsh. "A free lance, Kazák blood,"—that was the way Martýn Petróvitch expressed himself about her. I was afraid of her. . . . That imposing beauty reminded me of her father.

I rode on a little further, and heard her begin to sing, in an even, powerful, rather sharp, regular peasant voice: then she suddenly ceased. I glanced round, and from the summit of the hill I descried her, standing by the side of Kharlóff's son-in-law, in front of the eighth of rye which had been reaped. The man was flourishing his hands and pointing, but she did not move. The sun illumined her tall figure, and the wreath of corn-flowers on her head gleamed blue.

IX

I THINK I have already told you, gentlemen, that my mother had provided a husband for this second daughter of Kharlóff also. He was one of the poorest of our neighbours, a retired army Major, Gavriło Fedúlitch Zhitkóff, a man no longer young, and, as he himself expressed it, not devoid of licentiousness, and, as though it were a recommendation: "beaten and broken." He barely knew how to read and write, was stupid, but cherished a secret hope of obtaining the position of manager to my mother, for he felt himself to be possessed of "executive" ability. "As for the rest, sir, knocking out the peasants' teeth—I understand that to perfection,"—he was wont to say, almost gnashing his own teeth:—"because I got used to it,"—he explained,—“in my former vocation, you know.” Had Zhitkóff been less stupid, he would have understood, that the post of manager to my mother was precisely the one which he had no chance whatever of obtaining, since to that end it would be necessary to supersede our actual manager, a certain Kvitzínsky, a Pole of strong and active character, in whom my mother had entire confidence. Zhitkóff had a

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long, horse face, all overgrown with dusty-blond hair—even his cheeks up to his eyes were covered; even in the most severe cold weather, it was bedewed with copious perspiration, like dewdrops. At the sight of my mother, he immediately drew himself up in military style, his head began to tremble with zeal, his huge hands lightly tapped his hips, and his whole figure seemed to be crying aloud: “Command me! . . . and I will fly headlong!” My mother was under no illusions as to his capacity, which, nevertheless, did not prevent her making efforts to marry him to Ev-lámpiya.

“Only, wilt thou be able to get along with her, my father?” she asked him one day.

Zhitkóff indulged in a self-satisfied smile.

“Goodness me, Natálya Nikoláevna! I have kept a whole company in order, they toed the mark, and what’s this, ma’am? An insignificant affair, I spit upon it.”

“A company of soldiers is one thing, my good man, and a well-born young girl, a wife, is quite another,” remarked my mother, with displeasure.

“Good heavens, ma’am! Natálya Nikoláevna!” cried Zhitkóff again. “I can understand all that very well. In short: a young lady is a tender creature!”

“Well!”—my mother decided at last,—“Ev-lámpiya will not let herself be affronted.”

X

ONE day—this took place in the month of June, and evening was drawing on—a footman announced the arrival of Martýn Petróvitch. My mother was astonished: We had not seen him for more than a week, but he had never called on us so late.

“Something has happened!” she exclaimed in an undertone. Martýn Petróvitch’s face, when he presented himself in the room, and immediately dropped into a chair beside the door, wore such an unusual expression, it was so pensive and even pale, that my mother involuntarily repeated her exclamation aloud. Martýn Petróvitch fixed his little eyes upon her, remained silent, sighed heavily, again relapsed into silence, and announced, at last, that he had come about a matter of business . . . which . . . was of a nature, that in consequence

Having muttered these incoherent words, he suddenly rose and left the room.

My mother rang the bell, ordered the lackey who entered to bring Martýn Petróvitch back immediately, but the latter had already succeeded in mounting his drozhky and driving off.

On the following morning, my mother, who

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had been equally amazed and alarmed by Martýn Petróvitch's strange behaviour, and the expression of his face, was on the point of sending a messenger for him, when he himself again appeared before her. This time, he seemed to be more composed.

“Tell me, bátiushka,¹ tell me,”—exclaimed my mother, as soon as she caught sight of him,—“what has happened to you? I really thought yesterday: ‘O Lord!’ I thought,—‘has n't our old neighbour gone out of his mind?’”

“I have not gone crazy, madam,” replied Martýn Petróvitch:—“I'm not that sort of a man. But I must take counsel with you.”

“What about?”

“Only, I'm in doubt, whether the same will be agreeable to you. . . .”

“Speak, speak, father, and as simply as possible. Don't agitate me! why this *the same*? Speak simply. Have you got another fit of melancholy?”

Kharlóff contracted his brows. “No, not of melancholy—I have that at the time of the new moon; but permit me to ask you, madam, what you think about death?”

My mother was alarmed. “About what?”

“About death. Can death spare any one whomsoever in this world?”

¹ The genuine Russian form of address, literally, “dear little father.”—TRANSLATOR.

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“What other queer thing is this, that thou hast taken into thy head, my father? Thou, for instance, although thou wert born a giant—there will be an end to thee also.”

“There will! oh, there will!” chimed in Kharlóff, and cast down his eyes. “There has happened to me a vision in my sleep” he said slowly, at last. . .

“What art thou saying?”—my mother interrupted him.

“A vision in my sleep,” he repeated. “I’m a seer of visions, you know.”

“Thou?”

“Yes. I! But didn’t you know that?”—Kharlóff heaved a sigh. “Well, then I lay down a bit, madam, more than a week ago, just before the beginning of the Peter fast!¹ I lay down after dinner, to rest a bit,—well,—and I fell asleep! and I saw something, as though it were a black colt, come running into the room, and up to me. And that colt began to prance about, and show its teeth. The colt was as black as a beetle.”

Kharlóff ceased speaking.

“Well?”—said my mother.

“And that same colt suddenly wheels round, kicks me on the left elbow, right on the very

¹ The fast which precedes the day of St. Peter and St. Paul, June 29 (N. S. July 13): it varies in length, according to the date of Easter.—TRANSLATOR.

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crazy-bone! I awoke! and lo and behold, that arm would n't work, neither would the left leg. Well, thinks I, 't is paralysis; but I kneaded it well, and it got into action again: only, the creeps kept coursing through my limbs for a long time, and are still doing so. Whenever I open my palm, they just begin to run-up and down."

"Why, Martýn Petróvitch, thou must have been lying on thine arm, I'm sure."

"No, madam, please not to say that! 'T is a forewarning to me of my death, that is to say."

"Well, there he goes again!"—began my mother.

"'T is a forewarning! As much as to say: 'Prepare thyself, man!' And therefore, madam, this is what I have to announce to you, without the slightest delay. Not wishing,"—said Kharlóff, with a sudden shout,—“that that same death, should catch me, the servant of God, unawares, this is what I have decided upon in my own mind: that I must divide up my property now, during my lifetime, between my two daughters, Anna and Eвлámpiya, as the Lord God shall put in my soul to do.” Martýn Petróvitch paused, groaned, and added:—“Without the least delay.”

"Well, what then? That is a good act,"—remarked my mother:—“only, I think that thou art making haste without a cause.”

"And, as I desire, in this matter,"—went on

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Kharlóff, elevating his voice to a still louder pitch,—“to observe the proper order and legality, I most respectfully request your young son, Dmítry Semyónovitch, and impose it upon my relative Bytchikóff as a direct duty—to be present at the consummation of the formal deed, and induction into possession of my two daughters, Anna, married, and Evlámpiya, spinster; which is to be put in effect the day after to-morrow, at twelve o'clock, noon, at my own estate of É's'kovo, also known as Koziúlkinó, assisted by the constituted authorities and officials, who have already been invited.”

Martýn Petróvitch barely managed to finish this speech, which he had, obviously, committed to memory, and which was broken by numerous gasps. . . . It seemed as though there were a lack of air in his chest: his face, which had grown pallid, crimsoned once more, and he wiped the perspiration from it several times.

“And hast thou had the deed of partition drawn up already?” asked my mother. “When didst thou find the time for that?”

“I did okh! Without a bite or a sup. . . .”

“Didst thou write it thyself?”

“Volódka okh! helped me.”

“And hast thou presented thy petition?”

“Yes, and the court has confirmed it, and the district judge has received his instructions, and

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a special commission of the county court
okh! . . . has been designated to be present.”

My mother laughed. “I perceive, Martýn Petróvitch, that thou hast already taken all the proper measures,—and how promptly! That means, that thou hast not spared money?”

“No, I have not, madam.”

“Indeed thou hast not! But thou sayest that thou desirest to take counsel with me. Very well, Míténka may go, and I will let Souvenir go with him, and I will tell Kvitzinsky. . . But hast thou not invited Gavrílo Fedúlitch?”

“Gavrílo Fedúlitch Mr. Zhitkóff has also been notified by me. In his quality of betrothed it is proper that he should be.”

It was evident that Martýn Petróvitch had exhausted his entire store of eloquence. Moreover, it had always seemed to me, that, somehow or other, he was not quite well-disposed toward the bridegroom whom my mother had picked out; perhaps he had expected a more advantageous match for his Evlámpiya.

He rose from his chair, and made a bow and a scrape.—“Thanks for your consent!”

“Where art thou going?”—asked my mother. “Sit down; I will order refreshments to be served.”

“Much obliged,” replied Kharlóff. “But I cannot. . . . Okh! I must go home.”

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He retreated, and was on the point of sliding sideways through the door, according to his wont. . .

“ Stop, stop,”—went on my mother,—“ is it possible that thou art surrendering thy whole property, without reserve, to thy daughters? ”

“ Of course, without reserve.”

“ Well, and thou thyself where wilt thou live? ”

Kharlóff even flourished his hands at this. “ What do you mean by asking where? In my own house, as I have lived hitherto so I shall henceforth. What change can there be? ”

“ And hast thou so much confidence in thy daughters and in thy son-in-law? ”

“ Is it about Volódka that you are pleased to speak? About that rag? Why, I can shove him about anywhere, hither and yon. . . What power has he? And they, my daughters, that is to say, will furnish me with food, drink, shoes and clothing until I die. . . . Good gracious! that ’s their first obligation! But I shall not long offend their eyes. Death is not far off, behind the mountains—but close, behind my shoulders.”

“ Death is in the power of the Lord God,”—remarked my mother,—“ but that is their duty, it is true. Only, thou must pardon me, Martýn Petróvitch; thy eldest daughter, Anna, is well known to be a haughty chit,—well,—and thy second has the look of a wolf. . . . ”

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“Natálya Nikoláevna!”—broke in Kharlóff, “what are you saying?—that they My daughters That I Are they going to renounce obedience? Why, they never would dream of such a thing! Offer resistance? To whom? To their parent?—Dare they? And would it take long to curse them? They have passed their life in trembling, and in submission,—and all of a sudden! O Lord!”

Kharlóff cleared his throat: he had grown hoarse.

“Well, very good, very good,”—my mother hastened to soothe him:—“Only, I do not understand, nevertheless, why thou hast taken it into thy head to share the property between them *now*. In any case, it would have come to them after thy death. I suppose thy fit of melancholy is the cause of all this.”

“Eh, *mátushka*,”¹ returned Kharlóff, not without irritation,—“you ’re just wound up to say melancholy! Possibly, a higher power is acting in this matter, but you call it melancholy! And so, madam, I have taken it into my head, that I want to settle this personally, while I am in the land of the living,—who is to possess what,—and let the one whom I shall reward with anything hold possession of the same, and feel gratitude, and fulfil it, and regard that which her father and

¹ Literally, “dear little mother:” the genuine Russian address for women of all ranks.—TRANSLATOR.

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benefactor has imposed upon her as a great mercy. . . .”

Again Kharlóff's voice broke.

“Come, enough, my father, enough of that,”—my mother interrupted him; “or the black colt will straightway make his appearance.”

“Okh, Natálya Nikoláevna, don't talk to me about him:”—groaned Kharlóff. “It was my death that came for me. I beg your forgiveness. And I shall have the honour to expect you, my little gentleman, the day after to-morrow!”

Martýn Petróvitch left the room; my mother looked after him, and shook her head significantly. “No good will come of this,”—she whispered;—“no good will come of it. Hast thou noticed,” she said, turning to me:—“while he talked, he kept screwing up his eyes, as though to avoid the sun; thou must know that is a bad sign. When such a man feels heavy at heart, a calamity is threatening him. Go the day after to-morrow with Vikénty Osípovitch and Souvenir.”

XI

ON the appointed day, our big, four-seated, family carriage, drawn by six dark bay horses, with the chief "royal coachman," fat, grey-bearded Alexyéitch, on the box, rolled smoothly up to the porch of our house. The importance of the deed which Kharlóff was about to undertake, the solemnity with which he had invited us, had had their effect upon my mother. She herself had given orders to have precisely this extraordinary equipage harnessed up, and had commanded Souvenir and me to array ourselves in festive attire: evidently, she wished to show respect for her "protégé." As for Kvitzínsky,—he always went about in a dress-suit and a white neckcloth. Souvenir chattered like a magpie the whole way, giggled, discussed the question as to whether his dear brother would offer him anything, and then and there dubbed him an idol and a spectre. At last, Kvitzínsky, a morose, bilious man, could endure it no longer. "What possesses you,"—he said, with his clear-cut, Polish accent,—"to jabber such nonsense constantly? And is n't it possible to sit still, without any of that balderdash,—' which is of no use to any-

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body' ? (his favourite expression). "Well, immensely,"—muttered Souvenir, with displeasure, and riveted his squint-eyes on the window. A quarter of an hour had not elapsed, the smoothly-trotting horses had hardly begun to perspire under the slender straps of the new harness, when Kharlóff's manor-house came in sight. Through the gates, which stood open, our carriage rolled up to the courtyard; the tiny jockey, whose legs hardly reached half-way down the horse's body, bounded for the last time in his soft saddle with a youthful yell, old Alexyéitch's elbows simultaneously spread out and rose, a faint "tprrrrr" (whoa!) was audible, and we came to a halt. The dogs did not greet us with barks, the little brats of the house-serfs, in long shirts slightly open over their big bellies, had also disappeared somewhere. Kharlóff's son-in-law was waiting for us on the threshold. I remember, that I was particularly struck with the small birch-trees which were stuck up on each side of the porch, as on Trinity day.¹ "The Solemnity of Solemnities!"² sang Souvenir through his nose, as he alighted first from the carriage. And, in fact, solemnity was discernible in everything. Kharlóff's son-in-law wore a plush neckcloth, with a

¹ It is customary to decorate churches and houses with birch-trees on that Sunday, which corresponds, in a way, to Whit-Sunday: the following day, "the Day of the Spirit," being the actual Pentecost festival, though the celebration is on "Trinity day."—TRANSLATOR.

² A quotation from the Easter hymns.—TRANSLATOR.

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satin bow, and a remarkably tight-fitting dress-suit; and the hair of Maxím, who was popping up from behind his back, was drenched with home-made beer to such a degree, that it was even dripping with it. We entered the drawing-room, and beheld Martýn Petróvitch, towering up immovably,—precisely that, towering up,—in the middle of the room. I do not know what were the feelings of Souvenir and Kvitzínsky at the sight of his colossal figure, but I experienced something akin to reverence. Martýn Petróvitch had garbed himself in a grey jacket, with a black standing collar, which must have been his militia uniform in the year '12; the bronze medal was visible on his breast, the sword hung by his side; he had laid his left hand on the hilt, his right hand rested on a table covered with red cloth. Two sheets of paper covered with writing lay on that same table. Kharlóff did not move, did not even pant; and what dignity was expressed in his mien, what confidence in himself, in his unbounded and indubitable power! He barely greeted us with a nod, and saying hoarsely: "Pray be seated!" he pointed the index-finger of his left hand in the direction of a row of chairs. Against the right wall of the drawing-room stood both of Kharlóff's daughters, in their Sunday attire: Anna in a changeable gown of green and lilac, with a girdle of yellow silk; Evlámpiya in a pink gown, with flame-coloured ribbons. Beside them

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stood Zhitkóff, in a new uniform, with his customary expression of stupid, greedy expectation in his eyes, and with an unusually large amount of perspiration on his hairy face. Against the left wall of the drawing-room sat the priest, in a threadbare snuff-coloured cassock—an old man, with stiff, dark-brown hair. This hair, his dull eyes, and his large, shrivelled hands, which seemed to be a burden to himself, and lay, like heaps, on his knees, and his oiled boots, which peeped forth from beneath his cassock,—all bore witness to his toilsome, cheerless life: his parish was very poor. By his side sat the chief of the rural police, a fat, pale, dirty little gentleman, with plump, short hands and feet, black eyes, black, clipped moustache, and a constant, pitiful though cheery smile on his face: he had the reputation of being a great bribe-taker, and even tyrant, as the expression ran in those days: but not only the landed proprietors, but the peasants also had got used to him, and were fond of him. He was gazing about in a very free-and-easy and somewhat mocking manner: it was plain, that this whole “procedure” amused him. In reality, he was interested only in the impending luncheon with vodka. On the other hand, the pettifogging lawyer who sat beside him, a gaunt man with a long face, and narrow side-whiskers running from his ear to his nose, as they were worn under Alexander I, took a soul-felt interest in

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Martýn Petróvitch's arrangements, and never removed from him his large, serious eyes; extremely strained attention and sympathy made him keep constantly moving and twisting his lips, but he did not open them. Souvenir took a seat by him, and entered into a whispered conversation with him, having preliminarily informed me, that he was the leading Freemason of the district. A special commission of the county court consists, as every one knows, of the chief of rural police, a lawyer and the commissary of police; but either there was no commissary, or else he kept himself in the background to such a degree that I did not observe him; however, he went in our district by the nickname of "the non-existent," just as there are some called "the non-rememberers." I sat down next to Souvenir, Kvitzínsky next to me. On the face of the practical Pole there was depicted manifest vexation at the "useless to anybody" trip, at the vain loss of time. "Just like a fine lady! the freaks of these Russian gentry!" he seemed to be whispering to himself "These Russians are altogether too much for me!"

XII

WHEN we were all seated, Martýn Petróvitch elevated his shoulders, grunted, looked at us one after the other with his little bear-like eyes, and, sighing noisily, began thus:

“Dear sirs! I have invited you hither for the following cause. I am getting old, dear sirs, infirmities are beginning to overcome me. . . . I have already had a forewarning, the hour of death, like a thief in the night, is approaching. . . . Is n’t that right, *bátushka*,”¹ he said, addressing the priest.

The priest was startled. “Yes, yes,” he mumbled, wagging his little chin.

“And therefore,”—pursued Martýn Petróvitch, suddenly raising his voice,—“not wishing that that same death should overtake me unawares, I have settled in my own mind” Martýn Petróvitch repeated, word for word, the phrases which he had uttered at my mother’s house, two days before. “In virtue of this my decision,” he vociferated still more loudly, “this deed” (he smote the documents which were lying on the table) “has been drawn up by me, and

¹ *Bátushka*, the general address to a man in any station of life, is specifically the title of the clergy.—TRANSLATOR.

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the powers that be have been invited hither. As to what my said will consists of, the points follow. I have finished my reign, let there be an end of me!”

Martín Petróvitch placed his round iron spectacles on his nose, took from the table one of the sheets of writing, and began:

“A deed of partition of the property of retired bayonet-yunker¹ and hereditary noble, Martín Kharlóff, drawn up by himself in full and sound mind, and according to his own good judgment, and wherein are accurately specified what usufructs are placed at the disposal of his two daughters, Anna and Evlámpiya—make a reverence!” (they made a reverence)—“are placed at their disposal, and in what manner the house-serfs and the other property and the poultry are to be divided between the said daughters. And thereto I set my hand in confirmation!”

“He wants to read that document of his”—whispered the chief of police, with his perpetual smile, to Kvitzínsky,—“because of the beauty of its style, but the legal document is drawn up in proper form, without all those flourishes.”

Souvenir began to giggle. . . .

“In consonance with my will!”—put in Kharlóff; the chief of police’s comment had not escaped his attention.

¹ An old-fashioned rank in the artillery, between sergent and lieutenant.—TRANSLATOR.

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“It does agree in all points,”—replied the latter, hastily and cheerily;—“only, the form, you know, Martýn Petróvitch, cannot possibly be dispensed with. And superfluous details are eliminated. For the court cannot possibly enter into particulars as to piebald cows and Turkish drakes.”

“Come hither, thou!”—yelled Kharlóff to his son-in-law, who had followed us into the room, and had stopped near the door, with an obsequious air. He immediately ran to his father-in-law.

“Here, take, read! It’s difficult for me! Only, look out, don’t gabble! Read so that all the gentlemen present may penetrate the meaning.”

Slétkin took the sheet of paper with both hands, and began to read the deed of partition tremblingly, but intelligibly, with taste and feeling. Therein was defined, with the greatest accuracy, precisely what was allotted to Anna, and what to Evlámpiya, and in what manner they were to share. Kharlóff, from time to time, broke in on the reading with the words:—“Hearest thou, Anna, that is for thee, for thy zeal!”—or: “I present that to thee, Evlámpiushka!”—and both sisters bowed, Anna with her whole body to the waist, Evlámpiya with her head only. Kharlóff surveyed them with sombre pomposity. “The manor-house”—the new wing, he assigned

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to Evlámpiya, “as being the youngest daughter, according to custom from time immemorial”; the voice of the reader cracked and quivered as he articulated these words so unpleasant for himself: but Zhitkóff licked his lips. Evlámpiya cast a sidelong glance at him: had I been in Zhitkóff’s place, I should not have liked that glance. Martýn Petróvitch reserved to himself the right to live in the chambers at present occupied by him, and stipulated for himself, under the appellation of “privy purse,” full support “with natural provisions” and ten rubles in cash per month for shoes and clothing. Kharlóff insisted on reading the concluding clause in the deed of partition himself.

“And this my parental will,”—it ran,—“my daughters are to hold sacred and inviolate, as though it were my last will and testament; for, after God, I am their father and their head, and am not bound to render account to any one, neither have I rendered it; and if they shall fulfil my will, then shall my parental blessing be with them, but if they shall not fulfil my will, which God forbid, then shall my parental and irrevocable curse overtake them, now and unto ages of ages, amen!” Kharlóff elevated the sheet of paper high above his head. Anna instantly dropped briskly on her knees, and thumped the floor with her brow; her husband followed her with a similar somersault. “Well,

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and what art thou about?"—Kharlóff said to Evlámpiya. She flushed crimson all over, and also made a reverence to the earth: Zhitkóff bent his whole body forward.

"Sign!"—exclaimed Kharlóff, pointing his finger at the end of the deed. "Here: 'I thank and accept, Anna! I thank and accept, Evlámpiya!'"

Both daughters rose to their feet, and signed, one after the other. Slétkin rose also, and made a motion to take the pen, but Kharlóff brushed him aside, thrusting his middle finger in his neck-cloth so that he staggered back. The silence lasted for about a minute. All at once, Martýn Petróvitch gave a sort of gulp, and muttering, "Well, everything is yours now!" moved aside. His daughters and son-in-law exchanged glances, went to him, and began to kiss his arm, above the elbow. They could not reach his shoulder.¹

¹ An ancient Russian custom, from inferiors to their superiors. — TRANSLATOR.

XIII

THE chief of police read the real, formal act, the deed of gift, drawn up by Martýn Petróvitch. Then he and the lawyer went out on the porch, and announced to the neighbours, who had assembled about the gate,—namely, the local inhabitants, summoned by the police as witnesses, the serfs on the Kharlóff estate, and several house-serfs,—the transaction which had been completed. Then began the induction into possession of the two new landed proprietresses, who also made their appearance on the porch, and at whom the chief of police pointed with his hand, when, slightly frowning and for the moment imparting to his care-free countenance a menacing aspect, he exhorted the peasants to “obedience.”

He might have dispensed with this exhortation: I do not believe that more peaceable physiognomies than those of the Kharlóff peasants exist in nature. Clad in miserable cloth long coats and tattered sheepskin short coats, but very tightly girt, as is always proper on solemn occasions, they stood motionless as men of stone, and whenever the chief of police emitted interjections, in the nature of: “Listen, you fiends! under-

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stand, you devils!" they made an abrupt inclination, all in unison, as though at the word of command; each one of these "fiends and devils" held his cap tightly clutched with both hands, and never took his eyes from the window, through which was visible the figure of Martýn Petróvitch. And the inhabitants of the locality officially bidden as witnesses were not much less daunted.

"Do you know of any impediments whatsoever,"—shouted the chief at them,—“to the induction into possession of these only and legitimate heiresses and daughters of Martýn Petróvitch Kharlóff?"

All the official witnesses immediately seemed to shrivel up.

"Do you know any, you devils?"—shouted the chief of police again.

"We know of none, Your Well-born,"—manfully replied one small, pock-marked old fellow, a retired soldier, with a close-clipped beard and moustache.

"Well, now, Eremyéitch is a bold fellow!"—the witnesses said of him, as they went their several ways.

Notwithstanding the chief's request, Kharlóff would not go out on the porch with his daughters. "My subjects will submit to my will without that!"—he replied. A sort of depression had descended upon him after the consummation of the

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deed. His face again had become pallid. This new, unprecedented expression of dejection so ill suited the expansive and kindly features of Martýn Petróvitch, that I decidedly did not know what to make of it. Could it be that a fit of melancholy was coming on?—the peasants, evidently, on their side, were puzzled also. And, in fact: “The master is as lively as ever—yonder he stands, and what a Master! Martýn Petróvitch! And all of a sudden, he is not going to own them. . . . Astounding!” I know not whether Kharlóff divined the thoughts which were fermenting in the heads of his “subjects,” whether he wanted to bluster for the last time, but suddenly he opened the hinged pane, put his head in the opening, and shouted in a voice of thunder: “Obey!” Then he slammed to the pane. The bewilderment of the peasants was not dispelled by this, of course, and neither was it diminished. They became more petrified than ever, and even, as it were, ceased to look. The group of house-serfs (among their number were two buxom girls, in short calico gowns, with such calves as are, probably, to be seen nowhere else except in Michael Angelo’s “Last Judgment,” and one other, very aged, half-blind old man, who was even covered with rime, so antique was he, in a rough frieze great-coat,—according to report, he had been a “horn-player” under Potémkin,¹—

² Pronounced *Patyómkin*.—TRANSLATOR.

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Kharlóff had retained the page Maxím for his own service),—this group evinced more animation than the peasants: at all events, it shifted from foot to foot. The new proprietresses bore themselves with much dignity, especially Anna. Compressing her thin lips, she kept her eyes persistently downcast . . . her stern face did not augur much good. Neither did Eвлámpiya raise her eyes; only once she turned round, and, as though with surprise, with a glance measured from head to foot her betrothed, Zhitkóff, who had considered it necessary that he should follow Slétkin out, and show himself on the porch. “By what right art thou here?” those beautiful, prominent eyes seemed to say. Slétkin had undergone a greater change than any of the rest. A hurried energy had made its appearance in his whole being, as though ravenous appetite had permeated him; the movements of his head, of his feet, had remained as obsequious as ever; but how gaily did he rub his hands, how eagerly did he twitch his elbows! As much as to say: “At last, I have reached my goal!”

Having accomplished the “procedure” of installing in possession, the chief of police, whose mouth was fairly watering with the near approach of luncheon, rubbed his hands in that peculiar manner which usually precedes the “plunging into one’s self of the first glass of liquor”; but it appeared, that Martýn Petró-

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vitch wished to have a service of prayer with blessing of water celebrated first. The priest donned an old chasuble, which was almost falling to pieces: a barely-alive chanter emerged from the kitchen, with difficulty blowing alight the incense in an old brass censer. The prayer-service began. Kharlóff sighed incessantly; he could not make reverences to the ground, owing to his obesity, but crossing himself with his right hand, and bowing his head, he pointed at the floor with the finger of his left hand. . Slétkin was fairly beaming, and even shed tears; Zhitkóff, in a well-bred way, military fashion, crossed himself by barely twitching his fingers between the third and fourth buttons of his uniform; Kvitzínsky, being a Roman Catholic, remained in the adjoining room; on the other hand, the lawyer prayed so fervently, sighed so sympathetically in imitation of Martýn Petróvitch, and whispered and moved his lips so violently, rolling his eyes heavenward the while, that as I watched him I was much affected, and began to pray also. At the conclusion of the prayer-service and blessing of the water, when all present, even Potémkin's blind "hornist," even Kvitzínsky, wet their eyes with the holy water, Anna and Evlámpiya once more, at the command of Martýn Petróvitch, returned thanks to him with a ground-reverence: and then, at last, the moment for breakfast arrived. There were a great

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many viands, and all were very savoury; we all over-ate ourselves dreadfully. The inevitable bottle of Don wine made its appearance. The chief of police, in his quality of a man who was more familiar than all the rest of us with the customs of society,—well, and also as a representative of the ruling powers,—was the first to propose a toast to the health of “the beautiful proprietresses!” Then he proposed that we should drink also to the health of the most highly respected and most magnanimous Martýn Petróvitch. At the words, “most magnanimous,” Slétkin squealed aloud, and rushed to kiss his benefactor. . . . “Come, all right, all right, there’s no necessity for that,”—muttered Kharlóff, thrusting him aside with his elbow, as though vexed. . . . But at this point a not entirely pleasant episode, as the saying is, took place.

XIV

To WIT: Souvenir, who had been drinking uninterruptedly ever since the beginning of the breakfast, suddenly rose from his chair, as crimson as a beet, and pointing his finger at Martýn Petróvitch, burst out with his quavering, pitiful laugh.

“Magnanimous! Magnanimous!” he shrilled, “well, let us just see whether this magnanimity will suit his taste, when he, the servant of God, is turned out, barebacked, . . . and into the snow!”

“What nonsense art thou chattering? fool!” articulated Kharlóff, scornfully.

“Fool! fool!”—repeated Souvenir. “The Most High God alone knows which of us two is the real fool. See here, brother! you killed my sister, your spouse, and, to make it even, you have now wiped yourself out . . . ha-ha-ha!”

“How dare you insult our respected benefactor?”—Slétkin flew to his defence, and wrenching free his shoulder, which Martýn Petróvitch had grasped, he rushed at Souvenir. “Don’t you know, that if our benefactor wishes it, we can cancel that deed this very minute?” . . .

“Nevertheless, you will turn him out, stark-

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naked—into the snow . . .” interjected Souvenir, darting behind Kvitzínsky.

“Hold thy tongue!”—thundered Kharlóff.—“I’ll give thee such a slap, that there will be nothing left but a wet spot where thou hast been. And do thou hold thy tongue, also, pup!”—he addressed Slétkin;—“don’t thrust thyself in where thou art not asked! If I, Martýn Petróvitch Kharlóff, have made up my mind to draw up the said deed, then who can cancel it? who can oppose my will? Why, there is no power on earth”

“Martýn Petróvitch!”—suddenly remarked the lawyer, in a somnolent bass voice; he, also, had been drinking a great deal, but the only effect it had on him was to augment his pomposity. “Well, and what if the gentleman-proprietor has been pleased to speak the truth? You have done a great deed; well, and God forbid, that, as a matter of fact . . . instead of the gratitude which is due, some affront should be the outcome.”

I cast a stealthy glance at Martýn Petróvitch’s two daughters. Anna was fairly loring her eyes into the speaker, and, positively, I had never yet beheld her handsome face more evil and snaky, and more beautiful even in its malice! Evlámpiya turned away, and folded her arms; a scornful smile made her full, rosy lips curl more than ever.

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Kharlóff rose from his chair, opened his mouth, but evidently his tongue refused to move. . . . He suddenly smote the table with his fist, so that everything in the room danced and clattered.

“Dear father,” said Anna hastily; “they do not know us, and therefore have that opinion of us; but please do not do yourself an injury. There is no necessity for your being angry; why, your dear little face is positively distorted.”

Kharlóff glanced at Evlámpiya; she did not move, although Zhitkóff, who sat beside her, nudged her in the side.

“I thank thee, my daughter Anna,”—said Kharlóff, in a dull voice;—“thou art my clever girl; I trust thee, and thy husband also.” Again Slétkin squealed; Zhitkóff protruded his chest, and stamped his foot lightly; but Kharlóff did not notice his effort. “That blockhead,” he went on, indicating Souvenir with his chin,—“is glad to tease me; but you, my dear sir,”—and he turned to the lawyer,—“have no right to judge of Martýn Kharlóff: you know nothing about him yet. And you are an official man, but your words are absurd. However, the matter is settled, there will be no change in my decision. . . Well, and good luck to me! I shall go away. I am no longer the host here, but a guest. Anna, manage affairs as thou wilt; but I’m going off to my study. I’ve had enough!”

Martýn Petróvitch wheeled round with his

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back to us, and without adding another word, slowly left the room.

The sudden withdrawal of the master of the house could not **but** throw our company into confusion, the more so as both of the hostesses speedily disappeared also. In vain did Slétkin try to detain us. The chief of police did not fail to reprove the lawyer for his unseasonable frankness. "I could n't help it!"—replied the latter. "It was my conscience speaking!"

"There, 't is evident that he is a Freemason,"—whispered Souvenir to me.

"Conscience!" retorted the chief of police. "We know all about your conscience! It's located in your pocket, I think, as is the case with all of us sinners!"

The priest, in the meanwhile, still standing, but foreseeing a speedy end to the feast, was uninterruptedly sending one morsel after another into his mouth.

"You have a hearty appetite, I observe," Slétkin said to him sharply.

"I'm laying in a supply,"—replied the priest, with a peaceable grimace; chronic hunger was audible in this reply.

The equipages rumbled up . . . and we dispersed.

On the way home, no one interfered with Souvenir's writhing and chattering, as Kvitzínsky had announced that he was tired of all these

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horrors, "of no use to any one," and had set out homeward in advance, on foot. Zhitkóff took his place in our carriage; the retired Major wore an extremely dissatisfied aspect, and kept continually wagging his moustache about, like a beetle.

"Well, your High-Well-Born," — lisped Souvenir:—"subordination is broken, I suppose? Wait a bit, this is only the beginning! You'll catch it too. Akh, you poor bridegroom, poor miserable bridegroom, poor miserable little bridegroom!"

Souvenir was fairly intoxicated, and poor Zhitkóff merely wagged his moustache!

On reaching home, I narrated all that had occurred to my mother. She heard me to the end, and shook her head several times. "No good will come of it,"—she said:—"I don't like all these innovations!"

XV

ON the following day, Martýn Petróvitch came to dinner. My mother congratulated him on the successful completion of the matter he had undertaken. "Now thou art a free man,"—she said,—“and must feel relieved.”

“I’m relieved, right enough, madam,” replied Martýn Petróvitch, but without showing in the slightest degree by the expression of his countenance that he really was relieved. “Perhaps I shall have a chance now to think of my soul, and prepare myself for the hour of death, in the proper manner.”

“Well, how now?”—inquired my mother:—“do you still have those convulsive twitches in your palms?”

Kharlóff clenched and relaxed the palm of his left hand a couple of times.

“Yes, madam;—and here’s something I want to tell you: when I am on the point of falling asleep, some one shouts in my head: ‘Beware! Beware!’”

“It’s nerves,”—remarked my mother, and began to talk about the preceding day, alluding to several circumstances which had accompanied the consummation of the deed of partition.

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“ Well, yes, yes,”—Kharlóff interrupted her: “ there was something of that sort nothing of any importance. Only, see here, I must inform you,”—he added, falteringly,—“ Souvenir’s empty words did not trouble me yesterday,—even the lawyer,—and he is an exact man,—did not disconcert me; but the person who did trouble me was” Here Kharlóff hesitated.

“ Who was it?”—asked my mother.

Kharlóff turned his eyes on her:—“ Evlámpiya!”

“ Evlámpiya! Thy daughter? In what way?”

“ Good gracious, madam,—she was just like a stone! a regular statue! Can it be that she has no feeling? Her sister Anna,—well, she did everything that was fitting. She’s an artful one! But Evlámpiya—why, I’ve shown her,—what’s the use of hiding my sin!—I’ve shown her a great deal of partiality! Can it be that she is not sorry for me? So I shall fare badly,—so there is no longer any place for me on earth, I foresee, if I surrender everything to them; and she was like a stone! she might at least have grunted! As for making me a reverence, she did that—but there was no gratitude visible.”

“ Wait,”—remarked my mother,—“ we will marry her to Gavrílo Fedúlitch she will get tamed down in his hands.”

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Again Martýn Petróvitch cast a sidelong look at my mother. "Well, it is n't likely that Gavriło Fedúlitch will do anything of that sort! You are placing your hopes on him, I suppose, madam?"

"Yes."

"Just so, ma'am; well, you might as well know it. Evlámpiya is just like me, I must inform you: we have the same disposition. Kazák blood—and hearts like coals of fire!"

"Have you really that sort of heart, my father?"

Kharlóff made no answer. A brief silence ensued.

"And as for thee, Martýn Petróvitch,"—began my mother,—“in what manner dost thou intend to save thy soul now? Shalt thou go to Mitrofány, or to Kíeff? or, perchance, thou wilt betake thyself to the Óptin desert hermitage, as it is in the neighbourhood? They say that such a holy monk has made his appearance there, . . . his name is Father Makáry, and no one can recall such another! He sees straight through all sins.”

"If she should really turn out to be an ungrateful daughter,"—said Kharlóff, in a hoarse voice,—“I think it will be easier for me to kill her with my own hands!”

"What ails thee! What ails thee! The Lord

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be with thee! Come to thy senses!”—exclaimed my mother. “What speeches are these that thou art making! There now, that’s exactly what the trouble is! thou shouldst have listened to me, the other day, when thou camest for advice! But now, thou wilt torture thyself—and nevertheless, thou canst not remedy the matter! Yes! Here thou art complaining now, growing timid.”

This reproach seemed to stab Kharlóff in the very heart. All his former pride rose up within him like a flood.

“I’m not the sort of man, madam, Natálya Nikoláevna, to complain or turn cowardly,”—he said grimly. “I merely wished to set forth my feelings to you, as my benefactress, and a person whom I respect. But the Lord God knows” (here he raised his hand above his head) “that this earthly sphere shall go to smash before I go back on my word, or” (here he even snorted) “or grow cowardly, or repent of anything I have done. There was cause, you know. But my daughters will not fail in obedience, unto ages of ages, amen!”

My mother stopped her ears. “Why dost thou blare like a trumpet, my father! If thou really hast confidence in the members of thy household, well, then thanks be to thee, O Lord! Thou hast completely shattered my head.”

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Martín Petróvitch made his excuses, heaved a couple of sighs, and fell silent. My mother again mentioned Kíeff, the Óptin hermitage, Father Makáry . . . Khárloff assented, saying: "It is necessary, necessary . . . I must . . . my soul" and nothing more. Until the very moment of his departure, he did not cheer up; from time to time, he closed and opened his hand, stared at his palm, said that the most terrible thing of all to him would be to die without proper preparation, from apoplexy, and that he had sworn an oath to himself not to lose his temper, because the blood is spoiled from the heart and floods the head. . . . Moreover, he had now set himself apart from everything; what cause would there be for him to lose his temper? Let others toil now and corrupt their blood!

As he took leave of my mother, he looked at her in a strange way, thoughtfully and interrogatively. . . And all at once, pulling the volume of "The Labourer at Rest" from his pocket with a swift movement, he thrust it into my mother's hand.

"What is this?" she asked.

"Read it . . . here, in this place,"—he said hurriedly,—“where the corner of the page is turned down, about death. It strikes me, that it is very well said, but I can't possibly understand it. Will not you expound it to me, my benefac-

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tress? See here, I'll come back, and you shall expound it to me."

With these words, Martýn Petróvitch left the room.

"There 's something wrong! ekh, there 's something wrong!"—remarked my mother, as soon as he had disappeared through the door—and she set to work on "The Labourer at Rest." On the page indicated by Kharlóff stood the following words:

"Death is a great and important work of nature. It consists in nothing else than this,—that inasmuch as the spirit is lighter, more delicate, and much more penetrating than those elements to whose power it has been given over, and also even than electric force, so it purifies itself chemically, and yearns until it feels a spiritual environment like itself" and so forth.¹

My mother perused this passage twice, exclaimed, "Pshaw!"—and flung the book aside.

Two days later she received word, that her sister's husband had died, and taking me with her, she set off for her country house. My mother had made arrangements to spend a month with her, but remained until late in the autumn—and we did not return to our country house until the end of September.

¹ See "The Labourer at Rest," 1785, Part II. Moscow.

XVI

THE first bit of news with which my valet, Prokófy (he regarded himself as the seigniorial huntsman), greeted me on my arrival, was, that an immense number of woodcock had alighted, and that particularly in the birch grove near És'kovo (the Kharlóff estate) they were fairly swarming. It was still three hours to dinner-time. I immediately seized my gun and game-pouch, and, accompanied by Prokófy and a setter dog, I ran to the És'kovo grove. We really did find a great many woodcock there—and after firing about thirty shots, we killed five birds. As I was hastening homeward with my booty, I saw a peasant ploughing by the roadside. His horse had come to a standstill, and he, swearing tearfully and viciously, was tugging its head mercilessly on one side with the rope reins. I glanced at the unhappy nag, whose ribs had almost broken through the skin, and whose sides, drenched in sweat, were heaving convulsively and unevenly, like a blacksmith's bellows,—and instantly recognised it as the aged, emaciated mare with the scar on her neck, which had served Martýn Petróvitch for so many years.

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“Is Mr. Kharlóff alive?” I asked Prokófy. The hunt had so completely absorbed us, that up to that moment we had not discussed anything else.

“Yes, sir. Why do you ask, sir?”

“But, surely, this is his horse? Is it possible that he has sold her?”

“Just so, sir, it is his horse; only, as for selling her, he has n’t; but they have taken her away from him—and given her to this peasant.”

“What dost thou mean by saying that they have taken her away? And did he consent?”

“They did n’t ask any consent of him, sir. There’s a new order of things been set up during your absence,” replied Prokófy, with a faint grin, in reply to my glance of surprise,—“alas! O my God! Mr. Slétkin manages everything for them now.”

“And Martýn Petróvitch?”

“And Martýn Petróvitch has become the very lowest person on the place, so he has. He has been put on a diet of dry food. They’ve done him up completely. The first any one knows, they’ll drive him out of doors.”

The idea that such a giant could be driven out absolutely refused to get itself into my head. “But why does n’t Zhitkóff look after him?”—I inquired at last. “He married the second daughter, did n’t he?”

“Married?” repeated Prokófy, and this time

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grinned from ear to ear. "They won't let him enter the house. 'You're not wanted,' say they; 'turn your shafts the other way,' say they. I've told you how it is: Slétkin manages them all."

"But what does the bride say to that?"

"Evlámpiya Martýnovna, you mean? Ekh, master, I'd like to tell you but you're young—that's what it is. There have been such goings-on, that i i i! Eh! but I think Diánka is making a point."

In fact, my dog had halted, as though rooted to the spot, in front of a spreading oak bush in which terminated a narrow ravine that came out on the road. Prokófy and I ran to the dog; a woodcock rose from the bush. We both fired at it, and missed it; the woodcock changed its place; we followed it.

The soup was already on the table when I got home. My mother reprimanded me:

"What's this?"—she said with displeasure,—
"thou hast made us wait dinner for thee on the very first day." I presented her with the woodcock which I had shot; she did not even look at them. In addition to her, Souvenir, Kvitzínsky, and Zhitkóff were in the room. The retired Major had hidden himself in a corner,—precisely like a naughty school-boy; the expression of his face revealed a mixture of perturbation and vexation; his eyes were red. . . . One might even

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have supposed that he had been weeping recently. My mother continued to be out of temper; it cost me no great effort to divine that my late arrival had nothing to do with the matter. During dinner, she spoke hardly at all; from time to time, the Major cast pitiful glances at her, but he ate heartily, nevertheless; Souvenir trembled; Kvitzínsky preserved his customary intrepidity of demeanour.

“Vikénty Osípitch,” said my mother, addressing him;—“I request that to-morrow you will send the equipage for Martýn Petróvitch, as I have learned that he has no longer one of his own; and give orders that he is to be told, that he is to come without fail, that I wish to see him.”

Kvitzínsky wanted to make some reply, but refrained.

“And give Slétkin to understand,”—went on my mother,—“that I command him to come to me. . . . Do you hear? I com mand!”

“There, that’s precisely what that scoundrel needs” began Zhitkóff in an undertone; but my mother cast such a scornful look at him, that he immediately turned away, and fell silent.

“Do you hear? I command!”—repeated my mother.

“I obey, ma’am,”—said Kvitzínsky, submissively, but with dignity.

“Martýn Petróvitch won’t come!”—whis-

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pered Souvenir to me, as we left the dining-room together after dinner. "Just see, what he has become! It's incredible!—I think—that no matter what is said to him,—he does n't understand a single thing. Yes! They've squeezed the ad-der with pitchforks!"

And Souvenir broke into his quavering laugh.

XVII

SOUVENIR'S prediction proved correct. Martýn Petróvitch would not come to my mother. She was displeased at this, and sent him a note; he sent back to her a quarter of a sheet of paper, on which, in big letters, the following words were written: "Indeed, by heaven, I cannot. Shame would kill me. Let me perish. Thanks. Don't worry. Kharlóff Martýnko." Slétkin came, but not on the day on which my mother had "commanded" him to present himself, but a whole day later. My mother gave orders that he should be conducted to her boudoir. . . . God knows what their conversation was about, but it lasted a very short time only: not more than a quarter of an hour. Slétkin came out of my mother's room, all red in the face, and with such a viciously-evil and impudent expression of countenance, that on encountering him in the drawing-room, I was dumfounded, and Souvenir, who was skipping about there, did not finish the laugh which he had begun. My mother also emerged from her boudoir all red in the face, and announced, in the hearing of all, that Mr. Slétkin,

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henceforth, would not be admitted to her house on any pretext whatsoever; and that if Martýn Petróvitch's daughters should take it into their heads to present themselves—they were quite brazen-faced enough for that,—they, also, were to be sent about their business. At dinner, she suddenly exclaimed:—"What a wretched little Jew! And it was I who dragged him out of the gutter by his ears, it was I who made somebody of him, he is indebted to me for everything, everything—and he dares to tell me, that I have no right to intermeddle with their affairs!—that Martýn Petróvitch is a fool—and it is impossible to indulge him in his caprices! Indulge! Did you ever hear the like? Akh, he's an ungrateful young cub! A dirty little Jew!"—Major Zhitkóff, who was also among the diners, imagined that now God himself had bidden him take advantage of the opportunity, and put in his word . . . but my mother immediately snubbed him. "Well, and thou art a nice person, also, my father!"—said she. "Thou wert not able to get along with the girl, and yet thou art an officer! Thou hast commanded a company! I can imagine how it obeyed thee! And thou hadst aspirations to become my agent! A pretty agent thou wouldst have made!"

Kvitzínsky, who sat at the end of the table, smiled to himself, not without malevolent delight, while poor Zhitkóff merely wagged his mous-

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tache, and elevated his eyebrows, and buried the whole of his hairy face in his napkin.

After dinner, he went out on the porch to smoke his pipe, according to his habit,—and he seemed to me so pitiful and forlorn an object, that although I did not like him, I joined him.

“How did it come about, Gavrílo Fedúlitch,” I began, without any circumlocution—“that your affair with Evlámpiya Martýnovna suffered shipwreck? I had supposed that you were married long ago.”

The retired Major cast a dejected glance at me.

“The sly snake,”—he began, with mournful care pronouncing every letter of every word,—“has poisoned me with her sting, and has turned all my hopes in life to dust! And I would like to tell you, Dmítzy Semyónovitch, all her viperous deeds, but I ’m afraid of angering your mother!” (“You ’re still very young”—Prokófy’s expression flashed through my mind.) “So be it. . . .”—Zhitkóff quacked.

“Endure it endure it nothing else remains to be done!” (He smote himself on the chest with his clenched fist.) “Be patient, faithful old soldier, endure! I have served the Tzar with fidelity and truth . . . uncomplainingly yes! I have not spared my sweat and blood, but now what have I come to! Had this thing happened in the regiment—and had the

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matter depended upon me,"—he went on after a brief pause, pulling away convulsively at his cherry-wood tchibouk,—“ I ’d have given it to him. . . . I ’d have had him flogged with the flat of the sword, in three relays . . . that is, until he tumbled over. . . . ”

Zhitkóff took the pipe from his mouth, and riveted his gaze on space, as though inwardly admiring the picture which he had conjured up.

Souvenir ran up, and began to jeer at the Major. I stepped aside from them—and made up my mind that I would see Martýn Petróvitch, at whatever cost. . . . My childish curiosity was strongly piqued.

XVIII

ON the following day, I again set out with my gun and dog, but without Prokófy, for the És'-kovo grove. The day turned out to be magnificent. I think there are no such days anywhere in September, except in Russia. Such silence reigned, that one could hear a rabbit leaping over the dry leaves a hundred paces off, and a broken twig first faintly catching on other twigs, and at last falling on the soft grass—falling for good and all: never to stir again all the while it is rotting. The air, neither warm nor cool, but only fragrant, rather acrid, just pinched the eyes and cheeks agreeably; slender as a thread of silk, with a white little ball in the centre, a long spider's-web floated along and caught on the barrel of my gun, stretching straight upward in the air—an infallible sign of warm weather. The sun shone, but as mildly as though it were the moon. Woodcock turned up quite frequently; but I paid no particular attention to them: I knew that the grove extended almost to the very manor-house of Kharlóff, to the very wattled fence of his garden—and wended my steps in that direction—although I could not imagine how I was going to

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make my way into the house itself, and even felt doubtful as to whether I ought so much as to try to enter there, as my mother was wroth with the new owners.

Living human sounds surprised me in the far distance. I began to listen. . . . Some one was walking through the copse straight toward me.

“But thou mightest have said so”—a feminine voice became audible.

“Oh, you may talk!” interrupted another voice,—a man’s. “Dost thou suppose everything can be done at once?”

I knew the voices. Glimpses of a woman’s sky-blue gown were visible through the thinning nut-bushes; alongside it, a dark kaftán showed itself. Another moment—and Slétkin and Evlámpiya emerged into the glade five paces from me.

They suddenly became confused. Evlámpiya instantly retreated into the bushes. Slétkin reflected—and advanced to meet me. On his face there was no longer visible even a trace of that servile submissiveness with which, four months previously, he had walked up and down the yard of the Kharlóff house, polishing the chain of my horse’s bridle; but neither could I read in it that impudent defiance,—the defiance wherewith that face had so astounded me on the preceding day, on the threshold of my mother’s boudoir. As of

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yore, it was white and comely, but appeared to be more solid and broader.

“Well, have you shot many woodcock?”—he asked me, raising his cap, smirking, and passing his hand over his black curls. “You are hunting in our grove. . . . You are welcome! We do not hinder. . . On the contrary!”

“I have killed nothing to-day,”—said I, replying to his first question: “and I shall leave your grove immediately.”

Slétkin hastily replaced his cap. “Good gracious! why? We are not driving you out—and we are even very glad. . . . Here’s Evlámpiya Martýnovna, who will say the same. Evlámpiya Martýnovna, please come hither! Where have you hidden yourself?”

Evlámpiya’s head made its appearance from behind the bushes; but she did not come to us. She had become still handsomer of late—and seemed to have grown taller and stouter.

“I must confess,”—went on Slétkin,—“that it is even very agreeable for me to have ‘met’ you. Although you are still young—yet you already possess genuine good sense. Your mother was pleased to be angry with me yesterday—she would n’t listen to any reasons from me, but I say to you, as I would say it in the presence of God: I am not in the slightest degree to blame. It is impossible to treat Martýn Petróvitch otherwise: he has fallen into utter childishness. It is

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impossible for us to comply with all his caprices,—good gracious! And we show him all due respect! Ask Evlámpiya Martýnovna here if we don't!"

Evlámpiya did not stir; her habitual scornful smile hovered over her lips—and her beautiful eyes had an unfriendly gaze.

"But, Vladímir Vasílitch, why did you sell Martýn Petróvitch's horse?" (That horse troubled me particularly by being in a peasant's possession.)

"Why did we sell his horse? But, mercy on me, what was it good for? It merely devoured hay, without earning it. But with the peasant, it can still till the earth. But all Martýn Petróvitch has to do, if he takes it into his head to go anywhere, is to ask us. We don't refuse him an equipage. On days when no work is going on, with the greatest pleasure!"

"Vladímir Vasílievitch!"—said Evlámpiya, in a low tone, as though calling him away, and still not quitting her place. She was twisting several stalks of plantain in her fingers, and had cut off their heads by beating them against each other.

"And here's another thing, about the page Maxímka,"—went on Slétkin:—"Martýn Petróvitch complains, and wants to know why we have taken him away from him and apprenticed him. But, please judge for yourself: what would

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he have done with Martýn Petróvitch? Spent his time in idleness; that's all. And serve properly he cannot, because of his stupidity and his youth. But now we have apprenticed him to the saddler. He'll come out a good workman—and will bring profit to himself, and will pay us quit-rent. And in our little household, that is an important point, sir! In our little household, nothing must be neglected!”

“And this is the man whom Martýn Petróvitch called a rag!”—I thought. “But who reads to Martýn Petróvitch now?”—I inquired.

“But what is there to read? There was one book,—but, luckily, it has disappeared somewhere or other. . . And what does he want of reading at his age!”

“But who shaves him?”—I asked another question.

Slétkin smiled approvingly, as though in response to an amusing jest. “Why, no one. At first, he used to singe it off with a candle, but now he lets it grow. And that's fine!”

“Vladímír Vasílievitch!”—repeated Evlámpiya, importunately. “Hey—Vladímír Vasílievitch!”

Slétkin made a sign to her with his hand.

“Martýn Petróvitch is shod, clothed, and fed, just as we are ourselves; what more does he want? He himself has declared, that he desires nothing more in the world, except to care for his soul. He

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might take into consideration the fact, that—anyway—everything is ours now, not his. He says, also, that we do not pay him his allowance; but we don't always have money ourselves; and what does he need it for, when he has everything provided for him? But we treat him as a relative should be treated: I'm speaking the truth to you. The rooms, for instance, in which he resides,—how much we need them! Without them, we simply have n't space enough to turn round in; but we don't mind—we endure it. We are even thinking of how we may afford him diversion. For instance, I bought him some fish-hooks as a present on St. Peter's day, siple-endid hooks, real English: expensive hooks! so that he might catch fish. There are carp in our pond. He might sit and fish! If he were to sit there for an hour or two, there 'd be material for supper ready to hand. It's a most dignified occupation for old men!"

"Vladimir Vasílievitch!"—said Evlámpiya for the third time, in a decisive tone, and flung away the plantain-stalks which she had been twirling in her fingers. "I'm going!" Her eyes met mine. "I'm going away, Vladimir Vasílievitch!" she repeated, and disappeared behind the bushes.

"I'll be there directly, Evlámpiya Martýnovna, I'll come directly!"—shouted Slétkin. "Martýn Petróvitch himself now approves of

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us,"—he continued, again addressing me. "At first, he really did take offence; and he even grumbled, until he came to understand, you know: he was, if you will please to remember, a hot-tempered, stubborn man—awfully so! Well, and now he has become perfectly quiet. Because, he has perceived that it is for his advantage. Your mamma—and oh, my God! how she did fall foul of me. . . . Of course, a lady prizes her power just as much as Martýn Petróvitch used to prize his; well now, come in and see for yourself—and seize the opportunity to say a word. I am very sensible of Natálya Nikoláevna's benefits; but we must live also, nevertheless!"

"But why was Zhitkóff dismissed?"—I asked.

"Fedúlitch, you mean? That big lubber?" Slétkin shrugged his shoulders. "Why, mercy on us, of what use could he be? He had spent all his life as a soldier, and then took it into his head to busy himself with farming. 'I can administer chastisement to the peasants,' says he. 'Because I'm accustomed to strike men in the face.' He can't do anything, sir. One must understand the proper way even to strike a man in the face. But Evlámpiya Martýnovna herself dismissed him. He's a wholly unsuitable man. Our whole property would have vanished with him around!"

"A-oo!"—rang out Evlámpiya's resonant voice.

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“Immediately! immediately!” — responded Slétkin. He offered me his hand. I shook it, though unwillingly.

“Good-bye, Dmítiry Semyónitch,”—said Slétkin, displaying all his white teeth. “Shoot as many woodcock as you please; they are birds of passage, they belong to no one in particular; but if you should come upon a hare,—you will be so good as to spare it; that’s our property. Yes, and one thing more! do you happen to have a female pup from your bitch? We should be very glad if you would give it to us!”

“A-oo!”—rang out Evlámpiya’s voice again.

“A-oo! a-oo!” — responded Slétkin, and rushed into the bushes.

XIX

I REMEMBER, that when I was left alone, I was occupied with the thought: how came it, that Kharlóff had not struck Slétkin in such a way “that only a wet blot would remain on the spot where he had been?”—and how came it, that Slétkin had not been afraid of such a fate? Evidently, Martýn Petróvitch really had become “quiet,” I said to myself—and my desire to betake myself to És’kovo, and get at least a peep with one eye at that colossus, whom I could not possibly picture to myself as intimidated and submissive, grew stronger than ever. I had already reached the edge of the woods, when suddenly, from beneath my very feet, a large woodcock darted forth, with a vehement whirring of its wings, and flew headlong into the recesses of the grove. I took aim; my gun missed fire. I was very much vexed: the bird was a fine one, and I made up my mind to try and see whether I could not raise it again. I walked in the direction of its flight—and after proceeding for a couple of hundred paces, I espied on a small grass-plot, beneath a spreading birch-tree—not the woodcock,—but that same Mr. Slétkin. He was

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lying on his back, with both hands clasped under his head,—and was staring up at the sky with a contented smile, as he dangled his left leg, which was thrown over his right knee. He did not perceive my advance. Evlámpiya was strolling about the glade, with downcast eyes, a few paces from him; she seemed to be hunting for something in the grass—mushrooms, perhaps,—now and then bending down, stretching out her hand,—and was singing in a low voice. I came to an instantaneous standstill, and began to listen. At first, I could not understand what it was that she was singing, but afterward I distinctly recognised the following familiar lines of an ancient ballad:

“Come thou, storm-cloud, come,
Kill, kill bátiushka-father-in-law.
Strike thou, lightning, strike mátushka-mother-in-law,
But I myself will slay the youthful wife.”¹

Evlámpiya sang louder and louder: she prolonged the concluding words with particular force. Slétkin continued to lie on his back and laugh, and she seemed to be constantly circling round him.

“What a girl thou art!”—he said at last. “And what queer ideas thou dost get into thy head!”

¹ Only the second and third lines rhyme in the original.—TRANSLATOR.

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“What dost thou mean by that?”—asked Evlámpiya.

Slétkin raised his head a little. “What do I mean? What remarks are those that thou art making?”

“Thou knowest well enough, Volódya, that one can’t omit words from a song,” replied Evlámpiya, as she turned round, and caught sight of me. We both uttered an exclamation simultaneously, and both fled in opposite directions.

I hastily made my way out of the grove, and traversing a narrow glade, found myself in front of the Kharlóff garden.

XX

I HAD had no time to reflect on what I had seen,—neither was there any reason why I should do so. I remembered only the expression, “love-spell,” which I had been recently made acquainted with, and whose significance had greatly amazed me. I walked along the wattled fence of the garden, and a few moments later, from behind the silver-poplars (they had not lost a single leaf, as yet, and spread luxuriantly), I saw Martýn Petróvitch’s yard and house. The whole garden appeared to me to have been cleaned and spruced up: everywhere traces of constant and strict supervision were visible. Anna Martýnovna made her appearance on the porch, and screwing up her pale-blue eyes, she gazed long in the direction of the grove.

“Hast thou seen thy master?”—she asked of a peasant who was passing through the yard.

“Vladímír Vasílitch?”—replied the man, plucking his cap from his head. “I think he went to the grove.”

“I know that he was in the grove. Has n’t he returned? Hast not thou seen him?”

“I have n’t seen him . . . no.”

The peasant continued to stand capless in front of Anna Martýnovna.

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“Well, go along,”—said she. “Or, no . . . stay . . . Where is Martýn Petróvitch? Dost thou know?”

“Why, Martýn Petróvitch,”—replied the peasant in a singsong tone, raising his right and his left hand alternately, as though pointing at something,—“is sitting yonder, by the pond, with a fishing-rod. He ’s catching fish, I suppose. God knows!”

“Good! . . . Go thy way,”—repeated Anna Martýnovna,—“and pick up that wheel; thou seest it is lying around.”

The peasant flew to execute her command, and she stood for a few moments longer on the porch, and still kept gazing in the direction of the grove. Then she silently shook her fist, and slowly went into the house. “Aksiútka!”—rang out her imperious voice indoors.

Anna Martýnovna wore a wrathful aspect, and seemed to compress in a peculiarly firm manner her lips, which were thin enough already. She was carelessly dressed, and a lock of dishevelled hair fell on her shoulder. But notwithstanding the slatternliness of her attire, notwithstanding her ire, she seemed to me as attractive as ever, and it would have afforded me great pleasure to kiss the slender hand, that also seemed somehow malicious, with which, a couple of times, she swept back that dishevelled lock in anger.

XXI

“CAN it be possible that Martýn Petróvitch has actually turned fisherman?” I asked myself, as I wended my way to the pond, which lay on the further side of the garden. I stepped upon the dam, and glanced here and there. . . . Martýn Petróvitch was nowhere to be seen. I strolled along one of the shores of the pond,—and, at last, almost at the very end of it, in a tiny bay, among the flat, broken stalks of the rusty weeds, I espied a vast, grayish crag. . . . I took a closer look: it was Kharlóff. Hatless, dishevelled, in a crash kaftán split at the seams, with his legs tucked up under him, he was sitting motionless on the bare earth; so motionless did he sit, that a sandpiper, at my approach, broke from the dried mud a couple of paces from him, and flew away, flapping its little wings and whistling, across the watery expanse. It must have been, that no one had stirred in its vicinity for a long time, or frightened it. Kharlóff’s whole figure was unusual to such a degree, that no sooner did my dog catch sight of him, than it stopped abruptly, planted its legs, dropped its tail between its legs, and set up a howl. He barely turned his head, and fixed

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his wild eyes on my dog. His beard had changed him greatly, although short, but it was thick, and curled in white whorls, like Persian lambskin. In his right hand lay the end of a fishing-rod; the other end rocked feebly on the water. My heart involuntarily contracted with pain; but I plucked up my courage, went to him, and bade him good-morning. He winked slowly, as though he had just waked up.

“What are you doing here, Martýn Petróvitch,”—I began,—“are you catching fish?”

“Yes fish,”—he replied, in a hoarse voice, and jerked his rod upward; from its end dangled a fragment of line, about two feet in length, devoid of a hook.

“Your line is broken,”—I remarked, and then I perceived, that Martýn Petróvitch had neither bait-can nor worms beside him. . . . And what fishing could there be in September, anyway?

“Is it broken?”—he said, and passed his hand over his face. “But it makes no difference.”

Again he flung out his line.

“Are you Natályá Nikoláevna’s son?”—he asked, after a couple of minutes, during which I had been scrutinising him, not without secret amazement. Although he had grown very thin, he still seemed a giant; but in what rags he was clad, and how neglected he was!

“Yes,”—I replied,—“I am the son of Natályá Nikoláevna B * * *”

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“ Is she well? ”

“ My mother is well. She was very much pained by your refusal,” I added; “ she did not in the least expect that you would not wish to go to her.”

Martýn Petróvitch dropped his head. “ And hast thou been there? ” he asked, nodding his head to one side.

“ Where? ”

“ Yonder, at the manor-house. Hast thou been? Go away. What hast thou to do here? Go away. There ’s no use in talking to me. I don’t like it.”

He stopped.

“ Thou wouldst like to play all the time with thy gun. When I was of thy age, I used to run that same road. Only, I had a father but I revered him, so I did!—not like the folks of the present day. My father used to thrash me with a long whip—and that settled it! I stopped playing! Therefore, I respected him . . . Phew! . . . Yes ”

Again Kharlóff ceased speaking.

“ And thou must not stay here,”—he began again. “ Go to the manor-house. The house-keeping is splendidly run there now. Volódka ” He hesitated for a moment. “ That Volódka of mine is a great hand at all sorts of things. A fine fellow! but what a beast he is, too! ”

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I did not know what to say; Martýn Petróvitch spoke very calmly.

“And just look at my daughters! You remember that I had daughters, I suppose. They are also clever managers. But I am getting old, brother; I have stepped aside. To rest, thou knowest”

“A pretty sort of rest!”—I said to myself, casting a glance around me. “Martýn Petróvitch!”—I said aloud. “You must, positively, come to us.”

Kharlóff glanced at me. “Go away, brother; that’s my answer.”

“Do not grieve my mother; do come.”

“Go thy way, brother; go thy way,”—reiterated Kharlóff. “Why dost thou care to talk to me?”

“If you have no equipage, mamma will send you hers.”

“Go away!”

“But really now, Martýn Petróvitch!”

Again Kharlóff hung his head—and it seemed to me, that his cheeks, which had grown dark as though covered with earth, flushed slightly.

“I mean it; do come,”—I went on. “Why do you sit here? Why do you torture yourself?”

“What dost thou mean by torturing myself?” he faltered.

“Precisely that—torturing thyself!”—I repeated.

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Kharlóff maintained silence, and seemed to be absorbed in thought.

Encouraged by his silence, I decided to be frank, to act in a straightforward, open manner. (Do not forget, that I was only fifteen years old.)

“Martýn Petróvitch”—I began, seating myself by his side:—“you see, I know everything, absolutely everything! I know how your son-in-law treats you—with the consent of your daughters, of course. And now you are in such a position . . . But why get low-spirited?”

Kharlóff persisted in his silence, and merely dropped his rod; and I—what a wise fellow, what a philosopher I felt myself to be!

“Of course,”—I began again,—“you acted incautiously, in surrendering everything to your daughters. That was very magnanimous on your part . . . and I shall not reproach you for it. It is far too rare a trait in our days! But if your daughters are so ungrateful—then you ought to display scorn . . . precisely that—scorn . . . but not get cast down”

“Let me alone!”—whispered Kharlóff, suddenly gnashing his teeth, and his eyes, which were riveted on the pond, sparkled wrathfully. . . .

“Go away!”

“But, Martýn Petróvitch”

“Go away, I tell thee . . . if thou dost not, I ’ll kill thee!”

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I had moved up quite close to him; but at his last words, I involuntarily sprang to my feet. "What was that you said, Martýn Petróvitch?"

"I 'll kill thee, I tell thee: begone!"—With a fierce groan and roar, his voice forced itself from Kharlóff's breast, but he did not turn his head, and went on wrathfully staring straight in front of him. "I 'll take and fling thee and all thy foolish advice into the water. That will teach thee not to bother old folks, thou green strippling!"

"He has gone mad!" flashed through my mind.

I looked at him more intently, and was completely dumfounded. Martýn Petróvitch was weeping! Tear after tear trickled from his eyelashes upon his cheeks and his face had assumed a thoroughly savage expression. . . .

"Begone!"—he shouted once more,—“or I 'll kill thee, by God! so that it won't become a habit with others!"

His whole body twitched to one side, as it were, and showed his teeth in a snarl, like a wild boar; I seized my gun, and set off on a run. My dog followed me, barking. It was frightened also.

On reaching home, I did not, of course, hint to my mother, by so much as a word, what I had seen; but when I met Souvenir, I—the devil knows why—told him all. That repulsive man was so delighted at my narrative, and burst

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into such a squealing laugh, and even leaped up and down, that I came near giving him a thrashing.

“Ekh! Would n't I have liked to see”—he kept repeating, choking with laughter,—“how that idol, the ‘Vshede’ Kharlus, has crawled into the mud, and sits there . . .”

“Go to him at the pond, if you are so curious.”

“Yes; but what if he should kill me?”

I was very tired of Souvenir, and repented of my ill-judged loquacity. . . . Zhitkóff, to whom he communicated my story, looked at the matter in a somewhat different light.

“We shall have to appeal to the police,”—he said decisively,—“and, possibly, it will be necessary to send for a detachment of soldiers.”

His presentiment as to the military detachment did not come to pass,—but something remarkable really did happen.

XXII

IN the middle of October, three weeks after my meeting with Martýn Petróvitch, I was standing at the window of my chamber, in the second storey of our house, and, thinking of nothing at all, was staring dejectedly into the yard, and at the highway which ran on the other side of it. This was the fifth day that the weather had been disgusting: one could not even think of such a thing as hunting. Every living thing had taken to cover; even the sparrows had become mute, and the daws had long since disappeared. The wind was alternately howling dully and whistling in gusts: the low-hanging sky, without a chink of light, had passed over from a disagreeable white colour to a leaden and still more ominous hue,—and the rain, which had been pouring, pouring down pitilessly and incessantly, suddenly became heavier, more slanting,—and dashed against the window-panes with a shriek. The trees were all storm-tossed, and had turned a sort of grey; it seemed as though everything had been stripped from them,—and then, all of a sudden, the wind would begin to harry them again. Everywhere stood puddles choked with dead leaves; large bubbles, constantly breaking and forming again,

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skipped and glided across them. The mire in the road was too deep to wade through; the cold penetrated my chamber, beneath my clothing, into my very bones; an involuntary shiver coursed over my body—and into what an evil plight did my soul fall! Precisely that—evil, not melancholy. It seemed as though there would never be any more sun, or brightness, or beauty in the world; only that mire and slime, and grey moisture, and acrid wetness—and the wind would shriek and howl forever! So, then, I was standing, in a thoughtful sort of way, at the window—and I remember: a sudden darkness descended, a blue gloom,—although by the clock it was only twelve. All at once, it seemed to me that a bear was dashing across our yard,—from the gate to the porch! Not on all fours, it is true, but such as they are depicted when they rear up on their hind paws. I did not believe my eyes. And even if I had not beheld a bear, at any rate it was something huge, black, shaggy. . . . Before I had time to consider what it might be, a wild shriek suddenly rang out down-stairs. It seemed as though something unexpected, something dreadful had forced itself into our house. A bustle arose, a running to and fro. . . .

I briskly descended the stairs, and ran into the dining-room. . . .

In the door of the drawing-room, with her face toward me, stood my mother, as though

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rooted to the spot; behind her several frightened women's faces were visible; the butler, two footmen, and a page, with mouths wide open from amazement, had crammed themselves into the door leading into the anteroom; and in the middle of the dining-room, covered with mud, dishevelled, tattered, wet,—so wet that steam rose around him, and the water ran in streams across the floor,—knelt, swaying heavily to and fro, and apparently swooning, that same monster who had dashed across the yard in my sight! But who was that monster? Kharlóff! I approached from one side, and beheld—not his face,—but his head, which he had clasped in his hands, all plastered with mud as it was. He was breathing heavily, convulsively: there was even a gurgling in his chest—and the only point which could be clearly discerned in all that dark, bespattered mass was the tiny, wildly roving whites of his eyes. He was frightful! I called to mind the dignitary whom he had once taken up short for comparing him to a mastodon. As a matter of fact, precisely such must have been the aspect of an antediluvian animal which had just escaped from another and more powerful wild beast that had attacked him in the midst of the everlasting and primeval marshes.

“Martýn Petróvitch!”—exclaimed my mother at last, and wrung her hands. “Is it thou! Oh, merciful Lord God!”

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"'T is I I . . ." a broken voice made itself heard, apparently expelling every sound with an effort and pain. "Okh! 'T is I!"

"But what ails thee, good Lord!"

"Natálya Nikoláv na I have fled to you straight from home, on foo . . . ot."

"In this mud! But thou hast not the semblance of a man. Rise, sit down at least And you,"—she said, addressing the maids,—“run for towels, as quickly as you can. And is n't there some dry clothing?”—she asked the butler.

The butler signalled with his hands, as much as to say,—where is anything to be found of that size?—“However, I can bring a coverlet,”—he said:—“or there is a new horse-cloth.”

“Come, get up, get up, Martýn Petróvitch; sit down,”—repeated my mother.

“They have driven me out, madam,”—moaned Kharlóff, suddenly—and he threw back his head, and thrust his hands out in front of him. “They have turned me out, Natálya Nikoláevna! My own daughters, from my own home”

My mother cried out:

“What sayest thou? They have turned thee out! What a sin! what a sin!”—(She crossed herself)—“Only rise, Martýn Petróvitch, for pity's sake.”

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Two maids entered with towels, and stood in front of Kharlóff. It was evident that they could not even imagine where they were to begin on such a mass of mud. "They have turned me out, madam; they have turned me out!"—Kharlóff kept repeating the while. The butler returned with a large woollen coverlet, and also halted in perplexity. Souvenir's head was thrust through the door, then vanished.

"Martýn Petróvitch, rise! rise! sit down! and tell me all about it, in its proper order,"—commanded my mother, in a tone of decision.

Kharlóff half rose to his feet. . . . The butler attempted to aid him, but merely soiled his hands, and shaking his fingers, he retreated to the door. Waddling and reeling, Kharlóff made his way to a chair, and sat down. The maids again approached him with the towels, but he waved them aside with a gesture, and refused the coverlet also. And my mother also ceased to insist: evidently, to dry Kharlóff was an impossibility; only his tracks on the floor were hastily wiped up.

XXIII

“How did they come to turn thee out?”—my mother asked Kharlóff, as soon as he had somewhat recovered his breath.

“Madam! Natálya Nikoláevna!”—he began, in a constrained voice,—and again I was struck by the uneasy roving of his eyes,—“I will tell you the truth: I myself am to blame most of all.”

“Precisely so; thou wouldst not listen to me,”—said my mother, sinking into an arm-chair, and lightly waving in front of her nose her perfumed handkerchief: the stench from Kharlóff was excessive . . . the odour is not so strong in a forest swamp.

“Okh, not therein lay my error, madam, but in pride. Pride has ruined me, just as it did King Nebuchadnezzar. I thought: the Lord God has not been unkind to me in the matter of brains; if I have made up my mind about a thing, that means that it must be right. . . . But in that case the terror of death seized upon me. . . . I went astray completely! Says I to myself, I’ll show my power and my will for the last time! I’ll reward them—and they must feel sensible of it to the grave. . . .” (Suddenly Kharlóff

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quivered all over. . . .) “They’ve driven me out of the house, like a cur! That’s their gratitude for you!”

“But how did it come about,”—my mother was beginning again

“They took my page *Maxím* away from me,”—*Kharlóff* interrupted her (his eyes continued to rove, he held both hands under his chin, with locked fingers)—“they took away my equipage, they cut off my monthly allowance, they did not pay me the stipulated stipend,—they docked me all round,—still I held my peace, still I bore it patiently! And the reason I bore it patiently okh! . . . was again that pride of mine! So that my enemies might not be able to say: See, now, the old fool repents! And you, also, madam, forewarned me: ‘Don’t bite your own nose off,’ you said,—so I bore it patiently. . . . Only, to-day I go to my room—and it is already occupied—and they had flung my bed out into the store-room! ‘Thou mayest sleep there,’ said they: ‘we endure thee out of charity, anyway: we need thy rooms for the housekeeping,’ they said. And who is it that says that to me! *Volódka Slétkin*, that scoundrel, that dir”

Kharlóff’s voice broke.

“But thy daughters? What about them?”—asked my mother.

“But I continued to be patient,”—*Kharlóff* pursued his narrative:—“it was bitter, bitter to

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me, so it was, and mortifying to me. . . . I did not feel like looking at God's world! That is why I would not come to you, *mátushka*—because of that same mortification, of shame! For you see, my *mátushka*, I tried everything: wheedling and threatening; and I exhorted them, and what not all besides! I bowed down before them so” (Kharlóff showed how he had bowed.) “And all in vain! And still I bore it patiently! At the start, in the early days of it, I did not have such thoughts. I said to myself, I'll give them a sound thrashing, I'll pitch them all out, so that not a seed of them shall remain. . . . I'll teach them! Well, but, later on, I—I submitted! This cross has been sent to me, I thought; it signifies that I must prepare myself for death. And all of a sudden, to-day, I'm treated like a dog! And who did it? *Volódka*! And as you were good enough to inquire about my daughters,—why, have they any will of their own? They are *Volódka*'s slaves! Yes!”

My mother was amazed. “I can understand that as regards Anna; she is his wife. But why does thy second”

“*Evlámpiya*, you mean? She's worse than Anna! She has surrendered herself utterly into *Volódka*'s hands. And that's the reason, too, why she refused your soldier. At his, *Volódka*'s command. Anna—evidently—ought to feel injured, and, in fact, she cannot bear her sister—but

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she submits! He has bewitched her, the accursed fellow! And then, you see, it must be pleasant for her, for Anna, to think, 'Here art thou, Ev-lámpiya, who wert always such a proud creature, and now just see what thou hast come to!' O okh, okh! My God, my God!"

My mother cast a perturbed glance at me. I withdrew a little to one side, by way of precaution, lest I should be sent out of the room.

"I am very sorry, Martýn Petróvitch,"—she began;—"that my former nursling should have caused you pain, and should have turned out to be so bad a man; but I was deceived in him, you see. . . . Who could have expected that from him!"

"Madam,"—groaned Kharlóff, and smote his breast,—"I cannot endure the ingratitude of my daughters. I cannot, madam! You see, I gave up everything to them, everything! And moreover, my conscience has tormented me. Many things . . . okh! . . . many things have I pondered, as I sat by the pond, and fished! 'If thou hadst but done any good to any one in thy life!' I meditated:—'given to the poor, set the serfs at liberty, perhaps, because they had been eternally preyed upon! Surely, thou art responsible for them in the sight of God! Then their tears would be poured out for thee! But what is their lot now: the pit was deep under my rule—why should I conceal my sin—but now its bottom

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cannot be seen!' All these sins have I taken upon my soul, I have sacrificed my conscience for my children, and by way of reward they scorn me! They have kicked me out of the house, like a dog!"

"Stop thinking about it, Martýn Petróvitch," remarked my mother.

"And when he said to me, that Volódka of yours,"—resumed Kharlóff, with fresh vigour,—“when he said to me, that I could no longer dwell in my chamber,—and I had set every beam of that chamber in place with my own hands,—when he told me that,—God knows what came over me then! My head got confused, a knife seemed to cut my heart. . . . Well! It was a choice between cutting his throat and rushing out of the house! And so I fled to you, my benefactress, Natálya Nikoláevna And where was I to lay my head? And it was raining, and muddy I think I must have fallen down a score of times! And now in this horrible condition”

Kharlóff surveyed himself with a glance, and fidgeted about on his chair, as though he were preparing to rise.

"Enough, enough, Martýn Petróvitch," said my mother, hastily, "where is the harm in that? Thou hast soiled the floor? That is of no consequence whatever! But this is the proposition which I have to make to thee. Listen! Thou shalt

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now be conducted to a private room, thou shalt have a clean bed—thou art to undress and wash thyself, then lie down and sleep. . . .”

“Mátushka, Natálya Nikoláevna! I can't sleep!”—said Kharlóff, mournfully. “It seems as though hammers were beating in my brain! For, like a useless weed, I”

“Lie down, sleep,”—repeated my mother, insistently. “And then we will give thee tea—well, and we will discuss matters with thee. Be not cast down, my old friend! If thou hast been turned out of thy house, thou wilt always find a refuge in *mine*. . . . For, seest thou, I have not forgotten that thou savedst my life.”

“My benefactress!” moaned Kharlóff, and covered his face with his hands. “Do *you* save *me* now!”

This appeal moved my mother almost to tears. “I am ready and glad to aid thee, Martýn Petróvitch, in every way that is within my power; but thou must promise me, that thou wilt obey me in future, and banish from thy mind all unkind thoughts.”

Kharlóff removed his hands from his face. “If necessary,” he said, “I can even forgive!”

My mother nodded approvingly. “I am delighted to see that thou art in such a truly Christian frame of mind, Martýn Petróvitch; but we will talk of that hereafter. In the meanwhile, put thyself in order,—and, chief of all, sleep.

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Conduct Martýn Petróvitch to the green study of thy deceased master,”—said my mother, addressing the butler,—“and whatever he asks for, give it to him on the instant! Give orders that his clothing shall be dried and cleaned—and ask the housekeeper for whatever linen is required—dost hear?”

“I obey,”—replied the butler.

“And when he wakes up, order the tailor to take his measure; and his beard must be shaved. Not immediately, but later on.”

“I obey,”—repeated the butler. “Martýn Petróvitch,—be so good . . .” Kharlóff rose, looked at my mother, started to approach her, but halted, made her a bow to the girdle, crossed himself thrice before the holy image,¹ and followed the butler. I slipped out of the room in his wake.

¹ It is customary to have an ikóna, or holy image (picture), in dining-rooms and bedrooms. — TRANSLATOR.

XXIV

THE butler conducted Kharlóff to the green study, and immediately ran for the housekeeper, as there turned out to be no linen on the bed. Souvenir, who met us in the anteroom, and skipped into the study with us, instantly began, with writhing and laughter, to hover around Kharlóff, who had halted in a brown study, in the middle of the room, with his arms and legs somewhat extended. The water still continued to trickle from him.

“The Vshede! The Vshede Kharlus!”—squeaked Souvenir, bending double, and holding on to his sides. “Great founder of the famous race of the Kharlóffs, look upon thy descendant. Isn’t he a sight? Canst recognise him? Ha, ha, ha! Your illustrious highness, allow me to kiss your hand! why do you wear black gloves?”

I tried to stop Souvenir, but it was of no use.

“He called me a parasite, a sluggard! ‘Thou hast no roof of thine own,’ says he. But now, I rather think, he has become just such another parasite as sinful I! Martýn Petróvitch is just as much of a homeless tramp now as Souvenir!”

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He, also, will be supported by gifts! They will take the crust of discarded bread, which the dog sniffed at and then went his way as much as to say—come now, eat it! Ha-ha-ha!”

Kharlóff still stood motionless, with drooping head, and arms and legs outstretched.

“Martýn Kharlóff, hereditary noble!” pursued Souvenir, shrilly. “What importance he has assumed, oh my, phew! ‘Don’t come near me,’ says he; ‘I’ll do you an injury!’ And when he, out of his great wisdom, began to give away and portion out his property—how he did crow! ‘Gratitude!’ he yells, ‘gratitude!’ But why did he insult me? Why did n’t he give me something? Possibly, I might have shown more feeling! And the best of it is, that I told the truth, that they would turn him out, naked. . . .”

“Souvenir!” I shouted; but Souvenir did not stop. Still Kharlóff did not move: it seemed as though he had only just begun to realise how wet everything on him was, and was waiting to have everything taken off him. But the butler did not return.

“And a warrior, to boot!”—began Souvenir again. “In the year ’12 he saved his fatherland! he displayed his bravery! That’s precisely the point: to strip the measly marauders of their breeches—that’s quite in our line; but when a hussy stamps her foot at us, our own soul drops into our breeches.”

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“Souvenir!”—I cried a second time.

Kharlóff shot a sidelong glance at Souvenir; up to that moment, he had not even noticed his presence, to all appearances, and only my exclamation had aroused his attention.

“Look out, brother!”—he bellowed sullenly, —“don’t go skipping into a catastrophe!”

Souvenir fairly rolled with laughter. “Okh, how you frightened me, most respected brother! how terrible you are, really now! You had better comb your hair; otherwise,—which God forbid,—it will dry, and it can’t be washed out afterward; it will have to be mowed with a scythe.” All at once, Souvenir waxed angry. “You’re looking consequential again! A naked beggar, yet he puts on big airs! Where’s your roof now? You’d better tell me; you were always bragging of it. ‘I’ve got a roof,’ says he; but now thou art roofless! ‘My roof is hereditary,’ says he.” (This expression had struck Souvenir’s fancy.)

“Mr. Bytchkóff,” said I. “What are you doing! Come to your senses!”

But he continued to rattle on, and kept skipping and darting about close round Kharlóff. . . . And still the butler and the housekeeper did not come! I became alarmed. I began to observe that Kharlóff, who, in the course of the conversation with my mother, had gradually calmed down, and even, toward the end, had,

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apparently, become reconciled to his fate, had again begun to grow excited; he was breathing more rapidly, he seemed suddenly to swell up under the ears, his fingers began to twitch, again his eyes began to roll about in the midst of the dark mask of his mud-begrimed face. . . .

“Souvenir! Souvenir!” I cried. “Stop! I shall tell mamma.”

But Souvenir seemed possessed of a devil.

“Yes, yes, my most respected!”—he snarled again,—“just see in what subtle circumstances you and I now find ourselves! And your daughters, with your son-in-law, Vladímir Vasílievitch, are laughing their fill at you under your *roof*! And you might, at least, have cursed them, according to your promise! But you were n’t equal even to that much! And you’re no match for Vladímir Vasílievitch, anyway! And you have called him Volódka, into the bargain! How is he Volódka¹ to you? He is Vladímir Vasílievitch, Mr. Slétkin, landed proprietor, a gentleman,—and as for thee—what art thou?”

A fierce roar drowned Souvenir’s speech. . . Kharlóff had exploded. His fists clenched themselves and rose aloft, his face turned blue, foam made its appearance on his chapped lips, he quivered with rage. “Roof, sayest thou!” he thundered with his iron voice,—“a curse! sayest

¹ Meaning, “dirty, miserable little Vladímir.” The diminutive in *ka* almost always expresses contempt: hence the two forms used in this story at different points—*Volodya* and *Volodka*.—TRANSLATOR.

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thou. . . . No! I will not curse them. . . .
Much they care for that! But the roof
I'll destroy their roof, and they shall have no
roof, any more than I have! They shall learn
to know Martýn Kharlóff! My strength has not
vanished yet! I'll teach them to jeer at me! . . .
They shall have no roof!"

I was dumfounded; never in my life had I
been witness to such boundless wrath. It was
not a human being—but a fierce wild beast which
was ramping about in front of me! I was
stunned but Souvenir,—crawled under
the table in affright.

"They shall have none!"—shouted Kharlóff
for the last time, and almost upsetting the house-
keeper and butler, who entered at that moment,
he rushed out of the house. . . . He dashed
headlong through the yard, and disappeared be-
yond the gate.

XXV

MY mother was frightfully angry when the butler came, with troubled countenance, to announce Martýn Petróvitch's new and sudden departure. He dared not conceal from her the cause of that departure: I was compelled to confirm his statements. "So it is all thy fault!"—shrieked my mother at Souvenir, who started to run forward like a hare, and even kissed her hand:—"thine abominable tongue is to blame for it all!"—"Good gracious! I'll immejutly, immejutly" lisped Souvenir, stammering and jerking his elbows behind his back.

"'Immejutly immejutly'"—I know all about thy 'immejutly'!" repeated my mother, reproachfully, and sent him out of the room. Then she rang the bell, commanded that Kvitzínsky should be summoned, and gave him her orders: to set out without delay for És'kovo in her equipage, hunt up Martýn Petróvitch, at any cost, and bring him back. "Don't present yourself before me without him!"—she said in conclusion. The grim-visaged Pole bowed silently, and withdrew.

I returned to my own room, seated myself by

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the window again, and meditated long on what had taken place before my eyes. I was bewildered; I could not possibly understand why Kharlóff, who had endured, almost without remonstrance, the insult dealt him by the members of his household, had not been able to control himself, and had failed to endure the jeers and taunts of such an insignificant creature as Souvenir. I did not then know what intolerable bitterness may be contained, sometimes, in an empty reproach, even when it proceeds from contemptible lips. The hated name of Slétkin, uttered by Souvenir, had fallen like a spark in powder; the sore spot had not been able to bear this last sting.

About an hour elapsed. Our calash drove into the yard; but in it sat our steward alone. Yet my mother had said to him: "Do not present yourself without *him!*" Kvitzínsky sprang hastily from the carriage, and ran up the steps. His face wore a perturbed aspect,—a thing which hardly ever happened with him. I immediately went down-stairs, and followed on his heels into the drawing-room.

"Well? have you brought him?"—asked my mother.

"No,"—replied Kvitzínsky,—“and I could not bring him.”

"Why so? did you see him?"

"Yes."

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“What has happened to him? A stroke of apoplexy?”

“Not at all; nothing has happened to him.”

“Then why have not you brought him?”

“He is destroying his house.”

“What?”

“He is standing on the roof of the new wing—and destroying it. Forty or more of the planks, I should say, have already flown off.” (“They shall have no roof!” Kharlóff’s words recurred to my mind.)

My mother stared at Kvitzínsky. “He is standing . . . alone . . . on the roof, and tearing it to pieces?”

“Precisely so, madam. He is walking along the planking on the roof-tree, and breaking down on the right and the left. His strength is supernatural, as you know! Well, and the roof, to tell the truth, is a miserable one: it is laid with gaps,¹ it is nailed on with the thinnest sort of upper boards, two-and-a-quarter-inch nails.”

My mother glanced at me, as though to assure herself whether she had not, in some way, heard wrongly. “Thin boards with spaces,”—she repeated, evidently not understanding the meaning of a single one of these words. . . .

¹ That is, when between every pair of planks an open space is left, covered over on top with another plank: such a roof is cheaper, but less durable. The thinnest upper boards are half a *vershók* in thickness, the ordinary board being three-quarters of a *vershók*. (The *vershók* is one and three-quarter inches.)—AUTHOR’S NOTE.

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“Well, and what do you want?”—she said at last.

“I am come for instructions. Without men to help, nothing can be done. The peasants there have all hidden themselves with fright.”

“And his daughters—what of them?”

“His daughters are all right. They are rushing about at random . . . shrieking . . . But what good does that do?”

“And is Slétkin there?”

“Yes, he’s there also. He’s yelling the worst of all—but he can do nothing.”

“And Martýn Petróvitch is standing on the roof?”

“Yes—on the roof . . . that is to say, in the garret, and is destroying the roof.”

“Yes, yes,”—said my mother,—“the thin boards. . . .”

Evidently, an unusual case had presented itself.

What was to be done? Send to town for the chief of the rural police—assemble the peasants? My mother was utterly at a loss.

Zhitkóff, who had come to dinner, was equally at a loss. Truth to tell, he again made mention of his military command, but he offered no advice, and only wore a submissive and devoted air. Kvitzínsky, perceiving that he would get no instructions, announced to my mother, with the scornful respect peculiar to him, that if she

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would permit him to take several of the stablemen, gardeners, and other house-serfs, he would make an effort

“Yes, yes,”—my mother interrupted him,—“do make an effort, my dear Vikenty Osípitch! Only, be quick about it, pray, and I will assume all the responsibility!”

Kvitzínsky smiled frigidly. “Allow me to explain one thing to you in advance, madam: it is impossible to answer for the results, for Mr. Kharlóff’s strength is great, and so is his despair: he considers himself greatly wronged!”

“Yes, yes,”—assented my mother:—“and that abominable Souvenir is to blame for all! I shall never forgive him for this. Go, take men with you, proceed, Vikenty Osipitch!”

“Take as many ropes as possible, Mr. Manager,—and fire-hooks,”—said Zhitkóff in his bass voice,—“and if you have a net,—it would n’t be a bad thing to take that also. Now once upon a time, in our regiment”

“Be so good as not to instruct me, my dear sir,”—interrupted Kvitzínsky, with vexation: “I know what is required, without any suggestions from you.”

Zhitkóff took offence, and remarked that as he assumed that he also was bidden . . .

“No, no,”—interposed my mother. “Thou hadst better stay here. . . Vikenty Osípitch will act alone. . . . Go, Vikenty Osípitch!”

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Zhitkóff was more angry than before, but Kvitzínsky bowed and left the room.

I flew to the stable, hastily saddled my horse with my own hands, and set off at a gallop on the road to É's'kovo.

XXVI

THE rain had ceased; but the wind was blowing with redoubled violence—straight in my face. Half way on my road, my saddle came near turning with me: the girth had loosened: I alighted, and set to dragging at the strap with my teeth. . . . All at once, I heard some one calling me by name. . . Souvenir was running toward me over the grass. . . “Well, little father,”—he shouted at me, while still afar off,—“has curiosity conquered you? Well, you could n’t help yourself. . . And I’m going thither also, straight, on Kharlóff’s tracks. . . . Why, you ’ll never see such a sight again in all your life!”

“You want to admire the work of your hands,”—I said indignantly, sprang on my horse, and set off again at a gallop; but the indefatigable Souvenir did not leave me, and even shouted with laughter and writhed as he ran. And here, at last, was *És’kovo*, here was the dam,—and yonder were the long wattled fence and the willows of the manor. . . I rode up to the gate, alighted, and tied my horse; and stood stock-still in amazement.

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Of the front third of the roof, on the new wing of the mezzanine, only the skeleton remained, the shingles and sheathing-boards lay in formless heaps upon the ground, on both sides of the wing. Admitting that the roof had been, according to Kvizínsky's expression, a paltry one; nevertheless, the thing was incredible. On the planking of the loft, stirring up dust and rubbish, a blackish-grey mass was moving about with clumsy agility, and now shaking loose the remaining chimney, built of bricks (the other had already fallen), now ripping off a board, and hurling it down, now clutching at the very rafters themselves. It was Kharlóff. He seemed to me then a perfect bear: his head, and his back, and his shoulders were those of a bear, and he planted his legs wide apart, without bending the bottom of his feet, just as a bear does. The keen wind was blowing a gale around him on every side, lifting his matted hair; it was terrible to see, his naked body gleaming red through the rents in his tattered raiment: it was terrible to hear his fierce, hoarse muttering. The yard was filled with people: peasant women, dirty little boys, housemaids were ranged along the fence; a few peasant men had clustered together in a separate group at a distance. The old priest, whom I knew, was standing hatless on the steps of the other wing, and clasping a brass cross in both hands, silently and hopelessly raised it

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aloft, from time to time, and seemed to be showing it to Kharlóff. By the priest's side stood Evlámpiya, and with her back propped against the wall, she gazed immovably at her father; Anna now thrust her head out of the little window, again she vanished, now she ran out into the yard, again she went back into the house; Slétkin, all pale, sallow, in an old dressing-gown and a skull-cap, with a single-barrelled gun in his hands, was running back and forth, with short steps. He had become a thorough-going Jew, as the expression is: he panted, and threatened, shook himself, took aim at Kharlóff, then flung his gun on his shoulder, again took aim, shouted, wept. . . . On catching sight of me and Souvenir, he fairly hurled himself at us.

“Look, look, what is going on yonder!”—he squeaked,—“look! He has gone crazy, he has got into a fury . . . and see what he is doing! I have sent for the police,—but no one comes! No one comes! If I were to shoot him, the law could not call me to account, because every man has a right to defend his property! And I will shoot! . . . By God, I'll shoot!”

He ran toward the house.

“Martýn Petróvitch, beware! If you don't come down, I'll shoot!”

“Shoot away!”—rang out a hoarse voice from the roof. “Shoot away! And meanwhile, here's a gift for thee!”

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A long board flew down from above—and turning a couple of times in the air, crashed to the ground directly at Slétkin's feet. The latter fairly leaped into the air, and Kharlóff burst into a loud laugh.

“Oh, Lord Jesus!”—faltered some one behind my back.

I glanced round: it was Souvenir. “Ah!” I thought; “he has stopped laughing now!”

Slétkin seized by the collar a peasant who stood near.

“Come, climb up, climb up, climb up, you devils!” he yelled, shaking him with all his might—“save my property!”

The peasant took a couple of steps, flung back his head, waved his hands, shouted: “Hey! you! sir!”—stamped up and down a bit where he stood, and round about face.

“A ladder! fetch a ladder!”—Slétkin shouted at the remaining peasants.

“And where are we to get it?”—resounded in reply.

“And even if there were a ladder,”—remarked one voice, in a leisurely way,—“who wants to climb up there? You must think we are fools! He'd wring thy neck—in the twinkling of an eye!”

“He'd kill him d'rectly”—said one young, fair-haired fellow with a very evil face.

“And why should n't he?”—chimed in the

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rest. It seemed to me, that even had there been no self-evident danger, still the peasants would not willingly have obeyed the orders of their new master. They all but encouraged Kharlóff—although he had surprised them.

“Akh, you bandits!” groaned Slétkin, “I’ll give it to you all. . . .”

But at this point the last chimney came down with a crash, and in the midst of clouds of yellow dust which arose for a moment, Kharlóff, emitting a piercing yell, and raising his blood-stained hands aloft, turned his face toward us. Again Slétkin took aim at him.

Evlámpiya pulled him back by the elbow.

“Don’t meddle!” he vented his wrath fiercely on her.

“And as for thee—don’t dare!”—said she;—and her blue eyes flashed menacingly from beneath her knitted brows. “My father is destroying his own house. It’s his property.”

“Thou liest: it is ours!”

“Thou sayest: ‘it is ours:’—but I say ’t is his.”

Slétkin hissed with rage; Evlámpiya fairly bored her eyes into his face.

“Ah, how d’ ye do! how d’ ye do! my amiable daughter!”—thundered Kharlóff from on high. “Good-morning, Evlámpiya Martýnovna! How dost thou get along with thy friend?—Do you kiss and fondle each other nicely?”

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“Father!”—rang out Evlámpiya’s resonant voice.

“What, dear daughter?”—replied Kharlóff, and moved forward to the very brink of the wall. So far as could be seen, a strange grin had made its appearance on his face—a bright, cheery, and, precisely for that reason, peculiarly dreadful grin. . . . Many years afterward, I saw exactly that same sort of grin on the face of a man condemned to death.

“Stop, father; come down!” (Evlámpiya did not call him “bátiushka”—dear little father.) “We are guilty; we will give thee back everything. Come down.”

“And why art thou making arrangements for us?”—put in Slétkin. Evlámpiya merely contracted her brows still more.

“I will restore to thee my portion—I will give thee everything. Stop; come down, father! Forgive us; forgive me!”

Still Kharlóff went on grinning. “Too late, my dear little dove,”—said he, and every word of his had the ring of brass. “Thy stony soul has stirred too late! The ball has started to roll down hill—thou canst not stop it now! And thou needst not look at me! I’m a doomed man! Look rather at thy Volódka: see what a beauty thou hast sought out for thyself! And look at thy viper of a sister: yonder she is sticking her foxy nose out of the window, yonder she is egg-

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ing her nice little husband on! No, my dear young madams! You have wanted to deprive me of a roof—therefore I will not leave you one beam upon another! With my own hands I placed them, with my own hands I will destroy—just as I am, with my hands alone! See, I have not taken an axe!”

He spat on both his palms, and again grasped the rafters.

“Enough, father,”—Evlámpiya was saying in the meanwhile, and her voice, somehow, grew wonderfully caressing,—“forget the past. Come, believe me; thou hast always trusted me. Do come down; come to my chamber, to my soft bed. I will dry thee, and warm thee; I will bind up thy wounds, for thou hast flayed thy hands. Thou shalt live with me as though thou wert in Christ’s bosom, eat sweetly, and sleep still more sweetly. Come, we have been to blame, well, and we have grown arrogant, we have sinned; come, forgive!”

Kharlóff shook his head. “Jabber away! As though I would believe you! You have killed belief within me! You have killed everything! I was an eagle—and made myself a worm for you and you—mean to crush the worm? Enough of that! I loved thee, thou knowest it,—but now thou art not my daughter—and I am not thy father . . . I’m a doomed man! Don’t interfere! And as for thee, fire away, thou cow-

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ard, woe-hero!" bellowed Kharlóff suddenly at Slétkin. "Why dost thou keep taking aim? Hast thou called to mind the law: if he that has received a gift shall be guilty of an attempt on the life of the giver,"—said Kharlóff, pausing between the words,—“then the giver has a right to demand the return of everything? Ha, ha,—have no fear, thou man versed in law! I shall not demand it—I shall finish it all myself. . . Here goes!”

“Father!” implored Evlámpiya, for the last time.

“Hold thy tongue!”

“Martýn Petróvitch, brother, be magnanimous, forgive!”—faltered Souvenir.

“Father, darling!”

“Silence, bitch!”—yelled Kharlóff. He did not even look at Souvenir—but merely spat in his direction.

XXVII

AT that moment, Kvitzínsky with his whole squad—in three peasant carts—made his appearance at the gate. The weary horses snorted, the men, one after another, sprang out into the mud.

“Ehe!” shouted Kharlóff, at the top of his voice. “An army, there it is, an army! They are setting in array a whole army against me. Very good! Only, I give you warning, that if any one comes hither to me on the roof—I’ll pitch him down head over heels! I’m a surly host, I don’t like untimely guests! So there, now!”

He clutched the front pair of rafters in both hands, the so-called “legs” of the pediment,—and began to rock them to and fro violently. Hanging from the edge of the planking, he drew them after him, as it were, chanting in measured rhythm, stevedore fashion: “Heave-ho! heave-ho! ukh!”

Slétkin ran to Kvitzínsky, and began to complain and to whimper. . . . The latter requested him “not to meddle,” and proceeded to put in execution the plan which he had formed. He himself took up his stand in front of the house, and began by way of creating a diversion, to ex-

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plain to Kharlóff that what he was about was not a deed worthy of a nobleman. . . .

“Heave-ho! heave-ho!”—chanted Kharlóff.

. . . . That Natálya Nikoláevna was very much displeased with him, and had not expected this of him. . . .

“Heave-ho! heave-ho! ukh!”—chanted Kharlóff;—and, in the meantime, Kvitzínsky had detailed four of the most robust and daring of the stablemen to the opposite side of the house, with the object of having them mount to the roof from behind. But the plan of attack did not escape Kharlóff’s notice; he suddenly abandoned the rafters, and ran nimbly to the rear part of the mezzanine. His aspect was so terrifying, that two stablemen, who had already succeeded in ascending to the garret, instantly slid back to the ground by the water-spout, to the no small satisfaction and even laughter of the little boys of the house-servants. Kharlóff shook his fist after them, and returning to the front portion of the house, he again seized hold of the rafters, and again began to rock them, again chanting, in stevedore style.

Suddenly he stopped, and looked about him. . .

“Maxímushka, friend! comrade!” he cried: “do I behold thee?”

I glanced round. . . . In fact, Maxímka, the page, had detached himself from the throng

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of peasants, and smirking and displaying his teeth in a grin, had stepped forward. His master, the saddler, had probably allowed him to return home for a brief visit.

“Climb up here to me, Maxímushka, my faithful servant,”—went on Kharlóff;—“we will together ward off the savage Tatár folk, the Lithuanian thieves!”

Maxímka, still grinning, instantly climbed to the roof. . But he was seized and dragged back—God knows why—perhaps by way of example for the rest; he could not have rendered much aid to Martýn Petróvitch.

“Well, very good! All right!”—articulated Kharlóff in a menacing voice, and again set to work at the rafters.

“Vikénty Osípovitch! with your permission, I will shoot!”—said Slétkin to Kvitzínsky;—“you see, my gun is loaded with bird-shot, chiefly by way of frightening him.” But before Kvitzínsky could answer him, the foremost pair of rafters, vigorously shaken by the iron hands of Kharlóff, heeled over, cracked, and fell into the yard—and with them, being unable to hold himself back, fell Kharlóff himself, and crashed heavily on the ground. All shuddered, cried out. . . Kharlóff lay motionless, and against his back rested lengthwise the upper beam of the roof, the roof-tree, which had followed the falling pediment.

XXVIII

THE people rushed to Kharlóff, dragged the beam away from him, turned him over on his back; his face was lifeless, there was blood about his mouth; he was not breathing. "The spirit is knocked out of him,"—muttered the peasants who had stepped forward. They ran to the well for water, they brought a whole bucketful, and drenched Kharlóff's head: the mud and dust left his face, but its lifeless aspect remained as before. They dragged up a bench, placed it close against the wing, and with difficulty lifting Martýn Petróvitch's huge body, they placed it upon the bench, with his head leaning against the wall. The page Maxímka approached, knelt down on one knee, and thrusting the other leg far out, supported the arm of his former master in a theatrical sort of way. Evlámpiya, pale as death itself, stood directly in front of her father, with her huge eyes riveted immovably on him. Anna and Slétkin did not come near. All maintained silence, all waited for something or other. At last, broken, throbbing sounds became audible in Kharlóff's throat—as though he were choking. . . . Then he feebly moved one hand—the right one (Maxímka was holding the left), opened one eye,—the right,—and slowly gazing

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around him, as though drunk with some terrible sort of intoxication, he groaned,—articulated, indistinctly:—“ I am in jured” And then he added, as though after a brief reflection:—“ this is it the bla . . . ack co olt!”

The blood suddenly welled in a thick torrent from his mouth—his whole body quivered

“ It is the end!” I thought. But again Kharlóff opened one eye,—it was still the right one (the left eyelid did not move, any more than that of a corpse),—and fixing it on Evlámpiya, he articulated, in a barely audible tone:

“ Well, daugh ter, I do not for” Kvizínsky, with a sharp gesture, called up the priest, who was still standing on the steps of the wing. . . . The old man drew near, entangling his weak knees in his narrow cassock. But all at once, Kharlóff’s legs twitched in a horrible manner, and so did his trunk; athwart his face, from below upward, coursed a nervous convulsion—and Evlámpiya’s face was distorted in precisely the same manner. Maxímka began to cross himself. . . . I was horrified, I ran to the gate, and leaned my breast against it, without glancing round. A minute later, a soft murmur broke from all the mouths behind me—and I understood that Martýn Petróvitch was dead.

The roof-tree had broken the nape of his neck, and he had smashed in his breast himself, as was proved at the autopsy.

XXIX

“WHAT was it that he tried to say to her, as he was dying?” I asked myself, as I rode homeward on my trotter; “‘I do not curse thee?’ or ‘I do not for give thee?’”¹ The rain was again pouring down, but I rode at a foot-pace, I wished to remain alone as long as possible,—I wished to give myself up to my meditations. Souvenir set off in one of the carts, which had arrived with Kvitzínsky. Young and giddy as I was at that period, yet the sudden, general change (not in minor details alone) which is always evoked in all hearts by the unexpected or the expected (it makes no difference!) appearance of death, its solemnity, importance and righteousness—could not but impress me. And impressed I was but nevertheless, my perturbed, childish gaze immediately took note of many things: it noted how Slétkin flung his gun on one side, promptly and timidly, just as though it were a stolen article, how he and his wife both instantaneously became the object of a silent but universal avoidance, how a vacant space was

¹The point here cannot be made apparent in English. The half-uttered word in Russian might be either: *pro . . . klinyáiu* (curse) or *pro . . . shtcháiu* (forgive).—TRANSLATOR.

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formed around them. . . . This avoidance was not extended to Evlámpiya, although, in all probability, her fault was no less grave than that of her sister. She even aroused a certain amount of compassion for herself, when she flung herself down in a heap at the feet of her dead father. But that she was guilty was felt by all, notwithstanding. "You wronged the old man,"—said one greyish-haired, big-headed peasant, propping both hands and his beard on a long staff, like some judge of ancient times. "The sin is on your souls! You wronged him!" That word, "wronged," was immediately accepted by every one as a verdict from which there could be no appeal. The popular judgment had been pronounced,—I instantly comprehended that fact. I also noticed that Slétkin did not, at first, dare to take charge of affairs. Without any action on his part, the people lifted the body and bore it into the house; without consulting him, the priest wended his way to the church for the requisite articles, while the village elder ran to the village, to despatch a vehicle to town; even Anna Martýnovna could not bring herself to give orders, in her usual commanding tone, that the samovár should be prepared,—“in order that there may be warm water wherewith to wash the deceased.” Her order resembled an entreaty—and she received a rude reply. . . .

But I was still engrossed with the question:

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What had he really meant to say to his daughter? Had he meant to forgive her, or to curse her? I finally decided, that he intended to—forgive her.

Three days later, Martýn Petróvitch's funeral took place, at the cost of my mother, who was greatly grieved by his death, and gave orders that no expense was to be spared. She herself did not go to the church—because she did not wish, as she expressed it, to see those two hussies and that abominable . . . little Jew; but she sent Kvit-zínsky, me, and Zhitkóff, whom, by the way, from that time forth, she never alluded to otherwise than as an old woman. She would not permit Souvenir in her sight, and for a long time afterward she was angry with him, calling him the murderer of her friend. He felt this exile profoundly: he was constantly stealing about on tiptoe in the room adjoining that in which my mother was, and gave himself up to a sort of perturbed and dastardly melancholy, shuddering and whispering: “Imme-jutly!”

In the church, and during the funeral procession, Slétkin seemed to me to have completely recovered his spirits. He issued orders and bustled about as of yore, and watched greedily, that not a single superfluous kopék should be squandered, although, as a matter of fact, the affair did not concern his own pocket. Maxímka, in a

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new short jacket, also provided by my mother, emitted in the choir such tenor notes, that no one could, of course, cherish any doubt as to the sincerity of his attachment to the deceased! Both sisters were in mourning, as was proper,—but appeared to be more abashed than afflicted,—especially Evlámpiya. Anna assumed a subdued and wan aspect, but did not force herself to shed tears, and merely kept passing her thin, handsome hand over her hair and cheeks. Evlámpiya was absorbed in thought. The general, irrevocable avoidance and condemnation which I had observed on the day of Kharlóff's death, I thought I now descried in the countenances of all who were present in the church, in all their movements, in their glances,—but still more in a staid and unsympathetic manner. It seemed as though all these people knew that the sin into which the Kharlóff family had fallen—that great sin—had now come under the jurisdiction of the one Righteous Judge, and that, consequently, there was no longer anything for them to worry about or feel indignant over. They prayed assiduously for the soul of the deceased, whom they had not particularly loved, and had even feared, during his lifetime. Death had come so very suddenly.

“He might at least have had the comfort of dying from drink,” said one peasant to another, on the church porch.

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“A man can get drunk without drinking,”—replied the latter. “What things do happen!”

“They wronged him,”—the first peasant repeated the decisive word.

“They wronged him,”—others said after him.

“But surely, the deceased used to oppress you himself, did n't he?”—I asked of a peasant whom I recognised as one of Kharlóff's.

“He was the master, of course,”—replied the peasant:—“nevertheless . . . they wronged him!”

At the grave, Evlámpiya stood as though bewildered. Musing, . . . painful musing, tormented her. I noticed that she treated Slétkin, who spoke to her several times, as she had treated Zhitkóff—and much worse.

A few days later, a rumour became current in our neighbourhood, that Evlámpiya Martýnovna Kharlóff had left the paternal home forever, abandoning to her sister and her brother-in-law all the property which had fallen to her, and taking with her only a few hundred rubles. . . . “That Anna has, evidently, bought her freedom!”—remarked my mother:—“only, thou and I have unskilful hands!”—she added, addressing Zhitkóff, with whom she was playing piquet—he had superseded Souvenir with her. Zhitkóff cast a dejected glance at his

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hairy paws. . . “ They certainly are unskilful ! ”
he seemed to be saying to himself. . . .

Soon after this, my mother and I removed our residence to Moscow,—and many years elapsed before I chanced to see the two daughters of Martýn Petróvitch again.

XXX

BUT see them I did. I encountered Anna Mar-týnovna in the most commonplace fashion. While visiting our country-place, where I had not been for fifteen years, after the death of my mother, I received an invitation from the arbitrator—(at that time, all over Russia, the delimitation of the alternating strips of land belonging to proprietors and peasants was proceeding with a slowness which has not been forgotten to this day)—an invitation to come for consultation with the other owners of our country-side, to the estate of widow Anna Slétkin. The information that my mother's "dirty little Jew," with his little eyes like dried prunes, was no longer in the land of the living, did not cause me the slightest grief, I admit; but I thought it would be interesting to have a look at his widow. She had the reputation, in our parts, of being a capital manager. And it was true: her estate and home-farm, and even her house—(I cast an involuntary glance at the roof; it was of iron),—all proved to be in superlative order, everything was accurately, neatly kept, and where it was necessary, things were painted—as though they had

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belonged to a German woman. Anna Martýnovna herself had, of course, grown older; but that peculiar gaunt and, as it were, malicious charm, which had formerly excited me, had not entirely left her. She was dressed in country fashion, but elegantly. She received us—not cordially,—that word did not suit her,—but courteously, and, on seeing me, the witness of that dreadful episode, she did not move a muscle. Not a syllable did she utter about my mother, nor about her father or her sister, nor even her husband, any more than if they had never existed.¹

She had two daughters, both very pretty, well-built girls, with sweet little faces, and a merry, caressing look in their black eyes; she had also a son, who took somewhat after his father, but he also was a very fine little boy. During the progress of the discussion between the proprietors, Anna Martýnovna bore herself calmly, with dignity, displaying neither special stubbornness nor special covetousness. But no one understood his advantages any better than she did hers, and no one understood how to set forth more convincingly and to defend all her rights. All the “laws which were applicable,” even the ministerial circulars, were well known to her; she said little, and that in a quiet voice, but every word hit the mark. It ended by our expressing our

¹ Russian: “Exactly as though she had her mouth full of water.”—TRANSLATOR.

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assent to all her demands, and making such concessions, that there was nothing left for us to do but wonder at them. On the way home, some of the well-born landed proprietors even cursed themselves roundly; all groaned and shook their heads.

“What a clever woman?”—said one.

“A crafty rogue!”—interposed a second and less delicate proprietor:—“The bed is soft in the making, but hard to sleep on!”

“Yes, and a miser, into the bargain!”—added a third:—“Would it have hurt her to give us a glass of vódka and a bit of caviár?”

“What do you expect from her?”—chimed in rashly a proprietor who had hitherto held his peace;—“who does not know that she poisoned her husband?”

To my amazement, no one considered it necessary to refute this frightful accusation, which, assuredly, had no foundation! This surprised me the more, because, despite the objurgatory expressions which I have quoted, all felt respect for Anna Martýnovna, not even excepting the indelicate proprietor. The arbitrator even waxed pathetic.

“Put her on a throne,”—he exclaimed,—“and she’d be a regular Semiramis or Katherine II! The obedience of her peasants is exemplary. . . The way she has reared her children is exemplary! What a head! What a brain!”

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Leaving Semiramis and Katherine II out of the question,—there was no doubt that Anna Martýnovna led a very happy life. The woman herself, her family, her whole surroundings, fairly reeked with inward and outward contentment, with the agreeable tranquillity of spiritual well-being. To what degree she was deserving of that happiness . . . is another question. However, one puts such questions only in youth. Everything in the world, both good and bad, is bestowed upon a man, not in accordance with his merits, but as the result of some unknown but logical laws, which I will not even take it upon myself to indicate, although it sometimes seems to me that I dimly discern them.

XXXI

I INQUIRED of the arbitrator concerning Evlámpiya Martýnovna—and learned that as soon as she had left her home she had vanished without a trace—and probably had long since “flown up on high.”

That was the way our arbitrator put it but I am convinced that I have *seen* Evlámpiya, that I have met her. And this is how it came about.

About four years after my meeting with Anna Martýnovna, I settled down for the summer at Múriño, a small village near Petersburg, well known to summer-villa residents of moderate means. The hunting was not bad around Múriño, at that epoch,—and I went out with my gun nearly every day. I had a comrade, a certain Vikúloff, a member of the petty burgher class—a good-natured and far from stupid young fellow,—but, as he was wont to say of himself, a man of completely “lost” conduct.

Where and what had not that man been! Nothing could astonish him, he knew everything,—but he loved nothing except hunting—and liquor. Well, one day he and I were return-

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ing to Múriño, and we had to pass a certain house, which stood at the intersection of two roads, and was enclosed in a tall, close paling-fence. It was not the first time I had seen this house, and on every occasion it had aroused my curiosity; there was something mysterious, fast-locked, grimly-dumb, something which reminded the beholder of a prison or a hospital, about it. All that could be seen from the road was a steep roof, painted in a dark hue. In all the fence there was but one gate, and that appeared to be hermetically fastened; no sound was ever audible behind it. Nevertheless, you felt that some one certainly dwelt in that house; it did not, in the least, present the aspect of an abandoned dwelling. On the contrary, everything about it was so durable, and firm, and stout, that it could have stood a siege.

“What sort of a fortress is this?”—I asked my companion. “Do you know?”

Vikúloff gave a sly wink. “A remarkable edifice, is n’t it? The local chief of police gets a large income from it!”

“How so?”

“Why, because he does. You have heard, I suppose, about the dissenters called the Scourgers—those who live without priests?”

“Yes, I have heard of them.”

“Well, this is where their head-mother lives.”

“A woman?”

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“Yes—the mother; the Birthgiver of God, according to them.”¹

“What do you mean?”

“Just what I’m telling you. Such a stern woman she is, they say. . . . A regular female commander-in-chief! She rules over thousands! I’d just like to take all those Birthgivers of God, and give it to them. . . . But what’s the use of saying anything!”

He called up his Pegáshka, a remarkable dog, with a splendid scent, but without the slightest comprehension of pointing. Vikúloff was obliged to tie up its hind leg, to keep it from running about wildly.

His words sank into my memory. I used to go out of my way purposely, in order that I might pass the mysterious house. And lo, one day, suddenly, as I came opposite it,—wonderful to relate! the bolt thundered in the gate, the key squeaked in the lock,—then the gate itself opened gently—a powerful horse’s head, with braided forelock, under a pattern-painted shaft-arch, made its appearance, and out on the road, at a leisurely pace, rolled a small waggon of the sort in which drive little ladies of the fast set and the mistresses of merchants. On the leathern cushion of the waggon, nearest to me, sat a man

¹The Russian title of the Virgin is correctly translated thus, and all the peculiar Russian sects (almost without exception) have Madonnas—some even Christs.—TRANSLATOR.

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of about thirty years of age, of remarkably handsome and benevolent appearance, in a neat black long-coat, and with a black cap of military shape pulled low down upon his brow; he was driving, in a sedate way, the broad-backed horse, full-fed to bursting; and by the side of the man, on the other side of the waggon, sat a woman of lofty stature, straight as an arrow. A costly black shawl covered her head; she was dressed in a short velvet sacque, olive in hue, and a dark-blue merino petticoat; her white hands, staidly folded on her lap, supported each other. The waggon turned into the road to the left,—and the woman was brought within two paces of me; she turned her head slightly,—and I recognised Evlámpiya Kharlóff. I recognised her instantly,—I did not hesitate for a single moment,—and, indeed, hesitation was impossible: such eyes as she had,—and especially such a curve of the lips, arrogant and sensual,—I have never beheld in any one else. Her face had grown longer and thinner, her skin had darkened, here and there wrinkles were visible; but the expression of that face in particular had undergone a change! It is difficult to convey in words to what a degree it had become self-confident, stern, haughty! It was not the simple composure of authority,—but the utter permeation of authority, which every feature breathed forth; the careless glance which she dropped on me expressed a long-established,

A KING LEAR OF THE STEPPES

ingrained habit of encountering only adoring, unquestioning submission. This woman—evidently—lived surrounded not by admirers,—but by slaves: obviously, she had even forgotten the time when any command or even wish of hers had not been instantly fulfilled! I called her loudly by name and patronymic; she gave a barely perceptible start, cast another glance at me—not of alarm,—but of scornful indignation: as much as to say: “Who dares to disturb me?”—and barely opening her lips, she uttered an imperious word. The man who sat beside her gave a start, dealt a flourishing blow with the reins to the horse,—which moved on with a brisk, large trot,—and the waggon disappeared.

I have never met Evlámpiya since. How the daughter of Martýn Petróvitch came to be the Birthgiver of God to the Scourgers—I cannot even imagine; but who knows—perhaps she was the founder of a sect, which will be called—or is even now called, by her name,—“the Evlámpiyevshtchina”? All sorts of things come to pass.

And this is what I had to tell you about my “King Lear of the Steppe,” his family and his doings.

The narrator ceased speaking—and we chatted a while, then went our ways.

PHANTOMS

(1863)

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PHANTOMS

A FANTASY

One instant . . . and the magic tale is o'er—
And with the possible the soul is filled once more.

A. FET.¹

I

I COULD not get to sleep for a long time, and kept tossing incessantly from side to side. “May the devil take those table-tipping follies!”—I thought:—“they only upset the nerves.”—Drowsiness began to overpower me. . .

Suddenly it seemed to me as though a chord had twanged faintly and lugubriously in the room.

I raised my head. The moon was hanging low in the sky, and staring me straight in the eye. White as chalk its light lay on the floor. . . . The strange sound was clearly repeated.

I leaned on my elbow. A slight alarm nipped at my heart.—One minute passed, then another. . . . A cock crowed somewhere in the distance; still further away another answered.

I dropped my head on my pillow. “Just see

¹The pseudonym of Afanásy Afanásevitch Shénshin (1820–1892).—TRANSLATOR.

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to what one can bring one's self," I began my reflections again:—"my ears will begin to ring."

A little later I fell asleep—or it seemed to me that I did. I had a remarkable dream. It seemed to me as though I were lying in my bedroom, in my bed, but I was not asleep, and could not close my eyes. . . . I turned over. . . . The streak of moonlight on the floor softly began to rise up, to straighten itself, to become slightly rounded at the top. . . . Before me, transparent as mist, a white woman stood motionless.

"Who art thou?"—I asked with an effort.

The voice which replied was like the rustling of leaves.—"It is I . . . I . . . I . . . I have come for thee."

"For me? But who art thou?"

"Come by night to the corner of the forest, where the old oak stands. I shall be there."

I tried to get a good look at the features of the mysterious woman—and suddenly I gave an involuntary start: I felt a chill breath on me. And now I was no longer lying in my bed, but sitting on it—and there, where the spectre had seemed to stand, the moonlight lay in a long streak on the floor.

II

THE day passed after a fashion. I remember that I tried to read, to work . . . it came to no-

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thing. Night arrived. My heart beat violently within me, as though I were expecting something. I went to bed and turned my face to the wall.

“Why didst thou not come?”—an audible whisper rang out in the room.

I glanced round swiftly.

It was she again the mysterious phantom. Motionless eyes in a motionless face, and a gaze full of grief.

“Come!”—the whisper made itself heard again.

“I will come,”—I replied, with involuntary terror. The phantom quietly swayed forward, and became all mixed up, undulating lightly like smoke;—and the moonlight again lay white upon the polished floor.

III

I PASSED the day in a state of agitation. At supper I drank almost a whole bottle of wine, and started to go out on the porch; but returned, and flung myself on my bed. My blood was surging heavily through my veins.

Again a sound made itself heard. . . . I shuddered, but did not look round. Suddenly I felt some one clasp me in a close embrace from behind, and whisper in my ear: “Come, come, come!” Trembling with fright I groaned:

“I will come!”—and straightened myself up.

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The woman stood bending over me, close beside the head of my bed. She smiled faintly and vanished. But I had succeeded in scrutinising her face. It seemed to me that I had seen her before;—but where? when? I rose late and roamed about the fields all day long, approached the old oak-tree on the border of the forest, and made an attentive inspection of the surroundings.

Toward evening I seated myself at an open window in my study. The old housekeeper set a cup of tea before me—but I did not taste it. . . . I kept wondering and asking myself: “Am not I losing my mind?” The sun had only just set—and not only did the sky grow red, but the whole air suddenly became suffused with an almost unnatural crimson; the leaves and grass, as though covered with fresh varnish, did not stir; in their stony immobility, in the sharp brilliancy of their outlines, in that commingling of a strong glow and death-like tranquillity, there was something strange, enigmatical. A rather large grey bird flew up without any sound, and alighted on the very edge of the window. . . . I looked at it—and it looked at me askance with its round, dark eye. “I wonder if she did not send thee in order to remind me?”—I thought.

The bird immediately fluttered its soft wings, and flew away, as before, without any noise. I sat for a long time still at the window, but I no longer gave myself up to wonder: I seemed to

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have got into a charmed circle, and an irresistible though quiet power was drawing me on, as the onrush of the torrent draws the boat while still far away from the falls. At last I gave a start. The crimson had long since disappeared from the air, the hues had darkened, and the enchanted silence had ceased. A breeze was beginning to flutter about, the moon stood out with ever-increasing distinctness in the sky which was turning darkly blue,—and soon the leaves on the trees began to gleam silver and black in its cold rays. My old woman entered my study with a lighted candle, but the draught from the window blew on it and extinguished the flame. I could endure it no longer; I sprang to my feet, banged my cap down on my head, and set out for the corner of the forest, for the aged oak.

IV

MANY years before, this oak had been struck by lightning; its crest had been shattered and had withered away, but it still retained life enough for several centuries. As I began to draw near to it, a dark cloud floated across the moon: it was very dark under its wide-spreading boughs. At first I did not notice anything peculiar; but I glanced to one side—and my heart sank within me; a white figure was standing motionless beside

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a tall bush, between the oak-tree and the forest. My hair rose slightly on my head; but I summoned my courage, and advanced toward the forest.

Yes, it was she, my nocturnal visitor. As I approached her, the moon shone forth again. She seemed all woven of semi-transparent, milky vapour,—through her face I could see a branch softly waving in the wind,—only her hair and eyes shone dimly-black, and on one of the fingers of her clasped hands gleamed a narrow gold ring. I halted in front of her, and tried to speak; but my voice died in my breast, although I no longer felt any real terror. Her eyes were turned upon me; their gaze expressed neither grief nor joy, but a certain lifeless attention. I waited to see whether she would utter a word; but she stood motionless and dumb, and kept gazing at me with her deadly-intent look. Again I began to feel uneasy.

“I have come!”—I exclaimed at last with an effort. My voice had a dull, queer ring.

“I love thee,”—a whisper became audible.

“Thou lovest me!”—I repeated in amazement.

“Give thyself to me,”—rustled the voice again in reply to me.

“Give myself to thee! But thou art a phantom—thou hast no body.”—A strange sensation overpowered me.—“What art thou,—smoke, air, vapour? Give myself to thee! Answer me first—

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who art thou? Hast thou lived upon earth?
Whence hast thou revealed thyself?"

"Give thyself to me. I will do thee no harm.
Say only two words: 'Take me.'"

I looked at her. "What is that she is saying?"
I thought. "What is the meaning of all this?
And how will she take me? Shall I try the ex-
periment?"

"Well, very good,"—I uttered aloud, and
with unexpected force, as though some one had
given me a push from behind. "Take me!"

Before I had finished uttering these words, the
mysterious figure, with a sort of inward laugh,
which made her face quiver for an instant, swayed
forward, her arms separated and were out-
stretched. . . . I tried to spring aside; but I was
already in her power. She clasped me in her em-
brace, my body rose about fourteen inches from
the earth—and we both soared off, smoothly and
not too swiftly, over the wet, motionless grass.

V

At first my head reeled, and I involuntarily closed
my eyes. . . . A minute later, I opened them
again. We were floating on as before. But the
forest was no longer visible; beneath us lay out-
spread a level plain dotted with dark spots. With
terror I convinced myself that we had risen to a
fearful height.

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“ I am lost—I am in the power of Satan,” flashed through me like lightning. Up to that moment, the thought of obsession by an unclean power, of the possibility of damnation, had not entered my head. We continued to dash headlong onward, and seemed to be soaring ever higher and higher.

“ Whither art thou carrying me? ”—I moaned at last.

“ Wherever thou wishest,”—replied my fellow-traveller. She was sticking close to me all over; her face almost rested on my face. Nevertheless, I barely felt her touch.

“ Let me down to the earth; I feel giddy at this height.”

“ Good; only shut your eyes and do not take breath.”

I obeyed—and immediately felt myself falling, like a stone which has been hurled. . . . the wind whistled through my hair. When I came to myself, we were again floating close above the ground, so that we caught in the tips of the tall plants.

“ Set me on my feet,”—I began.—“ What pleasure is there in flying? I am not a bird.”

“ I thought it would be agreeable to you. We have no other occupation.”

“ You have not? But who are you? ”

There was no answer.

“ Thou dost not dare to tell me that? ”

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A plaintive sound, like that which had awakened me on the first night, trembled on my ear. In the meantime, we continued to move almost imperceptibly through the night air.

“Let me go!”—I said. My companion bent backward, and I found myself on my feet. She came to a halt in front of me and again clasped her hands. I recovered my equanimity and looked her in the face: as before, it expressed submissive grief.

“Where are we?”—I queried. I did not recognise my surroundings.

“Far from thy home, but thou mayest be there in one moment.”

“In what manner? Am I to trust myself to thee again?”

“I have not done and will not do thee any harm. We shall float together until dawn, that is all. I can carry thee whithersoever thou wishest—to all the ends of the earth. Give thyself to me; say again: ‘Take me!’”

“Well, then . . . take me!”

Again she fell upon my neck, again my feet left the earth—and away we flew.

VI

“WHITHER?”—she asked me.

“Straight ahead, ever straight ahead.”

“But the forest lies in that direction.”

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“ Let us rise above the forest—only, very gently.”

We soared aloft, like wood-snipe flying upon a birch-tree, and again floated on in a straight line. Instead of grass, the crests of the trees flitted past under our feet. It was wonderful to see the forest from above, its bristling spine all illuminated by the moon. It seemed some sort of a vast slumbering wild beast, and accompanied us with a broad, incessant rustling, resembling an unintelligible growl. Here and there we came across small glades; a dentated strip of shadow stood out finely in black on one side of them. . . . Now and then a hare cried pitifully below; up above, an owl whistled, also in plaintive wise; there was an odour of mushrooms, of buds, of lovage abroad in the air; the moonlight fairly poured in a flood in all directions—coldly and severely; the myriad stars glittered directly above our heads.

And now the forest was left behind; athwart the plain stretched a strip of mist; a river flowed there. We floated along one of its shores, above the bushes, rendered heavy and immovable by humidity. The waves on the river now glistened with a blue gleam, now rolled on darkly and as though they were vicious. In places a thin vapour moved strangely above it, and the cups of the water-lilies shone out with the virginal and sumptuous whiteness of all their unfolded petals, as

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though they knew that they were inaccessible. I took it into my head to pluck one of them—and lo! I immediately found myself directly over the smooth surface of the river. . . . The dampness struck me unpleasantly in the face as soon as I had broken the strong stem of a large blossom. We began to flit from shore to shore, like the sand-pipers, which we kept waking, and which we pursued. More than once it happened that we flew down upon a little family of wild ducks, disposed in a circle on a clear spot among the reeds—but they did not stir; perhaps one of them would hastily take its head out from under its wing, look and look, and then anxiously thrust its bill back again into its downy feathers; or another would quack faintly, its whole body quivering the while. We frightened one heron; it rose out of a willow bush, with dangling legs, and flapped its wings with awkward vigour; it really did seem to me then to resemble a German. Not a fish splashed anywhere—they, too, were asleep. I began to get used to the sensation of flying, and even found a certain pleasure in it; any one who has chanced to fly in his sleep will understand me. I took to watching with great attention the strange being, thanks to whom such improbable events were happening to me.

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VII

SHE was a woman with a small, non-Russian face. Greyish-white, semi-transparent, with barely-defined shadows, it reminded one of the figures on an alabaster vase illuminated from within—and again it seemed to be familiar to me.

“ May I talk with thee? ”—I said.

“ Speak.”

“ I see that thou hast a ring on thy finger; so thou hast dwelt on earth—thou hast been married? ”

I paused. . . . There was no reply.

“ What is thy name—or what was thy name, at least? ”

“ Call me Ellis.”

“ Ellis! That is an English name? Art thou an English woman? Thou hast known me before? ”

“ No.”

“ Why didst thou reveal thyself to me in particular? ”

“ I love thee.”

“ And art thou content? ”

“ Yes; we are floating, we are circling, you and I, through the pure air.”

“ Ellis! ”—I said suddenly,—“ perchance thou art a guilty, a damned soul? ”

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My companion's head dropped.—“I do not understand thee,”—she whispered.

“I adjure thee, in God's name” I was beginning.

“What art thou saying?”—she said with surprise.—“I do not understand.”—It seemed to me that the arm which lay about my waist like a girdle, was moving gently. . . .

“Fear not,”—said Ellis,—“fear not, my dear one!”—Her face turned and moved closer to my face. . . . I felt on my lips a strange sensation, like the touch of a soft, delicate sting. . . . Leeches which are not vicious take hold in that way.

VIII

I GLANCED downward. We had again managed to rise to a very considerable height. We were flying over a county capital with which I was unfamiliar, situated on the slope of a broad hill. The churches reared themselves amid a dark mass of wooden roofs and fruit orchards; a long bridge lowered black at a curve in the river; everything was silent, overwhelmed with sleep. The very domes and crosses seemed to glitter with a dumb gleam; dumbly the tall poles of the wells reared themselves aloft beside the round clumps of willows; the whitish highway dumbly plunged, like a narrow dart, into one end of the town—and

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dumbly emerged from the other side upon the gloomy expanse of the monotonous fields.

“What town is that?”—I queried.

“***off, in the *** Government.”

“***off, in the *** Government?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I am very far from home!”

“For us distance is nothing.”

“Really?” Sudden boldness flashed up within me.—“Then carry me to South America!”

“I cannot go to America. It is day there now.”

“While you and I are night birds? Well, somewhere or other, only as far off as possible.”

“Close thine eyes and do not draw breath,”—replied Ellis,—and we dashed headlong onward with the swiftness of the whirlwind. The wind rushed into my ears with a crashing noise.

We halted, but the noise did not cease. On the contrary, it had become converted into a sort of menacing roar, a thunderous din. . . .

“Now thou mayest open thine eyes,”—said Ellis.

IX

I OBEYED. . . . My God, where was I?

Overhead were heavy, smoky clouds; they were crowding together, and flying like a herd of vicious monsters and yonder, below, was another monster: the raging, just that,—raging

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sea. . . . The white foam was glistening convulsively, and seething in it in mounds,—and rearing aloft in shaggy billows, it was pounding with harsh thunder on the pitch-black cliffs. The howling of the storm, the icy breath of the heaving deep, the heavy dashing of the surf, in which, at times, one seemed to hear something resembling howls, the distant firing of cannon, the ringing of bells, the torturing shriek, and the grinding of the pebbles on the shore, the sudden scream of an invisible gull, on the troubled horizon the reeling remains of a ship—everywhere death, death and horror. . . . My head began to reel, and swooning, I again closed my eyes. . . .

“What is this? Where are we?”

“On the southern shore of the Isle of Wight, in front of the Blackgang Cliff, where ships are so frequently dashed to pieces,”—said Ellis, this time with peculiar distinctness and, as it seemed to me, not without malicious joy. . . .

“Take me away, away from here. . . . home! Home!”

I shrank together utterly, I clutched my face in my hands. . . . I felt that we were floating still more swiftly than before; the wind no longer howled nor whistled—it shrieked through my hair, in my garments. . . . I gasped for breath. . . .

“Now stand on thy feet,”—rang out the voice of Ellis.

I tried to control myself, my consciousness. . . .

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I felt the ground under foot, but heard nothing, as though everything round about had died . . . only the blood beat irregularly in my temples, and my head still reeled with a faint, internal sound. I straightened myself up and opened my eyes.

X

WE were on the dam of my pond. Directly in front of me, athwart the pointed leaves of the willows, its broad expanse was visible with filaments of feathery mist clinging to it here and there. On the right a field of rye glinted dully; on the left the trees of the garden reared themselves aloft, long, motionless, and damp in appearance. . . . Morning had not yet breathed upon them. Across the sky two or three clouds were stretched, obliquely, like wreaths of smoke; they seemed yellowish, and the first faint reflection of the dawn fell on them, God knows whence: the eye could not yet detect on the whitening horizon the spot from which it must be borrowed. The stars had disappeared; nothing was stirring yet, although everything was already awake in the enchanted stillness of early morning.

“The morning! Yonder is the morning!”—exclaimed Ellis in my very ear. . . . “Farewell! until to-morrow!”

I turned. . . . Lightly quitting the ground,

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she floated past,—and suddenly raised both arms above her head. The head, and the arms, and the shoulders instantly flushed with warm, corporeal light; in the dark eyes quivered living sparks; a smile of mysterious delicacy flitted across the reddening lips. . . . A charming woman suddenly made her appearance before me. . . . But she instantly threw herself backward, as though falling into a swoon, and melted away like vapour.

I stood motionless.

When I came to my senses and looked about me, it seemed to me that the corporeal, pale-rosy flush which had coursed over the figure of my phantom had not yet vanished and, dispersed through the air, was flooding me on all sides. . . . It was the dawn flushing red. I suddenly became conscious of extreme fatigue and wended my way homeward. As I passed the poultry-yard I heard the first matutinal quacking of the goslings (no bird wakes earlier than they); along the roof, at the tip of each projecting stake, perched a daw; and all of them were diligently and silently pluming themselves, distinctly outlined against the milky sky. From time to time, they all rose into the air simultaneously and, after flying about a little while, alighted again in a row, without croaking. . . . From the forest near at hand was wafted, twice, the hoarsely-fresh cry of the black-cock, which had just flown up from the dewy grass all overgrown with

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berries. . . . With a light shiver all over my body, I gained my bed and speedily sank into a sound sleep.

XI

ON the following night, when I began to draw near to the ancient oak, Ellis floated to meet me, as to a friend. I was not afraid of her as on the preceding day; I was almost delighted to see her. I did not even attempt to understand what had happened with me: all I cared about was to fly as far as possible, through curious places.

Again Ellis's arm was wound about me—and again we darted off.

“Let us go to Italy,”—I whispered in her ear.

“Whithersoever thou wilt, my dear one,”—she replied solemnly and softly—and softly and solemnly she turned her face toward me. It seemed to me to be less transparent than on the day before; more feminine and more dignified; it reminded me of that beautiful creature who had flashed before my vision in the dawn before our parting.

“To-night is a great night,”—went on Ellis.—“It rarely comes,—only when seven times thirteen”

At this point I lost several words.

“Now that can be seen which is invisible at other times.”

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“ Ellis! ”—I pleaded,—“ who art thou? Tell me! ”

She silently raised her long, white hand.

In the dark heaven, at the point to which her finger pointed, in the midst of tiny stars, a comet gleamed in a reddish streak.

“ How am I to understand thee? ”—I began.—“ Dost thou mean that thou soarest like that comet, between the planets and the sun,—that thou soarest among men . . . and how? ”

But Ellis's hand was suddenly clapped over my eyes. . . . Something akin to the grey mist from a damp valley enveloped me. . . .

“ To Italy! to Italy! ”—I heard her whisper.—“ This night is a great night! ”

XII

THE mist disappeared from before my eyes, and I beheld beneath me an interminable plain. But I was able to understand, from the very touch of the warm, soft air on my cheeks, that I was not in Russia; and neither did that plain resemble our Russian plains. It was a vast, dim expanse, apparently devoid of grass and empty; here and there, throughout its entire length, gleamed small stagnant pools, like tiny fragments of a mirror; far away the inaudible, motionless sea was visible. Great stars glittered in the intervals between the large, beautiful clouds; a thousand-voiced, un-

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ceasing, yet not clamorous trill, arose in all directions; and wonderful was that penetrating and dreamy rumble, that voice of the nocturnal desert. . . .

“The Pontine Marshes,”—said Ellis.—“Dost thou hear the frogs? Dost thou discern the odour of sulphur?”

“The Pontine Marshes” I repeated, and a sensation of majestic sadness took possession of me.—“But why hast thou brought me hither, to this mournful, deserted region? Let us rather fly to Rome.”

“Rome is close at hand,”—replied Ellis. . . .
“Prepare thyself!”

We descended and dashed along the ancient Roman road. A buffalo slowly raised from the ooze his shaggy, monstrous head with short whorls of bristles between the crooked horns which curved backward. He rolled the whites of his eyes sideways, and snorted heavily with his wet nostrils, as though he scented us.

“Rome, Rome is near,” whispered Ellis.—“Look, look ahead.”

I raised my eyes.

What was that which rose darkly against the night sky? The lofty arches of a huge bridge? What river did it span? Why was it rent in places? No, it was not a bridge, it was an ancient aqueduct. Round about lay the sacred land of Campania, and yonder, far away, were the Alban

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Hills; and their crests and the great back of the ancient aqueduct gleamed faintly in the rays of the moon which had just risen. . . .

We suddenly soared upward and hung suspended in the air before an isolated ruin. No one could have told what it had formerly been: a tomb, a palace, a tower. . . . Black ivy enveloped the whole of it with its deadly power—and below, a half-ruined arch yawned like jaws. A heavy, cellar-like odour was wafted in my face from that heap of small, closely-packed stones, from which the granite facing of the wall had long since fallen off.

“Here,”—said Ellis, raising her hand;—“here!—Utter loudly, thrice in succession, the name of a great Roman.”

“But what will happen?”

“Thou shalt see.”

I reflected.—“Divus Cajus Julius Cæsar!”—I suddenly exclaimed:—“Divus Cajus Julius Cæsar!” I repeated slowly:—“Cæsar!”

XIII

BEFORE the last echoes of my voice had had time to die away I heard. . . .

It is difficult to say precisely what. At first I heard a confused burst of trumpet notes and of hand-clapping, barely perceptible to the ear, but endlessly repeated. It seemed as though some-

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where, immensely far away, in some bottomless abyss, an innumerable throng were suddenly beginning to stir, and rise, rise, undulating and exchanging barely audible shouts, as though athwart a dream, athwart an oppressive dream many ages in duration. Then the air began to blow and darken above the ruin. . . . Shadows began to flit past me, myriads of shadows, millions of outlines, now rounded like helmets, now long like spears; the rays of the moon were shivered into many bluish sparks on these spears and helmets—and the whole of that army, that throng, moved nearer and nearer, grew greater, surged mightily. . . . An indescribable effort, a tense effort sufficient to lift the whole world, could be felt in it; but not a single figure stood out distinctly. . . . And suddenly it seemed to me as though a tremor ran through it all, as though certain huge billows had surged back and parted. . . . “Cæsar! Cæsar venit!”—rustled voices like the leaves of the forest upon which a whirlwind has suddenly descended a dull shock surged along, and a pallid, stern head in a laurel wreath, with drooping lids,—the head of the emperor,—began slowly to move forward from the ruin. . . .

There are no words of mortal tongue to express the dread which gripped my heart. It seemed to me that if that head were to open its eyes, to unseal its lips, I should fall dead on the

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spot.—“ Ellis!”—I moaned:—“ I do not wish it, I cannot, I do not want Rome, coarse, menacing Rome. . . . Away, away from here!”—“ Pusillanimous!”—she whispered, and we dashed headlong away. Once more I heard behind me the iron shout of the legions, like thunder now then all grew dark.

XIV

“ Look about thee,”—said Ellis to me,—“ and calm thyself.”

I obeyed; and I remember that my first impression was so sweet that I could only heave a sigh. Something smoky-blue, silvery-soft encompassed me on every side. At first I could distinguish nothing: that azure splendour blinded me. But lo! little by little the outlines of beautiful mountains and forests began to start forth before me; a lake lay outspread before me, with stars quivering in its depths, and the caressing murmur of the surge. The fragrance of orange-blossoms enveloped me in a billow, and along with it, also in a billow, as it were, the strong, pure tones of a youthful feminine voice reached my ears. That fragrance, those sounds, fairly drew me downward, and I began to descend to descend to a luxurious marble palace, which gleamed white and in friendlywise amid a cypress grove, The sounds were welling forth from its wide-

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open windows; the waves of the lake, dotted with a dust of flowers, plashed against its walls—and directly opposite, all clothed in the dark-green of orange-trees and laurels, all bathed in radiant mist, all studded with statues, slender columns, and porticoes of temples, a circular island rose from the bosom of the lake. . . .

“Isola Bella!”—said Ellis. . . . “Lago Maggiore. . . .”

I articulated only: “Ah!” and continued to descend. The feminine voice rang out ever more loudly, ever more clearly in the palace; I was irresistibly drawn to it. . . . I wanted to gaze into the face of the songstress who was warbling such strains on such a night. We halted in front of a window.

In the middle of a room decorated in Pompeian style, and more resembling an ancient temple than the newest sort of a hall, surrounded by Greek statues, Etruscan vases, rare plants, precious stuffs, and lighted from above by the soft rays of two lamps enclosed in crystal globes, sat a young woman at the piano. With her head thrown slightly backward, and her eyes half-closed she was singing an Italian aria; she was singing and smiling, and, at the same time, her features were expressive of seriousness, even of severity a sign of complete enjoyment. She smiled and the Faun of Praxiteles, indolent, as young as she, effeminate, sensual

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also, seemed to be smiling at her from one corner, from behind the branches of an oleander, athwart the thin smoke which rose from a bronze perfuming-pan upon an antique tripod. The beauty was alone. Enchanted by the sounds, the beauty, the glitter and perfume of the night, shaken to the very depths of my soul by the spectacle of that young, calm, brilliant happiness, I totally forgot my companion, forgot in what strange wise I had become a witness of that life which was so distant, so remote, so strange to me—and I wanted to step through the window, I wanted to enter into conversation. . . .

My whole body quivered from a forcible blow—as though I had touched a Leyden jar. I glanced round. . . . Ellis's face was gloomy and menacing, despite all its transparency; wrath glowed dully in her eyes, which had suddenly been opened to their full extent. . . .

“Away!”—she whispered furiously; and again there was the whirlwind and gloom and dizziness. . . . Only this time it was not the shout of the legions, but the voice of the songstress, broken short off on a high note, which lingered in my ears. . . .

We halted. A high note, that same high note, continued to ring out and did not cease to resound, although I felt an entirely different air, a different odour. . . . Invigorating freshness breathed upon me, as from a great river, and

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there was the scent of hay, of smoke, of hemp. The long-drawn note was followed by a second, then by a third, but with such an indubitable shading, such a familiar turn characteristic of my native land, that I immediately said to myself: "That is a Russian man singing a Russian song,"—and at that moment everything round about me grew clear.

XV

WE found ourselves above a flat shore. On the left, stretched out, losing themselves in infinity, lay mowed meadows, dotted with huge haystacks; on the right, to an equally unlimited extent, spread out the level expanse of a vast river abounding in water. Not far from the shores huge, dark barges were rocking quietly at anchor, slightly moving the tips of their masts like index-fingers. From one of these barges were wafted to me the sounds of a flowing voice, and on it burned lights, quivering and rocking in the water with their long, red reflections. Here and there both on the river and in the fields twinkled other lights—the eye was unable to discern whether near at hand or far away; now they blinked, again they stood forth in large, radiant spots; numberless katydids shrilled ceaselessly—quite equal to the frogs on the Pontine Marshes; and beneath the cloudless, but low-hanging, dark

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sky invisible birds uttered their calls from time to time.

“Are we in Russia?”—I asked Ellis.

“This is the Volga,”—she replied.

We soared along the bank.—“Why hast thou torn me thence, from that beautiful land?”—I began.—“Wert thou envious, pray? Did not jealousy awake in thee?”

Ellis's lips quivered faintly, and a menace again flashed in her eyes. . . . But her whole face immediately grew rigid once more.

“I want to go home,”—I said.

“Wait, wait,”—replied Ellis.—“To-night is a great night. It will not soon return. Thou mayest be the spectator. . . . Wait.”

And suddenly we flew across the Volga, in a slanting direction, close above the water, low and abruptly, like swallows before a storm. The broad waves gurgled heavily below us, the keen river wind beat us with its cold, strong wing the lofty right shore soon began to rise before us in the semi-darkness. Steep hills with great clefts made their appearance. We approached them.

“Shout, ‘Tow-path men to the prow!’” Ellis whispered to me.

I remembered the dread which I had experienced at the appearance of the Roman spectres, I felt fatigue and a certain strange anguish, as though my heart were melting within me—and

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I did not wish to utter the fateful words. I knew beforehand that in reply to them something monstrous would appear, like Freischütz, in the Volga Valley.—But my lips parted against my will, and I shouted in a weak, strained voice: “Tow-path men to the prow!”¹

XVI

AT first all remained dumb, as before the Roman ruin.—But suddenly close to my very ear, a coarse bark-hauler’s² laugh rang out, and something fell with a bang into the water and began to choke. . . . I glanced round: no one was anywhere to be seen, but an echo rebounded from the shore, and instantly and from all quarters a deafening uproar arose. What was there not in that chaos of sounds! Shouts and whines; violent swearing and laughter, laughter most of all; strokes of oars and of axes; the crash as of breaking in doors and chests; the creaking of rigging and wheels, and the galloping of horses; the sound of alarm-bells and the clanking of chains; the rumble and roar of conflagrations, drunken songs and interchange of hurried speech; inconsolable, despairing weeping, and imperious ex-

¹ According to tradition, this was the war-cry of the Volga brigands when they captured vessels. —TRANSLATOR.

² Before the introduction of steamers on the Volga, all vessels were hauled up-stream from Ástrakhan to Nízhi-Nóvgorod—or even further—by men walking along the tow-paths on the shore. —TRANSLATOR.

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clamations; the death-rattle, and audacious whistling; the yelling and trampling of the dance. . . . “Beat! Hang! Drown! Cut his throat! That’s fine! That’s fine! So! Show no pity!”—were distinctly audible; even the broken breathing of panting men was audible;—and nevertheless, everywhere round about, as far as the eye could see, nothing came into sight, nothing underwent any change. The river flowed past mysteriously, almost morosely; the very shore seemed more deserted and wild than before—that was all.

I turned to Ellis, but she laid her finger on her lips. . . .

“Stepán Timoféitch! Stepán Timoféitch is coming!”—arose a rustling round about;—“our dear little father is coming, our atamán, our nourisher!”—As before, I saw no one, but it suddenly seemed to me as though a huge body were moving straight at me. . . . “Frólka! Where art thou, dog?”—thundered a terrible voice.—“Set fire on all sides—and put them under the axe, my little White-hands!”¹

The heat of a flame close at hand breathed upon me, and the bitter reek of smoke,—and at the same moment something warm, like blood, spattered upon my face and hands. . . . Wild laughter roared round about. . . .

¹The bandit chief, generally known in history as Sténka Rázin and Frol or Frólka, his younger brother and inseparable companion, captured and laid waste great stretches of the Volga. Their memory still lives in epic ballads and among the peasants.—TRANSLATOR.

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I lost consciousness, and when I recovered my senses, Ellis and I were slipping along the familiar verge of my forest, straight toward the old oak-tree. . . .

“Seest thou yonder path?”—Ellis said to me,—“yonder where the moon is shining dimly and two small birch-trees are bending over? . . . Dost thou wish to go thither?”

But I felt so shattered and exhausted, that in reply I could say only:—“Home. . . . home!”

“Thou art at home,”—answered Ellis.

In fact, I was standing in front of the door of my house—alone. Ellis had vanished. The watch-dog was about to approach, glared suspiciously at me—and fled howling.

With difficulty I dragged myself to my bed, and fell asleep, without undressing.

XVII

ON the following morning I had a headache, and could hardly move my feet; but I paid no attention to my bodily indisposition. I was gnawed by penitence, stifled with vexation.

I was extremely displeased with myself. “Pussillanimous!”—I kept repeating incessantly:—“Yes—Ellis is right. What did I fear? How could I fail to profit by the opportunity? I might have beheld Cæsar himself—and I swooned with terror, I squealed, I turned away,

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like a child from the rod. Well, Rázin—that is quite a different matter. In my quality of nobleman and land-owner However, what was the actual cause of my fright in that case also? Pusillanimous, pusillanimous!”

“But is it not in a dream that I am seeing all this?”—I asked myself at last. I called my housekeeper.

“Márfa, at what time did I go to bed last night?—dost thou remember?”

“Why, who knows, my benefactor. . . . Late, I think. In the gloaming thou didst leave the house; and thou wert clattering thy heels in thy bedroom after midnight. Just before dawn—yes. And this is the third day it has been like that. Evidently, something has happened to worry thee.”

“Ehe-he!”—I thought.—“There can be no doubt as to the flying.”—“Well, and how do I look to-day?”—I added aloud.

“How dost thou look? Let me look at thee. Thy cheeks are somewhat sunken. And thou art pale, my nourisher; there now, there is n’t a drop of blood in thy face.”

I winced slightly. . . . I dismissed Márfa.

“If thou goest on like this thou wilt surely die or lose thy mind,”—I reasoned, as I sat meditating by the window. “I must abandon all this. It is dangerous. And, here now, how strangely my heart is beating! And when I am flying, it

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constantly seems to me as though some one were sucking it, or as though something were seeping out of it—like the spring sap from a birch, if you thrust an axe into it. And yet I feel sorry. And there is Ellis. . . . She is playing with me as a cat plays with a mouse but it is unlikely that she wishes any evil to me. I 'll surrender myself to her for the last time—I 'll gaze my fill—and then. . . . But what if she is drinking my blood? This is terrible. Moreover, such swift motion cannot fail to be injurious; they say that on the railways in England it is forbidden to go more than one hundred and twenty versts an hour. . . .”

Thus did I meditate—but at ten o'clock in the evening I was already standing before the aged oak.

XVIII

THE night was cold, dim, and grey; there was a scent of rain in the air. To my surprise, I found no one under the oak; I made the circuit of it several times, walked as far as the verge of the forest, and returned, staring assiduously into the darkness. . . . Everything was deserted. I waited a while, then uttered Ellis's name several times in succession, with ever-increasing loudness but she did not show herself. I was seized with sadness, almost with anguish; my for-

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mer apprehensions vanished; I could not reconcile myself to the thought that my companion would never return to me.

“Ellis! Ellis! Do come! Wilt thou not come?”—I shouted for the last time.

A crow which had been awakened by my voice suddenly began to fidget about in the crest of a neighbouring tree, and becoming entangled in the branches, set to flapping its wings. . . . But Ellis did not appear.

With drooping head I wended my way homeward. Ahead of me the willows on the dam stood out in a black mass, and the light in the window of my room twinkled among the apple-trees of the garden,—twinkled and vanished, like the eye of a man watching me,—when suddenly the faint swish of swiftly-cloven air became audible behind me, and something with one swoop embraced and seized hold of me from below upward: that is the way a buzzard seizes, “smashes” a quail. . . . It was Ellis who had flown upon me. I felt her cheek on my cheek, the girdle of her arms around my body—and like a keen chill the whisper of her mouth pierced my ear: “Here am I!” I was simultaneously alarmed and delighted. . . . We floated off not far above the ground.

“Thou didst not mean to come to-day?”—I said.

“But thou didst languish for me! Thou lovest me? Oh, thou art mine!”

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Ellis's last words disconcerted me. . . . I did not know what to say.

"I was detained,"—she went on;—"they set a guard over me."

"Who could detain thee?"

"Whither dost thou wish to go?"—queried Ellis, not replying to my question, as usual.

"Carry me to Italy, to that lake—dost thou remember?"

Ellis drew back a little and shook her head in negation. Then for the first time did I perceive that she had ceased to be transparent. And her face seemed to have grown rosy; a crimson flush spread over its cloudy whiteness. I looked into her eyes . . . and dread came upon me: in those eyes something was moving—with the slow, unceasing and vicious motion of a serpent which has coiled itself and, congealed in that position, is beginning to grow warm in the sunshine.

"Ellis!"—I exclaimed:—"Who art thou? Tell me, who art thou?"

Ellis merely shrugged her shoulders.

I was vexed. . . . I wanted to punish her;—and suddenly it occurred to me to order her to carry me to Paris. "That's where thou wilt have occasion for jealousy,"—I thought.—"Ellis!"—I said aloud;—"thou art not afraid of large cities, Paris, for example, art thou?"

"No."

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“No? Not even of those places where it is bright, as on the boulevards?”

“That is not the light of day.”

“Very good; then carry me immediately to the Boulevard des Italiens.”

Ellis threw over my head the end of her long, flowing sleeve. I was immediately enveloped in a sort of white mist, with a soporific scent of poppies. Everything disappeared instantaneously; all light, all sound—and almost consciousness itself. The sensation of life alone remained—and it was not unpleasant. Suddenly the mist vanished; Ellis had removed her sleeve from my head, and I beheld before me a huge mass of buildings crowded together, brilliancy, movement, din. . . . I beheld Paris.

XIX

I HAD been in Paris before, and therefore immediately recognised the spot to which Ellis had shaped her course. It was the garden of the Tuileries, with its aged chestnut-trees, iron fences, fortress-moat, and beast-like Zouaves on guard. Passing the palace, passing the Church of St. Roch, on whose steps the first Napoleon shed French blood for the first time, we halted high above the Boulevard des Italiens, where the third Napoleon did the same thing, and with equal success. Crowds of people—young and old

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dandies, workmen, women in sumptuous attire—were thronging the sidewalks; the gilded restaurants and cafés were blazing with lights, carriages of all sorts and aspects were driving up and down the boulevard; everything was fairly seething and glittering, in every direction, wherever the eye fell. . . . But, strange to say, I did not feel like quitting my pure, dark, airy height; I did not wish to approach that human ant-hill. It seemed as though a hot, oppressive, copper-coloured exhalation rose up thence, not precisely fragrant, nor yet precisely stinking; a very great deal of life had been collected there in one heap. I wavered. . . . But now the voice of a street-courtesan, sharp as the screech of iron rails, suddenly was wafted to my ear; like a naked blade it thrust itself out upward, that voice; it stung me like the fangs of a viper. I immediately pictured to myself the stony, greedy, flat Parisian face, with high cheek-bones, the eyes of a usurer, rouge, powder, curled hair, and a bouquet of bright-hued artificial flowers on the high-peaked hat, the scraped nails in the shape of claws, the monstrous crinoline. . . . I pictured to myself also a steppe-dweller like myself pursuing the venal doll with detestable tripping gait. . . . I pictured to myself how, confused to the point of rudeness, and lipping with his efforts, he endeavours to imitate in his manners the waiters at Véfour's, squeals, keeps on the alert, wheedles—

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and a feeling of loathing took possession of me. . . . "No,"—I thought,—“Ellis will have no occasion to feel jealous here. . . .”

In the meantime, I noticed that we were beginning gradually to descend. . . . Paris rose to meet us with all its din and reek. . . .

“Halt!”—I turned to Ellis.—“Dost thou not find it stifling here, oppressive?”

“It was, thou thyself who asked me to bring thee hither.”

“I was wrong, I recall my word. Carry me away, Ellis, I entreat thee. Just as I thought: yonder goes Prince Kulmamétoff, hobbling along the boulevard; and his friend Baráksin is waving his hand at him and crying: ‘Iván Stepánitch, *allons souper*, as quickly as possible, and engage Rigolbosch itself!’ Carry me away from these Mabilles and Maisons Dorés, away from fops, both male and female, from the Jockey Club and Figaro, from the closely-clipped soldiers’ heads and the polished barracks, from the *sergents de ville* with their goatees and the glasses of turbid absinthe, from the players of domino in the cafés and the gamblers on ‘Change, from the bits of red ribbon in the buttonhole of the coat and the buttonhole of the overcoat, from Monsieur de Foi, the inventor of ‘the speciality of weddings,’ and from the free consultations of Dr. Charles Albert, from liberal lectures and governmental pamphlets, from Parisian comedies and

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Parisian operas and Parisian ignorance. . . .
Away! Away! Away!”

“Look down,”—Ellis answered me:—“thou art no longer over Paris.”

I lowered my eyes. . . . It was a fact. A dark plain, here and there intersected by whitish lines of roads, was running swiftly past beneath us, and only behind, on the horizon, like the glow of a huge conflagration, the reflection of the innumerable lights of the world's capital throbbed upward.

XX

AGAIN a veil fell across my eyes. . . . Again I lost consciousness. It dispersed at last.

What was that yonder, below? What park was that with avenues of clipped lindens, isolated spruce-trees in the form of parasols, with porticoes and temples in the Pompadour taste, and statues of nymphs and satyrs of the Bernini school, and rococo Tritons in the centre of curving ponds, rimmed by low balustrades of blackened marble? Is it not Versailles? No, it is not Versailles. A small palace, also in rococo style, peers forth from clumps of curly oak-trees. The moon shines dimly, enveloped in a haze, and an extremely delicate smoke seems to be spread over the earth. The eye cannot distinguish what it is: moonlight or fog. Yonder on one of the ponds

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a swan is sleeping; its long back gleams white, like the snow of the steppes gripped by the frost, and yonder the glow-worms are burning like diamonds in the bluish shadow at the foot of the statues.

“We are close to Mannheim,”—said Ellis.—
“That is the Schwetzingen Park.”

“So we are in Germany,”—I thought, and began to listen. Everything was dumb; only somewhere a slender stream of falling water was plashing and babbling, isolated and invisible. It seemed to be repeating the same words over and over again: “Yes, yes, yes,” always “yes.” And suddenly it seemed to me as though in the very middle of one of the avenues, between the walls of shorn greenery, affectedly offering his arm to a lady in powdered coiffure and a gay-coloured farthingale, there stepped forth on his red heels a cavalier in a golden coat and lace cuffs, with a light, steel sword on his hip. . . . They were strange, pale figures. . . . I wanted to get a look at them. . . . But everything had vanished, and only the water babbled on as before.

“Those are dreams roaming abroad,”—whispered Ellis.—“Yesterday a great deal might have been seen—a great deal. To-day even dreams shun the eye of mortal man. On! On!”

We soared upward and flew further. So smooth and even was our flight that we did not seem to be moving, but everything, on the con-

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trary, appeared to be coming toward us. Mountains made their appearance, dark, undulating, covered with forests; they augmented and floated toward us. . . . Now they are already flowing past beneath us, with all their sinuosities, ravines, narrow meadows, with the fiery points in the slumbering villages along the swift rivers at the bottom of the valleys; and ahead of us again other mountains loom up and float past. . . . We are in the heart of the Schwarzwald.

Mountains, nothing but mountains and forest, the splendid, old, mighty forest. The night sky is clear; I can recognise every variety of tree; especially magnificent are the firs with their straight, white trunks. Here and there on the borders of the forests chamois are to be seen; stately and alert they stand on their slender legs and listen, with their heads finely turned, and their large, trumpet-shaped ears pricked up. The ruin of a tower sadly and blindly displays on a peak of naked crag its half-demolished battlements; above the ancient, forgotten stones a golden star glows peacefully. From a small, almost black lake, the moaning croak of tiny frogs rises up like a wail. I seem to hear other sounds, long, languid, like the sounds of a golden harp. . . . Here it is, the land of legend! That same delicate shimmer of moonlight which had impressed me at Schwetzingen is here disseminated everywhere, and the further the mountains stand apart

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the thicker does that smoke become. I distinguish five, six, ten, different tones of the different layers of shadow on the slopes of the mountains, and over the silent diversity pensively reigns the moon. The air ripples on softly and lightly. I feel at ease and in a mood of lofty composure and melancholy as it were. . . .

“ Ellis, thou must love this land! ”

“ I love nothing. ”

“ How is that? And how about me? ”

“ Yes thee! ”—she replies indifferently.

It strikes me that her arm clasps my waist more closely than before.

“ On! On! ”—says Ellis, with a sort of cold enthusiasm.

“ On! ”—I repeat.

XXI

A MIGHTY fluctuating, ringing cry suddenly resounded overhead and was immediately repeated a little way in advance.

“ Those are belated cranes flying to your land, to the north, ”—said Ellis:—“ wouldst thou like to join them? ”

“ Yes, yes! raise me to them. ”

We soared upward and in the twinkling of an eye found ourselves alongside of the flock which had flown past.

The huge, handsome birds (there were thirty

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of them in all) were flying in a wedge form abruptly and rarely flapping their inflated wings. With head and legs intently ahead and breast thrust sternly forward, they were forging onward, and that so swiftly that the air whistled around them. It was wonderful to see such hot, strong life, such unflinching will, at such a height, at such a distance from all living things. Without ceasing triumphantly to plough their way through space the cranes exchanged calls, from time to time, with their comrades in the vanguard, with their leader; and there was something proud, dignified, something invincibly confident in those loud cries, in the conversation under the clouds. "We shall fly to our goal, never fear, however difficult it may be," they seemed to be saying, encouraging one another.

And at this point it occurred to me that there are very few people in Russia—why do I say in Russia?—in the whole world—like those birds.

"We are now flying to Russia,"—said Ellis. This was not the first time I had noticed that she almost always knew what I was thinking about.—
"Dost thou wish to return?"

"Let us return . . . or, no! I have been in Paris; take me to Petersburg."

"Now?"

"This instant. . . . Only cover my head with thy veil or I shall become dizzy."

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Ellis raised her arm but before the mist enveloped me I felt on my lips the touch of that soft, dull sting. . . .

XXII

“AT-TE-E-E-E-ENTION!”—a prolonged cry resounded in my ears. “At-te-e-e-e-ention!” came the response, as though in despair, from the distance. “At-te-e-e-e-ention!” died away somewhere at the end of the world. I started. A lofty golden spire met my eye: I recognised the Peter-Paul Fortress.

A pale, northern night! Yes, but was it night? Was it not a pale, ailing day? I have never liked the Petersburg nights; but this time I was even terrified: Ellis’s form disappeared entirely, melted like the mist of morning in the July sun, and I clearly descried her whole body as it hung heavily and alone on a level with the Alexander column. So this was Petersburg! Yes, it really was. Those broad, empty, grey streets; those greyish-white, yellowish-grey, greyish-lilac, stuccoed and peeling houses with their sunken windows, brilliant sign-boards, iron pavilions over their porches, and nasty little vegetable-shops; those façades; those inscriptions, sentry-boxes, watering-troughs; the golden cap of St. Isaac’s Cathedral; the useless, motley Exchange; the granite walls of the fortress and the broken

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wooden pavement; those barks laden with hay and firewood; that odour of dust, cabbage, bast-matting and stables; those petrified yard-porters in sheepskin coats at the gates, those cab-drivers curled up in death-like sleep on their rickety carriages,—yes, it was she, our Northern Palmyra. Everything was visible round about; everything was clear, painfully clear and distinct; everything was sleeping mournfully, strangely heaped up and outlined in the dimly-transparent air. The glow of sunset—a consumptive glow—has not yet departed, and will not depart until morning from the white, starless sky. It lies on the silky surface of the Nevá, and the river barely murmurs and barely undulates as it hastens onward its cold, blue waters. . . .

“Let us fly away,”—pleaded Ellis.

And, without awaiting my answer, she bore me across the Nevá, across the Palace Square, to the Litéinaya. Footsteps and voices were audible below: along the street a cluster of young men were walking with drink-sodden faces and discussing dancing-classes. “Sub-lieutenant Stolpakóff the seventh!” suddenly cried out in his sleep a soldier, who was standing on guard at the pyramid of rusty cannon-balls,¹ and a little further on, at the open window of a tall house I caught sight of a young girl in a crumpled silk gown without sleeves, with a pearl net on her hair and a ciga-

¹ At the Artillery Barracks.—TRANSLATOR.

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rette in her mouth. She was devoutly perusing a book: it was the work of one of the most recent Juvenals.

“Let us fly on!”—I said to Ellis.

A minute more, and the little forests of decaying spruce-trees and mossy swamps which surround Petersburg were flitting past us. We directed our course straight for the south; sky and earth gradually grew darker and darker. The diseased night, the diseased day, the diseased city—all were left behind.

XXIII

WE flew more slowly than usual, and I was able to watch how the broad expanse of my native land unrolled before me like a series of interminable panoramas. Forests, bushes, fields, ravines, rivers—now and then villages and churches—and then again fields, and forests, and bushes, and ravines. . . . I grew melancholy,—and melancholy in an indifferent sort of way, somehow. And I was not melancholy and bored because we were flying over Russia in particular. No! The land itself, that flat surface which spread out beneath me; the whole earthly globe with its inhabitants, transitory, impotent, crushed by want, by sorrow, by diseases, fettered to a clod of contemptible earth; that rough, brittle crust, that excrescence on the fiery grain of sand of our planet, on which

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has broken out a mould dignified by us with the appellation of the organic, vegetable kingdom; those men-flies, a thousand times more insignificant than flies; their huts stuck together out of mud, the tiny traces of their petty, monotonous pother, their amusing struggles with the unchangeable and the inevitable,—how loathsome all this suddenly became to me! My heart slowly grew nauseated, and I did not wish to gaze any longer at those insignificant pictures, at that stale exhibition. . . Yes, I felt bored—worse than bored. I did not even feel compassion for my fellow-men: all emotions within me were drowned in one which I hardly venture to name: in a feeling of aversion; and that aversion was strongest of all and most of all toward myself.

“Stop,”—whispered Ellis:—“Stop, or I will not carry thee. Thou art becoming heavy.”

“Go home.”—I replied in the same sort of a tone with which I was accustomed to utter those words to my coachman on emerging, at four o'clock in the morning, from the houses of my Moscow friends with whom I had been discussing the future of Russia and the significance of the commune ever since dinner.—“Go home,”—I repeated, and closed my eyes.

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XXIV

BUT I speedily opened them again. Ellis was pressing against me in a strange sort of way; she was almost pushing me. I looked at her, and the blood curdled in my veins. Any one who has chanced to behold on the face of another a sudden expression of profound terror the cause of which he does not suspect, will understand me. Terror, harassing terror, contorted, distorted the pale, almost obliterated features of Ellis. I have never beheld anything like it even on a living human face. A lifeless, shadowy phantom, a shadow and that swooning terror

“ Ellis, what ails thee? ”—I said at last.

“ ’T is she ’t is she. . . . ” she replied with an effort;—“ ’t is she! ”

“ She? Who is she? ”

“ Do not name her, do not name her, ”—hurriedly stammered Ellis.—“ We must flee, or there will be an end to all—and forever. . . . Look: yonder! ”

I turned my head in the direction which she indicated to me with trembling hand,—and saw something something really frightful.

This something was all the more frightful because it had no definite form. Something heavy, gloomy, yellowish-black in hue, mottled like the belly of a lizard,—not a storm-cloud, and not

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smoke,—was moving over the earth with a slow, serpentine motion. A measured, wide-reaching undulation downward and upward,—an undulation which reminded one of the ominous sweep of the wings of a bird of prey, when it is in search of its booty; at times an inexpressibly revolting swooping down to the earth,—that is the way a spider swoops down to the captured fly. . . . Who art thou, what art thou, threatening mass? Under its influence—I saw it, I felt it—everything was annihilated, everything grew dumb. . . . A rotten, pestilential odour emanated from it—and a chill that caused the heart to grow sick, and made things grow dark before the eyes, and the hair to stand on end. It was a power which was advancing;—the power which cannot be resisted, to which all are subject, which, without sight, without form, without thought, sees everything, knows everything, and like a bird of prey chooses out its victims, like a serpent crushes them and licks them with its chilly sting. . . .

“Ellis! Ellis!”—I shrieked like a madman.—
“That is Death! Death itself!”

The wailing sound which I had already heard, burst from Ellis’s mouth—this time it bore more resemblance to a despairing, human scream—and we dashed away. But our flight was strange and frightfully uneven; Ellis kept turning somersaults in the air; she fell downward, she threw herself from side to side, like a partridge which

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is mortally wounded, or which is desirous of luring the hound away from her brood. And yet, long, wavy offshoots, separating themselves from the inexpressibly-dreadful mass, rolled after us, like outstretched arms, like claws. . . . The huge form of a muffled figure on a pale horse rose up for one moment, and soared up to the very sky. . . . Still more agitatedly, still more despairingly did Ellis throw herself about. "She has seen me! All is over! I am lost!" . . . her broken whisper became audible. "Oh, unhappy one that I am! I might have enjoyed, I might have acquired life . . . but now . . . Annihilation, annihilation!"

This was too unbearable. . . . I lost consciousness.

XXV

WHEN I came to myself I was lying prone upon the grass, and felt a dull pain all through my body, as though from a severe injury. Dawn was breaking in the sky: I was able to distinguish objects clearly. Not far away, along the edge of a birch-coppice, ran a road fringed with willows; the surroundings seemed familiar to me. I began to recall what had happened to me,—and I shuddered all over, as soon as the last, monstrous vision recurred to my mind. . . .

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“But of what was Ellis afraid?” I thought. “Can it be possible that she also is subject to *its* power? Can it be that she is not immortal? Can it be that she is doomed to annihilation, to destruction? How is that possible?”

A soft moan resounded close at hand. I turned my head. Two paces distant from me lay, outstretched and motionless, a young woman in a white gown, with dishevelled hair and bared shoulders. One arm was thrown up over her head, the other fell upon her breast. Her eyes were closed, and a light crimson foam had burst forth upon the closely-compressed lips. Could that be Ellis? But Ellis was a phantom, while I beheld before me a living woman. I approached her, bent over. . . .

“Ellis? Is it thou?”—I exclaimed. Suddenly, with a slow quiver, the broad eyelids were lifted; dark, piercing eyes bored into me—and at that same moment the lips also clung to me, warm, moist, with a scent of blood the soft arms wound themselves tightly round my neck, the full, burning bosom was pressed convulsively to mine.—“Farewell! Farewell forever!”—a dying voice articulated distinctly,—and everything vanished.

I rose to my feet staggering like one intoxicated, and passing my hands several times across my face, I gazed attentively about me. I was close to the *** highway, a couple of versts from

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my manor-house. The sun had already risen when I reached home.

ALL the following nights I waited—and not without terror, I admit—for the appearance of my phantom; but it did not visit me again. I even went one day, in the twilight, to the old oak-tree; but nothing unusual occurred there either. I did not grieve overmuch, however, at the cessation of the strange friendship. I pondered much and long over this incomprehensible, almost inexplicable affair—and I became convinced that not only is science unable to elucidate it, but that even in the fairy-tales, the legends, there is nothing of the sort to be encountered. What was Ellis, as a matter of fact? A vision, a wandering soul, an evil spirit, a sylph, a vampire? Sometimes it seemed to me once more that Ellis was a woman whom I had formerly known, and I made strenuous efforts to recall where I had seen her. . . . There now, there,—it sometimes seemed to me,—I shall recall it directly, in another moment. . . . In vain! again everything deliquesced like a dream. Yes, I pondered a great deal, and as was to be expected, I arrived at no conclusion. I could not make up my mind to ask the advice or opinion of other people, for I was afraid of gaining the reputation of a madman. At last I have cast aside all my surmises: to tell the truth, I am in no mood for them. On the one hand, the

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Emancipation has taken place, with its division of arable land, and so forth, and so on; on the other hand, my health has failed; my chest has begun to pain me, I am subject to insomnia, and have a cough. My whole body is withering away. My face is yellow as that of a corpse. The doctor declares that I have very little blood, and calls my malady by a Greek name—"anæmia"—and has ordered me to Gastein. But the Arbitrer of the Peace¹ fears that he "will not be able to deal with" the peasants without me. . . .

So you see how matters stand!

But what signify those keen, piercingly-clear sounds,—the sounds of a harmonica,—which I hear as soon as people begin to talk to me about any one's death? They grow ever louder and more piercing. . . . And why do I shudder in such torturing anguish at the mere thought of annihilation?

¹ An official who was appointed after the Emancipation to arbitrate differences of opinion as to the division of the land between the landed proprietors and the serfs.—TRANSLATOR.

YÁKOFF PÁSYNKOFF

(1855)

YÁKOFF PÁSYNKOFF

I

IT happened in Petersburg, in winter, on the first day of the carnival-week. I had been invited to dine by one of my boarding-school comrades, who had borne the reputation in his youth of being a pretty girl, and had later on turned out a man who was not in the least bashful. He is dead now, like the majority of my comrades. In addition to myself, Konstantín Alexándrovitch Asánoff, and a literary celebrity of the day had promised to come to dinner. The literary celebrity kept us waiting for him, and at last sent word that he would not come, but in his stead a small, fair-haired gentleman presented himself,—one of those everlasting unbidden guests in which Petersburg abounds.

The dinner lasted a long time; the host did not spare his wine, and our heads gradually got heated. Everything that each one of us had concealed in his soul—and who has not something concealed in his soul?—came out. The host's face suddenly lost its modest and reserved ex-

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pression; his eyes began to glitter insolently, and an insipid grin distorted his lips; the fair-haired gentleman began to laugh in a pitiful sort of way, with a stupid whine; but Asánoff surprised me most of all. That man had always been distinguished for a sense of decorum; but on this occasion he suddenly began to pass his hand across his brow, to put on airs, and to brag of his powerful connections, incessantly making mention of some uncle of his, a very influential man. . . . I decidedly failed to recognise him; he was openly jeering at us he almost expressed his contempt for our society. Asánoff's insolence enraged me.

“ See here,”—I said to him:—“ if we are so insignificant in your eyes, march off to your influential uncle. But perhaps he does not admit you to his presence? ”

Asánoff made me no reply, and continued to draw his hand across his brow.

“ And what sort of folks are these! ”—he said again.—“ Why, they never go in any decent society, they are n't acquainted with a single well-bred woman, while I,”—he exclaimed, drawing from his side-pocket a wallet, and banging the table with it,—“ have here a whole bunch of letters from a young girl whose like you will not find in all the world! ”

The host and the fair-haired gentleman paid no heed to Asánoff's last words; they were clutching each other by the button,—and both of them

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were narrating some story; but I pricked up my ears.

“ Well, you are bragging in good sooth, Mr. Nephew of an important personage! ”—I said, moving closer to Asánoff:—“ you have n’t any letters, whatsoever. ”

“ You think so? ”—he retorted, glancing loftily down upon me.—“ What ’s this, then? ”—He opened the wallet, and showed me about half a score of letters addressed to him. . . . “ The handwriting is familiar! ”—I thought. . . .

I feel the flush of shame start out on my cheeks my self-love suffers acutely. . . . What possesses me to confess so ignoble a deed? But there is no help for it. I knew when I began my tale that I should be forced to blush to the very ears. So, then, summoning up all my forces, I am bound to confess that

Here is the point: I took advantage of Asánoff’s tipsy condition, and when he carelessly flung the letters on the table-cloth, which was drenched with champagne (my own head was buzzing pretty hard, too), I swiftly ran my eye over one of the letters. . . .

My heart sank within me. . . . Alas! I myself was in love with the young girl who had been writing to Asánoff, and now I could no longer cherish any doubt that she loved him. The whole letter, which was written in French, breathed forth tenderness, devotion. . . .

“ *Mon cher ami Constantin!* ”—that was the

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way it began and it wound up with the words: "be cautious, as of yore, and I will be yours or no one's."

Stunned, as though by a clap of thunder, I sat motionless for a few moments, but recovered myself at last, sprang to my feet, and rushed from the room. . . .

A quarter of an hour later I was in my own lodgings.

THE Zlotnítzky family was one of the first with which I had become acquainted after my removal from Moscow to Petersburg. It consisted of father, mother, two daughters, and a son. The father, already a grey-haired but still fresh man, formerly in the army, occupied a rather important post, spent the morning at his service, slept after dinner, and in the evening played cards at the club. . . . He was rarely at home, he conversed little and reluctantly, gazed askance from under his brows in a manner which was not precisely surly nor yet precisely indifferent, and never read anything except books of travel and geographies, and when he was ill he coloured pictures, having locked himself in his study, or teased the old grey parrot Pópka. His wife, an ailing and consumptive woman, with sunken black eyes and a sharp nose, never quitted her couch for days together, and was always embroidering cushions on canvas; so far as I was able to observe,

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she was afraid of her husband, exactly as though she were culpable toward him in some way. The eldest daughter, Varvára, a plump, rosy, chestnut-haired girl, eighteen years of age, was perpetually sitting at the window and scrutinising the passers-by. The son was being educated in a government institution, made his appearance at home only on Sunday, and was not fond of wasting words for nothing either; even the younger daughter, Sófya, the young girl with whom I fell in love, was of a taciturn disposition. Silence always reigned in the Zlotnítzkys' house; only Pópka's piercing screams broke it; but visitors speedily became accustomed to it, and again felt the burden and oppression of that eternal silence weighing upon them. However, visitors rarely looked in at the Zlotnítzkys': it was tiresome there. The very furniture, the red wallpaper, with yellowish patterns, in the drawing-room; the multitude of chairs, with plaited seats, in the dining-room; the faded worsted pillows, with representations of young girls and dogs, on the divans; the horned lamps and gloomy portraits, on the walls—all inspired an involuntary melancholy, all emitted a cold, sour sort of atmosphere. On reaching Petersburg, I had regarded it as my duty to call upon the Zlotnítzkys: they were distantly related to my mother. With difficulty did I sit out the hour, and for a long time I did not return; but gradually I took to going

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more and more frequently. I was attracted by Sófya, whom I had not liked at first, and with whom I ultimately fell in love.

She was a girl of short stature, almost gaunt, with a pale face, thick, black hair, and large, brown eyes, which were always half-closed. Her features, which were regular and sharp-set, especially her tightly-compressed lips, expressed firmness and force of will. At home she was called a girl with character. . . . “She resembles her eldest sister, Katerína,”—said Madame Zlotnítzky one day, when she was sitting alone with me (she never ventured to refer to that Katerína in her husband’s presence).—“You do not know her; she is in the Caucasus, married. At the age of thirteen,—just imagine it!—she fell in love with the man who is now her husband, and then announced to us that she would marry no one else. Do what we would,—nothing was of any avail! She waited until she was twenty-three, enraged her father,—and married her idol all the same. It would be the easiest thing in the world for a catastrophe to happen with Sónetchka also! May the Lord preserve her from such stubbornness! But I ’m apprehensive for her; she is only sixteen, but already it is impossible to control her. . . .”

Mr. Zlotnítzky entered; his wife immediately fell silent.

Strictly speaking, Sófya did not attract me by

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her force of will—no; but, with all her dryness, and lack of animation and imagination, she possessed the charm of straightforwardness, honourable sincerity, and spiritual purity. I respected her as much as I loved her. . . . It seemed to me that she was well-inclined toward me; it was painful to me to be undeceived as to her attachment, to become convinced of her love for another.

The unexpected discovery which I had made astounded me all the more, because Mr. Asánoff visited the Zlotnítzkys' house infrequently, much more rarely than I did, and showed no particular preference for Sófyá. He was a handsome, dark-complexioned man, with expressive, although rather heavy features, prominent, brilliant eyes, a large, white brow, and plump, red little lips beneath a delicate moustache. He bore himself very modestly, but rigorously, talked and pronounced judgment with self-confidence, and held his peace with dignity. It was obvious that he thought a great deal of himself. Asánoff laughed rarely, and that through his teeth, and he never danced. He was very badly built. He had once served in the *** regiment, and had borne the reputation of an active officer.

“Strange!”—I reflected, as I lay on my divan:—“why have I not noticed anything of this?” The words of Sófyá's letter suddenly recurred to my mind.—“Ah!”—I thought:—“that 's it! What a crafty little girl! And I had thought

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her frank and sincere. . . . Well, just wait, and I 'll show you!”

But at this point, so far as I can recall the circumstances, I fell to weeping bitterly, and could not get to sleep until morning.

ON the following day, at two o'clock, I set out for the Zlotnítzkys'. The old man was not at home, and his wife was not sitting in her accustomed place; her head had begun to ache after she had eaten pancakes,¹ and she had gone to lie down in her bedroom. Varvára was standing with her shoulder leaning against the window, and staring into the street; Sófya was pacing to and fro in the room, with her arms folded across her breast; Pópka² was shrieking.

“Ah! good morning!”—said Varvára, languidly, as soon as I entered the room, and immediately added, in an undertone: “yonder goes a man with a tray on his head. . . .” (She had a habit of making remarks about the passers-by, occasionally, and as though to herself.)

“Good morning,”—I replied.—“Good morning, Sófya Nikoláevna. And where is Tatyána Vasílievna?”

¹ Pancakes, served with melted butter and caviare (never with sweet syrup), are the principal feature of the Russian “butter-week” or carnival-tide, and are seldom or never eaten at any other time.—TRANSLATOR.

² Equivalent to Polly, in the case of parrots.—TRANSLATOR.

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“She has gone to lie down,”—replied Sófyá, continuing to pace the room.

“We had pancakes,”—remarked Varvára, without turning round.—“Why did n’t you come? . . . Where is that clerk going?”

“I had no time.”—(“Po-li-iíce!” yelled the parrot, harshly.)—“How your Pópka does screech to-day!”

“He always screeches like that,”—said Sófyá.

We all maintained silence for a while.

“He has turned in at the gate,”—said Varvára, suddenly climbing on the window-sill and opening the hinged pane.

“What art thou about?”—inquired Sófyá.

“A beggar,”—replied Varvára, bent down, picked up a copper five-kopék piece, on which the ashes of a fumigating pastile still rose in a mound, flung the coin into the street, slammed to the pane, and jumped heavily to the floor. . . .

“I passed the time very pleasantly last night,”—I began, as I seated myself in an arm-chair:—“I dined with a friend; Konstantín Alexándritch was there. . . .” (I looked at Sófyá; she did not even contract her brows.)—“And, I must confess,”—I went on,—“that we got rather convivial; the four of us drank eight bottles.”

“You don’t say so!”—calmly ejaculated Sófyá, shaking her head.

“Yes,”—I went on, slightly nettled by her in-

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difference;—“and do you know what, Sófya Nikoláevna,—’t is not without reason that the proverb says that when the wine is in the truth comes out.”

“How so?”

“Konstantín Alexándritch made us laugh greatly. Just picture to yourself: he suddenly took to passing his hand across his forehead like this, and saying: ‘What a fine, dashing fellow I am! I have an uncle who is a distinguished man. . . .’”

“Ha, ha!”—rang out Varvára’s short, abrupt laugh. . . . “Pópka, pópka, pópka!” rattled the parrot in response.

Sófya halted in front of me, and looked into my face.

“And what did you say?”—she asked:—“don’t you remember?”

I blushed involuntarily.

“I don’t remember! I must have been in a fine state also. As a matter of fact,”—I added, with significant pauses:—“it is a dangerous thing to drink wine; the first you know, you babble secrets, and say that which no one ought to know. You will repent afterward, but then it is too late.”

“And did you babble secrets?”—inquired Sófya.

“I ’m not talking about myself.”

Sófya turned away, and again began to walk up and down the room. I gazed at her, and raged

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inwardly. "Just look at you,"—I said to myself,—"you 're a baby, a mere child, yet what control you have over yourself! You 're like a stone, simply. But just wait a bit. . . ."

"Sófya Nikoláevna" I said aloud.

Sófya stood still.

"What do you want?"

"Will not you play something on the piano? By the way, I have something to tell you,"—I added, lowering my voice.

Sófya, without uttering a word, went into the hall; I followed her. She stopped beside the piano.

"What shall I play for you?"—she asked.

"What you please . . . a nocturne by Chopin."

Sófya began the nocturne. She played rather badly, but with feeling. Her sister played only polkas and waltzes, and that rarely. She would lounge up to the piano, with her lazy gait, seat herself, drop the burnous from her shoulders to her elbows (I never saw her without a burnous), start up a polka thunderously, fail to finish it, begin another, then suddenly heave a sigh, rise and return to the window. A strange being was that Varvára.

I sat down beside Sófya.

"Sófya Nikoláevna,"—I began, gazing intently at her askance:—"I must impart to you a bit of news which is very disagreeable to me."

"News? What is it?"

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“ This. . . . Up to this time I have been mistaken in you, utterly mistaken.”

“ How so? ”—she returned, continuing to play, and fixing her eyes on her fingers.

“ I have thought that you were frank; I have thought that you did not know how to be crafty, to be sly. . . . ”

Sófya put her face close to her music. . . .

“ I don't understand you.”

“ But the principal thing is,”—I went on:—“ that I could not possibly imagine, that you, at your age, were already capable of playing a part in so masterly a manner. . . . ”

Sófya's hands trembled slightly on the keys.

“ What are you saying? ”—she said, still without looking at me:—“ I am playing a part? ”

“ Yes, you.” (She laughed. . . . Fierce wrath took possession of me.) “ You feign to be indifferent to a certain man and . . . and you write letters to him,”—I added in a whisper.

Sófya's cheeks blanched, but she did not turn toward me; she played the nocturne to the end, rose, and shut the lid of the piano.

“ Where are you going? ”—I asked, not without confusion.—“ You will not answer me? ”

“ What answer have I to make to you? I don't know what you are talking about. . . . And I don't know how to dissemble.”

She began to put the music together. . . .

The blood flew to my head.

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“Yes, you do know what I am talking about,”
—I said, rising also:—“and if you like, I will immediately remind you of several expressions in one of those letters:—‘be cautious as of yore.’ . . .”

Sófya gave a slight start.

“I had not in the least expected this from you,”
—she said at last.

“And I had not in the least expected,”—I interposed,—“that you, Sófya Nikoláevna, deigned to bestow your attention upon a man who”

Sófya turned swiftly toward me; I involuntarily retreated a pace; her eyes, always half-closed, were so widely opened that they appeared huge, and sparkled angrily under her brows.

“Ah! In that case,”—said she,—“you must know that I love that man, and that your opinion of him and of my love for him is a matter of perfect indifference to me. And where did you get the idea? What right have you to say that? And if I have made up my mind to anything”

She stopped short, and swiftly left the room.

I remained. I suddenly felt so awkward and conscience-stricken, that I covered my face with my hands. I comprehended all the impropriety, all the baseness of my conduct, and panting with shame and penitence, I stood like one branded

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with disgrace. "My God!"—I thought:—"what have I done?"

"Antón Nikítitch,"—the maid's voice became audible in the anteroom,—“please get a glass of water as quickly as possible for Sófyá Nikoláevna.”

“Why, what's the matter?”—asked the butler.

“I think she's weeping. . . .”

I gave a start, and went into the drawing-room to get my hat.

“What were you talking about with Sónetchka?”—Varvára asked me indifferently, and after a brief pause, she added in an undertone:—“there goes that notary's clerk again.”

I began to take my leave.

“Where are you going? Wait, mamma will come out of her room directly.”

“No; I can't now,”—said I:—“it would be better for me to return some other time.”

At that moment, to my terror,—precisely that,—to my terror, Sófyá entered the drawing-room with firm steps. Her face was paler than usual, and her eyelids were slightly red. She did not even glance at me.

“Look, Sófyá,”—said Varvára:—“some clerk or other keeps walking about our house.”

“Some spy or other,” remarked Sófyá, coldly and scornfully.

This was too much! I departed, and, really, I do not remember how I got home.

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I was very heavy at heart, more heavy and bitter than I can describe. Two such cruel blows in the space of four-and-twenty hours! I had learned that Sófyá loved another, and had forever forfeited her respect. I felt myself so annihilated and put to shame, that I could not even be indignant with myself. As I lay on the divan, with my face turned to the wall, I was surrendering myself with a sort of burning enjoyment to the first outbursts of despairing anguish, when I suddenly heard footsteps in the room. I raised my head and beheld one of my most intimate friends—Yákoff Pásynkoff.

I was ready to fly into a passion with any man who entered my room that day, but never could I be angry with Pásynkoff; on the contrary, in spite of the grief which was devouring me, I inwardly rejoiced at his coming, and nodded to him. According to his wont, he strode up and down the room a couple of times, grunting and stretching his long limbs, stood silently for a little while, in front of me, and silently seated himself in one corner.

I had known Pásynkoff a very long time, almost from childhood. He had been reared in the same private boarding-school, kept by a German named Winterkeller, in which I had spent three years. Yákoff's father, a poor, retired major, a very honourable man, but somewhat un-
hinged mentally, had brought him, an urchin of

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seven years, to this German, paid a year's tuition in advance, had gone away from Moscow, and vanished, without leaving a trace. From time to time dark, strange rumours concerning him arrived. Only after the lapse of seven years was it learned with certainty that he had been drowned in a freshet, as he was crossing the Irtýsh. What had taken him to Siberia, the Lord only knows. Yákoff had no other relatives. So he remained on Winterkeller's hands. It is true that Yákoff had one distant relative,—an aunt, who was so poor, that at first she was afraid to go to see her nephew, lest they should cast him on her shoulders. Her alarm proved to be unfounded; the kind-hearted German kept Yákoff with him, permitted him to learn with the other pupils, fed him (but they passed him over at dessert on week-days), and made over clothing for him from the camelot morning-gowns (chiefly snuff-coloured) of his mother, a very aged, but still alert and active Lifyand¹ woman. The result of all these circumstances, and the result of Yákoff's inferior position in the boarding-school was, that his comrades treated him slightly, looked down on him, and called him sometimes "woman's wrapper," sometimes "the mob-cap's nephew" (his aunt constantly wore a very queer cap, with a tuft of yellow ribbons in the shape of an artichoke, sticking out at the top), sometimes "the

¹ Livonia.—TRANSLATOR.

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son of Yermák¹ (because his father had been drowned in the Irtýsh). But, in spite of these nicknames, in spite of his absurd garments, in spite of his extreme poverty, they all loved him greatly, and it was impossible not to love him; a kinder, more noble soul never existed on earth, I think. He also studied extremely well.

When I saw him for the first time, he was sixteen years of age, while I had just passed my thirteenth birthday. I was an extremely conceited and spoiled urchin, had been reared in a fairly wealthy home, and therefore when I entered the boarding-school I made haste to get intimate with a certain little Prince, the object of Winterkeller's special solicitude, and with two or three other small aristocrats, while I put on pompous airs with all the rest. I did not even deign to notice Pásynkoff. That long, awkward young fellow, in his hideous round-jacket and short trousers, from beneath which peeped thick, knitted thread stockings, seemed to me something in the nature of a page-boy from the house-serfs' class, or the son of a petty burgher. Pásynkoff was very polite and gentle to everybody, although he fawned on no one; if they repulsed him, he did not humble himself, and did not sulk, but held himself aloof, as though grieving and waiting. Thus did he behave with me also. About two months

¹The conqueror of Siberia, in the reign of Iván the Terrible. He was drowned (1584) while trying to swim the Irtysh.—TRANSLATOR.

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elapsed. One clear summer day, as I was passing from the courtyard into the garden, after a noisy game of ball, I saw Pásynkoff sitting on a bench, under a tall lilac-bush. He was reading a book. I cast a glance, in passing, at the cover, and read on the back the title: "Schiller's Werke." I stopped short.

"Do you know German?"—I asked Pásynkoff. . . .

To this day I feel mortified, when I recall how much scorn there was in the sound of my voice. . . . Pásynkoff gently raised his small but expressive eyes to mine, and answered:

"Yes, I do; do you?"

"I should think so!"—I retorted, already affronted; and was on the point of proceeding on my way, but something kept me back.

"And what in particular are you reading from Schiller?"—I inquired with as much haughtiness as before.

"I am now reading 'Resignation'; it is a very beautiful poem. I'll read it to you if you like—shall I? Sit down here beside me, on the bench."

I hesitated a little, but sat down. Pásynkoff began to read. He knew German much better than I did; he was obliged to explain to me the sense of several lines; but I was no longer ashamed either of my ignorance, or of his superiority to myself. From that day forth, from that reading together in the garden, in the shade of the

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lilac-bush, I loved Pásynkoff with all my soul; I got intimate with him, I submitted wholly to him.

I vividly recall his personal appearance at that epoch. However, he changed very little afterward. He was tall, thin, long-bodied, and decidedly clumsy. His narrow shoulders and sunken chest gave him a sickly aspect, although he had no reason to complain of his health. His large head, arched on top, was inclined slightly on one side, his soft, chestnut hair hung in thin locks around his thin neck. His face was not handsome, and might even appear ridiculous, thanks to his long, thick and reddened nose, which seemed to hang over his broad, straight lips; but his open brow was very fine, and when he smiled, his small, grey eyes beamed with such gentle and affectionate good-nature, that everyone felt warm and blithe at heart, from merely looking at him. I recall his voice, also, soft and even, with a peculiarly agreeable hoarseness. He talked little, as a general thing, and with obvious difficulty; but when he grew animated his speech flowed freely and,—strange to say!—his voice grew even softer, his glance seemed to retreat within and become extinguished, and his whole face flushed faintly. In his mouth the words: “good,” “truth,” “life,” “science,” “love,” never had a false ring, no matter how enthusiastically he uttered them. He entered into the realm of the ideal without a strain, without an

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effort; his chaste soul was ready at all times to present itself before "the shrine of beauty"; it waited only for the greeting, the touch of another soul. . . . Pásynkoff was a romanticist, one of the last romanticists whom I have chanced to meet. The romanticists, as every one knows, have died out now; at all events, there are none among the young people of the present day. So much the worse for the young people of the present day!

I spent about three years with Pásynkoff, soul to soul, as the saying is. I was the confidant of his first love. With what grateful attention and sympathy did I listen to his avowal! The object of his passion was Winterkeller's niece, a fair-haired pretty little German, with a plump, almost childish little face, and trustful, tender blue eyes. She was very kind-hearted and sentimental, loved Mattieson, Uhland, and Schiller, and recited their verses very agreeably, in her timid, melodious voice. Pásynkoff's love was of the most platonic sort; he saw his beloved only on Sunday (she came to play at forfeits with the Winterkeller children) and talked very little with her; on the other hand, one day, when she said to him, "*Mein lieber, lieber Herr Jacob!*" he could not get to sleep all night from excess of happiness. It never entered his head then, that she said "*mein lieber*" to all his comrades. I remember, too, his grief and dejection, when the news suddenly spread

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abroad, that Fräulein Frederika (that was her name), was going to marry Herr Kniftus, the owner of a rich meat-shop, and marry solely out of obedience to her parents' wishes, but not for love. That was a difficult time for Pásinkoff, and he suffered especially on the day when the newly-wedded pair made their first call. The former Fräulein, now already Frau Frederika, introduced him again by the name of "*lieber Herr Jacob,*" to her husband, everything about whom was glistening: his eyes, and his black hair curled into a crest, and his forehead, and his teeth, and the buttons on his dress-suit, and the chain on his waistcoat, and the very boots on his decidedly large feet, whose toes were pointed outward. Pásinkoff shook hands with Herr Kniftus, and wished him (and wished it sincerely—I am convinced of that) full and long-continued happiness. This took place in my presence. I remember with what surprise and sympathy I gazed at Yákoff then. He seemed to me a hero! . . . And afterward, what sad conversations took place between us!—"Seek consolation in art,"—I said to him.—"Yes,"—he answered me,—"*and in poetry.*"—"And in friendship,"—I added.—"*And in friendship,*"—he repeated. Oh, happy days! . . .

It was painful to me to part from Pásinkoff! Just before my departure, he finally got his papers, and entered the university, after long wor-

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rying and trouble, and a correspondence which was often amusing. He continued to exist at Winterkeller's expense, but in place of the camelot round-jackets and trousers, he received the customary clothing in return for lessons in various subjects, which he gave to the younger pupils. Pásynkoff never changed his mode of conduct to me to the very end of my stay in the boarding-school, although the difference in our ages had already begun to tell, and I, I remember, had begun to be jealous of several of his new comrade-students. His influence on me was of the most beneficial nature. Unfortunately, it was not of long duration. I will cite one instance only. In my childhood, I had a habit of lying. . . . In Yákoff's presence my tongue never turned to falsehood. But especially delightful to me was it to stroll with him, or to pace by his side to and fro in the room, and listen to him recite verses in his quiet, concentrated voice, without glancing at me. Really, it seemed to me then, that he and I were gradually leaving the earth behind us and soaring away into some radiant, mysteriously-beautiful region. . . . I remember one night. He and I were sitting under the same lilac-bush: we had grown fond of the spot. All our comrades were already asleep; but we had risen softly, dressed ourselves by the sense of feeling, in the dark, and stealthily gone out "to dream awhile." It was quite warm out of doors,

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but a chilly little breeze blew in gusts now and then, and made us nestle up closer to each other. We talked, we talked a great deal, and with fervour, so that we even interrupted each other, although we were not wrangling. In the sky shone myriads of stars. Yákoff raised his eyes, and, pressing my hand closely, softly exclaimed:

“Above us
Lies Heaven with its eternal stars. . . .
And above the stars is their Creator. . . .”

A devout tremor coursed through me; I turned cold all over, and sank down on his shoulder. . . . My heart was filled to overflowing. . . .

Where are those raptures now? Alas! in the place where youth is also.

I encountered Yákoff in Petersburg eight years later on. I had just obtained a position in the government service, and some one had got him a petty post in some department or other. Our meeting was of the most joyous character. Never shall I forget that moment when, as I was sitting at home one day, I suddenly heard his voice in the anteroom. . . . How I started, with what a violent beating of the heart did I spring to my feet and throw myself on his neck, without giving him time to take off his fur coat and unwind his scarf! How eagerly did I gaze at him athwart bright, involuntary tears of delight! He had aged somewhat in the course of the last seven

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years; wrinkles, fine as the trace of a needle, had furrowed his brow here and there, his cheeks had grown slightly sunken, but his beard had hardly increased at all in thickness, and his smile remained the same as of yore, and his laugh, his charming, inward laugh, which resembled a drawing-in of the breath, was the same as ever. . . .

Great heavens! what was there that we did not talk over that day! . . . How many favourite poems we recited to each other! I began to urge him to come and live with me, but he would not consent; but, on the other hand, he promised to come to see me every day, and he kept his promise.

And Pásynkoff had not changed in soul, either. He presented himself before me the same romanticist as I had formerly known him. In spite of the way in which life's chill, the bitter chill of experience, had gripped him, the tender flower, which had blossomed early in the heart of my friend had retained all its pristine beauty. No sadness, no pensiveness even, were perceptible in him: as of old, he was gentle, but ever blithe in soul.

He lived in Petersburg as in a desert, taking no heed for the future, and consorting with hardly any one. I made him acquainted with the Zlotnítzkys. He called on them with tolerable frequency. Without being conceited, he was not shy: but with them, as everywhere else, he talked little, although he liked them. The heavy old

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man, Tatyána Vasílievna's husband, even treated him affectionately, and both the taciturn girls speedily got used to him.

He would come bringing with him, in the back pocket of his overcoat, some newly-published work, and take a long time to make up his mind to read it, but keep twisting his neck to one side, like a bird, and peering to see whether it were possible; and, at last, he would ensconce himself in a corner (he was fond, in general, of sitting in corners), pull out the book, and set to reading aloud, now and then interrupting himself with brief comments or exclamations. I noticed that Varvára was more given to sitting down beside him and listening than her sister was, although, of course, she did not understand him clearly: literature did not interest her. She would sit opposite Pásynkoff, with her chin propped on her hands, and gaze,—not into his eyes, but into his whole face,—and not give utterance to a single word, but merely heave a sudden, noisy sigh.—In the evening, we played at forfeits, especially on Sundays and feast-days. We were then joined by two young ladies, sisters, distant relatives of the Zlotnítzkys,—small, plump girls, and frightful gigglers; also by several cadets and yunkers, very quiet, good-natured lads. Pásynkoff always seated himself beside Tatyána Vasílievna, and helped her devise what the person who drew the forfeit should do.

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Sófya was not fond of the caresses and kisses with which forfeits are usually redeemed, while Varvára was vexed when she was compelled to hunt up anything or guess a riddle. The young ladies giggled incessantly,—heaven knows what about,—and I was sometimes seized with vexation when I looked at them, while Pásynkoff merely smiled and shook his head. Old Zlotnítzky took no part in our games, and even glowered at us in none too gracious wise from behind the door of his study. Once only, quite unexpectedly, did he come out to us, and suggest that the person whose forfeit was drawn should waltz with him; of course, we assented. Tatyána Vasílievna's forfeit was drawn; she flushed all over, grew confused and shy as a fifteen-year-old girl,—but her husband immediately bade Sófya to seat herself at the piano, stepped up to his wife, and took a couple of turns with her, in old-fashioned style, in three-time. I remember how his sallow, dark face, with unsmiling eyes, now appeared, now disappeared, as he revolved slowly, and without altering his stern expression. In waltzing he took long steps, and skipped, while his wife took quick little steps and pressed her face to his breast, as though in terror. He led her to her seat, made his bow to her, went off to his own room, and locked himself in. Sófya was on the point of rising. But Varvára begged her to continue the waltz, stepped up to Pásynkoff, and,

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extending her hand, said with an awkward grin: "Will you?" Pásynkoff was astounded, but sprang to his feet nevertheless,—he was always distinguished for his refined courtesy,—took Varvára round the waist, but slipped at the very first step, and hastily freeing himself from his lady, rolled straight under the pedestal on which stood the parrot's cage. . . . The cage fell, the parrot was frightened, and began to shriek: "Po-li-iice!" A universal roar of laughter rang out. . . . Zlotnítzky made his appearance on the threshold of his study, gave a surly stare, and clapped to the door. From that time forth, all that was necessary was to allude to this incident in Varvára's presence, and she would forthwith begin to laugh, with an expression on her face, as she glanced at Pásynkoff, which seemed to say that nothing more clever than what he had done on that occasion could possibly be devised.

Pásynkoff was extremely fond of music. He frequently asked Sófyá to play something for him, seated himself a little apart, and listened, from time to time chiming in with his thin voice on the tender notes. He was especially fond of Schubert's "The Constellations." He declared that when "The Constellations" was played in his presence, it always seemed to him as though, along with the sounds, some long, sky-blue rays poured down from on high, straight into his breast. To this day, at the sight of the

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cloudless sky at night, with its softly-twinkling stars, I always recall that melody of Schubert and Pásynkoff. . . . A certain stroll in the suburbs also recurs to my mind. The whole company of us had driven out in two double-seated, hired carriages, to Párgolovo.¹ I remember that we got the carriages in Vladímir street; they were very old, light-blue in colour, mounted on round springs, with broad boxes for the coachmen, and tufts of hay inside; the dark-bay, broken-winded horses drew us along at a ponderous trot, each limping on a different foot. For a long time we roamed through the pine groves surrounding Párgolovo, drank milk from earthen jugs, and ate strawberries and sugar. The weather was splendid. Varvára was not fond of walking much: she soon wearied; but on this occasion she did not lag behind us. She took off her hat, her hair fell out of curl, her heavy features grew animated, and her cheeks flushed crimson. On encountering two peasant maidens in the forest, she suddenly seated herself on the ground, called them to her, and did not caress them, but made them sit down beside her. Sófyá stared at them from afar with a cold smile, and did not approach them. She was walking with Asánoff, while Zlotnítzky remarked that Varvára was a

¹ A Finnish village, situated a little more than ten miles north of St. Petersburg. There are many summer villas, and numbers of the former dwellings of the Finns have been converted into summer residences by literary and artistic people. — TRANSLATOR.

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regular setting hen. Varvára rose and walked on. In the course of the stroll she approached Pásynkoff several times and said to him: "Yákoff Ivánitch, I have something to say to you,"—but what she wanted to say to him remained a secret.

However, it is high time for me to return to my story.

I WAS delighted at Pásynkoff's arrival; but I recalled what I had done on the preceding day; I felt inexpressibly conscience-stricken, and hastily turned my face to the wall again. After waiting awhile, Yákoff asked me if I were well.

"Yes,"—I replied through my teeth:—"only, my head aches."

Yákoff made no reply, and picked up a book. More than an hour passed; I was already on the point of making a clean breast of the whole thing to Yákoff . . . when, suddenly, the bell in the anteroom began to ring.

The door on the staircase opened. . . I listened. . . . Asánoff was asking my man whether I was at home.

Pásynkoff rose; he did not like Asánoff, and whispering to me that he would go and lie down on my bed, he betook himself to my sleeping-room.

A minute later, Asánoff entered.

From his flushed face, from his curt and dry

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bow alone, I divined that he had not come to me for any ordinary call. "What 's in the wind?" I thought.

"My dear sir,"—he began, swiftly seating himself in an arm-chair,—“ I have presented myself to you for the purpose of having you solve for me a certain doubt.”

“ What is it, precisely? ”

“ This: I wish to know whether you are an honourable man? ”

I flared up.

“ What does this mean? ”—I asked.

“ This is what it means,” . . . he returned, pronouncing each word with clear-cut distinctness: “ Yesterday evening I showed you a wallet containing the letters of a certain person to me. . . . To-day you have repeated to that person with reproach,—observe, with reproach,—several expressions from those letters, without having the slightest right to do so. I wish to know how you will explain this? ”

“ And I wish to know, what right *you* have to catechise me? ”—I replied, trembling all over with rage and inward shame.—“ Why did you brag of your uncle, of your correspondence? What had I to do with that? All your letters are intact, are n't they? ”

“ The letters are intact; but I was in such a condition last night that you might easily have . . . ”

“ In short, my dear sir,”—I interposed, inten-

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tionally speaking as loudly as I could,—“ I request you to leave me in peace, do you hear? I don't want to know anything about it, and I shall explain nothing to you. Go to that person for explanations!” (I felt my head beginning to reel.)

Asánoff darted at me a glance to which he, obviously, endeavoured to impart an expression of sneering penetration, plucked at his moustache, and rose without haste.

“ I know now what I am bound to think,”—said he:—“ your face is the best proof against you. But I must observe to you that well-bred persons do not behave in this manner. . . . To read a letter by stealth, and then to go to a well-born young girl and worry her is”

“ Go to the devil!”—I shouted, stamping my foot:—“ and send your second to me; I have no intention of discussing the matter with you.”

“ I beg that you will not instruct me,”—retorted Asánoff, coldly:—“ and I was intending to send my second to you.”

He went away. I fell back on the divan, and covered my eyes with my hands. Some one touched me on the shoulder; I removed my hands—in front of me stood Pásynkoff.

“ What is this? Is it true?” . . . he asked me.—“ Hast thou read another person's letter?”

I had not the strength to answer him, but nodded my head affirmatively.

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Pásynkoff walked to the window, and, standing with his back to me, said slowly: "Thou hast read a letter from a young girl to Asánoff. Who is the girl?"

"Sófya Zlotnítzky,"—I replied, as a condemned man answers his judge.

For a long time Pásynkoff did not utter a word.

"Passion alone can excuse thee, to a certain extent,"—he began, at last.—"Art thou in love with Miss Zlotnítzky?"

"Yes."

Again Pásynkoff held his peace for a while.

"I thought so. And to-day thou didst go to her and begin to upbraid her. . . ."

"Yes, yes, yes" I said in desperation.—"Now thou mayest despise me. . . ."

Pásynkoff paced up and down the room a couple of times.

"And does she love him?"—he asked.

"She does. . . ."

Pásynkoff dropped his eyes, and stared for a long time immovably at the floor.

"Well, this must be put right,"—he began, raising his head:—"things cannot be left like this."

And he picked up his hat.

"Whither art thou going?"

"To Asánoff."

I sprang from the divan.

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“ But I will not permit thee. Good heavens! how canst thou do so? ! What will he think? ”

Pásynkoff cast a glance at me.

“ And is it better, in thy opinion, to let his folly proceed, to ruin thyself, and disgrace the girl? ”

“ But what wilt thou say to Asánoff? ”

“ I shall try to bring him to his senses; I shall say that thou dost beg his pardon. . . . ”

“ But I won't beg his pardon! ”

“ Thou wilt not? Art not thou guilty? ”

I looked at Pásynkoff: the calm and stern though sad expression of his face impressed me; it was a new one to me. I made no reply, and sat down on the divan.

Pásynkoff left the room.

With what torturing anguish did I wait his return! With what cruel sluggishness did the time pass! At last he returned—late.

“ Well, how are things? ”

“ God be thanked! ”—he replied.—“ Everything is made up.”

“ Hast thou been to Asánoff? ”

“ I have.”

“ Well, how about him? He made wry faces, I suppose,”—I said with an effort.

“ No, I will not say that. I expected more. . . . He . . . is not the vulgar man I had thought him.”

“ Well, and hast thou not been to see any one except him? ”—I asked, after waiting a little.

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“ I have been to see the Zlotnítzkys.”

“ Ah! ” (My heart began to beat violently. I did not dare to look Pásynkoff in the eye.) — “ Well, and how about her? ”

“ Sófya Nikoláevna is a sensible girl, a kind-hearted girl. . . . Yes, she is a good girl. At first it was awkward for her, but afterward she recovered her composure. However, our entire conversation did not last more than five minutes.”

“ And didst thou tell her everything about me? ”

“ I told her what was necessary.”

“ Henceforth, I shall not be able to go to see them! ” — I said dejectedly. . . .

“ Why not? Yes, yes; thou mayest occasionally. On the contrary, thou must call on them, without fail, lest they should imagine something. . . . ”

“ Akh, Yákoff, thou wilt despise me now! ” — I exclaimed, hardly restraining my tears.

“ I? Despise thee? ” . . . (His affectionate eyes warmed up with love.) — “ Despise thee stupid man! Was it easy for thee, pray? Didst not thou suffer? ”

He extended his hand to me; I rushed to him and fell, sobbing, on his neck.

AFTER the lapse of several days, in the course of which I was able to observe that Pásynkoff was very much out of sorts, I finally made up my

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mind to call on the Zlotnítzkys. It would be difficult to convey in words what I felt when I entered their drawing-room. I remember that I could barely distinguish faces, and that my voice broke in my throat. And Sófya was no more at ease than I was: she evidently forced herself to converse with me, but her eyes avoided mine just as my eyes avoided hers, and in her every movement, in her whole being, there peered forth constraint, mingled with . . . why conceal the truth? . . . with a secret repulsion. I endeavoured as speedily as possible, to free both her and myself from such painful sensations. This meeting was, happily, the last . . . before her marriage. A sudden change in my fate took me to the other end of Russia, and I bade farewell for a long time to Petersburg, to the Zlotnítzky family, and, what was more painful to me than all else, to kind Yákoff Pásynkoff.

II

SEVEN years elapsed. I do not consider it necessary to relate precisely what happened to me in the course of all that time. I wore myself out with travelling all over Russia; I went into the wilds and the remote parts—and, thank God! the wilds and the remote parts are not so dreadful as some people think, and in the most hidden nooks of the forest, dreaming in primeval dense-

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ness, under fallen trees and thickets, grow fragrant flowers.

One day in spring, as I was passing, on business connected with the service, through the small county town of one of the remote Governments of eastern Russia, through the dim little window of my tarantás I caught sight of a man on the square, in front of a shop,—a man whose face seemed extremely familiar to me. I took a second look at this man and, to my no small delight, recognised in him Elisyéi, Pásynkoff's servant.

I immediately ordered my postilion to halt, sprang out of the tarantás, and approached Elisyéi.

“ Good morning, brother! ”—I said, with difficulty concealing my agitation:—“ art thou here with thy master? ”

“ Yes, ”—he replied slowly, then suddenly cried out:—“ Akh, dear little father, is it you? And I did n't recognise you! ”

“ Art thou here with Yákoff Ivánitch? ”

“ I am, dear little father, I am. . . . And with whom else should I be? ”

“ Lead me to him as speedily as possible. ”

“ Certainly, certainly! This way, please, this way. . . . We are stopping here in the inn. ”

And Elisyéi conducted me across the square, incessantly repeating: “ Well, and how delighted Yákoff Ivánitch will be! ”

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This Elisyéi, of Kalmýk extraction, a man of extremely hideous and even fierce aspect, but the kindest of souls, and far from stupid, was passionately attached to Pásynkoff, and had been in his service for ten years.

“How is Yákoff Ivánitch’s health?”—I asked him.

Elisyéi turned toward me his small, dark-yellow face.

“Akh, dear little father, ’t is bad . . . bad, dear little father! You will not recognise him. . . . I don’t believe he has long to live in this world. That ’s the reason we settled down here, for we were on our way to Odessa for the cure.”¹

“Whence come you?”

“From Siberia, dear little father.”

“From Siberia?”

“Just so, sir. Yákoff Ivánitch has been in the service there. And it was there he received his wound, sir.”

“Has he been in the military service?”

“Not at all, sir. He was in the civil service, sir.”

“What marvels are these?!” I thought. In the meantime, we had drawn near the inn, and Elisyéi ran on ahead to announce me. During the first years of our separation, Pásynkoff and I had written to each other pretty frequently, but

¹ The famous salt-water and mud baths in the vicinity of Odessa.—TRANSLATOR.

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I had received his last letter four years previous to this, and from that time onward had known nothing about him.

“Please come in, sir; please come in, sir!”—Elisyéi shouted to me from the staircase:—“Yákoff Ivánitch is very anxious to see you, sir.”

I ran hastily up the rickety stairs, entered a dark little room—and my heart sank within me. . . . On a narrow bed, under his uniform cloak, pale as death, lay Pásynkoff, stretching out to me his bare, emaciated hand. I rushed to him and clasped him in a convulsive embrace.

“Yásha!”—I cried at last:—“What ails thee?”

“Nothing,”—he replied in a weak voice.—“I am not very well. How in the world do you come to be here?”

I sat down on a chair beside Pásynkoff’s bed and, without releasing his hands from mine, I began to gaze into his face. I recognised the features which were so dear to me: the expression of his eyes and his smile had not changed, but how sickness had altered him!

He noticed the impression which he produced on me.

“I have not shaved for three days,”—he said:—“well, and my hair is not brushed either, but otherwise I . . . I ’m all right.”

“Tell me, please, Yásha,”—I began:—“what

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is this Elisyéi has been telling me. . . . Thou art wounded?"

"Ah! yes; that 's a whole history in itself,"—he replied.—"I 'll tell thee about that later on. I really was wounded, and just fancy by what? An arrow."

"An arrow?"

"Yes, an arrow; only not the mythological one, not the dart of love, but a real arrow made from some extremely supple wood, with an artful sharp tip on the end. . . . Such an arrow produces a very unpleasant sensation, especially when it lands in the lungs."

"But how did it happen? Good gracious. . . ."

"This way. As thou knowest, there has always been a great deal that was ridiculous about my fate. Dost thou remember my comical correspondence in connection with demanding my papers? Well, and so I was wounded in an absurd way also. And, as a matter of fact, what well-bred man, in our enlightened century, permits himself to deal wounds with an arrow? And not accidentally—observe, not during some games or other, but in conflict."

"Yes; but still thou dost not tell me. . . ."

"Here now, wait a bit,"—he interrupted.—"Thou knowest that shortly after thy departure from Petersburg, I was transferred to Nóvgorod. I spent quite a long time in Nóvgorod, and, I must confess that I was bored, although I did

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meet there a certain being. . . .” (He heaved a sigh) “But there ’s no time to go into that now; but a couple of years ago a splendid little post fell to my lot, a trifle distant, ’t is true, in the Government of Irkútsk, but what ’s the harm in that! Evidently, it was written in my father’s fate and in mine that we should visit Siberia. A glorious land is Siberia! Rich and fertile, as any one will tell you. I liked it very much there. The natives of foreign stock were under my authority; a peaceable folk; but to my misfortune a score of their men, no more, took it into their heads to smuggle contraband goods. I was sent to seize them. So far as seizing them is concerned, I effected that, but one of them, out of caprice, it must have been, tried to defend himself, and treated me to that arrow. . . . I came near dying, but recovered. And now here I am on my way to make a final cure. . . The authorities have given the money,—may God grant them all health!”

Pásynkoff, completely exhausted, dropped his head on the pillow, and ceased speaking. A faint flush spread over his cheeks. He closed his eyes.

“He cannot talk much,”—said Elisyéi, who had not left the room, in an undertone.

“Here now,”—he went on, opening his eyes:—
“I must have caught cold. The local district doctor is attending me,—thou wilt see him; he appears to know his business. But I am glad it

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has happened, because, otherwise, how could I have met thee?" (And he clasped my hand. His hand, which shortly before had been as cold as ice, was now burning hot.)—"Tell me something about thyself,"—he began again, throwing his cloak off his breast:—"for God knows when we shall see each other again."

I hastened to comply with his wish, if only to prevent his talking, and began my narration. At first he listened to me with great attention, then asked for a drink, then began to close his eyes again and to throw his head about on the pillow. I advised him to take a little nap, adding that I would not proceed further until he should recover, and would establish myself in the adjoining room.

"Things are very wretched here," Pá-synkoff was beginning; but I stopped his mouth and softly left the room. Elisyéi followed me out.

"What 's the meaning of this, Elisyéi? Why, he is dying, is n't he?"—I asked the faithful servant.

Elisyéi merely waved his hand in despair, and turned away.

Having dismissed my postilion, and hastily established myself in the adjoining room, I went to see whether Pásynkoff had fallen asleep. At his door I collided with a tall, very fat and heavy man. His puffy, pock-marked face expressed in-

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dolence—and nothing else, his tiny eyes were all but closed, and his lips glistened as though after sleep.

“Allow me to inquire,”—I asked him, “whether you are not the doctor?”

The fat man looked at me, after having, with an effort elevated his overhanging forehead with his eyebrows.

“I am, sir,” he said at last.

“Will not you do me the favour to come this way to my room, doctor? I think Yákoff Ivánitch is asleep at present. I am his friend, and I should like to have a talk with you about his malady, which causes me great anxiety.”

“Very good, sir,”—replied the doctor, with an expression which seemed to say: “What in the world possesses you to talk so much? I would have gone any way,” and followed me.

“Tell me, please,”—I began, as soon as he had dropped down on a chair: “is my friend’s condition dangerous? What do you think?”

“Yes,”—calmly replied the fat man.

“And . . . is it very critical?”

“Yes, it is.”

“So that he may even . . . die?”

“Yes.”

I must confess that I gazed at my interlocutor almost with hatred.

“Good gracious!”—I began: “then we must resort to some measures, call a consultation, or

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something. . . . Why, things cannot be left in this condition. . . . Good heavens!”

“A consultation?—That can be done. Why not? We might call in Iván Efrémitch. . . .”

The doctor spoke with difficulty, and sighed incessantly. His belly heaved visibly, when he spoke, as though ejecting every word with an effort.

“Who is Iván Efrémitch?”

“The town doctor.”

“Would n’t it be better to send to the capital of the government—what think you? There certainly must be good physicians there.”

“Why not? We might do that.”

“And who is considered to be the best physician there?”

“The best? There was a Dr. Kohlrabus there only, I—I rather think he has been transferred somewhere else. However, I must confess that there is no necessity for sending.”

“Why not?”

“Even the governmental doctor cannot help your friend.”

“Is it possible that he is as bad as that?”

“Yes, exactly that; he ’s done for.”

“What, in particular, is his ailment?”

“He has received a wound. . . . The lungs have been injured, you know. . . . Well, and then he has caught cold, and fever has set in well, and so forth. . . . And he has no reserve force. A

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man can't recover without reserve force, as you know yourself."

We both remained silent for a while.

"We might try homeopathy,"—said the fat man, darting a sidelong glance at me.

"Homeopathy? Why, you are an allopath, are you not?"

"Well, and what if I am an allopath! Do you think I don't know about homeopathy? Just as well as anybody. Our apothecary here gives homeopathic treatment, and he has no learned degree."

"Well!"—I said to myself: "things are in a bad way! No, doctor," I said: "you had better treat him by your usual method."

"As you like, sir."

The fat man rose, and heaved a sigh.

"Are you going to him?"—I inquired.

"Yes; I must take a look at him."

And he left the room.

I did not follow him. It was more than my strength would bear to see him at the bedside of my poor friend. I called my man and ordered him to drive immediately to the capital of the government, and inquire there for the best physician, and bring him, without fail. There came a rapping in the corridor; I opened the door quickly.

The doctor had already come out of Pásynkoff's room.

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“ Well, how is he? ”—I asked in a whisper.

“ All right; I have prescribed a potion.”

“ I have decided, doctor, to send to the government town. I do not doubt your skill; but you know yourself that two heads are better than one.”

“ Very well, that ’s laudable!”—returned the fat man, and began to descend the stairs. Evidently, I bored him.

I went to Pásynkoff.

“ Hast thou seen the local Æsculapius? ”—he asked me.

“ Yes,”—I replied.

“ What I like about him,”—remarked Pásynkoff,—“ is his wonderful composure. A doctor ought to be phlegmatic, ought n’t he? That is very encouraging for the patient.”

As a matter of course, I did not attempt to persuade him to the contrary.

Toward evening, contrary to my anticipations, Pásynkoff felt more at ease. He requested Elysyéi to prepare the samovár, announced that he was going to treat me to tea, and would drink a cup himself, and he was perceptibly more cheerful. Nevertheless, I endeavoured to prevent his talking; and perceiving that he was absolutely determined not to be quiet, I asked him if he did not wish me to read something aloud to him.

“ As we used to do at Winterkeller’s—dost thou remember? ”—he replied: “ Certainly, with

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pleasure. What shall we read? Look over my books, yonder on the window-sill. . . .”

I went to the window and took up the first book which came to hand. . . .

“What is that?”—he asked.

“Lérmontoff.”

“Ah, Lérmontoff! Very good indeed! Púshkin is higher, of course. . . . Dost thou remember: ‘Again the storm-clouds over me have gathered in the gloom,’ . . . or: ‘For the last time thine image dear, I dare caress in mind.’ Akh, how wonderfully fine! wonderfully fine! But Lérmontoff is good also. Come here, brother, take and open the book at haphazard, and read!”

I opened the book and was disconcerted; I had hit upon “The Testament.” I tried to turn over the leaf, but Pásynkoff noticed my movement, and said hastily: “No, no, no! Read where it opened.”

There was no help for it; I read “The Testament.”

“A splendid thing!”—remarked Pásynkoff, as soon as I had uttered the last line.—“A splendid thing! But it is strange,”—he added, after a brief pause,—“it is strange that thou shouldst have hit upon ‘The Testament,’ of all things. . . . Strange!”

I began to read another poem, but Pásynkoff did not listen to me, gazed to one side, and repeated “strange!” a couple of times more.

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I dropped the book on my knees.

“ ‘They have a little neighbour,’ ”—he whispered, and suddenly turning to me, he asked: “Dost thou remember Sófya Zlotnítzky?”

I flushed scarlet.

“How can I help remembering?!”

“She married, did n’t she?” . . .

“Yes; she married Asánoff, long ago. I wrote thee about that.”

“Exactly, exactly so, thou didst write. Did her father forgive her in the end?”

“Yes; but he would not receive Asánoff.”

“The stubborn old man! Well, and what dost thou hear about it? Do they live happily?”

“I really do not know. . . . I think they do. They are living in the country, in the *** Government; I have not seen them; but I have driven past.”

“And have they children?”

“I believe so. . . . By the way, Pásynkoff?”—I asked.

He glanced at me.

“Confess,—I remember that thou wouldst not answer my question at the time; thou didst tell her that I was in love with her, didst thou not?”

“I told her everything, the whole truth. . . . I always spoke the truth to her. To have concealed anything from her would have been a sin!”

Pásynkoff ceased speaking.

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“Come, tell me,”—he began again: “didst thou get over thy love for her promptly or not?”

“Not very promptly; but I did get over it. What’s the use of sighing in vain?”

Pásynkoff turned his face toward me.

“But I, my dear fellow,”—he began, and his lips quivered,—“am no match for thee; I have n’t got over my love for her to this day.”

“What!”—I exclaimed with inexpressible amazement.—“Wert thou in love with her?”

“I was,”—said Pásynkoff, slowly, raising both hands to his head.—“How I loved her God alone knows. I never spoke of it to any one in the world, and never meant to mention it to any one but it has come out! ‘I have but a brief while to live in this world,’ they say. . . . So it does not matter!”

Pásynkoff’s unexpected confession astounded me to such a degree that I was positively unable to utter a word, and merely thought: “Is it possible? how is it that I did not suspect this?”

“Yes,”—he went on, as though talking to himself:—“I loved her. I did not cease to love her, even when I learned that her heart belonged to Asánoff. But it pained me to learn that! If she had fallen in love with thee, I would, at all events, have rejoiced on thy account; but Asánoff. . . . How could he please her? It was his luck! And she was not able to be unfaithful to her feeling,

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to cease to love him. An honourable soul does not change. . . .”

I recalled Asánoff’s visit after the fatal dinner, Pásynkoff’s intervention, and involuntarily clasped my hands.

“Thou didst learn all that from me, poor fellow!”—I exclaimed:—“and thou didst take it upon thyself to go to her, nevertheless!”

“Yes,”—said Pásynkoff:—“that explanation with her—I shall never forget it. It was then I learned, it was then I understood the meaning of the motto I had long before chosen for myself: ‘Resignation.’ But she still remained my constant dream, my ideal. . . . And pitiable is he who lives without an ideal!”

I glanced at Pásynkoff; his eyes seemed to be fixed on the distance, and blazed with a feverish gleam.

“I loved her,”—he went on:—“I loved her, her, quiet, honourable, inaccessible, incorruptible; when she went away, I became nearly crazed with grief. . . . I have never loved any one since. . . .”

And suddenly, turning round, he pressed his face to his pillow, and fell to weeping softly.

I sprang to my feet, bent over him, and began to comfort him. . . .

“Never mind,”—he said, raising his head, and shaking back his hair:—“I did n’t mean to do it. I feel rather sad, rather sorry for myself, that is to say. . . . But it is of no conse-

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quence. The poetry is to blame for it all. Read me some other poems—something more cheerful.”

I took up Lérmontoff, and began hastily to turn over the leaves; but, as though expressly, I kept hitting upon poems which might again agitate Pásynkoff. At last I read him “The Gifts of the Téreka.”

“Rhetorical crackling!”—remarked my poor friend, in the tone of an instructor:—“but there are good places! I tried my hand at poetry myself, my dear fellow, in thine absence, and began a poem: ‘The Beaker of Life,’—but it came to nothing! my business, brother, is to sympathise, not to create. . . . But I feel tired, somehow; I believe I had better take a nap—what dost thou think? What a splendid thing sleep is, when you come to think of it! All our life is a dream, and the best thing in it is sleep.”

“And poetry?”—I asked.

“Poetry is a dream also, only a dream of paradise.”

Pásynkoff closed his eyes.

I stood for a while beside his bed. I did not think that he could get to sleep quickly; but his breathing became more even and prolonged. I stole out of the room on tiptoe, returned to my own chamber, and lay down on the divan. For a long time I reflected on what Pásynkoff had told me, recalled many things, marvelled, and, at last, fell asleep myself. . . .

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Some one nudged me: before me stood Elisyéi.

“Please come to my master,”—he said.

I rose at once.

“What is the matter with him?”

“He is delirious.”

“Delirious? And he has not been so before?”

“Yes; he was delirious last night also; but somehow it is dreadful to-night.”

I entered Pásynkoff's room. He was not lying on his bed, but sitting up, with his whole body bent forward, softly throwing his hands apart, smiling and talking—talking incessantly in a weak, toneless voice, like the rustling of reeds. His eyes were wandering. The melancholy light of the night-taper, placed on the floor, and screened by a book, lay in a motionless patch on the ceiling; Pásynkoff's face looked paler than ever in the half gloom.

I went up to him, called him by name—he did not reply. I began to listen to his mumblings: he was raving about Siberia, about its forests. At times there was sense in his ravings.

“What trees!”—he whispered: “they reach to the very sky. How much hoar-frost there is on them! Silver. . . . Snow-drifts. . . . And yonder are little tracks a hare has leaped along, or a white ermine. . . . No, it is my father who has run past with my papers. Yonder he is! . . . Yonder he is! I must go; the moon is shining. I must go and find my papers. . . .

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Ah, a flower, a scarlet flower—Sófya is there. . . . There, little bells are ringing, oh, it is the frost ringing. . . . Akh, no; it is the stupid bull-finches hopping in the bushes, and whistling. . . . See the red-breasted warblers! It is cold. . . . Ah! there is Asánoff. . . . Akh, yes, he is a cannon, you know—a brass cannon, and his gun-carriage is green. That is why he pleases people. Was that a shooting-star? No, it is an arrow flying. . . . Akh, how swiftly, and straight at my heart! Who is that shooting? Thou, Sónetchka?”

He bent his head and began to whisper incoherent words. I glanced at Elisyúi; he was standing with his hands clasped behind his back, and gazing compassionately at his master.

“Well, my dear fellow, hast thou become a practical man?”—he suddenly inquired, fixing on me a glance so clear, so full of intelligence, that I gave an involuntary start, and was on the point of answering, but he immediately went on:—“But I, brother, have not become a practical man, I have not done that which thou wilt do! I was born a dreamer, a dreamer! Dreams, dreams. . . . What is a dream? Sobakévitch’s peasant,—that’s what a dream is. Okh!”

Pásynkoff raved until nearly daylight; at last, he quieted down a little, sank back on his pillow, and fell into a doze. I returned to my own room.

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Exhausted by the cruel night, I fell into a heavy slumber.

Again Elisyéi awakened me.

“Akh, dear little father!”—he said to me in a trembling voice:—“I believe Yákovf Ivánitch is dying. . . .”

I ran to Pásynkoff. He was lying motionless. By the light of the dawning day, he already looked like a corpse. He recognised me.

“Farewell,”—he whispered:—“remember me to her, I am dying. . . .”

“Yásha!”—I cried:—“don’t say that! Thou wilt live. . . .”

“No; what’s the use? I am dying. . . . Here, take this in memory of me . . .” (He pointed at his breast.)

“What is this?”—he suddenly began to speak again:—“Look! the sea all golden; on it are blue islands, marble temples, palms, incense. . . .”

He fell silent dropped his eyes. . . .

Half an hour later he was dead. Elisyéi fell, weeping, on his breast. I closed his eyes.

On his neck was a small silken amulet, attached to a black cord. I took possession of it.

On the third day he was buried. . . . The noblest of hearts had vanished forever from the world! I myself flung the first handful of earth on him.

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III

ANOTHER year and a half passed. Business forced me to go to Moscow. I established myself in one of the best hotels there. One day, as I was passing along the corridor, I glanced at the black-board whereon stood the names of travellers, and almost cried aloud in surprise: opposite No. 1 stood the name of Sófya Nikoláevna Asánoff. I had accidentally heard much that was evil about her husband of late; I had learned that he had become passionately addicted to liquor and cards; had ruined himself, and, altogether, was conducting himself badly. People spoke with respect of his wife. . . . Not without agitation did I return to my own room. Passion which had cooled long, long ago, seemed to begin to stir in my heart, and my heart began to beat violently. I decided to go to Sófya Nikoláevna. "What a long time has passed since the day we parted," I thought: "she has probably forgotten everything which took place between us then."

I sent to her Elisyéi, whom I had taken into my service after Pásynkoff's death, with my visiting-card, and ordered him to inquire whether she was at home, and whether I could see her. Elisyéi speedily returned, and announced that

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Sófya Nikoláevna was at home, and would receive me.

I betook myself to Sófya Nikoláevna. When I entered, she was standing in the middle of the room, and taking leave of some tall, stout gentleman or other. "As you like,"—he was saying, in a thick, sibilant voice:—"he is not a harmless man, he is a useless man; and every useless man in well-regulated society is harmful, harmful!"

With these words, the tall gentleman left the room. Sófya Nikoláevna turned to me.

"What a long time it is since we met!"—said she.—"Sit down, I beg of you. . . ."

We sat down. I looked at her. . . . To behold, after a long separation, features once dear; to recognise them, yet not to recognise them, as though through the former, still unforgotten face, another face—like, yet strange—had emerged; momentarily, almost involuntarily to note the traces imposed by time,—all this is sad enough. "And I, also, must have changed," one thinks to himself. . . .

Sófya Nikoláevna had not aged greatly, however; but when I had seen her for the last time, she had just entered her seventeenth year, and nine years had elapsed since that day. Her features had become more severe and regular than ever. As of old, they expressed sincerity of feeling and firmness; but in place of their former

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composure, a certain hidden pain and anxiety was manifested in them. Her eyes had grown deeper and darker. She had come to resemble her mother. . . .

Sófya Nikoláevna was the first to start the conversation.

“We are both changed,”—she began.—“Where have you been all this time?”

“I have been wandering about here and there,” I replied.—“And have you been living in the country all the while?”

“Chiefly in the country. And I am only passing through here now.”

“How are your parents?”

“My mother is dead, but my father is still in Petersburg; my brother is in the service; Várya lives with him.”

“And your husband?”

“My husband?”—she said in a somewhat hurried voice;—“He is now in southern Russia, at the fairs. He was always fond of horses, as you know, and he has set up a stud-farm of his own . . . so, for that purpose . . . he is now buying horses.”

At that moment a little girl of eight entered the room, with her hair dressed in Chinese fashion, a very sharp and vivacious little face, and large, dark-grey eyes. On catching sight of me, she immediately thrust out her little foot, made a swift curtsy, and went to Sófya Nikoláevna.

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“Let me introduce to you my little daughter,”—said Sófya Nikoláevna, touching the little girl with her finger under her chubby chin:—“she would not consent to remain at home, but entreated me to take her with me.”

The little girl swept her quick eyes over me, and frowned slightly.

“She ’s my fine, courageous girl,”—went on Sófya Nikoláevna:—“she is not afraid of anything. And she studies well; I must praise her for that.”

“*Comment se nomme monsieur?*”—inquired the little girl, in a low voice, bending toward her mother.

Sófya Nikoláevna mentioned my name. Again the little girl glanced at me.

“What is your name?”—I asked her.

“My name is Lídiya,”—replied the little girl, looking me boldly in the eye.

“They spoil you, I suppose,”—I remarked.

“Who spoils me?”

“Who? Why, everybody, I suppose, beginning with your parents.” (The little girl darted a silent glance at her mother.) “Konstantín Alexándrovitch, I imagine,”—I went on. . . .

“Yes, yes,”—interposed Sófya Nikoláevna, while her little daughter did not remove her attentive gaze from her; “my husband, of course he is very fond of children. . . .”

A strange expression flashed over Lídiya’s in-

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telligent little face. Her lips pouted slightly; she cast down her eyes.

“Tell me,”—hastily added Sófya Nikoláevna:—“you are here on business, I suppose?”

“Yes. . . . And you also?”

“Yes; I also. . . . In my husband’s absence, you understand, I am forced to attend to business.”

“*Maman!*”—began Lídiya.

“*Quoi, mon enfant?*”

“*Non—rien. . . . Je te dirai après.*”

Sófya Nikoláevna laughed, and shrugged her shoulders.

We both maintained silence for a space, while Lídiya folded her arms pompously on her breast.

“Tell me, please,”—began Sófya Nikoláevna again:—“I remember that you had a friend what in the world was his name? he had such a kind face he was always reading poetry; a very enthusiastic man. . . .”

“Was n’t it Pásynkoff?”

“Yes, yes; Pásynkoff where is he now?”

“He is dead.”

“Dead?”—repeated Sófya Nikoláevna:—“what a pity!”

“Have I seen him?”—asked the little girl in a hasty whisper.

“No, Lídiya, thou hast not seen him. What a pity!”—repeated Sófya Nikoláevna.

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“You mourn for him” I began:—
“What would you do if you had known him as I knew him? But permit me to inquire: why did you mention him in particular?”

“By accident; I really don’t know why. . . .” (Sófya Nikoláevna dropped her eyes.)—“Lí-diya,”—she added:—“go to thy nurse.”

“Wilt thou call me when I may come?”—asked the little girl.

“I will.”

The little girl left the room. Sófya Nikoláevna turned to me.

“Tell me, please, everything you know about Pásynkoff.”

I began my narration. I sketched, in brief words, the whole life of my friend; I tried, to the best of my ability, to depict his soul; I described his last meeting with me, his end.

“And so that was the sort of man he was!”—I exclaimed, as I concluded my narration:—“he is gone from us, unnoticed, almost unappreciated! And that would be no great harm. What does popular appreciation amount to? But I feel pained, affronted, that such a man, with so loving and devoted a heart should have died, without having even once experienced the bliss of mutual love, without having awakened sympathy in a single woman’s heart worthy of him! What if the rest of us do not taste that bliss? We are not worthy of it; but Pásynkoff!”

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. . . And, moreover, have not I in my day encountered a thousand men who were not to be compared with him in any way, and who have been beloved? Are we bound to assume that certain defects in a man,—self-confidence, for example, or frivolousness, are indispensable in order that a woman shall become attached to him? Or is love afraid of perfection, of such perfection as is possible here on earth, as of something alien and terrible to it?”

Sófya Nikoláevna listened to me to the end, without taking from me her stern and piercing eyes, or unsealing her lips; only her brows twitched from time to time.

“Why do you assume,”—she said, after a brief pause,—“that not a single woman loved your friend?”

“Because I know it, I know it for a fact.”

Sófya Nikoláevna was on the point of saying something, but stopped short. She seemed to be struggling with herself.

“You are mistaken,”—she said at last:—“I know a woman who loved your dead friend fervently: she loves and remembers him to this day . . . and the news of his death will wound her deeply.”

“Who is the woman?—permit me to ask.”

“My sister Vára.”

“Varvára Nikoláevna!”—I exclaimed in amazement.

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“ Yes.”

“ What? Varvára Nikoláevna?”—I repeated:—“ that”

“ I will complete your thought,”—pursued Sófya Nikoláevna:—“ that cold, indifferent, in your opinion, languid girl, loved your friend; that is the reason she has not married, and will not marry. Until to-day, I have been the only one to know this. Várya would have died, rather than betray her secret. In our family, we know how to hold our peace and endure.”

For a long time I gazed intently at Sófya Nikoláevna, involuntarily meditating on the bitter significance of her last words.

“ You have astounded me,”—I said at last.—“ But do you know, Sófya Nikoláevna, if I were not afraid of awakening in you unpleasant memories, I also, in my turn, could astound you. . . .”

“ I do not understand you,”—she returned slowly, and in some confusion.

“ You really do not understand me,”—said I, rising hastily:—“ and therefore, permit me, instead of a verbal explanation, to send you a certain article. . . .”

“ But what is it?”—she asked.

“ Be not disturbed, Sófya Nikoláevna; the question does not concern me.”

I bowed and returned to my room, got out the amulet which I had taken from Pásynkoff, and

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sent it to Sófya Nikoláevna, with the following note:

“This amulet, my dead friend wore constantly on his breast, and died with it there. In it you will find a note of yours to him, of utterly insignificant contents; you may read it. He wore it because he loved you passionately, as he confessed to me only the night before he died. Now that he is dead, why should not you know that his heart belonged to you?”

Elisyéi soon returned, and brought me back the amulet.

“How is this?”—I asked:—“Did she send no message to me?”

“No, sir.”

I said nothing for a while.

“Did she read my note?”

“She must have read it, sir; her little girl carried it to her.”

“Unapproachable,”—I thought, recalling Pásynkoff’s last words.—“Well, go,”—I said aloud.

Elisyéi smiled in a strange sort of way, and did not leave the room.

“A certain young girl . . . has come to see you, sir,”—he began.

“What girl?”

Elisyéi was silent for a space.

“Did n’t my late master tell you anything, sir?”

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“No. . . . What dost thou mean?”

“When he was in Nóvgorod,”—went on Elisyéi, touching the jamb of the door with his hand, “he made acquaintance with a certain young girl, say, for example. So it is that girl who wishes to see you, sir. I met her on the street the other day. I said to her: ‘Come; if the master commands, I will admit thee.’”

“Ask her in, ask her in, of course. But what sort of a girl is she?”

“A lowly girl, sir from the petty burgher class a Russian.”

“Did the late Yákoff Ivánitch love her?”

“He loved her right enough, sir. Well, she when she heard that my master was dead, she was greatly afflicted. She ’s a good girl, right enough, sir.”

“Ask her in, ask her in.”

Elisyéi went out, and immediately returned. Behind him came a girl in a gaily-coloured cotton gown, and with a dark kerchief on her head, which half covered her face. On catching sight of me, she was abashed, and turned away.

“What ails thee?”—Elisyéi said to her:—
“Go along, have no fear.”

I stepped up to her, and took her hand.

“What is your name?”—I asked her.

“Másha,”—she said, in a soft voice, casting a covert glance at me.

Judging from her appearance, she was twenty-

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two or three years of age; she had a round, rather plain but agreeable face, soft cheeks, gentle blue eyes, and small, very pretty, clean hands. She was neatly dressed.

“Did you know Yákoff Ivánitch?”—I went on.

“Yes, sir,”—she said, plucking at the ends of her kerchief, and tears started out on her eye-lashes.

I asked her to be seated.

She immediately sat down on the edge of a chair, without ceremony, and without putting on airs. Elisyéi left the room.

“You made his acquaintance in Nóvgorod?”

“Yes, in Nóvgorod, sir,”—she replied, tucking both hands under her kerchief. “I only heard of his death day before yesterday, from Elisyéi Timoféitch, sir. Yákoff Ivánitch, when he went away to Siberia, promised to write, and he did write twice; but after that he did not write any more, sir. I would have followed him to Siberia, but he did not want me to, sir.”

“Have you relatives in Nóvgorod?”

“I have.”

“Did you live with them?”

“I lived with my mother and my married sister; but afterward my mother got angry with me; and it got crowded at my sister’s: they had a lot of children; so I moved away. I always set my hopes on Yákoff Ivánitch, and wanted

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nothing except to see him, for he was always affectionate to me—ask Elisyéi Timoféitch if he was n't."

Másha ceased speaking for a little while.

"I have his letters with me,"—she went on.—
"Here, look at them, sir."

She drew from her pocket several letters and gave them to me:—"Read them, sir,"—she added.

I unfolded one letter, and recognised Pásynkoff's handwriting.

"Dear Másha!" (He wrote a large, fine hand)—"yesterday thou didst lean thy dear little head against my head, and when I asked: 'why art thou doing this?' thou didst say to me: 'I want to listen to what you are thinking about.' I will tell thee what I was thinking about: I was thinking how nice it would be for Másha to learn to read and write! Then she could have deciphered this letter. . . ."

Másha glanced at the letter.

"He wrote me that while he was still in Nóvgorod,"—she said:—"when he was planning to teach me to read and write. Look at the others, sir. There is one from Siberia, sir. Here, read this one, sir."

I read the letters. They were all very affectionate, even tender. In one of them, precisely in that first letter from Siberia, Pásynkoff called Másha his best friend, and promised to send her money to come to Siberia, and wound up with

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the following words: "I kiss thy pretty little hands; the young girls here have no such hands; and their heads are no match for thine, neither are their hearts. . . . Read the little books which I gave thee, and remember me, and I shall not forget thee. Thou alone, alone hast loved me; and so I wish to belong to thee only. . . ."

"I see that he was very much attached to thee,"—I said, returning the letters to her.

"He loved me very much,"—returned Másha, carefully stowing the letters away in her pocket, and tears coursed slowly down her cheeks.—"I always set my hopes on him; if the Lord had prolonged his life, he would not have abandoned me. May God grant him the kingdom of heaven! . . ."

She wiped her eyes with a corner of her kerchief.

"Where are you living now?"—I inquired.

"I am living in Moscow now; I came with a lady; but now I am without a place. I went to Yákoff Ivánitch's aunt, but she is very poor herself. Yákoff Ivánitch often talked to me about you, sir,"—she added, rising and bowing:—"he was always very fond of you, and remembered you. I met Elisyéi Timoféitch here the day before yesterday, and I thought: would n't you be willing to help me, as I have no place at present. . . ."

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“With great pleasure, Márya allow me to inquire your patronymic?”

“Petróff,”—replied Másha, and dropped her eyes.

“I will do everything in my power for you, Márya Petrónna,”—I went on:—“I am only sorry that I am only passing through the town, and am very little acquainted in nice houses.”

Másha sighed.

“I ’d like to get some sort of a place, sir. . . . I don’t know how to cut out, but when it comes to sewing, I can sew anything well, and I can take care of children.”

“I must give her some money,” I thought: “but how am I to do it?”

“Hearken, Márya Petrónna,”—I began, not without confusion:—“you must excuse me, please, but you know from Pásynkoff’s words on what friendly terms I was with him. . . . Will you not permit me to offer to you for present necessities a small sum?”

Másha darted a look at me.

“What, sir?”—she asked.

“Are you not in need of money?”—I said.

Másha blushed all over and bent her head.

“What should I do with money?”—she whispered. “Better get me a place, sir. . . .”

“I will try to get you a place; but I cannot answer for that with certainty; and really, it is

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wrong for you to feel ashamed. . . . For I am not a mere stranger to you. . . . Accept this from me, in memory of your friend. . . .”

I turned away, hastily took several bank-notes from my pocket-book, and gave them to her.

Masha stood motionless, her head drooping still lower. . . .

“Take it,”—I repeated.

She softly raised her eyes to mine, looked into my face with a mournful gaze, softly liberated her pale hand from under her kerchief, and stretched it out to me. I laid the bank-notes on her cold fingers. She silently hid her hand again under her kerchief, and dropped her eyes.

“And in future, Márya Petróvna,”—I went on,—“if you are in want of anything, please appeal directly to me.—I will give you my address.”

“I thank you humbly, sir,”—she said; and after a brief pause, she added: “Did n’t he speak to you about me, sir?”

“I met him the day before he died, Márya Petróvna. However, I do not recollect. . . . I think he did speak of you.”

Masha passed her hand over her hair, propped her cheek lightly on it, meditated, and after saying: “Farewell, sir,” she left the room.

I sat down at the table, and began to think bitter thoughts. This Másha, her relations to

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Pásynkoff, his letters, the secret love of Sófya Nikoláevna's sister for him. . . . "Poor fellow! Poor fellow!"—I whispered, sighing heavily. I recalled the whole of Pásynkoff's life, his childhood, his youth, Fräulein Frederika. . . . "There now,"—I thought: "Fate did not give thee much! she did not gladden thee with a great deal!"

On the following day, I called again on Sófya Nikoláevna. I was made to wait in the ante-room, and when I entered, Lídiya was already sitting beside her mother. I understood that Sófya Nikoláevna did not wish to renew the conversation of the preceding day.

We began to chat—really, I do not remember about what,—rumours of the town, business matters. . . . Lídiya frequently put in her little word, and gazed slyly at me. An amusing importance had suddenly made its appearance on her mobile little face. . . . The clever little girl must have divined that her mother had placed her by her side of deliberate purpose.

I rose, and began to take my leave. Sófya Nikoláevna escorted me to the door. "I made you no reply yesterday,"—she said, halting at the threshold:—"and what reply was there to make? Our life does not depend on ourselves; but we all have one anchor, from which we need never break away, unless we so wish it ourselves: the sense of duty."

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I silently bent my head in token of assent, and bade farewell to the young Puritan.

All that evening I remained at home; but I did not think of her; I kept thinking, thinking incessantly of my dear, my never-to-be-forgotten Pásynkoff—of that last of the romanticists; and feelings now sad, now tender, surged up sweetly in my breast, and resounded on the strings of my heart, which was not yet grown utterly old. . . . Peace to thy ashes, thou unpractical man, thou kind-hearted idealist! And may God grant to all practical gentlemen, to whom thou were ever an alien, and who, perchance, will still ridicule thy shadow,—may God grant them to taste at least the hundredth part of those pure delights, wherewith, in spite of Fate and men, thy poor and submissive life was adorned!

“FAUST”

(1855)

“FAUST”

A STORY IN NINE LETTERS

Entbehren sollst du, sollst entbehren.

“FAUST.” (Part I.)

FIRST LETTER

*From Pável Alexándrovitch B*** to Semyón
Nicoláevitch V***.*

VILLAGE OF M OE, June 6, 1850.

I ARRIVED here three days ago, my dear friend, and, in accordance with my promise, I take up my pen to write to thee. A fine rain has been drizzling down ever since morning; it is impossible to go out; and besides, I want to have a chat with thee. Here I am again, in my old nest, in which I have not been—dreadful to say—for nine whole years. Really, when one comes to think of it, I have become altogether another man. Yes, actually, another man. Dost thou remember in the drawing-room the small, dark mirror of my great-grandmother, with those queer scrolls at the corners? Thou wert always meditating on what it had beheld a hundred years ago. As soon as I arrived, I went

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to it, and was involuntarily disconcerted. I suddenly perceived how I had aged and changed of late. However, I am not the only one who has grown old. My tiny house, which was in a state of decrepitude long since, hardly holds itself upright now, and has sagged down, and sunk into the ground. My good Vasílievna, the house-keeper (thou hast not forgotten her, I am sure: she used to regale thee with such splendid preserves), has quite dried up and bent together. At sight of me, she could not cry out, and she did not fall to weeping, but merely grunted and coughed, sat down exhausted on a chair, and waved her hand in despair. Old Terénty is still alert, holds himself erect as of old, and as he walks turns out his feet clad in the same yellow nankeen trousers, and shod with the same squeaking goat's-leather shoes, with high instep and knots of ribbon, which evoked your emotions more than once. . . . But great heavens!—how loose those trousers now hang on his thin legs! how white his hair has grown! And his face has all shrivelled up to the size of your fist; and when he talked with me, when he began to make arrangements and issue orders in the adjoining room, I found him ridiculous, and yet I was sorry for him. All his teeth are gone, and he mumbles with a whistling and hissing sound.

On the other hand, the park has grown wonderfully beautiful: the little modest bushes of

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lilac, acacia, and honeysuckle (you and I set them out, dost remember?) have grown up into magnificent, dense thickets; the birches and maples, have all spread upward and outward; the linden alleys in particular, have become very fine. I love those alleys, I love their tender grey-green hue, and the delicate fragrance of the air beneath their arches; I love the mottled network of circles of light on the dark earth—I have no sand, as thou knowest. My favourite oak-sapling has already become a young oak-tree. Yesterday, in the middle of the day, I sat for more than an hour in its shade, on a bench. I felt greatly at my ease. Round about the grass gleamed so merrily green; over all lay a golden light, strong and soft; it even penetrated into the shade . . . and how many birds I heard! Thou hast not forgotten, I trust, that birds are my passion! The turtle-doves cooed incessantly, now and then an oriole whistled, a chaffinch executed its charming song, thrushes waxed angry and chattered, a cuckoo answered from afar; suddenly, like a madman, a woodpecker uttered a piercing scream. I listened, listened to all this soft, commingled din, and did not want to move, and in my heart was something which was not indolence, nor yet emotion.

And the park is not the only thing that has grown up; sturdy, robust lads, in whom I should never have recognised the little urchins whom I

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used to know, are constantly coming under my eye. And thy favourite, Timósha, has now become such a Timofyéi as thou canst not picture to thyself. Thou hadst fears for his health then, and predicted consumption for him; but thou shouldst take a look now at his huge, red hands, and the way they stick out from the tight sleeves of his nankeen coat, and what round, thick muscles stand out all over him! The nape of his neck is like that of a bull, and his head is all covered with round, blond curls,—a regular Farnese Hercules! His face has undergone less change, however, than the faces of the others have; it has not even increased greatly in size, and his cheery, “gaping” smile, as thou wert wont to express it, has remained the same as of yore. I have taken him for my valet; I discarded my Petersburg valet in Moscow: he was altogether too fond of putting me to shame, and making me feel his superiority in the usages of the capital.

I have not found a single one of my dogs; they are all dead. Néfta alone outlived the rest—and even she did not survive till my arrival, as Argos waited for Ulysses; she was not fated to behold her former master and comrade of the hunt with her dimmed eyes. But Shávka is still sound, and still barks hoarsely, and one ear is torn, as usual, and there are burrs in his tail, as is fitting.

I have established myself in thy former chamber. The sun strikes on it, it is true, and there

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are a great many flies in it; but, on the other hand, it has less of the odour of an old house about it than the other rooms. 'T is strange! that musty, somewhat sour and withered odour acts powerfully on my imagination. I will not say that it is disagreeable to me—on the contrary; but it evokes in me sadness, and, eventually, dejection. Like thyself, I am very fond of the pot-bellied chests of drawers with their brass fastenings, the white arm-chairs with oval backs and curved legs, the glass chandeliers covered with fly-specks, with the huge egg of purple tinsel in the middle,—in a word, all sorts of furniture belonging to our grandfathers; but I cannot look at all this constantly: a sort of perturbed tedium (precisely that!) takes possession of me. In the room where I have settled myself, the furniture is of the most ordinary description, home-made; but I have left in one corner a tall, narrow cupboard with shelves, on which, athwart the dust are barely visible divers old-fashioned, pot-bellied vessels, of blue and green glass. And I have given orders that there shall be hung on the wall,—thou wilt recall it,—that portrait of a woman, in the black frame, which thou wert wont to call the portrait of Manon Lescaut. It has grown a little darker in these nine years; but the eyes look forth as pensively, slily, and tenderly as ever, and the lips smile in the same frivolous and mournful way as of old, and the half-

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stripped rose dangles as softly as ever from the slender fingers. The window-shades in my room amuse me greatly. Once upon a time they used to be green, but have grown yellow in the sunlight. Upon them, in black, are painted scenes from d’Arlincourt’s “Hermit.” On one shade, this hermit, with the biggest sort of a beard, staringly-prominent eyes, and in sandals, is dragging off to the mountains some dishevelled young lady or other; on the other shade, a fierce combat is in progress between four knights in skull-caps, and with puffs on their shoulders; one is lying, *en raccourci*, slain—in short, all the horrors are depicted, and all around reigns such undisturbed tranquillity, and such gentle reflections are cast on the ceiling from the shades themselves. . . . A sort of spiritual quietude has descended upon me since I have established myself here. I do not want to do anything; I do not want to see any one, to meditate about anything. I am too indolent to speculate; but not too indolent to think; but thinking is not indolence; they are two separate things, as thou art well aware.

At first the memories of my childhood invaded me. . . . Wheresoever I went, whatsoever I looked at, they surged up from every direction, clear, clear to the most minute details, and motionless, as it were, in their distinct definiteness. . . . Then those memories were suc-

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ceeded by others; then . . . then I softly turned away from the past, and there remained nothing in my breast save a sort of dreamy burden. Just imagine! As I sat on the dam, under the willow, I suddenly fell to weeping, quite unexpectedly; and would have wept for a long time, in spite of my advanced age, had I not been mortified by a passing peasant-wife, who stared at me with curiosity, then, without turning her head toward me, made a straight, low obeisance, and walked past. I should have liked greatly to remain in that frame of mind (I shall not weep any more, of course) until my departure hence, that is to say, until the month of September; and I shall be very much chagrined, if any one of the neighbours should take it into his head to call on me. However, apparently, there is nothing to fear in that quarter; for I have no near neighbours. Thou wilt understand me, I am convinced; thou knowest, from thine own experience, how beneficial solitude often is. . . . I need it now, after all sorts of wanderings.

But I shall not be bored. I have brought with me several books, and I have a very fair library here. Yesterday I opened the cases, and rummaged for a long time among the musty books. I found many curious things, which I had not noticed before: “Candide,” in a manuscript translation of the '70s; newspapers and journals of the same period; “The Triumphant Chame-

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leon” (that is to say, Mirabeau); “Le Paysan Perversi,” and so forth. I came upon some children’s books, my own, and those of my father, and my grandmother, and, even—just fancy!—of my great-grandmother. On one very, very ancient French grammar, in a gay binding, was written in large letters: “*Ce livre appartient à M-lle Eudoxie de Lavrine,*” and the year was added—1741. I saw books which I had brought from abroad some time or other; among others, Goethe’s “Faust.” Perhaps thou art not aware that there was a time when I knew “Faust” by heart (the first part, of course), word for word; I could not read it enough to satisfy myself. . . . But, other times, other dreams, and in the course of the last nine years I don’t believe I have taken Goethe in my hand a single time. With what an inexpressible feeling did I behold the little book, but too familiar to me (a bad edition of 1828). I carried it off with me, lay down on my bed, and began to read. What an effect the whole magnificent first scene had upon me! The appearance of the Spirit of Earth, his words; thou rememberest: “On the billows of life, in the whirlwind of action,” aroused within me the trepidation and chill of rapture which I have not experienced for many a day. I recalled everything: Berlin, and my student days, and Fräulein Klara Schtik, and Zeidelmann, in the part of Mephistopheles, and everything and every

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one. . . . For a long time I could not get to sleep; my youth came and stood before me, like a ghost; like a fire, like a poison, it coursed through my veins; my heart expanded and refused to contract; something swept across its strings, and desires began to seethe. . . .

Such were the reveries to which thy friend, aged almost forty, surrendered himself as he sat solitary, in his isolated little house! What if some one had seen me? Well, what if they had? I should not have been in the least ashamed. To feel ashamed is also a sign of youth; but I have begun to notice that I am growing old, and knowest thou why? This is the reason. I now try to magnify to myself my cheerful sensations, and to belittle the mournful ones, while in the days of youth I proceeded on the diametrically opposite plan. One goes about then hoarding his sorrow as though it were a treasure, and is ashamed of a cheerful impulse. . . .

And nevertheless, it seems to me that, notwithstanding all my experience of life, there is still something more in the world, friend Horatio, that I have not experienced, and that that “something” is about the most important of all.

Ekh, how I have run on! Farewell! until another time. What art thou doing in Petersburg? By the way: Savély, my rustic cook, asks to be remembered to thee. He also has grown old, but not too much so, has waxed fat and some-

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what pot-bellied. He makes just as well as of old, chicken soup with boiled onions, curd-cakes with fancy edges, and *pigus*,¹ the famous dish of the steppes, which made thy tongue turn white, gave thee indigestion, and stood like a stake through thee for four-and-twenty hours. On the other hand, he dries up the roasts, as of old, to such a point, that you might bang them against the plate—they are regular cardboard. But fare-well!

Thine,

P. B.

SECOND LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, June 12, 1850.

I HAVE a rather important bit of news to communicate to thee, my dear friend.—Listen! Yesterday, before dinner, I took a fancy for a stroll,—only not in the park; I walked along the road leading to town. It is very pleasant to walk on a long, straight road, without any object, and with long strides. One seems to be engaged in business, hastening somewhere or other.—I look: a calash is driving to meet me. “Is n’t it coming to my house?” I thought with secret alarm. . . . But, no; in the calash sits a gentleman with a moustache, a stranger to me. I recover my

¹ A sour soup, with cucumbers.—TRANSLATOR.

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equanimity. But suddenly this gentleman, on coming alongside of me, orders his coachman to stop the horses, courteously lifts his cap, and with still greater courtesy asks me: “ Am not I so-and-so? ” calling me by name. I, in turn, come to a halt, and with the animation of a criminal being conducted to his trial, reply: “ I am so-and-so, ” and stare the while, like a sheep, at the gentleman with the moustache, thinking to myself: “ Why, I certainly have seen him somewhere or other! ”

“ You do not recognise me? ”—he enunciates, alighting in the meantime, from the calash.

“ I do not in the least, sir. ”

“ But I recognised you instantly. ”

One word follows another; it turns out that he is Priímkoff,—dost thou remember? Our old comrade in the university. “ What important bit of news is this? ” thou art thinking at this moment, my dear Semyón Nikoláitch.—“ Priím-koff, so far as I recollect, was a rather frivolous fellow, although neither malicious nor stupid. ”—All that is so, my dear friend; but listen to the continuation of my tale.

“ I was greatly delighted, ” says he, “ when I heard that you had come to your village, to our neighbourhood. But I was not the only one who rejoiced. ”

“ Allow me to inquire, ”—I inquired:—“ who else was so amiable. . . . ”

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“ My wife.”

“ Your wife?”

“ Yes, my wife; she is an old acquaintance of yours.”

“ Permit me to inquire your wife’s name?”

“ Her name is Vyéra Nikoláevna; she was born Éltzoff. . . .”

“ Vyéra Nikoláevna!”—I exclaimed involuntarily. . . .

So this is that same important piece of news, of which I spoke to thee at the beginning of my letter.

But perhaps thou wilt not discern anything important about it. . . . I must narrate to thee somewhat of my past . . . of my long-past life.

When we, thou and I, came out of the university, I was twenty-two years of age. Thou didst enter the government service; I, as thou art aware, decided to betake myself to Berlin. But there was nothing to do in Berlin before October. I wanted to spend the summer in Russia, in the country, to have my fill of lounging for the last time; and then to set to work in sober earnest. As to how far this last project was executed, I will not dilate at present. . . . “ But where shall I spend the summer?” I asked myself. I did not wish to go to my own country-place: my father had recently died, I had no near relatives, I dreaded solitude, tedium. . . .

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And therefore, I joyfully accepted the suggestion of one of my relatives, my great-uncle, that I should visit him on his estate, in the T*** Government. He was a wealthy man, kind-hearted and simple, lived in fine style, and had a manor worthy of a nobleman. I established myself in his house. My uncle had a large family: two sons and five daughters. In addition to these, there dwelt in his house a throng of people. Guests were incessantly arriving,—and, nevertheless, things were not cheerful. The days flowed by noisily; there was no possibility of isolating one’s self. Everything was done in company; everybody tried to divert themselves in some way, to devise something, and by the end of the day everybody was frightfully tired. This life had a commonplace savour. I had already begun to meditate departure, and was only waiting until my uncle’s Name-day should arrive; but on that very day—the Name-day—I saw Vyéra Nikoláevna Éltzoff at the ball,—and remained.

She was then sixteen. She lived with her mother on a tiny estate, about five versts from my uncle’s. Her father—a remarkable man, they say—had speedily attained to the rank of colonel, and would have risen still higher, but perished while yet a young man, accidentally shot in hunting by a comrade. Vyéra Nikoláevna was a child when he died. Her mother, also,

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was a remarkable woman: she spoke several languages, she knew a great deal. She was seven or eight years older than her husband, whom she had married for love; he had secretly carried her off from her father's house. She barely survived his loss, and until her own death (according to Priímkoff's statement, she died soon after her daughter's marriage) she wore black garments only. I vividly recall her face: expressive, dark, with thick hair sprinkled with grey, large stern eyes which seemed extinguished, and a straight, delicate nose. Her father—his surname was Ladánoff—had lived for fifteen years in Italy. Vyéra Nikoláevna's mother had been born the daughter of a plain peasant-woman of Albano, who had been killed on the day after the birth of her child, by a man of Transtevere, her betrothed, from whom Ladánoff had stolen her. . . . This story had made a great noise in its day. On his return to Russia, Ladánoff not only did not step out of his house, but even out of his study, busied himself with chemistry, anatomy, the cabalistic art; tried to lengthen the life of mankind, and imagined that he could enter into relations with spirits, and call up the dead. . . . The neighbours looked on him as a wizard. He was extremely fond of his daughter, taught her everything himself; but did not forgive her for her elopement with Éltzoff, would not admit her to his presence, either

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her or her husband, foretold a sorrowful life for both of them, and died alone. On being left a widow, Madame Éltzoff consecrated her leisure to the education of her daughter, and received almost no one. When I made the acquaintance of Vyéra Nikoláevna,—just imagine it!—she had never been in a large town in her life, not even in her county town.

Vyéra Nikoláevna did not resemble the ordinary young Russian gentlewoman; a sort of special stamp lay upon her. What instantly impressed me in her was the wonderful repose of all her movements and remarks. Apparently, she did not worry about anything, did not get excited, answered simply and sensibly, and listened attentively. The expression of her face was sincere and upright, as that of a child, but somewhat cold and monotonous, although not pensive. She was rarely merry, and then not like other people: the clarity of an innocent soul, more delightful than merriment, glowed in all her being. She was short of stature, very well made, rather thin; she had regular and tender features, a very handsome, smooth brow, golden-chestnut hair, a straight nose, like her mother, and quite full lips; her grey eyes, with a tinge of black, looked out somewhat too directly from beneath her thick, upward-curling lashes. Her hands were small, but not very pretty; people who possess talent do not have such hands . . . and,

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as a matter of fact, Vyéra Nikoláevna had no particular talents. Her voice was as ringing as that of a seven-year-old girl. At my uncle's ball I was introduced to her mother, and, a few days later, I drove to see them for the first time.

Madame Éltzoff was a very strange woman, with a great deal of character, persistent and concentrated. She exerted a strong influence on me: I both respected and feared her. With her everything was done on a system; and she had reared her daughter on a system, but did not restrain her of her liberty. Her daughter loved her and believed in her blindly. It sufficed for Madame Éltzoff to give her a book, and to say: “ Here, don't read this page,”—and she would, probably, skip the preceding page, but would not even glance at the forbidden one. But Madame Éltzoff had also her *idées fixes*, her hobbies. For example, she feared everything which might act on the imagination, as she did fire; and therefore her daughter, up to the age of seventeen, had not read a single poem, while in geography, history, and even natural history, she frequently nonplussed me, a university graduate, and not one who had stood low in his class either, as thou wilt, perhaps, remember. I once undertook to argue with Madame Éltzoff about her hobby, although it was difficult to draw her into conversation: she was extremely taciturn. She merely shook her head.

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“ You say,”—she remarked at last,—“ that it is *both* useful *and* agreeable to read poetical productions. . . . I think that one should, as early as possible, make a choice in life *either* of the useful *or* of the agreeable, and so make up one’s mind once for all. I, also, once upon a time, tried to combine the two things. . . . It is impossible and leads to destruction or to insipidity.”

Yes, a wonderful being was that woman, an honourable, proud being, not devoid of fanaticism and superstition of a certain sort. “ I fear life,”—she said to me one day.—And, in fact, she did fear it,—she feared those secret forces upon which life is erected, and which rarely but suddenly make their way to the surface. Woe to the person over whose head they break! These forces had made themselves felt by Madame Éltzoff in a terrible manner: remember the death of her mother, her husband, her father. . . . It was enough to terrify any one. I never saw her smile. She seemed to have locked herself up, and flung the key into the water. She must have gone through a great deal of sorrow in her day, and she never shared it with any one whomsoever. She had trained herself not to give way to her feelings to such a degree, that she was even ashamed to display her passionate love for her daughter; she never once kissed her in my presence, never called her by a pet name, but always “ Vyéra.” I remember one remark of

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hers. I happened to say to her that all we people of the present day were half-broken. . . . “ There ’s no use in breaking one’s self so,”—she said:—“ one must subdue one’s self thoroughly, —or not touch one’s self. . . . ”

Very few persons called at Madame Éltzoff’s; but I visited her frequently. I was secretly conscious that she felt kindly toward me; and I liked Vyéra Nikoláevna very much. She and I chatted and strolled together. . . . Her mother did not interfere with us; the daughter herself did not like to be apart from her mother, and I, on my side, did not feel any need of solitary conversations. . . . Vyéra Nikoláevna had a strange habit of thinking aloud; at night she talked loudly and intelligibly in her sleep of what had impressed her during the day.—One day, after scanning me attentively, and, according to her wont, softly propping her chin on her hand, she said: “ It strikes me that B*** is a good man; but one cannot rely on him.” Our relations were of the most friendly and even character; only one day it seemed to me that I noticed far away, somewhere in the depths of her bright eyes, a strange something, a sort of softness and tenderness. . . . But perhaps I was mistaken.

In the meanwhile, time passed on, and the day came when I was obliged to make preparations for departure. But still I tarried. As I recall

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it, I persisted in thinking that I should not soon see again that charming girl, to whom I had grown so attached—and I should feel uncomfortable. . . . Berlin began to lose its power of attraction. I did not dare to admit to myself what had taken place in me,—and I did not understand what it was that had taken place in me,—it was as though a mist were roving about in my soul. At last, one morning, everything suddenly became clear to me. “What’s the use of seeking further?”—I thought. “Why should I strive onward? For the truth will not surrender itself into my hands, all the same. Would it not be better to remain here? Ought not I to marry?” and, just imagine, this thought of marriage did not alarm me in the least then. On the contrary, I was delighted at it. More than that; that very same day, I avowed my intentions, only not to Vyéra, but to Madame Éltzoff herself. The old lady looked at me.

“No,”—said she:—“my dear fellow, go to Berlin, and break yourself a little more. You are good; but you are not the sort of husband whom Vyéra needs.”

I cast down my eyes, flushed scarlet, and—what will probably amaze thee still more—I inwardly agreed with Madame Éltzoff on the spot. A week later I took my departure, and have never seen either her or Vyéra since that time.

I have described to thee my adventure in brief,

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because I know that thou dost not like anything “long-drawn-out.” On arriving in Berlin, I very promptly forgot Vyéra Nikoláevna. . . . But, I must confess, that the unexpected news of her has agitated me. I have been impressed by the thought that she is so near, that she is my neighbour, that I shall see her in a few days. The past has suddenly started up before me, as though it had sprung out of the earth, and were fairly swooping down on me. Priímkoff informed me that he had called upon me with the express purpose of renewing our ancient acquaintance, and that he hoped to see me at his house very shortly. He informed me that he had served in the cavalry, had retired with the rank of lieutenant, purchased an estate eight versts distant from mine, and was intending to occupy himself with farming; that he had had three children, but two of them had died, and only a five-year-old daughter was left.

“And does your wife remember me?”—I asked.

“Yes, she does,”—he replied with a slight hesitation.—“Of course, she was then a child, so to speak; but her mother always praised you highly, and you know how she prizes every word of the deceased.”

Madame Éltzoff’s words, that I was not a suitable husband for Vyéra, recurred to my memory. . . . “So thou wert suitable,”—I thought,

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darting a sidelong glance at Priímkoff. He spent several hours at my house. He is a very good, nice fellow, he talks very modestly, has a very good-natured gaze; one cannot help liking him but his intellectual faculties have not developed since the period of our acquaintance with him. I shall go to see him without fail, to-morrow, perhaps. I shall find it extremely interesting to see how Vyéra Nikoláevna has turned out.

Thou art, probably, laughing at me now, thou rascal, as thou sittest at thy director's table; but nevertheless, I shall write to thee what impression she makes on me. Farewell! Until the next letter.

Thine,

P. B.

THIRD LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, June 16, 1850.

WELL, my dear fellow, I have been at her house, I have seen her. First of all, I must communicate to thee a remarkable circumstance: believe me or not, as thou wilt, but she has hardly changed at all, either in face or in figure. When she came out to greet me, I almost exclaimed aloud: a young girl of seventeen, and that 's all there is to be said! Only, her eyes are not like those of

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a little girl; however, even in her youth she did not have childish eyes, they were too bright. But there is the same composure, the same serenity, the same voice, not a single wrinkle on her brow, just as though she had been lying somewhere in the snow all these years. And now she is twenty-eight years old, and has had three children. . . 'T is incomprehensible! Pray, do not think that I am exaggerating out of prejudice; on the contrary, this immutability in her does not please me.

A woman of eight-and-twenty, a wife and a mother, ought not to look like a young girl; for she has not lived in vain. She greeted me very cordially; but my arrival simply enraptured Primkoff; that good fellow looks as though he would like to get attached to some one. Their house is very comfortable and clean. Vyéra Nikoláevna was dressed like a young girl, also; all in white, with a sky-blue sash, and a slender gold chain on her neck. Her little daughter is very charming, and does not resemble her in the least; she reminds one of her grandmother. In the drawing-room, over the divan, hangs a portrait of that strange woman, a striking likeness. It caught my eye the moment I entered. She seemed to be staring sternly and attentively at me. We sat down, recalled old times, and gradually got into conversation. I kept involuntarily glancing at the gloomy portrait of Madame

“FAUST”

Éltzoff. Vyéra Nikoláevna was sitting directly under it; it is her favourite place. Fancy my amazement! To this day, Vyéra Nikoláevna has not read a single romance, a single poem—in short, as she expresses it, a single work of fiction! This incredible indifference to the loftiest joys of the mind enraged me. In a sensible woman, and one who, so far as I can judge, possesses delicate feelings, this is simply unpardonable.

“Why,”—I said:—“have you made it a rule never to read such books?”

“I have never happened to do it,”—she replied.—“I have not had the time.”

“Not had the time! I am astonished! You might at least have inspired your wife with a wish to do so,”—I went on, addressing Priímkoff.

“It would have given me great pleasure . . .” Priímkoff began, but Vyéra Nikoláevna interrupted him.

“Don’t pretend; thou art no great lover of poetry thyself.”

“Of poetry,”—he began,—“I really am not very fond; but romances, for example. . . .”

“But what do you do, how do you occupy yourselves evenings?”—I inquired.—“Do you play cards?”

“Sometimes we do,”—she replied:—“but is n’t there plenty to occupy us? We read, also; there are good books besides poetry.”

“Why do you attack poetry so?”

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“I don’t attack it; I have been accustomed from my childhood not to read works of fiction; my mother thought that was proper, and the longer I live, the more convinced do I become that everything which my mother did, everything she said, was the truth, the sacred truth.”

“Well, as you like; but I cannot agree with you. I am convinced that you do wrong in depriving yourself of the purest, the most lawful enjoyment. Surely, you do not reject music, painting; then why should you reject poetry?”

“I do not reject it. Up to the present time I have not made acquaintance with it—that is all.”

“Then I shall take the matter in hand! Surely, your mother did not forbid you to acquaint yourself with the productions of elegant literature during your entire life?”

“No; when I married, my mother removed all restrictions from me; it has never entered my head to read . . . what was it you called it? . . . well, in short, to read romances.”

I listened with surprise to Vyéra Nikoláevna. I had not expected this.

She gazed at me with her tranquil look. That is the way birds gaze, when they are not afraid.

“I will bring you a book!”—I exclaimed. (The thought of “Faust,” which I had recently read, flashed through my mind.)

Vyéra Nikoláevna heaved a soft sigh.

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“ It it is not Georges Sand? ”—she inquired, not without timidity.

“ Ah! so you have heard of her? Well, and what if it were she, where ’s the harm? . . . No; I shall bring you another author. You have not forgotten your German, I suppose? ”

“ No, I have not forgotten it.”

“ She speaks it like a German,”—interposed Priimkoff.

“ Well, that ’s fine! I shall bring you . . . but there now, you shall see what a marvellous thing I shall bring you.”

“ Well, very good, I shall see. And now let us go into the garden, for Natásha will not be able to sit quietly otherwise.”

She put on a round straw hat, a child’s hat, exactly like the one which her daughter donned, only a little larger, and we betook ourselves to the garden. I walked by her side. In the fresh air, in the shadow of the lofty lindens, her face seemed to me more charming than ever, especially when she turned slightly and threw back her head in order to look up at me from under the brim of her hat. Had it not been for Priimkoff, had it not been for the little girl who was skipping on in front of us, I really might have thought that I was not thirty-five years of age, but three-and-twenty; that I was only just making ready to set out for Berlin; the more so, as the garden in which we were greatly resembled

“ FAUST ”

the garden on Madame Éltzoff's estate. I could not refrain from communicating my impressions to Vyéra Nikoláevna.

“ Everybody tells me that I have changed very little in outward appearance,”—she replied:—“ moreover, I have remained the same inwardly also.”

We approached a small Chinese house.

“ There, we did not have such a little house at Ósinovko,”—she said:—“ but you must not mind its being so rickety and faded; it is very nice and cool inside.”

We entered the little house. I glanced about me.

“ Do you know what, Vyéra Nikoláevna,”—I said:—“ order a table and a few chairs to be brought hither before I come. It really is extraordinarily nice here. I will read aloud to you here. . . . Goethe's ‘ Faust ’ that is the thing I mean to read to you.”

“ Yes; there are no flies here,”—she remarked ingenuously;—“ but when shall you come? ”

“ Day after to-morrow.”

“ Very well,”—she said:—“ I will give orders.”

Natásha, who had entered the house in company with us, suddenly uttered a scream, and sprang back, all pale.

“ What is the matter? ”—asked Vyéra Nikoláevna.

“ Akh, mamma,”—said the little girl, pointing

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at one corner,—“ look, what a dreadful spider!”

Vyéra Nikoláevna glanced at the corner; a huge, mottled spider was crawling quietly along the wall.

“ What is there to be afraid of? ”—she said:—“ it does not bite; see here.”

And before I could stop her, she took the hideous insect in her hand, let it run about on her palm, and flung it aside.

“ Well, you are a brave woman! ”—I exclaimed.

“ Where is the bravery in that? That is not one of the poisonous spiders.”

“ Evidently, as of old, you are strong in natural history. I would n't have taken it in my hand.”

“ There 's no cause to be afraid of it,”—repeated Vyéra Nikoláevna.

Natásha gazed silently at us and smiled.

“ How much like your mother she is! ”—I remarked.

“ Yes,”—replied Vyéra Nikoláevna, with a smile of satisfaction;—“ that delights me greatly. God grant that she may resemble her not in face alone! ”

We were summoned to dinner, and after dinner I took my departure. *N. B.* The dinner was very good and savoury.—I make this remark in parenthesis, for thy benefit, thou sponger! To-

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morrow I shall carry “Faust” to them. I ’m afraid that old Goethe and I shall suffer defeat. I will describe everything to thee in detail.

Come now, what thinkest thou about all “these events”? Probably, that she has made a powerful impression on me, that I am ready to fall in love, and so forth? Nonsense, my dear fellow! It is high time for me to exercise moderation. I have played the fool long enough; *finis!* One cannot begin life over again at my age. Moreover, even in former days, I never liked women of that sort. . . . But what women I did like! !

I tremble—my heart is sore—
I ’m ashamed of my idols.

In any case, I am very glad of these neighbours, I am glad of the possibility of meeting a sensible, simple, limpid being; but what happens further thou shalt know in due time.

Thine,

P. B.

FOURTH LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, June 20, 1850.

THE reading took place yesterday, my dear friend, and as to the precise manner of it, details follow. First of all, I make haste to say, it was

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an unexpected success that is, “ success ” is not the word for it. . . . Come, listen. I arrived for dinner. There were six of us at table: she, Priímkoff, her little daughter, the governess (an insignificant little white figure), I, and some old German or other, in a short, light-brown frock-coat, neat, well-shaven, experienced, with the most peaceable and honest of faces, a toothless smile, and an odour of chicory coffee all old Germans smell like that. He was introduced to me; he was a certain Schimmel, a teacher of the German language in the family of Prince X***, a neighbour of Priímkoff. It appears that he is a favourite of Vyéra Nikoláevna’s, and she had invited him to be present at the reading. We dined late and did not leave the table for a long time; then we went for a stroll. The weather was magnificent. It had rained in the morning, and the wind had been blowing; but toward evening everything had quieted down. She and I emerged into an open glade. Directly above this glade, a large, rosy cloud hung high and light; grey streaks, like smoke, stretched across it; on its extreme edge twinkled a tiny star, now appearing, now disappearing, while a little further off the white sickle of the moon was visible against the faintly crimsoned azure. I pointed out the cloud to Vyéra Nikoláevna.

“ Yes,”—she said:—“ it is very beautiful; but look yonder.”—I looked. A huge, dark-blue

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storm-cloud was ascending like smoke, and concealing the setting sun; in aspect, it presented the likeness of a mountain spouting fire; its crest was spread athwart the sky in a broad sheaf; an ominous crimson glow surrounded it with a brilliant border, and in one spot, at the very centre of it, forced its way through the heavy mass, as though tearing itself free from a red-hot crater. . . .

“ There is going to be a thunder-storm,”—remarked Priímkoff.

But I am getting away from the main point.— In my last letter I forgot to tell thee that on my return home from the Priímkoffs', I repented of having named “ Faust ” in particular; Schiller would have been much more suitable for a first reading, if it must be a German. I was particularly alarmed by the first scene, before the acquaintance with Gretchen; I was uneasy on the score of Mephistopheles also. But I was under the influence of “ Faust,” and could not have read anything else with good will. It was already perfectly dark when we betook ourselves to the little Chinese house; it had been put in order the day before. Directly opposite the door, in front of a small divan, stood a round table, covered with a cloth; chairs and arm-chairs were set round about; on the table burned a lamp. I seated myself on the divan, and got my book. Vyéra Nikoláevna placed herself in an arm-chair at some distance, not far from the door.

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Beyond the door, in the darkness, a green branch of acacia, illuminated by the lamp, displayed itself, swaying gently; now and then a current of night air diffused itself through the room. Priímkoff sat down near me, at the table, the German by his side. The governess had remained in the house with Natáša. I made a little introductory speech; I alluded to the ancient legend of Dr. Faustus, to the significance of Mephistopheles, to Goethe himself, and begged that they would stop me if anything should seem to them unintelligible. Then I cleared my throat. . . . Priímkoff asked me whether I did not need some sugar and water, and, so far as I was able to observe, was greatly pleased with himself for having put that question to me. I declined. Profound silence reigned. I began to read, without raising my eyes; I felt awkward, my heart beat violently and my voice trembled. The first exclamation of sympathy burst from the German, and he alone, during the course of the reading, broke the silence. . . . “Wonderful! Sublime!”—he kept repeating, now and then adding: “Here it is deep.” Priímkoff was bored, as I could plainly see; he understood German imperfectly, and confessed that he was not fond of poetry! It was his own fault.—At table, I had wanted to hint that the reading could proceed without him, but had been ashamed to do so. Vyéra Nikoláevna

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did not stir; a couple of times I shot a stealthy glance at her; her eyes were fixed straight and attentively on me; her face seemed to me to be pale. After Faust's first meeting with Gretchen, she separated herself from the back of her chair, clasped her hands, and remained motionless in that attitude until the end. I felt conscious that Priímkoff found it disgusting, and at first this chilled me; but gradually I forgot all about him, warmed up, and read with fervour, with enthusiasm. . . . I was reading for Vyéra Nikoláevna alone; an inward voice told me that “Faust” was taking effect on her. When I had finished (I skipped the intermezzo; that bit, by its style, belongs to the second part; and I also omitted portions from the “Night on the Brocken”) when I had finished, when the last “Heinrich!” had rung out,—the German ejaculated with emotion: “Heavens! how beautiful!” Priímkoff sprang to his feet as though delighted (poor fellow!), heaved a sigh, and began to thank me for the pleasure I had given them. . . . But I did not answer him; I glanced at Vyéra Nikoláevna. . . . I wanted to hear what she would say. She rose, walked to the door with wavering steps, stood awhile on the threshold, and then quietly went out into the garden. I rushed after her. She had already succeeded in getting several paces away; her white gown was barely visible in the dense shadow.

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“ Well? ” I cried;—“ did n’t you like it? ”

She halted.

“ Can you let me have that book? ”—her voice rang out.

“ I will make you a present of it, Vyéra Nikoláevna, if you care to have it.”

“ Thank you! ”—she replied, and vanished.

Priím koff and the German approached me.

“ How wonderfully warm it is! ”—remarked Priím koff;—“ even sultry. But where has my wife gone? ”

“ To the house, I believe, ”—I replied.

“ I think it will soon be supper-time, ”—he responded.—“ You read capitally, capitally, ”—he added, after a brief pause.

“ Vyéra Nikoláevna seemed to be pleased with ‘ Faust, ’ ” I remarked.

“ Without doubt! ”—exclaimed Priím koff.

“ Oh, of course! ”—chimed in Schimmel.

We entered the house.

“ Where is the mistress? ”—Priím koff asked of a maid whom we encountered.

“ She has been pleased to go to her bedroom. ”

Priím koff directed his steps to the bedroom.

I went out on the terrace with Schimmel. The old man raised his eyes to the sky.

“ How many stars there are! ”—he said slowly, as he took a pinch of snuff;—“ and all of them are worlds, ”—he added, taking another pinch.

I did not consider it necessary to answer him, and only gazed upward in silence. A secret per-

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plexity was weighing on my soul. . . . The stars seemed to me to be gazing seriously at us. Five minutes later, Priímkoff made his appearance and summoned us to the dining-room. Vyéra Nikoláevna soon came also. We sat down.

“ Just look at Vyérotchka,”—said Priímkoff to me.

I glanced at her.

“ Well? Don’t you notice anything?”

I really did note a change in her face, but I know not why I answered:

“ No, nothing.”

“ Her eyes are red,”—went on Priímkoff.

I held my peace.

“ Just fancy, I went to her up-stairs, and found her; she was crying. It is a long time since that has happened with her. I can tell you the last time she cried: it was when our Sásha died. So that ’s what you have done with your ‘ Faust ’!” he added with a smile.

“ You must see now, Vyéra Nikoláevna,”—I began,—“ that I was right when”

“ I had not expected that,”—she interrupted me;—“ but God knows whether you are right. Perhaps the reason my mother prohibited my reading such books was because she knew”

Vyéra Nikoláevna stopped short.

“ Because she knew?”—I repeated.—“ Tell me.”

“ What is the use? I am ashamed of myself

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as it is; what was I crying about? However, you and I will discuss this further. There were many things which I did not quite understand.”

“ Then why did n't you stop me? ”

“ I understood all the words, and their sense, but ”

She did not finish her phrase, and became pensive. At that moment, the noise of the foliage, suddenly stirred by the rising wind, swept through the garden. Vyéra Nikoláevna started, and turned her face toward the open window.

“ I told you that there would be a thunderstorm! ”—cried Priímkoff.—“ But what makes thee tremble so, Vyérotchka? ”

She glanced at him in silence. The lightning, flashing faintly far away, was reflected on her impassive face.

“ All thanks to ‘ Faust, ’ ”—went on Priímkoff.

“ After supper, we must go immediately to bye-bye, must n't we, Herr Schimmel? ”

“ After moral pleasure physical repose is as beneficial as it is useful, ”—replied the good German, drinking off a glass of vodka.

We parted immediately after supper. As I bade Vyéra Nikoláevna good night, I shook hands with her; her hand was cold. I reached the chamber assigned to me, and stood for a long time at the window before undressing and getting into bed.

Priímkoff's prediction was fulfilled; a thun-

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der-storm gathered and broke. I listened to the roar of the wind, the clatter and beating of the rain, I saw how, at every flash of lightning, the church, built close at hand, near the lake, now suddenly was revealed in black against a white ground, then as white against a black ground, then again was swallowed up in the gloom. . . . But my thoughts were far away. I was thinking of Vyéra Nikoláevna: I was thinking of what she would say to me when she should have read “Faust” herself; I was thinking of her tears; I was recalling how she had listened. . . .

The thunder-storm had long since passed off, —the stars were beaming, everything had fallen silent round about. Some bird with which I was not familiar was singing in various tones, repeating the same phrase several times in succession. Its resonant, solitary voice rang out oddly amid the profound silence; and still I did not go to bed. . . .

On the following morning I entered the drawing-room earlier than all the rest, and halted in front of Madame Éltzoff’s portrait.—“What didst thou make by it?”—I thought, with a secret feeling of jeering triumph,—“for here, seest thou, I have read to thy daughter a forbidden book!” All at once, it seemed to me probably thou hast noticed that eyes painted *en face* always seem to be riveted straight on the spectator? . . . But on this oc-

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casion, it really did seem to me as though the old lady had turned them on me reproachfully.

I turned away, walked to the window, and beheld Vyéra Nikoláevna. With a parasol on her shoulder, and a thin white kerchief on her head, she was strolling in the garden. I immediately went out and bade her good morning. . . .

“ I have not slept all night,”—she said to me;—“ I have a headache; I have come out into the air to see if it will not pass off.”

“ Can it have been caused by last night’s reading?”—I asked.

“ Of course it was; I am not used to that. There are things in that book of yours which I cannot get rid of; it seems to me that they are fairly searing my brain,”—she added, laying her hand on her brow.

“ Very good indeed,”—said I:—“ but this is the bad thing about it: I ’m afraid this sleeplessness and headache have destroyed your wish to read such things.”

“ Do you think so?”—she returned, breaking off a spray of wild jasmine as she passed.—“ God knows! It seems to me that any one who has entered upon that road cannot turn back.”

She suddenly flung aside the spray.

“ Let us go and sit in that arbour,”—she went on,—“ and until I speak to you of it myself, please do not remind me . . . of that book.”

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(She seemed to be afraid to pronounce the name of “ Faust.”)

We entered the harbour and seated ourselves.

“ I will not talk to you about ‘ Faust,’ ” I began;—“ but you must allow me to congratulate you, and to tell you that I envy you.”

“ You envy me? ”

“ Yes; as I know you now, with your soul, how much enjoyment you have in store! There are other great poets besides Goethe: Shakspeare, Schiller yes, and our own Púshkin and you must make acquaintance with them also.”

She maintained silence, and drew figures on the sand with her parasol.

Oh, my friend, Semyón Nikoláitch! if thou couldst but have seen how charming she was at that moment! Pale almost to transparency, slightly bent forward, weary, inwardly distraught,—and nevertheless serene as the sky! I talked, talked a long time, then fell silent—and sat there silently watching her. . . .

She did not raise her eyes, and continued now to sketch with her parasol, now to erase what she had drawn. Suddenly the sound of brisk, childish footsteps resounded: Natásha ran into the harbour. Vyéra Nikoláevna straightened herself up, rose, and, to my amazement, embraced her daughter with a sort of impulsive tenderness. . . . This was not her habit. Then Priímkoff made his appearance. That grey-haired but

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punctual, fine fellow Schimmel had gone away before daybreak, in order not to miss his lesson. We went to drink tea.

But I am tired; it is time to bring this letter to an end. It must seem silly, confused to thee. I feel confused myself. I am out of sorts. I don't know what ails me. There is constantly flitting before my vision a tiny room with bare walls, a lamp, an open door, the scent and freshness of night, and there, near the door, an attentive young face, thin, white garments. . . . I understand now why I wanted to marry her; evidently, I was not so stupid before my trip to Berlin as I have hitherto thought. Yes, Semyón Nikoláitch, your friend is in a strange frame of mind. All this will pass off, I know . . . but what if it should not pass off—well, what then? I am satisfied with myself, nevertheless; in the first place, I have spent a wonderful evening; and in the second place, if I have awakened that soul, who can blame me? Old Madame Éltzoff is nailed to the wall and must hold her peace. The old lady! I do not know all the particulars of her life; but I do know that she eloped from her father's house; evidently, she was not born of an Italian mother for nothing. She wanted to insure her daughter. We shall see.

I fling aside my pen. Thou, jeering man, please to think of me as thou wilt, but don't

“ FAUST ”

make fun of me by letter. Thou and I are old friends, and must spare each other. Farewell!

Thine,

P. B.

FIFTH LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, July 26, 1850.

I HAVE not written to thee for a long time, my dear Semyón Nikoláitch; not for more than a month, I think. There has been plenty to write about; but I have been too lazy. To tell the truth, I have hardly thought of thee during the whole of that time. But I may deduce from thy last letter to me that thou art making assumptions about me which are unjust; that is to say, not quite just. Thou thinkest that I am carried away by Vyéra (somehow, I find it awkward to call her Vyéra Nikoláevna); thou art mistaken. Of course, I see her frequently; I like her extremely and who would not like her? I should just like to see thee in my place. She's a wonderful creature! Instantaneous penetration hand in hand with the inexperience of a baby; clear, sound sense and innate feeling for beauty, a constant striving for the truth, for the lofty, and a comprehension of everything, even of the vicious, even of the ridiculous—and, over all this, like

“ FAUST ”

the white wings of an angel, gentle feminine charm. . . . But what 's the use of talking! We have read a great deal, discussed a great deal, she and I, in the course of this month. To read with her is a delight such as I have not hitherto experienced. It is as though one were opening fresh pages. She never goes into raptures over anything; everything noisy is alien to her; she quietly beams all over when anything pleases her, and her face assumes such a noble, good precisely that, good expression. From her earliest childhood Vyéra has never known what it is to lie; she has become accustomed to the truth, she is redolent of it, and therefore in poetry the truth alone appears natural to her; she immediately recognises it, without difficulty, as a familiar face a great advantage and happiness! It is impossible not to hold her mother in kindly memory for that. How many times have I thought, as I looked at Vyéra: “ Yes, Goethe is right:— ‘ a good man in his obscure aspirations always feels where the true road lies.’ ”¹ One thing is vexatious; her husband is always hanging around. (Please don't indulge in your stupid laugh, don't sully our friendship by even so much as a thought.) He is as capable of understanding poetry as I am of playing the flute, and he won't leave his wife; he wants to be enlightened also. Sometimes she

¹ “ Faust,” the Prologue to Part I.

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herself puts me out of patience: a queer sort of mood will suddenly come over her; she will neither read nor converse; she works at her embroidery-frame, and fusses with Natásha, with the housekeeper, suddenly runs off to the kitchen, or simply sits with folded hands and stares out of the window, or sets to playing “ fool ”¹ with the nurse. . . . I have observed that on such occasions I must not worry her, but that it is best to wait until she herself approaches me, and starts a conversation, or takes up a book. She has a great deal of independence, and I am very glad of that. Dost thou remember how, in the days of our youth, some young girl or other would repeat to thee thy own words, to the best of her ability, and thou wouldst go into raptures over that echo and, probably, bow down before it, until thou didst get an inkling of the real state of the case? But this woman . . . no; she thinks for herself. She will accept nothing on faith; one cannot frighten her by authority; she will not dispute; but she will not give in. She and I have argued over “ Faust ” more than once; but—strange to say!—she never says anything about Gretchen herself, but merely listens to what I say of her. Mephistopheles alarms her, not as the devil, but as “ something which may exist in every man. . . . ” Those are her very words. I undertook to explain to her that

¹ A Russian card-game. — TRANSLATOR.

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we called that “ something ” reflex action; but she did not understand the words “ reflex action ” in the German sense; she knows only the French “ *réflexion*,” and has become accustomed to consider it useful.

Our relations are remarkable! From a certain point of view I may say that I have great influence over her, and am educating her, as it were; but without herself being aware of the fact, she is transforming many things in me for the better. For example, it is solely due to her that I have recently discovered what an immense amount of the conventional, the rhetorical there is in the finest, the most famous poetical productions. That to which she remains cold becomes at once suspicious in my eyes. Yes, I have grown better, more serene. To be intimate with her, to meet her, and remain the same man as before is an impossibility.

“ What is to be the upshot of all this? ” thou wilt ask. Why, really, nothing, I think. I am passing my time very agreeably until September, and then I shall go away. Life will seem dark and tedious to me during the first months. . . . But I shall get used to it. I know how dangerous is any sort of a tie between a man and a young woman, how imperceptibly one feeling is replaced by another. . . . I would have managed to wrench myself away, had I not known that both of us are perfectly calm. Truth to

“ FAUST ”

tell, one day something strange happened with us. I know not how, and as a result of what—I remember that we were reading “ Onyégin ”¹—and I kissed her hand. She recoiled slightly, riveted a glance upon me (I have never beheld such a glance in any one but her; it contains both pensiveness and attention, and a sort of severity) . . . suddenly blushed, rose, and left the room. I did not succeed in being alone with her again that day. She avoided me, and for four mortal hours played with her husband, the nurse, and the governess at “ Trumps.” The next morning she suggested that we should go into the garden. We walked the whole length of it, clear to the lake. Suddenly she whispered softly, without turning toward me: “ Please don’t do that again!”—and immediately began to narrate something to me. . . . I was very much abashed.

I must confess that her image never leaves my mind, and I probably have begun to write this letter to thee more with the object of securing the possibility of thinking and talking about her, than anything else. I hear the neighing and trampling of horses: it is my calash being brought round. I am going to their house. My coachman no longer asks me whither he shall drive when I take my seat in the equipage,—he drives straight to the Prímkoff’s’.

¹ Púshkin’s poem, “ Evgény Onyégin.”—TRANSLATOR.

“ FAUST ”

Two versts distant from their village, at a sharp turn of the road, their manor-house suddenly peers forth from behind a birch-grove. . . . Every time my heart leaps with joy as soon as the windows of her house gleam forth. Schimmel (that harmless old man comes to them occasionally; they have seen the family of Prince X*** only once, thank God!) Schimmel says, not without cause, with the modest triumph peculiar to him, as he points to the house where Vyéra dwells: “That is the abode of peace!” The angel of peace has taken up its abode in that house. . . .

Cover me with thy pinions,
My heart's emotion allay,—
And blessed shall be that shadow
For my enchanted soul. . . .

But come, enough of this,—or God knows what thou wilt think,—until the next time. . . . What shall I write the next time?—Good-bye!—By the way, she will never say “good-bye,” but always: “Well, good-bye.”—I like that awfully.

Thine,

P. B.

P. S.—I don't remember whether I have told thee that she knows I proposed for her hand.

“ FAUST ”

SIXTH LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, August 10, 1850.

CONFESS that thou art expecting either a despairing or a rapturous letter from me. . . . Nothing of the sort. My letter will be like all letters. Nothing new has happened, and nothing can happen, I think. The other day we were rowing in a boat on the lake. I will describe that jaunt to thee. There were three of us: she, Schimmel and I. I cannot understand what possesses her to invite that old man so often. The X***s are put out with him, they say, because he has begun to neglect his lessons. But on this occasion he was amusing. Priimkoff did not go with us: he had a headache. The weather was magnificent, cheerful; there were huge white ragged-looking storm-clouds all over the blue sky; everywhere there was a gleam, a rustling in the trees, a plashing and rippling of the water on the shores; on the waves darting golden serpents of light, coolness and sunshine!—At first I and the German rowed; then we raised the sail and dashed headlong onward. The bow of the boat fairly dived through the waves, and the wake behind the stern hissed and foamed. She sat at the helm and steered; she had tied a kerchief over her head: a hat

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would have blown off; her curls burst forth from beneath it, and floated softly on the breeze. She held the helm firmly with her sun-burned little hand, and smiled at the splashes of water which flew in her face from time to time. I curled myself up in the bottom of the boat, not far from her feet, the German pulled out his pipe, lighted up his coarse tobacco, and—just fancy!—began to sing in a fairly agreeable bass voice. First he sang the old ballad: “*Freut’ euch des Lebens,*” then an aria from “The Magic Flute,” then a romance entitled “Love’s Alphabet”—“*Das A-B-C der Liebe.*” In this romance the whole alphabet is recited,—with appropriate quaint sayings, of course,—beginning with: “*Ah, Bay, Say, Day,—Wenn ich dich seh!*” and ending with “*Oo, Fau, Vay, Eeks,—Mach einen Knicks!*” He sang all the couplets through with tender expression; but thou shouldst have seen how roguishly he screwed up his left eye at the word “*Knicks*”!—Vyéra burst out laughing and shook her finger at him. I remarked that it struck me Herr Schimmel had been no fool in his day. “Oh, yes, I could stand up for myself!” he replied pompously, knocking the ashes out of his pipe into his palm; and thrusting his fingers into his tobacco-pouch, he gripped the mouthpiece of his pipe swaggeringly, on one side, with his teeth. “When I was a student,”—he added,—“o-ho-ho!” He said no more. But what an “o-ho-ho!”

“ FAUST ”

that was!—Vyéra requested him to sing some student song, and he sang to her: “ *Knaster, den gelben,*” but got out of tune on the last note.

In the meantime, the wind had increased, the waves had begun to run rather high, the boat careened over somewhat; swallows were darting low around us. We put the sail over and began to jibe. The wind suddenly veered about; we had not succeeded in completing the manœuvre, when a wave dashed over the side, and the boat took in a quantity of water. Here, also, the German showed himself to be a fine fellow; he snatched the sheet-rope from my hand, and jibed in proper fashion, remarking, as he did so: “ That ’s the way they do at Kuxhafen!”—“ *So macht man’s in Kuxhafen!* ”

Vyéra was probably frightened, for she turned pale; but, according to her wont, she did not utter a word, but gathered up her gown and placed her feet on the thwart of the boat. Suddenly there flashed across my mind Goethe’s poem (I have been thoroughly infected by him for some time past) dost thou remember it? “ On the waves twinkle thousands of quivering stars ”; and I recited it aloud. When I reached the line: “ Mine eyes, why do ye droop?” she raised her eyes a little (I was sitting lower than she: her glance fell upon me from above) and gazed for a long time into the far distance, narrowing her eyes to protect them from the

“ FAUST ”

wind. . . . A light rain came up in an instant, and pattered in bubbles on the water. I offered her my overcoat; she threw it over her shoulders. We landed on the shore,—not at the wharf,—and went to the house on foot. I walked arm in arm with her. All the time I felt like saying something to her; but I held my peace. But I remember asking her why, when she was at home, she always sat under the portrait of Madame Éltzoff, just like a birdling under its mother’s wing.—“Your comparison is very accurate,”—she replied:—“I should never wish to emerge from beneath her wing.”—“Would n’t you like to emerge into freedom?”—I asked another question. She made no reply.

I do not know why I have told thee about this expedition,—perhaps because it has lingered in my memory as one of the brightest events of recent days, although, in reality, how can it be called an event? I was so delighted and speechlessly happy, and tears—light, happy tears—fairly gushed from my eyes.

Yes; just fancy! On the following day, as I was strolling through the garden, past the arbour, I suddenly heard an agreeable, ringing, feminine voice singing, “*Freut’ euch des Lebens.*” . . . I glanced into the arbour:—it was Vyéra.

“Bravo!”—I exclaimed;—“I was not aware that you had such a fine voice!”—She was abashed, and stopped singing. Seriously, she has

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an excellent, strong soprano voice. But I don't believe she even suspected that she had a good voice. How many untouched treasures are still concealed in her! She does not know herself. But such a woman is a rarity in our day, is she not?

August 12.

WE had a very strange conversation yesterday. First we talked about visions. Just imagine; she believes in them, and says that she has her reasons for so doing. Priímkoff, who was sitting with us, dropped his eyes and shook his head, as though in confirmation of her words. I tried to interrogate her; but speedily perceived that the conversation was disagreeable to her. We began to talk about imagination, about the force of imagination. I narrated how, in my youth, being in the habit of dreaming a great deal about happiness (the customary occupation of people who have not had, or will not have luck in life), I had, among other things, dreamed of what bliss it would be to pass a few weeks in Venice with the woman I loved. I thought of this so often, especially at night, that I gradually formed in my mind a complete picture, which I could summon up before me at will: all I had to do was to shut my eyes. This is what presented itself to me:—Night, the moon, white and tender moonlight, fragrance . . . the fragrance of the orange-flower, thinkest thou? No, of vanilla,

“ FAUST ”

the fragrance of the cactus, a broad watery expanse, a flat island overgrown with olive-trees; on the island, on the very shore, a small marble house, with wide-open windows; music is audible—whence, God knows; in the house are trees with dark foliage, and the light of a half-veiled lamp; a heavy velvet mantle with golden fringe has been thrown over one window-sill, and one end of it is trailing in the water; while, side by side, with their arms resting on the mantle, sit *he* and *she*, gazing far away to the spot where Venice is visible.—All this presented itself to me as plainly as though I had beheld it all with my own eyes.

She listened to my nonsense, and said that she also often indulged in reverie, but that her dreams were of a different nature: she either imagined herself on the plains of Africa, with some traveller or other, or hunting for the traces of Franklin in the Arctic Ocean; she vividly pictured to herself all the hardships which she must undergo, all the difficulties with which she must contend. . . .

“Thou hast read a quantity of travels,”—remarked her husband.

“Perhaps so,”—she rejoined. “But if one is to dream, what possesses one to dream of the impossible?”

“But why not?”—I interposed.—“How is the poor impossible to blame?”

“ FAUST ”

“ I did not express myself correctly,”—said she:—“ I meant to say, what possesses a person to dream of himself, of his own happiness? There is no use in thinking about it; if it does not come,—why pursue it? It is like health: when one does not notice it, it means that one possesses it.”

These words amazed me. That woman has a great soul, believe me. . . . From Venice the conversation passed to Italy, to the Italians. Priímkoff left the room, and Vyéra and I were left alone.

“ There is Italian blood in your veins also,”—I remarked.

“ Yes,”—she responded:—“ I will show you the portrait of my grandmother, if you wish.”

“ Pray do.”

She went into her boudoir and brought thence a rather large gold locket. On opening this locket, I beheld a splendidly-painted miniature portrait of Madame Éltzoff’s father and his wife, —that peasant from Albano. Vyéra’s grandfather surprised me by his likeness to his daughter. Only his features, rimmed with a white cloud of powder, appeared still more severe, still more sharp and pointed, and in his little, yellow eyes gleamed a sort of surly stubbornness. But what a face the Italian girl had! sensual, open like a full-blown rose, with big, prominent, humid eyes, and conceitedly-smiling, rosy lips! The

“ FAUST ”

thin, sensitive nostrils seemed to be quivering, and inflating, as after recent kisses; from her dark-skinned cheeks sultry heat and health seemed to emanate, and the splendour of youth, and feminine force. . . . That brow had never thought, and God be thanked for that! She was depicted in her Albanian costume; the artist (a master) had placed a spray of vine-leaves in her hair, which was black as pitch, with bright-grey reflections. Nothing could have been better suited to the expression of her face than that bacchantic decoration. And knowest thou, of whom that face reminded me? Of my Manon Lescaut in the black frame. And, what is most astonishing of all: as I gazed at that portrait, I recalled the fact that something resembling that smile, that glance, sometimes flits over Vyéra's face, despite the utter dissimilarity of the outlines. . . .

Yes, I repeat it: neither she herself nor any one else in all the world knows what lies hidden within her. . . .

By the way! Madame Éltzoff, before her daughter's marriage, related to her the story of her whole life, the death of her mother, and so forth, probably with the object of edification. That which had a particular effect upon Vyéra, was what she heard about her grandfather, about that mysterious Ladánoff. Is it not from him that she inherits her faith in visions? Strange! she herself is so pure and bright, yet she is afraid

“FAUST”

of everything gloomy, subterranean, and believes in it. . . .

But enough. Why write all this? However, since it is already written, I 'll just send it off to thee.

Thine,

P. B.

SEVENTH LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, August 22.

I TAKE up my pen ten days after the date of my last letter. . . . Oh, my friend, I can no longer dissimulate. . . . How painful it is to me! How I love her! Thou canst imagine with what a bitter shudder I write this fateful word. I am no boy, not even a stripling; I am no longer at the age when it is almost impossible to deceive another person, while it costs no effort at all to deceive one's self. I know everything, and I see clearly. I know that I am close on forty years of age, that she is the wife of another, that she loves her husband; I know very well that I have nothing to expect from the unfortunate sentiment which has taken possession of me, save secret torments and definitive waste of my vital forces,—I know all this, I hope for nothing and I desire nothing. But I am no more at my ease for all that.

“FAUST”

A month ago I began to notice that my attachment for her was becoming stronger and stronger. That partly disconcerted me, partly delighted me. . . . But could I have expected that all that would be repeated in me from which, as in youth, there is no return? But what am I saying! I never have loved thus, no, never! Manon Lescaut, the Frétilions—those were my idols. It is easy to shatter such idols; but now and only now have I learned what it means to love a woman. I am ashamed even to speak of it; but so it is. I am ashamed. . . . Love is egoism, nevertheless; but at my age, egoism would be unpardonable: one cannot live for himself at seven-and-thirty; one must live usefully, with the object of fulfilling one's duty, doing one's business. And I have tried to set to work. . . . And lo, everything has been dissipated again, as by a hurricane! Now I understand what I wrote to thee in my first letter; I understand what trial I lacked. How suddenly this blow has descended upon my head! I stand and gaze irrationally ahead: a black curtain hangs just in front of my eyes; my soul aches and is affrighted! I can restrain myself, I am outwardly calm, not only in the presence of others, but even when I am alone; really, I cannot go into a rage, like a boy! But the worm has crawled into my heart, and is gnawing it day and night. How is this thing going to end? Hitherto I have languished and been agi-

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tated in her absence, while in her presence I have instantly calmed down. . . . Now I am uneasy in her presence—that is what alarms me. Oh, my friend, how painful a thing it is to be ashamed of one’s tears, to conceal them! Only youth is permitted to weep; tears become it alone. . . .

I cannot read over this letter; it has burst from me like a groan. I can add nothing, narrate nothing. . . . Give me time: I shall come to myself. I shall regain control of my soul, I shall talk with thee like a man, but now I should like to lean my head on thy breast and

O Mephistopheles! Even thou wilt not help me! I have intentionally lingered over, I have intentionally irritated the ironical vein in myself; I have reminded myself how ridiculous and hypocritical these complaints, these effusions, will appear to me a year, half a year hence. . . . No, Mephistopheles is powerless, and his teeth have grown blunt. . . . Farewell.

Thine,

P. B.

“ FAUST ”

EIGHTH LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, September 8, 1850.

MY DEAR FRIEND, SEMYÓN NIKOLÁITCH :

Thou hast taken my last letter too much to heart. Thou knowest how much inclined I have always been to exaggerate my feelings; I do it quite involuntarily: a feminine nature! That will pass off, with years, it is true; but I must admit, with a sigh, that up to the present time, I have not corrected myself. And, therefore, reassure thyself. I will not deny the impression which Vyéra has made upon me; but, nevertheless, I will say: there was nothing remarkable in all that. It is not in the least necessary that thou shouldst come hither, as thou writest that thou art intending to do. To gallop more than a thousand miles, God knows for what—why, that would be madness! But I am very grateful to thee for this new proof of thy friendship, and, believe me, I shall never forget it. Thy journey hither is ill-judged also because I myself intend soon to set off for Petersburg. Seated on thy divan, I will relate to thee many things; but now, really, I do not feel like it: the first thing you know, I shall get to chattering too much, and become entangled again. I will write to thee again

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before my departure. So then, farewell until we meet shortly. May health be thine, and cheerfulness, and do not worry too much over the fate of —thine sincerely,

P. B.

NINTH LETTER

From the same to the same

VILLAGE OF M OE, March 10, 1853.

I HAVE not answered thy letter for a long time; I have been thinking of thee all these days. I have felt that thou wert prompted not by idle curiosity, but by genuine friendly sympathy; but still I have hesitated: whether I ought to follow thy advice, whether I ought to comply with thy wish. At last I have reached a decision; I will tell thee all. Whether my confession will relieve me, as thou assumest, I do not know; but it seems to me that I should remain culpable even if alas! still more culpable toward that unforgettable, charming spirit, if I did not confide our sad secret to the only heart which I still prize. Thou alone, possibly, on earth dost remember Vyéra, and that thou shouldst judge of her light-mindedly and falsely, is what I cannot permit. Then know all! Alas! it can all be imparted in two words; that which existed between us flashed for a moment, like the lightning, and,

“ FAUST ”

like the lightning, carried death and destruction with it. . . .

Since her death, since I settled down in this remote nook, which I shall never leave again to the end of my days, more than two years have passed, and everything is as clear in my memory, my wounds are still as fresh, my grief is as bitter as ever. . . .

I will not complain. Complaints, by irritating, alleviate sorrow, but not mine. I will begin my narration.

Dost thou remember my last letter—that letter in which I undertook to dissipate thy fears and dissuade thee from leaving Petersburg? Thou wert suspicious of its constrained ease, thou hadst no faith that we should soon see each other: thou wert right. On the eve of the day when I wrote to thee, I had learned that I was beloved.

As I trace these words I discover how difficult it will be for me to pursue my narration to the end. The importunate thought of her death will torture me with redoubled force, these memories will sear me. . . . But I shall try to control myself, and I will either discard my pen, or I will not utter a superfluous word.

This is how I learned that Vyéra loved me. First of all, I must tell thee (and thou wilt believe me), that up to that day I positively had not had a suspicion. She had, it is true, begun to be pensive at times, which had never been the case

“ FAUST ”

with her previously; but I did not understand why this happened to her. At last, one day, the seventh of September,—a memorable day for me,—this is what occurred. Thou knowest how I loved her, how I was suffering. I wandered like a ghost, I could find no place of rest. I tried to remain at home, but could not endure it, and went to her. I found her alone in her boudoir. Priimkoff was not at home: he had gone off hunting. When I entered Vyéra's room, she looked intently at me, and did not respond to my greeting. She was sitting by the window; on her lap lay a book: it was my “Faust.” Her face expressed weariness. She requested me to read aloud the scene between Faust and Gretchen, where she asks him whether he believes in God. I took the book and began to read. With her head leaning against the back of her chair, and her hands clasped on her breast, she continued to gaze at me in the same intent manner as before.

I do not know why my heart suddenly began to beat violently.

“What have you done to me?”—she said in a lingering voice.

“What?”—I ejaculated in confusion.

“Yes; what have you done to me?”—she repeated.

“Do you mean to ask,”—I began:—“why have I persuaded you to read such books?”

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She rose in silence, and left the room. I stared after her.

On the threshold she halted and turned toward me.

“ I love you,”—said she:—“ that is what you have done to me.”

The blood flew to my head. . . .

“ I love you, I am in love with you,”—repeated Vyéra.

She went away, and shut the door behind her. I will not describe to thee what went on in me then. I remember that I went out into the garden, made my way into its thickets, and leaned against a tree. How long I stood there I know not. It was as though I had swooned; the feeling of bliss surged across my heart in a billow, from time to time. . . . No, I will not talk about that. Priímkoff’s voice aroused me from my stupor; they had sent to tell him that I had arrived. He had returned from the chase, and had hunted me up. He was surprised at finding me in the garden alone, without a hat, and he led me to the house. “ My wife is in the drawing-room,”—he said:—“ let us go to her.” Thou canst conjecture with what emotions I crossed the threshold of the drawing-room. Vyéra was sitting in one corner, at her embroidery-frame. I darted a covert glance at her, and for a long time thereafter, did not raise my eyes. To my amazement, she appeared to be calm; there was no tremor per-

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ceptible in what she said, in the sound of her voice. At last, I brought myself to look at her. Our glances met. . . . She blushed almost imperceptibly, and bent over her canvas. I began to watch her. She seemed perplexed, somehow; a cheerless smile now and then flitted across her lips.

Priímkoff left the room. She suddenly raised her head and asked me in quite a loud tone:

“ What dost thou intend to do now? ”

I was disconcerted, and hastily, in a dull voice, I replied that I intended to fulfil the duty of an honourable man—to go away, “ because,”—I added,—“ I love you, Vyéra Nikoláevna, as you have, probably, long since perceived.”

“ I must have a talk with you,”—said she:—“ come to-morrow evening, after tea, to our little house . . . you know, where you read ‘ Faust.’ ”

She said this so distinctly that even now I cannot understand how Priímkoff, who entered the room at that moment, failed to hear anything. Slowly, with painful slowness did that day pass. Vyéra gazed about her from time to time, with an expression as though she were asking herself: “ Was not she dreaming? ” And, at the same time, decision was written on her countenance. While I I could not recover my composure. Vyéra loves me! These words gyrated incessantly in my mind; but I did not understand them,—I understood neither myself nor her. I

“ FAUST ”

did not believe in such unexpected, such soul-disturbing happiness; with an effort I recalled the past, and I also looked and talked as in a dream. . . .

After tea, when I had already begun to meditate how I might slip unperceived out of the house, she herself suddenly announced that she wished to take a stroll, and proposed to me that I should accompany her. I dared not begin the conversation, I could barely draw my breath, I waited for her first word, I waited for an explanation; but she maintained silence. In silence we reached the little Chinese house, in silence we entered it, and there—to this day I do not know, I cannot comprehend how it came about—but we suddenly found ourselves in each other’s arms. Some invisible force dashed me to her, and her to me. By the dying light of day, her face, with its curls tossed back, was illuminated for a moment by a smile of self-forgetfulness and tenderness, and our lips melted together in a kiss. . . .

This kiss was the first and the last.

Vyéra suddenly tore herself from my arms, and, with an expression of horror in her widely-opened eyes, staggered back. . . .

“ Look round,”—she said to me in a quivering voice:—“ do you see nothing? ”

I wheeled swiftly round.

“ No, nothing. But do you see any one? ”

“ I don’t now, but I did.”

“ FAUST ”

She was breathing deeply and slowly.

“ Whom? What? ”

“ My mother, ”—she said slowly, trembling all over.

I also shivered, as though a chill had seized me. I suddenly felt alarmed, like a criminal. And was not I a criminal at that moment?

“ Enough! ”—I began.—“ What ails you? Tell me rather . . . ”

“ No, for God’s sake, no! ”—she interrupted, clutching her head.—“ This is madness. . . . I shall go out of my mind. . . . This is not to be trifled with—this is death. . . . Farewell. . . . ”

I stretched out my arms toward her.

“ Stay one moment, for God’s sake, ”—I cried in an involuntary transport. I did not know what to say, and could hardly stand on my feet.—“ For God’s sake . . . why, this is cruel. . . . ”

She glanced at me.

“ To-morrow, to-morrow evening, ”—she said:—“ not to-day, I beg of you. . . . Go away to-day Come to-morrow evening to the wicket-gate in the garden, near the lake. I shall be there, I will come. . . . I swear to thee that I will come, ”—she added, with an effort, and her eyes flashed.—“ No matter who may seek to stop me, I swear it! I will tell thee all, only let me go to-day. ”

And before I could utter a word, she vanished.

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Shaken to the very foundations, I remained rooted to the spot. My head was reeling. A feeling of anguish crept through the mad joy which filled my being. I glanced about me. The chamber in which I was standing, with its low vault and dark walls, seemed horrible to me.

I went out and betook myself with hasty steps to the house. Vyéra was waiting for me on the terrace; she went into the house as soon as I approached, and immediately retired to her bedroom.

I went away.

How I spent that night and the following day until the evening, I cannot describe. I remember only that I lay prone, with my face hidden in my hands, recalling her smile which had preceded the kiss, and whispering: “ Here she is, at last. . . . ”

I recalled also Madame Éltzoff’s words, which Vyéra had repeated to me. She had said to her one day: “ Thou art like ice: until thou shalt melt, thou art strong as a rock, but when thou meltest, there will not remain a trace of thee.”

And here is another thing which recurred to my memory: Vyéra and I had, somehow, got into a discussion as to what are knowledge and talent.

“ I know only one thing,”—she said:—“ how to hold my peace until the last minute.”

I had understood nothing at the time.

“ FAUST ”

“ But what is the meaning of her fright? ”—I asked myself. . . . “ Did she really see Madame Éltzoff? Imagination! ”—I thought, and again surrendered myself to the emotions of anticipation.

That same day I wrote to thee—with what thoughts I shudder to recall—that artful letter.

In the evening, before the sun had set, I was standing at a distance of fifty paces from the garden gate, in a tall, thick mass of vines, on the shore of the lake. I had come from home on foot. I confess it, to my shame: terror, the most pusillanimous terror filled my breast, I kept trembling incessantly but I felt no remorse. Concealing myself among the branches, I stared fixedly at the gate. It did not open. The sun set, darkness descended: the stars had already come out, and the sky had grown black. No one appeared. Fever seized upon me. Night came. I could endure it no longer, and cautiously emerging from the vines, I crept up to the gate. Everything was quiet in the garden. I called Vyéra in a whisper, I called a second time, a third. . . . No voice responded. Another half hour, an hour elapsed; it had grown perfectly dark. Anticipation had exhausted me; I pulled the gate toward me, opened it at one movement and directed my way on tiptoe, like a thief, toward the house. I halted in the shadow of the lindens.

Almost all the windows in the house were

“ FAUST ”

lighted: people were moving to and fro in the rooms. This astonished me: my watch, so far as I could make out by the dim light of the stars, indicated half-past eleven. Suddenly a rumbling resounded on the other side of the house: an equipage had driven into the courtyard.

“ Evidently, there are visitors,”—I thought. Abandoning all hope of seeing Vyéra, I made my way out of the garden, and strode homeward with hasty steps. It was a dark September night, warm but starless. A feeling not so much of vexation as of grief, which was on the point of taking possession of me, was dissipated to a certain degree, and I arrived at my own house somewhat fatigued from my brisk walk, but soothed by the tranquillity of the night, happy and almost merry. I entered my bedroom, dismissed Timofyéi, threw myself on the bed without undressing, and plunged into reverie.

At first my musings were cheerful; but I speedily noticed a strange change in myself. I began to feel a sort of mysterious, gnawing grief, a sort of profound, inward uneasiness. I could not understand whence it proceeded; but I became alarmed, and oppressed, as though an impending misfortune were menacing me, as though some one dear to me were suffering at that moment, and were appealing to me for help. On the table a wax taper was burning with a small, motionless flame, the pendulum of the clock was ticking

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heavily and regularly. I leaned my head on my hand, and sat to staring into the empty, semi-darkness of my solitary chamber. I thought of Vyéra, and my soul ached within me: everything in which I had delighted appeared to me in its proper light, as a calamity, as ruin from which there was no escape. The feeling of anguish kept augmenting within me; I could no longer lie down; again it suddenly seemed to me as though some one were calling me with an appealing voice. . . . I raised my head and shuddered. I was not mistaken: a wailing shriek swept from afar, and clung, faintly quivering, to the window-panes. I was terrified: I sprang from the bed, and threw open the window. A plainly-audible groan burst into the room, and seemed to hover over me. It seemed as though some one's throat were being cut at a distance, and the unhappy person were entreating, in vain, for mercy. I did not stop, at the time, to consider whether it might not be an owl hooting in the grove, or whether some other creature had emitted that groan, but as Mazepa answered Kotchubéy, I replied with a shriek to that sound of ill-omen.

“Vyéra, Vyéra!”—I cried:—“is it thou who art calling me?”—Timofyéi, sleepy and dumb-founded, appeared before me.

I came to my senses, drank a glass of water, and went into another room; but sleep did not visit me. My heart beat painfully, although not

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frequently. I could no longer give myself up to dreams, to happiness. I no longer dared to believe in it.

On the following day, before dinner, I set off to see Priímkoff. He greeted me with a care-worn face.

“ My wife is ill,”—he began:—“ she is in bed. I have sent for the doctor.”

“ What is the matter with her? ”

“ I don’t understand. Yesterday evening she started to go into the garden, but suddenly came back, beside herself, thoroughly frightened. Her maid ran for me. I came, and asked my wife, ‘ What ails thee? ’ She made no reply, and instantly took to her bed; during the night, delirium set in. God knows what she said in her delirium; she mentioned you. The maid told me an astonishing thing: it seems that Vyérotchka saw her dead mother in the garden; her mother seemed to be coming toward her with open arms.”

Thou canst imagine my sensations at these words!

“ Of course, it is nonsense,”—pursued Priím-koff:—“ but I must confess that remarkable things have happened to my wife in that line.”

“ And is Vyéra Nikoláevna very ill, pray tell me? ”

“ Yes, very; she was very bad during the night; now she is unconscious.”

“ But what did the doctor say? ”

“ FAUST ”

“ He said that the malady had not yet declared itself. . . . ”

March 12.

I CANNOT continue as I have begun, my dear friend: it costs me too much effort and irritates my wounds too greatly. The malady declared itself, to use the doctor's words, and Vyéra died of it. She did not survive a fortnight after that fatal day of our momentary tryst. I saw her once more before her end. I possess no more cruel memory. I had already learned from the doctor that there was no hope. Late at night, when every one in the house was in bed, I crept to the door of her chamber and looked at her. Vyéra was lying in bed, with closed eyes, emaciated, tiny, with the glow of fever on her cheeks. I stared at her as though I had been petrified. Suddenly she opened her eyes, fixed them on me, took a closer look, and stretching out her emaciated hand—

“ What does he want on that holy spot,
That man . . . that man yonder. . . . ”¹

she articulated in a voice so terrible, that I fled at full speed. She raved of “ Faust ” almost continuously during her illness, and of her mother, whom she called now Martha, now Gretchen's mother.

¹ “ *Was will er an dem heiligen Ort,
Der da . . . der dort. . . .* ”

“ Faust,” Part I, Last Scene.

“ FAUST ”

Vyéra died. I was at her funeral. Since that day I have abandoned everything, and have settled down here forever.

Reflect now on what I have told thee; think of her, of that being who perished so early. How this came about, how that incomprehensible interposition of the dead in the affairs of the living is to be explained, I know not, and I shall never know; but thou must agree with me that it is no fit of capricious hypochondria, as thou expressest it, which has made me withdraw from society. All this time I have thought so much about that unhappy woman (I came near saying, “ young girl ”), about her origin, the mysterious play of Fate which we, blind that we are, designate as blind chance. Who knows how much seed is left by each person who lives on the earth, which is destined to spring up only after his death? Who can say to what mysterious end the fate of a man is bound up with the fate of his children, his posterity, and how his aspirations will be reflected in them, his mistakes visited on them? We must all submit and bow our heads before the Unknowable.

Yes, Vyéra perished, and I have remained whole. I remember, when I was still a child, there was in our house a beautiful vase of transparent alabaster. Not a fleck sullied its virgin whiteness. One day, when I was left alone, I began to rock the pedestal on which it stood The vase

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suddenly fell to the floor, and was shattered to atoms. I nearly swooned with fright, and stood motionless before the fragments. My father entered the room, saw me, and said: “ Just see what thou hast done! We shall never have our beautiful vase again; there is no way to mend it now.” I burst out sobbing. It seemed to me that I had committed a crime.

I have become a man—and have heedlessly shattered a vessel which was a thousand times more precious. . . .

In vain do I tell myself that I could not have anticipated this instantaneous catastrophe, that it startled even me by its unexpectedness, that I had no suspicion as to the sort of woman Vyéra was. She really did know how to hold her peace to the last minute. I ought to have fled as soon as I felt that I loved her,—loved a married woman; but I remained,—and have shattered in fragments a very beautiful creature, and with dumb despair I now gaze upon the work of my hands.

Yes; Madame Éltzoff jealously guarded her daughter. She guarded her to the end, and at her first unwary step, she bore her off with her into the tomb.

It is time for me to make an end. . . . I have not told thee the hundredth part of what I should: but this has been quite enough for me. Let everything which has flashed up in my soul sink once more into its depths. . . . In ending, I will tell

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thee: I have brought one conviction out of the experiences of the recent years; life is not even enjoyment, . . . life is a heavy toil. Renunciation, constant renunciation,—that is its secret meaning, its solution; not the fulfilment of cherished ideas and dreams, no matter how lofty they may be,—but the fulfilment of duty,—that is what man must take heed to; not unless he imposes upon himself chains, the iron chains of duty, can he attain to the end of his course without falling; but in youth we think: “The freer the better; the further one can go.” It is permissible for youth to think thus; but it is disgraceful to console one’s self with an illusion, when the stern face of the truth has at last looked thee full in the eye.

Farewell! Formerly I would have added: “Be happy.” Now I say to thee: Endeavour to live, it is not as easy as it seems. Remember me, not in hours of sadness, but in hours of thoughtfulness, and preserve in thy soul the image of Vyéra in all its unsullied purity. . . . Once more, farewell!

Thine,

P. B.

AN EXCURSION TO THE
FOREST BELT

(1857)

AN EXCURSION TO THE FOREST BELT¹

THE FIRST DAY

THE aspect of the huge pine woods which embrace the whole horizon, the aspect of the "Forest Belt," reminds one of the aspect of the sea. And the impressions evoked by both are the same: the same primeval, untouched strength lies in vast and regal expanse before the spectator. From the bosom of the eternal forests, from the deathless lap of the waters the selfsame voice arises: "I care nothing for thee,"—Nature says to man:—"I reign, but do thou bestir thyself as to the means of escaping death." But the forest is more monotonous and melancholy than the sea, especially a pine forest, which is forever the same, and almost noiseless. The sea menaces and caresses, it has a shifting play of all hues, it speaks with all voices; it reflects the sky, which also exhales eternity, but an eternity which does not seem alien to us. . . . The unchanging, gloomy pine forest maintains a surly silence, or roars dully,—and at the sight of it the consciousness of our in-

¹ A district in southwest Russia—TRANSLATOR.

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significance penetrates still more deeply and irresistibly into the heart of man.

It is difficult for a man, the creature of a single day, yesterday born and to-day doomed to death,—it is difficult for him to endure the cold gaze of the eternal Isis riveted impassibly upon him; not his bold hopes and dreams alone quiet down and become extinguished within him, encompassed by the icy breath of the elements; no—his whole soul chirps feebly and expires; and he feels that the last of his fellows may vanish from the face of the earth—and not a single needle on those branches will quiver; he feels his isolation, his impotence, his fortuitousness and with hurried, secret terror he turns his attention to the petty cares and toils of life; he is more at his ease in that world, created by himself; there he is at home, there he still dares to believe in his own importance, in his own power.

Such were the thoughts which occurred to me several years ago, when, as I stood on the porch of a tiny posting-station, erected on the bank of the marshy little Reséta, I beheld the Forest Belt for the first time. The blue masses of the ever-green forest retreated in front of me in long, serried ranks of terraces; here and there, small birch groves glimmered only as green spots; the entire field of vision was encompassed by the pine forest; no church gleamed white, no fields shone light in any direction—there was nothing but

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trees, trees, nothing but jagged crests; and a thin, dull mist, the eternal mist of the Forest Belt, hung high above them. It was not indolence, that impassivity of life, no—it was absence of life, something dead, though majestic, which breathed forth upon me from all points of the horizon. I remember that huge, white clouds sailed past, softly, and high in air, and the hot summer day lay motionless and silent on the earth. The reddish water of the little stream slipped by without a plash between the dense growth of reeds; at its bottom round hillocks of prickly moss were dimly visible, and the banks now disappeared in the swampy ooze, now shone forth with the sharp whiteness of fine, friable sand. Past the posting-station itself ran the well-beaten county highway.

On this highway, directly opposite the porch, stood a peasant-cart, laden with boxes and chests. Its owner, a gaunt petty burgher, with a hawk's-bill nose and tiny, mouse-like eyes, round-shouldered and lame, was harnessing to it his wretched nag, which was lame, like himself; he was a gingerbread pedlar, who was on his way to the Karatchyóff fair. Several persons suddenly made their appearance on the threshold; others straggled after them at last, a whole throng poured forth; all of them had staves in their hands, and wallets on their backs. From their walk, which was weary and shambling, from their sunburned faces, it was evident that they came

from afar: they were day-labourers, diggers, who were returning from a trip to earn money by harvest labour. An old man of seventy, with perfectly white hair, seemed to be acting as their leader; he turned round from time to time, and spurred on the laggards with a tranquil voice. "Come, come, come, my lads,"—he said,— "co-ome on." They all advanced in silence, in a sort of impressive tranquillity. Only one, a man of low stature, and with an angry aspect, in a sheep-pelt coat open on the breast, and a sheep-skin cap, pulled down over his very eyes, suddenly asked the gingerbread pedlar, as he came on a level with him:

"How much is gingerbread, fool?"

"That depends on the sort of gingerbread, my dear man,"—replied the astounded dealer in a shrill voice.—"I have some for a kopék—while other sorts cost two kopéks. But hast thou two kopéks in thy purse?"

"I guess it ferments in the belly,"—retorted the man in the sheepskin coat, and strode away from the cart.

"Hurry up, my lads, hurry up!"—the old man's voice made itself heard:—"It is a long way to our halting-place for the night."

"A rough lot,"—said the gingerbread pedlar, darting a sidelong glance at me, as soon as the whole throng had straggled past him; "is that the food for them?"

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And harnessing his nag with all speed, he drove down to the river, on which a small ferry-boat of planks was visible. A peasant in a white felt "shlyk" (the tall, pointed cap usual in the Forest Belt), emerged from a low earth-hut to meet him, and ferried him over to the opposite shore. The cart crawled along the rutted and gullied road, now and then emitting a squeak from one of the wheels.

I fed my horses and crossed the stream also. After crawling along for about two versts¹ through a swampy meadow, I drove, at last, on to a narrow dam at a clearing in the forest. My tarantás jolted unevenly over the round logs; I alighted and went on foot. The horses advanced at an energetic pace, snorting and tossing their heads to rid themselves of the gnats and small flies. The Forest Belt had received us into its bosom. At its border, nearest to the meadow, grew birches, aspens, lindens, maples, and oaks; then these began to occur more rarely, the thick fir woods moved up in a dense wall; further away the bare trunks of a pine wood shone red, and then again a mixed forest stretched out, overgrown below with hazel-bushes, bird-cherry, mountain-ash, and large, juicy grass. The sun's rays brilliantly illuminated the crests of the trees, and, sifting over the branches, only here and there reached the ground in pale streaks and patches.

¹ A verst is two-thirds of a mile. — TRANSLATOR.

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Hardly any birds were to be heard—they are not fond of the great forests; only the mournful, thrice-repeated cry of a hoopoe, and the angry scream of a nut-bird, or a jay rang out from time to time; a reticent, always solitary rook flew across the clearing, the golden-blue of its beautiful feathers gleaming brightly. Sometimes the trees thinned out, stood further apart, there was more light ahead, the tarantás came out on a clear, sandy glade; sparse rye grew thereon in beds, noiselessly waving its pale little ears; on one side a small, ancient chapel stood out darkly with its sagging cross above a well; an invisible brook babbled peaceably, with varying and resonant sounds, as though it were flowing into an empty bottle; and then, suddenly, the road was barred by a recently-fallen birch-tree, and the forest stood round about, so aged, so lofty, so dreamy, that even the air seemed stifling. In places the clearing was all inundated with water; on both sides extended a forest morass, all green and dark, all covered with reeds and a growth of young alder-bushes; ducks kept flying upward in pairs—and strange it was to see these water-fowl flitting swiftly between the pines.—“Ga, ga, ga, ga,” a prolonged cry suddenly arose; it was a shepherd driving his flock through the smaller growth of trees; a dark-brown cow with short, sharp horns butted her way noisily through the bushes, with her big, dark eyes riveted on the hound which was

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running on in front of me; a gentle breeze wafted to me the delicate yet strong odour of burnt wood; a tiny wreath of white smoke crawled up and down far away in circular streams against the pale-blue forest air; evidently, some peasant furnished charcoal to the glass-works or a factory. The further we advanced the more dull and quiet did it grow around us. It is always silent in a pine forest, only far away, high overhead, a sort of long murmur and suppressed roar passes through the branches. . . . One drives on and on, that everlasting murmur of the forest never ceases, and his heart gradually begins to ache, and he wants to get out as speedily as possible, into a spacious place, into the light; he wants to inhale with full lungs—and that fragrant dampness and rotting oppress his breast. . . .

We drove for fifteen versts at a foot-pace, now and then breaking into a trot. I wanted to reach the village of Svyátoe, which lay in the very heart of the forest, by daylight. Twice we encountered peasants with long logs, or linden-bark, which they had stripped from the trees, in their carts.

“Is it far to Svyátoe?”—I inquired of one of them.

“No, not far.”

“How far?”

“Why, it must be about three versts.”

An hour and a half passed. We were still

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driving on and on. Now again a loaded cart creaked. A peasant was walking beside it.

“How much further is it to Svyátœ, brother?”

“What?”

“How far it is to Svyátœ?”

“Eight versts.”

The sun had already set when, at last, I emerged from the forest and beheld before me a small village. About twenty homesteads clung closely around an ancient church, with a single, green dome, and tiny windows, which gleamed crimson in the evening glow. It was Svyátœ. I drove into the enclosure.¹ The herd on its homeward way overtook my tarantás, and ran past, lowing, grunting, and bleating. The young girls and care-worn housewives welcomed their beasts; tow-headed little urchins chased the unruly sucking pigs with merry shouts; the dust whirled along the streets, in light clouds, and turned crimson as it rose higher in the air.

I stopped at the house of the Elder, a crafty and intelligent “forest-dweller,” one of those concerning whom it is said that they can see what is going on two yards under the ground. Early on the following day, I set off, in a light cart, drawn by a pair of pot-bellied horses belonging to the peasants, with the Elder’s son, and another young peasant, named Egór, on a hunt

¹ Russian villages are enclosed with a hedge, a fence, or wattled branches. — TRANSLATOR.

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for moor-cock and hazel-hens. The forest stood in a dense-blue ring along the entire rim of the sky—the cultivated fields around Svyátœ were reckoned at two hundred desyatínas,¹ no more; but we were obliged to drive for seven versts to reach the good places. The Elder's son was named Kondrát. He was a chestnut-haired, red-cheeked young lad, with a kindly and pacific expression of countenance, obliging and loquacious. He drove the horses. Egór sat beside me. I wish to say a couple of words concerning him.

He was considered the best hunter in the entire county. He had traversed all the localities for fifty versts round about, in their entire length and breadth. He rarely fired at a bird, because of scarcity of powder and shot; but it was enough for him that he had lured up a hazel-hen, and had noted the crest of a wood-snipe. Egór bore the reputation of being an upright man and a "close-mouthed fellow." He was not fond of talking, and never exaggerated the number of the game he had found—a rare trait in a hunter. He was of medium height, and gaunt; and had a pale, elongated face and large, honest eyes. All his features, especially his lips, were regular, and were permanently impassive; they breathed forth imperturbable composure. He smiled slightly, and inwardly, as it were, when he uttered his words, and that quiet smile was very charming.

¹ A desyatína is equal to 2.70 acres.—TRANSLATOR.

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He did not drink liquor, and worked industriously, but had no luck: his wife was constantly ailing, his children died one after the other; he had been "reduced to poverty," and was absolutely unable to get on his feet again. And it must be said, that a passion for hunting is not befitting a peasant, and he who "indulges himself with a gun" is a bad farmer.

Whether it arose from dwelling constantly in the forest, face to face with the mournful and rigorous nature of that unpopulated region, or in consequence of a special turn and type of mind, at any rate, a certain modest dignity, precisely that, dignity and not thoughtfulness,—the dignity of a stately deer,—was perceptible in all Egór's movements. In the course of his career, he had killed seven bears, after having laid in wait for them in the fields of oats. It was only on the fourth night that he made up his mind to fire on the last: the bear persisted in not standing sideways to him, and he had but one bullet. Egór had killed him just before my arrival. When Kondrát conducted me to him, I found him in his little back yard: squatted on his heels in front of the huge beast, he was cutting out the fat with a short, dull knife.

"What a fine fellow thou hast laid low!"—I remarked.

Egór raised his head and gazed first at me, then at the hound which had come with me.

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“If you have come to hunt, there are moor-cock at Móshnoe—three broods of them, and five of hazel-hens,”—he said, and turned again to his task.

It was with this Egór and with Kondrát that I set off on the following day on my hunting expedition. We drove briskly across the glade which surrounded Svyátoe, but on entering the forest, dragged along again at a walk.

“Yonder sits a wood-pigeon,” said Kondrát, suddenly turning to me:—“’t would be a good thing to knock it over.”

Egór glanced in the direction whither Kondrát was pointing, and said nothing. It was a distance of over one hundred paces to the wood-pigeon, and one cannot kill it at forty paces, such is the firmness of its feathers.

The loquacious Kondrát made a few more remarks; but not without effect did the forest stillness embrace him also: he fell silent. Only now and then exchanging words, but keeping our eyes fixed ahead, and listening to the panting and snorting of the horses, we finally reached “Móshnoe.”¹ This appellation was applied to a mighty pine forest, with a sprinkling of spruce-trees here and there. We alighted. Kondrát pushed the cart into the bushes, so that the mosquitoes might not bite the horses. Egór inspected the trigger of his gun, and crossed himself: he

¹ An adjective meaning *mighty*. —TRANSLATOR.

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never began anything without the sign of the cross.

The forest which we had entered was extremely aged. I do not know whether the Tatárs roved therein,¹ but the Russian bandits and the Lithuanians of the Troublous Time² certainly might have concealed themselves in its remote fastnesses. At a respectful distance from one another rose the mighty pines with huge, slightly-gnarled trunks of a pale-yellow hue; between them, drawn up in military array, stood others, of lesser growth. Greenish moss, all besprinkled with dead pine-needles, covered the ground; the bog-bilberry grew in dense bushes; the strong odour of its berries, resembling the perfume of musk, oppressed the breath. The sun could not penetrate through the lofty canopy of the pine-branches; but it was stifling hot and not dark in the forest, nevertheless; like huge drops of sweat, the heavy, transparent pitch oozed out and quietly trickled down the coarse bark of the trees. The motionless air, devoid of shadow and devoid of light, burned the face. All was silent; even our footsteps were not audible. We trod on the moss, as on a carpet; Egór, in particular, moved noiselessly, as though he had been a shadow; beneath his feet not even the dead

¹ During the period of the "Tatár Yoke," in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.—TRANSLATOR.

² In the beginning of the seventeenth century, which ended in the election of the first Románoff Tzar.—TRANSLATOR.

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branches crackled. He walked without haste, now and then blowing his decoy-whistle; a hazel-hen soon answered, and before my very eyes dived into a thick spruce-tree; but in vain did Egór point it out to me: strain my vision as I would, I could not possibly descry it; Egór was compelled to fire at it. We also found two coveys of moor-cocks; the cautious birds rose far away, with a heavy, sharp clatter; but we succeeded in shooting three young ones.

At one *maidán*,¹ Egor suddenly came to a halt and called to me. “A bear has been trying to get water,”—he said, pointing at a broad, fresh scratch in the very centre of the pit, lined with fine moss.

“Is that a trace of his paws?”—I inquired.

“Yes; but the water had dried up. He has left his traces on that pine-tree also; he climbed it for honey. He has cut it with his claws as with a knife.”

We continued to make our way into the very densest part of the forest. Egór only rarely cast a glance upward, and walked on in front calmly and confidently. I espied a tall, circular embankment, surrounded by a trench half-filled with earth.

“What is that,—a tar-pit also?”—I asked.

“No,”—replied Egór:—“a fortress of brigands used to stand here.”

¹ A place where tar is distilled is called a *maidán*.

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“ Long ago? ”

“ Yes, long ago; beyond the memories of our grandfathers. And a treasure is buried here, too. But a strong malediction is placed upon it; an oath sworn on human blood.”

We proceeded about a couple of versts further. I was thirsty.

“ Sit down a bit,”—said Egór:—“ I will go for water; there is a spring hard by.”

He departed; I remained alone.

I seated myself on the stump of a felled tree, propped my elbow on my knees, and after a long silence, slowly raised my head and gazed about me. Oh, how quiet and grimly-melancholy was everything around—no, not even melancholy, but dumb, cold, and menacing at one and the same time! My heart contracted within me. At that moment, on that spot, I became conscious of the breath of death, I felt it; its proximity was almost tangible. Not a single sound quivered, not a momentary rustle arose in the motionless jaws of the pine forest which surrounded me! Again, almost in terror, I dropped my head; I seemed to have been gazing into something at which a man should not look. . . . I covered my eyes with my hand—and suddenly, as though in obedience to a mysterious command, I began to recall my whole life. . . .

Now my childhood flitted before me,—noisy and quiet, irritable and good, with hurried joys

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and swift griefs; then my youth rose up, troubled, strange, vain-glorious, with all its errors and enterprises, with disordered labour, and agitated inactivity. . . . Then also recurred to my mind the comrades of my aspirations then, like a flash of lightning by night, several bright memories gleamed then the shadows began to grow and move forward; it became darker and darker around me; the monotonous years flew past more dully and quietly—and sadness descended like a stone upon my heart. I sat motionless gazing with surprise and effort, as though I beheld my whole life before me, as though a scroll were being unrolled before my eyes. “Oh, what have I done?” my lips involuntarily uttered in a bitter whisper. “Oh, life, life, how art thou gone without a trace? How hast thou slipped out of my tightly-clenched hands? Hast thou deceived me, or have I failed to make use of thy gifts? Is it possible? This trifle, this poor handful of dusty ashes—is that all that is left of thee? This cold, impassive, useless something—is it I, the I of days gone by? What? My soul has thirsted for such full happiness, it has rejected with scorn everything petty, everything defective, it has waited: in another moment happiness will gush forth in a flood—and not a single drop has moistened the longing lips? Oh, my golden chords, ye, who quivered so sensitively, so sweetly once on a time,—I hardly heard your song ye had

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only just begun to sound, when ye broke. Or, perchance, happiness, the direct happiness of my whole life has gone by close to me, has passed me, smiling with a radiant smile—and I have failed to recognise its divine countenance? Or has it really visited me and sat on my pillow, but I have forgotten it, as though it had been a dream? As though it had been a dream,”—I repeated dejectedly. Intangible images wandered through my soul, evoking in me not precisely pity, nor yet precisely perplexity. . . . “And you,”—I thought,—“dear, familiar, vanished faces, you who have encircled me in this dead solitude, why are you so profoundly and sadly silent? From what depths have ye risen? How am I to understand your enigmatical glances? Are ye bidding me farewell, or are ye welcoming me? Oh, can it be that there is no hope, no return? Why have ye flowed from my eyes, ye scanty, belated drops? Oh, heart, to what end, wherefore, still feel pity? Strive to forget if thou desirest repose; train thyself to the submission of the last parting, to the bitter words: ‘farewell’ and ‘forever.’ Do not look back, do not remember, do not aspire thither where it is bright, where youth smiles, where joy profound flutters its azure pinions, where love, like the dew in the crimson dawn, beams with tears of rapture; look not thither where bliss dwells and faith and power—that is no place for us!”

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“Here ’s your water for you,”—rang out Egór’s resonant voice behind me:—“drink, with God’s blessing!”

I gave an involuntary start: this living speech administered a shock to me, joyously agitated my whole being. It was as though I had fallen into an unexplored, gloomy depth, where everything round about had grown still, and nothing was audible save the quiet incessant moaning of some eternal grief . . . as though I were dying, but could not offer resistance; and suddenly a friendly call had reached my ear, and some one’s mighty hand had brought me forth, with one upward sweep, into God’s daylight. I glanced round, and, with unspeakable delight, perceived the honest and composed face of my guide. He was standing before me in a light and stately pose, with his wonted smile, reaching out to me a small, damp bottle, all filled with fresh water. . . . I rose.

“Let us go on, guide me,”—I said with enthusiasm.

We set out and roved about for a long time, until evening. As soon as the midday heat “held up,” it began to grow cold and dark in the forest so swiftly that one no longer felt any inclination to remain in it. “Begone, ye uneasy mortals,” it seemed to be whispering to us in surly wise from behind every pine. We made our way out, but did not soon find Kondrát. We shouted,

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called him by name, but he did not respond. Suddenly, in the midst of the wonderful stillness of the air, we heard his “whoa! whoa!”—ring out in a ravine close at hand. . . . He had not heard our shouts because of the wind which had suddenly sprung up, and as suddenly completely died away. Only on trees which stood apart could the traces of its gusts be seen: it had turned many leaves wrong side out, and so they remained, imparting a motley appearance to the motionless foliage.

We climbed into the cart and rolled off homeward. I sat swaying to and fro and quietly inhaling the damp, rather keen air, and all my recent visions and regrets were engulfed in one sensation of dreaminess and fatigue, in one desire to return as promptly as possible under the roof of a warm house; to drink tea with thick cream; to burrow into the soft, porous hay and sleep, sleep, sleep. . . .

THE SECOND DAY

ON the following morning, we three again betook ourselves to the Burnt District. Ten years previously, several thousand desyatínas had been burned over in the Forest Belt, and up to the present time it had not been covered with a new growth of trees; here and there young firs and pines are springing up, but with that exception,

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there is nothing but moss and ashes rendered worthless by long lying. On this Burnt District, which is reckoned as lying twelve versts from Svyátoe, grow all sorts of berries in great quantities, and woodcock, which are extremely fond of strawberries and red bilberries, breed there.

We were driving along in silence, when suddenly Kondrát raised his head.

“Eh!”—he exclaimed:—“why, I do believe ’t is Efrém standing yonder. Morning, Alexándritch,”—he added, raising his voice, and lifting his cap.

A peasant of short stature, in a short, black peasant-coat girt with a rope, stepped out from under a tree and approached the cart.

“Did they release thee?”—inquired Kondrát.

“I should think they did!”—returned the peasant, displaying his teeth in a grin.—“It is n’t convenient to hold fellows like me.”

“And is Piótr Philíppitch all right?”

“Philíppoff is it? We know our business, he ’s all right.”

“You don’t say so! Why, Alexándritch, I was thinking; ‘come, brother,’ I was thinking, ‘now lie down on the frying-pan, goose!’”

“About Piótr Philíppoff is it? Not much! We ’ve seen his like before. He tries to play the wolf, but he has a dog’s tail.—Art thou going a-hunting, master?”—the little peasant suddenly inquired, swiftly turning up to me his little,

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puckered-up eyes, and immediately dropping them again.

“ Yes.”

“ And where, for example? ”

“ To the Burnt District,”—said Kondrát.

“ You ’re going to the Burnt District; look out that you don’t drive into a conflagration.”

“ Why, what dost thou mean? ”

“ I have seen a lot of moor-cock,”—went on the little peasant, as though jeering and without replying to Kondrát,—“ but you won’t hit on the place; it is a good twenty versts off in a bee-line. And there ’s Egór—there ’s no denying it! he ’s as much at home in the pine forest as in his own yard, but even he won’t make his way thither. Morning, Egór, thou God’s soul worth one kopék,”—he suddenly bellowed.

“ Morning, Efrém,”—returned Egór deliberately.

I stared with curiosity at this Efrém. It was a long time since I had seen so strange a face. He had a long, sharp nose, big lips, and a scanty beard. His blue eyes fairly darted about like fireworks. He stood in a free-and-easy attitude, with his arms set lightly akimbo, and did not doff his cap.

“ Art on a visit home, pray? ”—Kondrát asked him.

“ Exh-sta! on a visit! ’T is not the weather now for that, brother. I ’ve been on a spree.

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I've been cutting a dash, brother, that 's what. Thou mayest lie on the stove until winter, and not a single dog will sneeze. That superintendent yonder in the town said to me: 'Leave us, Alexándritch,' says he, 'go away out of the country; we 'll give thee a first-class passport . . . but I'm sorry for thy Svyátoe folks: they can't produce another such thief as thou.'"

Kondrát broke out laughing.

"Thou art a jester, little uncle, a regular jester,"—he said, giving the reins a shake. The horses started on.

"Whoa!"—said Efrém. The horses came to a standstill. Kondrát did not like this sally.

"Stop thy insolence, Alexándritch,"—he remarked in an undertone. "Dost thou not see that we are driving a gentleman? He 'll get angry, the first thou knowest."

"Ekh, thou sea-drake! What is there for him to get angry about? He 's a kind gentleman. Just see now, he 'll give me some money for vodka. Ekh, master, give the wayfarer the price of a dram! I 'll dispose of it,"—he caught himself up, elevating his shoulder to his ear, and gnashing his teeth.

I involuntarily smiled, gave him a ten-kopék piece, and ordered Kondrát to drive on.

"Much obliged, Your Well-born,"—shouted Efrém after us, in military fashion.¹ "And do

¹"Much satisfied" (in the plural), literally.—TRANSLATOR.

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thou, Kondrát, henceforth know from whom thou shouldst take lessons; the timid man is done for, the bold man succeeds. When thou returnest drop in to see me, dost hear? I shall have liquor on hand for three days; we 'll polish off a couple of bottles; my wife 's a shrew, the housekeeping goes as on runners. . . . Hey, white-sided magpie, carouse while thy tail is whole!"

And whistling shrilly, Efrém dived into the bushes.

"What sort of a man is he?"—I inquired of Kondrát, who, as he sat on the box, kept shaking his head as though engaged in argument with himself.

"That one, you mean?"—returned Kondrát, dropping his eyes.—"That one, you mean?" he repeated.

"Yes. Is he one of your villagers?"

"Yes; he belongs in Svyátœ. He 's the sort of a man Such another is n't to be found for a hundred versts. Such a thief and rascal—and, oh, my God! his eye fairly warps at other folks' goods. You can't get away from him even by burrowing in the earth; and as for money, for example, why, he 'll drag it out from underneath your very backbone without your noticing it."

"What a daring fellow he is!"

"Daring? Yes; he is n't afraid of anybody. Just you take a good look at him: from his phynasomy he 's a knave; you can fairly detect that

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from his nose.” (Kondrát frequently drove with gentlemen, and was in the habit of visiting the county town; consequently, he was fond, on occasion, of showing off.) “And you can’t do anything to him. Many a time they ’ve haled him to town and put him in prison,—and only loss came of it. They will begin to bind him, and he ’ll say: ‘Come now, are n’t you going to fether that leg? Fether it also, and as strongly as you can, and I ’ll take a nap in the meantime; but I ’ll reach home quicker than your guards.’ You look: and he really has got back, he ’s there again, akh! oh, thou my God! All of us hereabouts know the forest; we ’ve been used to it from our infancy, but we can’t compete with him. Last summer, he came by night in a bee-line from Altúkhin to Syvátoe, which must be forty versts. And as for stealing honey, he ’s a master-hand at that; and not a bee stings him. He has devastated all the bee-farms.”

“I suppose he shows no quarter to the wild hives either?”

“Well, no; why accuse him without cause? That sin has not been noticed in him. A wild hive is a sacred thing with us. A bee-farm is fenced in; there is a guard; if he purloins that,—that ’s according to luck; but a wild bee is God’s affair, not guarded; only a bear touches it.”

“That ’s because he is a bear,”—remarked Egór.

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“ Is he married? ”

“ Certainly. And he has a son. And his son will turn out a thief also! He takes after his father completely. And he ’s teaching him now. A little while ago he brought home a pot full of old five-kopék pieces,—he had stolen it somewhere, of course; he went and buried it in a glade in the forest, but returned home himself and sent his son to the glade. ‘ I won’t give thee anything to eat until thou findest the pot,’ says he; ‘ and I won’t let thee into the house.’—The son sat a whole day in the forest, and spent the night in the forest; but he found the pot. Yes, he ’s clever, that Efrém. So long as he ’s at home, he ’s an amiable man, he treats everybody: drink, eat, as much as thou wilt; and folks set up dancing at his house, and all sorts of drollery; but if he ’s at the assembly,—we have such an assembly in our village,—the best thing a man can do is not to condemn him; he ’ll come up from behind, listen, say a word, as though he were chopping something, and off he ’ll go; and ’t is a weighty word. And if he goes off into the forest, well, then look out for a catastrophe! Expect ruin. But I must say one thing, that he won’t touch his own fellow-villagers unless he ’s in a tight place himself. If he meets a Svyátœ man,—‘ Turn out, and get past me, brother,’—he ’ll shout from afar:—‘ The forest spirit has come over me: I ’m in murderous mood!’—Calamity!”

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“ But why do you pay any heed to that? Cannot the whole countryside get the better of one man? ”

“ Why, apparently they can't. ”

“ Is he a wizard, pray? ”

“ Who knows? A while ago, he got into the bee-farm of the neighbouring chanter, by night; yet the chanter was on guard himself. Well, he caught him, and gave him a good thrashing in the darkness. When he got through, Efrém says to him: ‘ And dost thou know whom thou hast thrashed? ’ And when the chanter recognised him by his voice, he was fairly dumfounded. ‘ Well, brother, ’ says Efrém, ‘ thou shalt pay for this. ’ The chanter fell at his feet: ‘ Take what thou wilt, ’ says he.—‘ No, ’ says the other, ‘ I ’ll take from thee at my own time, and what I choose. ’—And what think you? From that very day, the chanter began to wander about like a shadow, just as though he had been scalded. ‘ My heart is pining away within me, ’ says he: ‘ evidently, the brigand has fastened on me an awfully strong spell. ’—And that ’s what happened to him, to that chanter. ”

“ That chanter must be stupid, ”—I remarked.

“ Stupid? And is that the way you judge? Once an order was issued to capture that same Efrém. We ’ve got such a sharp commissary of police! So ten men set out to capture Efrém. They see him coming toward them. . . . One of

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them begins to shout: 'There he is, hold him, bind him!' But Efrém goes into the forest, and cuts himself a cudgel, about two fingers thick, and leaps out again on the road, so hideous, so terrible, and commands, like a general on parade: 'On your knees!'—and down they all fall.—'And who was it,'—says he,—'that shouted,—"Hold him, bind him?"' Thou, Seryóga?' And the latter just springs to his feet, and makes off. . . . But Efrém follows him and whacks him on the heels with his cudgel. . . . He stroked him for about a verst. And afterward he was always complaining: 'Ekh, I 'm vexed,' says he, 'that I did n't prevent his eating flesh for the last time before the fast.' This happened just before the fast of St. Philip. Well, and the commissary of police was soon superseded,—and that was the end of the whole matter."

"But why did they all submit to him?"

"Why! because they just did. . . ."

"He has scared all of you, and now he does what he pleases with you."

"He has scared us. . . . But he 'll scare any one you like. And he 's clever at inventions. O thou, my God!—Once I stumbled upon him in the forest, and such a healthy rain was coming down that I was about to turn aside. . . . But he looked at me, and beckoned me up so, with his hand. 'Come hither, Kondrát,' says he, 'don't be afraid. Learn from me how to live in the

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forest, and what to do in a rain.' I approached him, and he was sitting under a spruce-tree and had lighted a small fire of damp branches; the smoke had caught in the spruce, and prevented the rain from dripping down. I was astonished at him. And then, here 's another thing he invented, once on a time " (and Kondrát broke into a laugh), " and amused us. Our oats were being threshed on the threshing-floor, but the men had not finished; they had not managed to rake together the last pile. Well, and so they stationed two sentries for the night; but the lads were not of the brave sort. So, they were sitting and chattering, when Efrém took and filled the sleeves of his shirt with straw, and tied the ends, and put the shirt on his head. So he crept up to the kiln in that guise, and began to show himself a little from round the corner, and thrust forth his horns. One young fellow says to the other: ' Dost see? ' — ' I see,' says the other, and suddenly uttered an exclamation only the cords of their bast-slippers burst. But Efrém gathered the oats into a sack and dragged it off to his house. He told all about it himself afterward. How he did shame them, shame those lads. . . . Truly!"

Again Kondrát burst out laughing. And Egór smiled. " Only the cords of their bast-slippers burst?" said he.

Again we all relapsed into silence. Suddenly Kondrát gave a start of alarm and sat up straight.

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“Hey, good heavens!”—he exclaimed;—
“why, I do believe there ’s a fire!”

“Where? Where?”—we asked.

“Yonder, look, straight ahead in the direction we ’re driving. . . . A fire it is. That Efrém, —Efrém predicted it. Can it be his doing, the accursed soul?”

I glanced in the direction indicated by Kondrát. In fact, two or three versts in front of us, behind a green band of low spruce-trees, a thick pillar of blue smoke was slowly rising from the earth, gradually curving and assuming the form of a cap; to the right and left of it others, smaller and whiter, were visible.

A peasant, all red in the face and perspiring, clad in nothing but his shirt, with his hair dishevelled above his frightened face, was galloping straight toward us, and with difficulty drew up his hastily-bridled horse.

“Brothers,”—he asked in a panting voice,—
“have n’t you seen any of the forest guards?”

“No; we have n’t. What is it—is the forest on fire?”

“Yes. The people must be assembled; otherwise, it will take the direction of Trósnoe. . . .”

The peasant jerked his elbows, as he kicked the flanks of his horse with his heels. . . . It galloped off.

Kondrát also urged on his pair. We drove straight at the smoke, which spread out more and

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more widely; in places it suddenly turned black and spurted up aloft. The nearer we came, the less clear became its outlines; soon the air was all dimmed, there was a strong odour of burning, and the first pale-red tongues of flame flashed out, moving strangely and terribly among the trees.

“Well, God be thanked,”—said Kondrát:—“it appears to be a ground fire.”

“A what?”

“A ground fire; the sort which runs along the ground. ’T is difficult to get control of an underground fire. What is one to do when the earth is burning for a whole arshin¹ down? There is but one salvation: dig trenches—and is that easy? But a ground fire is nothing. It will only shave off the grass, and burn up the dead leaves. The forest is all the better for it. But good heavens, just see, how it has struck out!”

We drove almost to the very verge of the conflagration. I alighted and walked toward it. This was neither difficult nor dangerous. The fire was running through the sparse pine forest *against* the wind; it was moving with an uneven line, or, to speak more accurately, in a dense, serrated wall of reflexed tongues. The smoke was carried away by the wind. Kondrát had told the truth; it really was a ground fire, which was merely shaving off the grass, and without flam-

¹ Twenty-eight inches—the Russian yard-measure. — TRANSLATOR.

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ing up was proceeding onward, leaving behind it a black and smoking, but not even smouldering, track. Sometimes, it is true, in places where the fire encountered a depression filled with a thicket and dried branches, it suddenly reared itself aloft with a certain peculiar, decidedly ominous roar, in long, billowy tufts; but it speedily subsided, and ran onward as before, lightly crackling and hissing. I even noticed more than once, how an oak-bush with dry, pendent leaves, though surrounded by the flame remained untouched; it merely got a little singed below. I must confess that I could not understand why the dry leaves did not catch fire. Kondrát explained to me that this arose from the fact that it was a ground fire, "that is to say, not an angry one."

"But it is a fire, nevertheless," I retorted. — "'T is a ground fire,"—repeated Kondrát. But although it was a ground fire, yet the conflagration produced its effect: the hares were scurrying back and forth in a disorderly sort of way, quite unnecessarily returning to the vicinity of the fire; birds got caught in the smoke, and circled about; the horses glanced about them, and snorted; the very forest seemed to be booming,—and man felt uncomfortable with the heat which suddenly struck him in the face. . . .

"What 's the use of looking at it?"—said Egór suddenly behind my back.—"Let 's go on."

"But where are we to pass through?"

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“ Turn to the left, over the dry marsh,—we can drive across.”

We turned to the left and drove over, although sometimes it was rather hard on the horses and the cart.

All day long we dragged on through the Burnt District. Just before evening (the sunset glow had not yet kindled in the sky, but the shadows of the trees already lay motionless and long; and in the grass that chill was perceptible which precedes the dew) I lay down on the road near the cart,—to which Kondrát was engaged, without haste, in harnessing the horses which had eaten their fill,—and recalled my cheerless visions of the day before. Everything round about was as still as on the preceding day; but the soul-oppressing and crowding pine forest was not there; on the tall moss, the lilac steppe-grass, the soft dust of the road, the slender boles and clean little leaves of the young birches, lay the clear and gentle light of the low-hanging, no longer sultry, sun. Everything was resting, immersed in a soothing coolness; nothing had yet fallen asleep, but everything was already preparing for the healing slumber of the evening and the night. Everything seemed to be saying to man: “ Rest, our brother; breathe lightly and do not grieve before sleep, which is near at hand.” I raised my head and beheld, at the very tip of a slender branch, one of those large flies with an emerald

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head, a long body, and four transparent wings, which the French coquettishly designate as “*demoiselles*,” and our guileless folk call “*yokes*.” For a long time, more than an hour, I did not take my eyes off it. Baked through and through by the sun, it did not stir, but only now and then turned its head from side to side, and let its raised wings palpitate that is all. As I gazed at it, it suddenly seemed to me that I understood the life of nature,—understood its clear and indubitable, though for many still mysterious meaning. The slow and quiet inspiration, leisureliness and reserve of sensations and of forces, the equilibrium of health in each separate individual—that is its very basis, its irrevocable law; that is the thing on which it stands and is upheld. Everything which deviates from this level—either above or below, it makes no difference—is cast forth by it as worthless. Many insects die as soon as they know the equilibrium-destroying joy of love; an ailing wild beast plunges into the dense thickets, and expires there alone: it seems to feel that it no longer has a right to behold the sun, which is common to all, or to breathe the free air; it has not the right to live; but man, whose lot is evil in the world, whether by his own fault or through that of others, must at least know how to hold his peace.

“Come, what art thou about, *Egór?*”—suddenly exclaimed *Kondrát*, who had already man-

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aged to mount the box of the cart, and was playing with and disentangling the reins.—“Come, take thy seat. What hast thou fallen to musing about? Still about the cow?”

“About the cow? About what cow?”—I asked, glancing at Egór. Calm and dignified as ever, he really had fallen to musing, apparently, and was gazing off somewhere into the distance, at the fields which were already beginning to grow dark.

“Why, don’t you know?”—retorted Kondrát:—“his last cow died last night. He has no luck—what ’s to be done?”

Egór took his seat in silence on the box, and we drove off. “That man knows how to refrain from complaining,” I thought.

ÁSYA

(1857)

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I

I WAS five-and-twenty years of age at the time [began N. N.].—'T is an affair of days long past, as you see. I had just acquired my freedom and had gone abroad; not in order to "finish my education," as people expressed it then, but simply because I wanted to see God's world. I was healthy, young, cheerful; my money was not exhausted; cares had not yet succeeded in accumulating; I lived without looking back, I did what I wished: in one word, I flourished. It never entered my head that man is not a plant, and that he cannot flourish long. Youth eats gilded gingerbread cakes and thinks they are its daily bread; but a time will come when one will beg for bread. But there is no use in discussing that.

I was travelling utterly without an aim, without a plan; I was halting everywhere where things pleased me, and immediately proceeded onward, as soon as I felt a desire to see new faces—precisely that, faces. People alone and exclusively

interested me; I hated curious monuments, noteworthy collections; the mere sight of a local guide aroused in me a sensation of melancholy and wrath. I nearly went out of my mind in the Grüne Gewölbe in Dresden. Nature had a very great effect on me, but I did not love its so-called beauties, remarkable mountains, cliffs, and waterfalls; I did not like to have it force itself upon me, interfere with me. On the other hand, faces,—living, human faces,—people's speech, their movements, their laughter, were what I could not dispense with. I had always felt peculiarly gay and at my ease in a crowd; I found it cheerful to go where other people went, to shout when others shouted; and, at the same time, I liked to watch those others shout. It amused me to watch people. . . . yes, and I did not even watch them—I contemplated them with a sort of joyous and insatiable curiosity. But I am digressing again.

So then, twenty years ago, I was residing in the small German town of Z., on the left bank of the Rhine. I was seeking solitude; I had just been wounded in the heart by a young widow, with whom I had become acquainted at the baths. She was very pretty and clever; she coquetted with every one—including sinful me; and at first she even encouraged me, but afterward wounded me cruelly, sacrificing me to a red-cheeked Bavarian lieutenant. I am bound to say that the wound in my heart was not very deep; but I regarded

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it as my duty to surrender myself to grief and solitude for a certain time,—with what will not youth divert itself!—and I settled in Z.

This little town pleased me by its site at the foot of two lofty hills; by its decrepit walls and towers, its aged lindens, and the steep bridge over the bright little river, which fell into the Rhine; but chiefly by its good wine. Through its narrow streets there strolled in the evening, immediately after sunset (this was in July), extremely pretty, fair-haired German maidens, and on meeting a stranger they articulated with a pleasant voice: “*Guten Abend!*”—and some of them did not depart even when the moon rose from behind the steep roofs of the ancient houses, and the tiny stones of the pavement were clearly outlined in its motionless rays. I loved to wander then through the town; the moon seemed to be gazing intently at it from the clear sky; and the town felt that gaze, and stood sensitive and peaceful, all bathed in its light,—that tranquil and, at the same time, soul-agitating light. The cock on the tall Gothic belfry glittered like pale gold; the same gold was diffused in streams over the shining black expanse of the little river; slender candles (the German is economical!) burned modestly in the narrow windows under the slate-covered roofs; grape-vines mysteriously thrust their curled moustaches from behind stone walls; something flitted past in the shadow near the ancient well on the triangular market-place; suddenly the

somnolent whistle of the night watchman rang out, a good-natured dog growled in an undertone, the air fairly caressed one's face, and the lindens emitted so sweet a perfume that one's chest involuntarily inhaled deeper and deeper breaths, and the word: "Gretchen"—not quite an exclamation nor yet quite a query—fairly forced itself to one's lips.

The little town of Z. lies a couple of versts distant from the Rhine. I frequently walked to take a look at the majestic stream and, as I mused,—not without some effort,—on the sly widow, I would sit for long hours on a stone bench, beneath a huge, isolated ash-tree. A small statue of the Madonna, with almost childish face and a red heart on her breast, transfixed by swords, gazed sadly forth from among its branches. On the opposite shore was the small town of L.; a little larger than the one in which I had settled down. One evening I was sitting on my favourite bench, gazing now at the river, now at the sky, and again at the vineyards. In front of me, tow-headed urchins were clambering over the sides of a boat, drawn up on the shore, and overturned with its tarred bottom upward. Small vessels were running under slightly inflated sails; the greenish waves were gliding past, faintly swelling and gurgling. Suddenly the sounds of music were wafted to my ear: I began to listen. A waltz was being played in the town of L.; a bass-viol was

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droning spasmodically; a violin was trilling indistinctly; a flute was piping valorously.

“What ’s that?”—I enquired of an old man in a velveteen waistcoat, blue stockings and buckled shoes, who approached me.

“That,”—he replied, having preliminarily shifted the mouthpiece of his pipe from one corner of his mouth to the other,—“is students who have come from B., for a commers.”

“I believe I ’ll take a look at that commers,”—I thought.—“By the way, I have n’t been in L., as yet.” I hunted up a wherryman and set off for the other shore.

II

IT is not every one, possibly, who knows what a commers is. It is a peculiar sort of triumphal banquet, at which the students of one land or fraternity (*Landsmannschaft*) assemble. Almost all the participants on a commers wear the costume,—established long ago,—of German students: a round jacket, large boots, and tiny caps with bands of familiar colours. The students generally assemble for a dinner, presided over by the Senior, that is to say, the Elder,—and feast until morning, drink, sing the songs, “Landesvater,” “Gaudeamus,” smoke and curse the Philistines; sometimes they hire an orchestra.

Just this sort of a commers was in progress

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in L., in front of a small inn under the sign-board of the "Sun," in a garden which abutted on the street. Over the inn itself, and the garden, flags were fluttering; the students were sitting at tables under the clipped lindens; a huge bull-dog was lying under one of the tables; on one side, in an arbour of ivy, the musicians were installed and were playing industriously, constantly reinforcing their strength with beer. On the street, in front of the low fence of the garden, a considerable number of people were gathered: the good-natured citizens of L. had not wished to let slip the opportunity of staring at visitors from a distance. I also mingled in the crowd of spectators. It cheered me to look at the faces of the students; their embraces, exclamations, the innocent coquetry of youth, the ardent glances, the causeless laughter—the best laughter in the world,—all this joyous ebullition of young, fresh life, this impulse in advance—no matter where, so long as it was forward,—this good-natured liberty touched and kindled me. Why not join them? I asked myself. . . .

"Ásya, art thou satisfied?"—suddenly said a man's voice behind me, in Russian.

"Let us wait a little longer,"—replied another, a feminine voice, in the same language.

I wheeled hastily round. . . My gaze fell upon a handsome young man in a foraging-cap and a roomy round-jacket. He was arm in arm with a

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young girl of short stature, with a straw hat which covered the whole upper part of her face.

“You are Russians?”—broke involuntarily from my tongue.

The young man smiled and said:

“Yes; we are Russians.”

“I did not in the least expect in such a remote nook” I was beginning

“And we did not expect,”—he interrupted me;—“what of that? so much the better. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Gágín, and this is my ” he hesitated for a moment,—“is my sister. And may I ask your name?”

I mentioned my name, and we got into conversation. I learned that Gágín, while travelling for pleasure, like myself, had arrived in the town of L. a week previously, and had stuck fast there. Truth to tell, I was not fond of making acquaintance with Russians abroad. I recognised them from afar by their walk, the cut of their garments, and, chiefly, by the expression of their faces. Conceited and scornful, often imperious, it was suddenly replaced by an expression of caution and timidity. . . . The man would suddenly become all alert, his eyes would roll about uneasily. . . .

“Good heavens! have n’t I blundered? Are n’t people laughing at me?” that hurried glance seemed to be saying. . . . A moment passed,—and again the majesty of the physiognomy was restored, now and then giving way, in turn, to dull

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perplexity. Yes, I avoided Russians, but I took an instantaneous liking to Gágin. There are in the world such happy faces, that every one likes to look at them, as though they warmed or caressed you. Gágin had precisely such a face, charming, caressing, with large, soft eyes, and soft, curly hair. He spoke in such a way that, without seeing his face, merely from the sound of his voice, you felt that he was smiling.

The young girl whom he had called his sister, seemed to me very pretty at the first glance. There was something individual, peculiar in the form of her dark-skinned, round face, with its small, slender nose, almost childish little cheeks, and bright, black eyes. She was gracefully built, and apparently not yet fully developed. She did not bear the slightest resemblance to her brother.

“Will you drop in and make us a call?”—said Gágin to me.—“I think we have gazed our fill at the Germans. Our fellows, it is true, would have smashed the glasses and broken the chairs, but these men are more discreet. Shall we go home—what thinkest thou, Ásya?”

The young girl nodded assent.

“We are living out of town,”—went on Gágin, “in a vineyard, in an isolated house, high up. We have a splendid site, as you will see. The landlady has promised to prepare some sour milk for us. But it will soon be dark now, and it will be better for you to cross the Rhine by moonlight.”

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We set out. Through the small gates of the town (an ancient wall of cobble-stones surrounded it on all sides, and even the embrasures had not yet entirely gone to ruin) we emerged into the open country, and, proceeding for a hundred paces along the stone rampart, halted before a narrow wicket-gate. Gágin opened it and led us up the hill by a steep path. Grape-vines grew on both sides, on terraces; the sun had just set, and a thin scarlet light lay on the vines, on the tall stakes, on the dry earth thickly besprinkled with large and small flag-stones, and on the white walls of a small house, with black, sagging joists and four bright little windows, which stood on the very apex of the hill up which we were climbing.

“Here ’s our dwelling!”—exclaimed Gágin, as soon as we began to approach the house;—“and yonder is the landlady bringing the milk. *Guten Abend, Madame!* We ’ll set to eating immediately; but first,”—he added,—“look around you What do you think of the view?”

The view really was magnificent. The Rhine lay before us, between green banks; in one place it was flaming with the crimson hues of the sunset. The little town, nestling close against the shore, displayed all its houses and streets; hills and fields spread out widely in all directions. Down below it had been good, but up aloft it was still better: I was particularly struck by the purity and

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depth of the sky, the radiant transparency of the air. Cool and light, it softly undulated and surged in waves, as though it were more at its ease on the heights.

“You have chosen capital quarters,”—I said.

“It was Ásya who found them,”—replied Gágin.—“Come now, Ásya,”—he went on:—“See to things. Order everything to be served here. We will sup in the open air. The music can be heard better here. Have you noticed,”—he added, turning to me,—“that some waltzes are good for nothing when heard close to?—the sounds are insipid, harsh—while at a distance, they are splendid! they fairly set all the romantic chords in you to vibrating.”

Ásya (her name was really Anna, but Gágin called her Ásya, and therefore you must permit me to do the same)—Ásya withdrew into the house, and speedily returned in company with the landlady. They carried between them a large tray with a pot of milk, spoons, sugar, berries, and bread. We sat down and began our supper. Ásya removed her hat; her black hair, cut short and brushed like that of a boy, fell in large rings on her neck and ears. At first she was shy of me; but Gágin said to her:

“Ásya, have done with thy shrinking! He does n't bite!”

She smiled and, a little while afterward, entered into conversation with me of her own ac-

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cord. I have never seen a more restless being. She did not sit still for a single moment; she kept rising, running into the house, and running back to us again. She would begin to hum in a low voice, frequently broke out laughing, and that in a very strange manner:—it seemed as though she were laughing not at what she heard, but at various thoughts which came into her head. Her large eyes had a bright, direct, bold gaze, but sometimes her eyelids contracted slightly, and then her glance suddenly became deep and tender.

We chatted for a couple of hours. Day had long since vanished, and evening,—first all fiery, then clear and scarlet, then pale and confused,—had quietly melted and merged into night; and still our conversation continued, peaceful and gentle as the air which surrounded us. Gágin ordered a bottle of Rhine wine to be brought; we quaffed it, without haste. The music, as before, floated up to us; its sounds seemed sweeter and more tender; the lights had kindled in the town and on the river. Suddenly Ásya lowered her head, so that her curls fell into her eyes, became silent, heaved a sigh, and then said to us that she was sleepy, and went away to the house. But I saw that, without lighting a candle, she stood for a long time at the unopened window. At last the moon rose and played on the Rhine; everything grew bright, darkened, changed, even the wine in our faceted glasses began to glitter with

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a mysterious gleam. The wind subsided, as though it had folded its wings, and died out; perfumed, nocturnal warmth was exhaled from the earth.

“ ’T is time for me to go! ”—I exclaimed:—
“ otherwise I shall probably find no one to ferry me over.”

“ It is time, ”—repeated Gágin.

We descended along the path. The stones behind us suddenly began to clatter; it was Ásya pursuing us.

“ Art thou not asleep? ”—her brother asked her; but she, without answering him a word, ran past us. The last dying fire-pots lighted by the students in the garden of the inn illuminated the under side of the foliage on the trees, which imparted to it a festive and fantastic aspect. We found Ásya on the shore; she was chatting with a wherryman. I sprang into the boat and took leave of my new friends. Gágin promised to make me a visit on the following day; I shook hands with him, and offered my hand to Ásya; but she merely gazed at me and shook her head. The boat floated off and glided over the swift river. The wherryman, a brisk old fellow, dipped his oars with tense effort into the dark water.

“ You have entered the shaft of moonlight, you have broken it up, ”—Ásya shouted to me.

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I lowered my eyes; around the boat the waves rocked darkly.

“Good-bye!”—rang out her voice once more.

“Until to-morrow,”—said Gágin, after her.

The boat made its landing. I got out and glanced around me. No one was any longer visible on the opposite shore. The shaft of moonlight stretched in a golden bridge across the entire width of the river. As though by way of farewell, the sounds of an old Lanner waltz hurtled over. Gágin was right: I felt that all my heart-strings were vibrating in response to those challenging strains. I wended my way home through the darkening fields, slowly inhaling the fragrant air, and reached my little chamber all softened by the sweet languor of random and limitless expectancy. I felt happy. . . . But why was I happy? I desired nothing, I was thinking of nothing. . . . I was happy.

Almost laughing aloud with the exuberance of pleasant and vivacious emotions, I dived headlong into bed, and was on the point of closing my eyes, when suddenly it occurred to me that not once during the whole course of the evening had I called to mind my cruel beauty. . . . “But what does it mean?”—I asked myself:—“Can it be that I am in love?” But without furnish-

ing myself with an answer to this question, I apparently fell asleep on the instant, like a baby in its cradle.

III

ON the following morning (I was already awake, but had not yet risen), a knock resounded under my window, and a voice, which I immediately recognised as the voice of Gágín, struck up:

“Sleepest thou? With my guitar
I will awaken thee. . . .”

I made haste to open the door for him.

“Good morning,”—said Gágín, as he entered:—“I have disturbed you rather early, but just see what a morning it is. See the freshness, the dew; and the larks are singing. . . .”

With his gleaming, curly hair, his bared neck and rosy cheeks, he himself was as fresh as the morning.

I dressed myself; we went out into the little garden, ordered coffee to be brought out to us, and began to chat. Gágín communicated to me his plans for the future: being in possession of a comfortable property, and dependent upon no one, he was desirous of devoting himself to painting, and only regretted that he had become sensible rather late in the day, and had wasted a great deal of time in vain. I also mentioned my intentions;

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yes, and by the way, I confided to him the secret of my unhappy love. He listened to me with condescension but, so far as I was able to perceive, I did not arouse in him any strong sympathy for my passion. After heaving a couple of sighs in imitation of me, out of politeness, Gágin proposed that we should go to his rooms and inspect his sketches. I immediately consented.

We did not find Ásya. According to the landlady's words, she had gone to "the ruin." A couple of versts from the town of L. there existed the remains of a feudal castle. Gágin opened all his portfolios for me. There was a great deal of life and truth in his studies, something free and broad; but not a single one of them was finished, and the drawing seemed to me to be slovenly and inaccurate. I frankly expressed my opinion to him.

"Yes, yes,"—he chimed in with a sigh,—“you are right; all this is very bad and immature, but what help is there for it? I have not studied as I should have done, and that cursed Slavonic laxity is asserting itself. When one dreams of work, he soars like an eagle; it seems as though he could move the earth from its place; but in the execution he immediately grows slack and weary.”

I tried to encourage him, but he waved his hand in despair, and collecting all his portfolios in his arms, he flung them on the divan.

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“If my patience holds out, I shall make something of myself,”—he muttered through his teeth:—“if it does n’t hold out, I shall remain a hobbledehoy¹ of the gentry class. We had better go and look up Ásya.”

We went.

IV

THE road to the ruin wound down a narrow declivity to a wooded valley; at the bottom of it ran a brook purling noisily among stones, as though in haste to merge itself with the great river which gleamed calmly beyond the dark border of sharply-serrated mountain crests. Gágin called my attention to several happily illuminated spots; in his words was audible, if not the painter, yet certainly the artist. The ruin soon came in sight. On the very apex of a bare cliff rose a four-cornered tower, all black, still strong, but cleft, as it were, with a long rent. Mossy walls joined the tower; here and there ivy was clinging; small, distorted trees hung from the grey battlements and crumbling arches. A stony path led to the gate, which was still intact. We were already approaching it, when suddenly a woman’s figure flitted in front of us, ran swiftly over the heap of fragments, and placed itself on a projection of the wall directly over the chasm.

¹ An allusion to Von Vízín’s famous comedy, “The Hobbledehoy.”—TRANSLATOR.

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“That certainly is Ásya!”—exclaimed Gágin:—“What a mad-woman!”

We entered the gate and found ourselves in a small courtyard, half overgrown with wild apple-trees and nettles. On the projection sat Ásya, in effect. She turned her face toward us and began to laugh, but did not stir from the spot. Gágin shook his finger at her, while I loudly reproached her for her imprudence.

“Stop,”—said Gágin to me:—“don’t irritate her; you do not know her: she is quite capable of climbing the tower. But here, you had better wonder at the intelligence of the local inhabitants.”

I looked about me. In one corner, sheltering herself in a tiny wooden shed, an old woman was engaged in knitting a stocking, and darting side-long glances at us through her spectacles. She sold beer, gingerbread, and seltzer water to tourists. We placed ourselves on a bench, and began to drink tolerably cool beer out of heavy, pewter mugs. Ásya continued to sit motionless, with her feet tucked up under her, and her head enveloped in a muslin scarf; her graceful figure was distinctly and beautifully outlined against the clear sky; but I surveyed her with an unpleasant sensation. On the preceding evening I had noticed something constrained, not quite natural, about her. . . . “She wants to astonish us,”—I thought; “to what end? What childish prank is this?”

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As though divining my thoughts, she suddenly flung a swift, piercing glance at me, broke out laughing again, and with two skips leaped from the wall, and running up to the old woman, asked her for a glass of water.

“Dost thou think that I want to drink?”—she said, addressing her brother.—“No; there are flowers on the wall yonder, which positively must be watered.”

Gágin made her no reply; and she, glass in hand, went scrambling over the ruins, now and then halting, bending down and, with amusing importance, sprinkling a few drops of water, which glittered brightly in the sunlight. Her movements were extremely charming, but, as before, I felt vexed with her, although I involuntarily admired her lightness and agility. At one dangerous spot she intentionally shrieked aloud, and then screamed with laughter. . . . I was more vexed than ever.

“Why, she climbs like a goat,”—muttered the old woman, tearing herself for a moment from her stocking.

At last Ásya entirely emptied her glass, and, swaying in frolicsome wise, she returned to us. A strange smile slightly contracted her brows, nostrils, and lips; half-audaciously, half-merrily did the dark eyes narrow their lids.

“You consider my behaviour improper,”—her

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face seemed to say:—"I don't care: I know that you are admiring me."

"Clever, Ásya, clever,"—said Gágín, in an undertone.

She seemed suddenly seized with shame, dropped her long eyelashes, and seated herself modestly beside us, like a culprit. Then, for the first time, did I get a thoroughly good look at her face, the most variable face which I had ever beheld. A few moments later it had turned pale, and assumed a concentrated, almost melancholy expression; her very features seemed to me larger, more severe, more simple. She had completely quieted down. We made the circuit of the ruin (Ásya followed behind us) and admired the views. In the meantime the hour for dinner was drawing near. On settling with the old woman, Gágín asked for another tankard of beer, and turning to me, exclaimed with a sly grimace:

"To the health of the lady of your heart!"

"And has he,—have you such a lady?"—Ásya suddenly inquired.

"Why, who has not?"—retorted Gágín.

Ásya became pensive for a moment; again her face underwent a change; again there made its appearance upon it a challenging, almost audacious smile.

On the way home she laughed and frolicked worse than ever. She broke off a long branch,

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laid it on her shoulders like a gun, and bound her scarf around her head. I remember that we met a numerous family of fair-haired and affected English people; all of them, as though at the word of command, stared after Ásya in frigid amazement with their glassy eyes, while she, as though to spite them, began to sing loudly. On reaching home, she immediately went off to her room, and only made her appearance at dinner, arrayed in her best gown, with her hair carefully arranged, her bodice tightly laced, and in gloves. At table she bore herself in very decorous manner, almost affectedly, barely tasted the viands, and drank water out of a wine-glass. She evidently wished to play a new part before me—the part of a decorous and well-bred young lady. Gágin did not interfere with her; it was obvious that he had got used to backing her up in everything. He merely cast a good-humoured glance at me from time to time, and shrugged his shoulders slightly, as much as to say:—“She is a child, be lenient.” The moment dinner was over, Ásya rose, made a curtsy and, donning her hat, asked Gágin whether she might go to Frau Luise.

“Hast thou long been in the habit of asking permission?”—he replied with his invariable, on this occasion somewhat troubled, smile:—“Dost thou find it tiresome with us?”

“No; but I promised Frau Luise yesterday to go to her; and, besides, I thought you would

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be better off alone together; Mr. N." (she pointed at me) "will tell thee something more."

She departed.

"Frau Luise,"—began Gágin, endeavouring to avoid my eye,—“is the widow of a former burgomaster here, a kind-hearted but frivolous woman. She has taken a great fancy to Ásya. Ásya has a passion for getting acquainted with people from a lower class. I have observed that the cause of that is always vanity. I have spoiled her pretty thoroughly, as you see,”—he added, after a brief pause:—“and what would you have me do? I don't know how to be stern with any one, least of all with her. I am *bound* to be indulgent to her.”

I held my peace. Gágin changed the subject. The better I knew him the more strongly was I drawn to him. I soon understood him. He was a regular Russian soul, upright, honourable, simple, but, unhappily, somewhat languid, without tenacity or inward ardour. Youth did not bubble up in him like a spring; it beamed with a tranquil light. He was very charming and clever, but I could not imagine to myself what would become of him as soon as he became a man. Be an artist? One cannot be an artist without bitter, incessant toil “and toil,” I thought, as I looked at his soft features, and listened to his indolent speech,—“no! Thou wilt never toil, thou wilt not be capable of concentrating thy-

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self." But not to love him was an impossibility; one's heart was fairly drawn to him. We spent four hours together, now seated on the divan, again pacing slowly to and fro in front of the house; and in the course of those four hours we definitively struck up a friendship.

The sun set, and it was time for me to go home. Ásya had not yet returned.

"What a wilful creature she is!"—said Gágin. —"I will accompany you, shall I? We'll drop in at Frau Luise's on the way, and I will inquire if she is there. It is not much out of our road."

We descended to the town and, turning into a narrow, crooked alley, halted in front of a house two windows in breadth and four stories high. The second story projected over the street more than the first, the third and fourth projected more than the second; the whole house, with its ancient carving, its two thick pillars below, its pointed roof of tiles, and elongated spout, in the shape of a beak on the garret, seemed like a huge, crouching bird.

"Ásya!"—shouted Gágin:—"Art thou here?"

A tiny illuminated window in the third story opened, and we beheld Ásya's little, dark head. The toothless and purblind face of an old German woman peeped forth from behind her.

"I'm here,"—said Ásya, coquettishly propping her elbows on the window-sill. "I'm com-

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fortable here. There, take that,"—she added, tossing a spray of geranium to Gágin.—“Imagine that I am the lady of thy heart.”

Frau Luise laughed.

“N. is going away,”—returned Gágin:—“he wants to bid thee farewell.”

“Really?”—said Ásya:—“In that case, give him my spray, and I ’ll return at once.”

She clapped to the window and, apparently, kissed Frau Luise. Gágin silently held out the spray to me. I silently put it in my pocket, walked to the ferry and crossed to the other side.

I remember that I was walking home thinking of nothing, but with a strange weight on my heart, when suddenly a powerful, familiar scent, but one which is rare in Germany, arrested my attention. I came to a standstill, and beheld by the side of the road a small bed of hemp. Its fragrance of the steppes had instantaneously reminded me of my native land and aroused in my soul a passionate longing for it. I wanted to breathe the Russian air, to walk on Russian soil. “What am I doing here, why am I dawdling in foreign lands, among strangers?” I exclaimed; the deadly burden, which I had felt at my heart, was suddenly merged, in bitter, burning emotion. I reached home in an entirely different mood from that of the day before. I felt almost incensed, and for a long time could not recover my composure. An irritation which I myself

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found incomprehensible was rending me asunder. At last I sat down, and calling to mind my crafty widow (each one of my days wound up with an official calling to mind of that lady), I got out one of her notes. But I did not even open it; my thoughts immediately took another direction. I began to think to think of Ásya. It occurred to me that Gágin, in the course of our conversation, had hinted to me at some difficulties, some impediments to his return to Russia. . . . “Is she really his sister?” I ejaculated aloud.

I undressed, got into bed, and tried to get to sleep; but an hour later I was again sitting on my bed, and again thinking about that “capricious little girl with the strained laugh.” “She is formed like the little Galatea by Raphael, in the Farnese gallery,”—I whispered:—“yes, and she is not his sister. . . .”

And the widow’s note lay quite quietly on the floor, gleaming whitely in the rays of the moon.

V

ON the following morning I again went to L. I assured myself that I wanted to meet Gágin; but I was secretly longing to see what Ásya would do,—whether she would “play tricks,” as on the day before. I found them both in the parlour, and, strange to say—perhaps because I had been

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thinking a great deal about Russia during the night and morning—Ásya seemed to me to be a thorough Russian girl, and a low-class girl, almost a chambermaid, at that. She wore a poor little old gown, had brushed her hair behind her ears, and sat immovably at the window, embroidering at a frame, modestly, quietly, as though she had never done anything else in all her life. She said hardly anything, gazed calmly at her work, and her features had assumed such an insignificant, every-day expression, that I was involuntarily reminded of our home-bred Kátyas and Máshas. To complete the likeness, she began to sing in an undertone: “Mother dear, beloved one.” I glanced at her sallow, extinguished little face, recalled my musings of the night before, and felt sorry for something. The weather was magnificent. Gágin announced to us that he was going that day to make a sketch from nature; I asked him if he would allow me to accompany him, whether I should be in his way.

“On the contrary,”—he replied:—“you may be able to give me some good advice.”

He donned a round hat, à la Van Dyck, and a blouse, took a portfolio under his arm, and set out; I ambled after him. Ásya remained at home. Gágin, as he was departing, asked her to see that the soup was not too thin: Ásya promised to visit the kitchen. Gágin made his way to the valley with which I was already acquainted,

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seated himself on a stone, and began to sketch an aged, hollow oak, with widely-spreading roots. I threw myself down on the grass, and pulled out a book; but I did not read two pages, and he merely daubed his paper; we spent the time chiefly in argument; and, so far as I can judge, we argued with considerable cleverness and penetration, as to the precise way in which one should work, what should be avoided, what rules should be observed, and precisely what is the significance of art in our age. Gágin decided at last that he “was not in the mood to-day,” lay down beside me, and then our youthful speeches began to flow freely,—now fervid, now thoughtful, now rapturous, but almost always the obscure speeches wherein the Russian man is so fond of pouring himself out. After having talked to satiety, and filled with a sense of contentment, we returned home. I found Ásya precisely the same as I had left her; try as I would to watch her, not a shade of coquetry, not a sign of a deliberately-assumed rôle did I detect in her; on this occasion, it was impossible to accuse her of lack of naturalness.

“A-ha!”—said Gágin:—“She has imposed fasting and penance upon herself!”

Toward evening she yawned several times unaffectedly, and went off early to her own room. I soon took leave of Gágin, and on my way home, I no longer meditated about anything: that day had passed in sober sensations. I remember, how-

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ever, that as I got into bed I involuntarily said aloud:

“What a chameleon that young girl is!”—
And after reflecting a while I added:—“And all the same, she is not his sister.”

VI

Two whole weeks passed. I visited the Gágins every day. Ásya seemed to shun me but no longer indulged in a single one of the pranks which had so astounded me during the first days of our acquaintance. She appeared to be secretly embittered or discomfited; she laughed less. I watched her with curiosity.

She spoke French and German fairly well; but in everything it was apparent that she had been in feminine hands since her infancy, and had received a strange, an unusual bringing-up, which had nothing in common with the breeding of Gágin. Despite his hat à la Van Dyck, and his blouse, he exhaled the soft, half-enervated atmosphere of the Great Russian nobleman, but she did not resemble a young lady of noble birth; in all her movements there was something uneasy; she was a wild tree which had only recently been grafted; she was wine still in the process of fermentation. By nature shy and timid, she was vexed at her own bashfulness, and with irritation

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she made desperate efforts to be bold and at her ease, in which she was not always successful. Several times I began to talk to her about her life in Russia, about her past; she answered my queries reluctantly. I learned, however, that for a long time before her departure abroad, she had lived in the country. I once caught her alone, over a book. With her head resting on both hands and her fingers deeply buried in her hair, she was devouring the lines with her eyes.

“Bravo!”—I said, stepping up to her:—“How diligent you are!”

She raised her head with dignity and gazed sternly at me.

“You think that I know how to do nothing but laugh,”—she said, and started to leave the room. . .

I glanced at the title of the book; it was some French romance or other.

“But I cannot commend your choice,”—I remarked.

“’T is reading all the same!”—she exclaimed; and flinging the book on the table, she added:—“I had better go and play the fool,”—and ran off into the garden.

That same day, in the evening, I was reading to Gágin “Herman and Dorothea.” At first Asya only darted past us, then suddenly she came to a halt, lent an ear, quietly sat down beside me, and listened to the reading to the end. On

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the following day I again failed to recognise her, until I guessed what had suddenly got into her head: to be domestic and sedate, like Dorothea. In a word, she was to me a semi-enigmatical being. Vain to the last degree, she attracted me even when I was angry with her. Of one thing only I became more and more convinced, namely, that she was not Gágin's sister. He did not treat her in brotherly fashion; he was too affectionate, too lenient, and at the same time, rather constrained.

A strange circumstance, apparently, confirmed my suspicions.

One evening, as I was approaching the vineyard, where the Gágins lived, I found the gate locked. Without thinking long about the matter, I made my way to a breach in the fence, which I had previously noted, and leaped over it. Not far from that spot, on one side of the path, stood a small acacia arbour. I came on a level with it, and was on the point of passing it when suddenly Asya's voice struck my ear, uttering the following words with heat and through tears:

“No; I won't love anybody except thee, no, no, I will love only thee—and forever.”

“Stop, Asya, calm thyself,”—said Gágin:—“thou knowest that I believe thee.”

Their voices resounded in the arbour. I caught a sight of both of them through the interlacing

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branches which were not thick. They did not notice me.

“Thee, thee alone,”—she repeated, throwing herself on his neck, and beginning to kiss him with convulsive sobs, and to press herself to his breast.

“Enough, enough,”—he repeated, passing his hand lightly over her hair.

For several moments I stood motionless. . . . Suddenly I started.—“Shall I go to them? . . . On no account!”—flashed through my mind. With swift strides I returned to the fence, sprang over it into the road, and set off homeward almost on a run. I smiled, rubbed my hands, marvelled at the accident which had suddenly confirmed my surmises (not for one moment did I doubt their correctness), and, yet I felt very bitter at heart. “How well they understand how to dissimulate!” I thought. “But with what object? What possesses them to mystify me? I had not expected that from him. . . . And what a sentimental explanation!”

VII

I SLEPT badly, and rose early the next morning, strapped my travelling wallet to my back, and, having informed my landlady that she need not expect me back for the night, I set off on foot for the mountains, up the little river, on which Z.

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lies. These mountains, a spur of the chain called The Dog's Back (Hundsrück), are very curious from a geological point of view; they are especially noteworthy for the regularity and purity of the basaltic layers; but I was in no mood for geological observations. I could not account to myself for what was in progress within me; one feeling was clear to me: a disinclination to meet the Gágins. I assured myself that the sole cause for my sudden dislike to them was anger at their duplicity. Who had forced them to give themselves out for relatives? However, I tried not to think of them; I wandered, without haste, over the mountains and valleys, I tarried in village eating-houses, peaceably chatting with landlords and patrons, or lay on a flat, sun-heated stone, and watched the clouds sail past; luckily the weather was wonderfully fine. In such occupations I spent three days, and not without satisfaction,—although my heart was heavy at times. The trend of my thoughts was exactly in harmony with the calm nature of that locality.

I surrendered myself to the quiet plan of accident, to chance impressions: succeeding one another without haste, they flowed through my soul, leaving in it at last one general impression, in which was merged everything I had seen, felt, and heard during those three days—everything: the delicate odour of resin in the forests, the cry and pecking of the wood-peckers; the incessant

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babbling of bright little brooks with spotted trout on their sandy bottoms; the not too bold outlines of the hills; the frowning cliffs; clean little hamlets with time-honoured, ancient churches and trees; storks in the meadow; cosey mills with briskly-revolving wheels; the cheerful faces of the natives, their blue shirts and grey stockings; creaking, sluggish wains drawn by fat horses, and sometimes by cows; young, long-haired wayfarers on the clean roads, planted with apple and pear-trees. . . .

Even now it is a pleasure to me to recall my impressions of that time. A greeting to thee, modest nook of the German land, with thy ingenuous satisfaction; with traces everywhere about of industrious hands, of patient though unhurried toil. . . . A greeting and peace to thee!

I reached home at the very end of the third day. I have forgotten to say that, out of vexation toward the Gágins, I had made an effort to resurrect within me the image of the hard-hearted widow;—but my efforts remained fruitless. I remember that when I began to meditate about her, I beheld before me a little peasant girl, five years of age, with a round little face, and innocently protruding eyes. She looked at me in such a childishly-simple way. . . . I felt ashamed of her pure gaze, I did not want to lie in her presence, and instantly, finally, and forever I

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made my farewell bow to the former object of my affections.

At home I found a note from Gágin. He was surprised at the suddenness of my decision, upbraided me for not having taken him with me, and begged me to come to them as soon as I returned. I read this note with displeasure, but on the following day I went to L.

VIII

GÁGIN welcomed me in friendly fashion, overwhelmed me with affectionate reproaches; but Ásya, as though of deliberate purpose, no sooner caught sight of me, than she burst out laughing loudly without any cause and, according to her wont, immediately ran away. Gágin was disconcerted, muttered after her that she was crazy, and entreated me to pardon her. I confess that I had become greatly incensed at Ásya; even without that I was not feeling like myself, and here again were that unnatural laughter, those strange grimaces. But I pretended that I had not noticed anything, and communicated to Gágin the details of my little trip. He narrated to me what he had been doing in my absence. But our speeches did not get on well; Ásya entered the room, and then ran out again; at last I announced that I had some work which must be

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done in haste, and that it was time for me to return home. At first Gágin tried to detain me; then, after looking intently at me, he offered to accompany me. In the anteroom Ásya suddenly came up to me and offered me her hand; I clasped her fingers lightly and barely bowed to her. Gágin and I got ourselves ferried across the Rhine and, as we passed my favourite ash-tree with the little statue of the Madonna, we sat down on the bench to admire the view. Thereupon, a remarkable conversation ensued between us.

At first we exchanged a few words, then fell silent, as we gazed at the gleaming river.

“Tell me,”—suddenly began Gágin, with his habitual smile:—“what is your opinion of Ásya? She must seem rather queer to you, does n’t she?”

“Yes,”—I replied, not without some surprise. I had not expected that he would speak of her.

“One must know her well in order to judge her. She has a very kind heart, but a wretched head. It is difficult to get along with her. However, it would be impossible for you to blame her, if you knew her history. . . .”

“Her history,”—I interrupted. . . . “Is n’t she your”

Gágin darted a glance at me.

“Can it be that you think she is not my sister? Yes,”—he continued, without paying any heed to my confusion:—“she really is my sister;

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she is my father's daughter. Hearken to me. I feel confidence in you, and I will tell you all.

“ My father was a very kind-hearted, clever, cultured—and unhappy man. Fate treated him no worse than she treats many others; but he was unable to withstand her first blow. He married early, for love; his wife, my mother, died very soon; she left me, a baby of six months. My father carried me off to the country, and for twelve whole years never went anywhere. He busied himself with my education, and would never have parted with me had not his brother, my blood-uncle, come to the country. This uncle resided permanently in Petersburg and occupied a pretty high post. He persuaded my father to surrender me into his hands, as my father would not consent to leave the country on any terms whatsoever. My uncle represented to him that it was injurious for a boy of my age to live in absolute isolation; that with such an eternally melancholy and taciturn preceptor as my father, I would infallibly fall behind the lads of my own age, and my very disposition might be ruined into the bargain. For a long time my father combated his brother's admonitions, but yielded at last. I wept at parting with my father; I loved him, although I had never seen a smile on his face but when I got to Petersburg I speedily forgot our gloomy and cheerless nest. I entered the yunkers' school, and from the

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school graduated into a regiment of the Guards. Every year I made a journey to the country for several weeks, and with every passing year I found my father more and more morose, engrossed in himself, and pensive to the point of timidity. He went to church every day, and had almost unlearned the art of speaking.

“During one of my visits (I was then over twenty years of age), I beheld for the first time in our house a thin, black-eyed little girl, ten years of age—Ásya. My father said that she was an orphan whom he had taken to rear—that was precisely the way he expressed himself. I paid no particular attention to her; she was shy, alert, and taciturn as a little wild beast, and as soon as I entered my father’s favourite room, the huge, gloomy chamber where my mother had died, and where candles were lighted even in the daytime, she immediately hid herself behind his Voltaire chair, or behind a bookcase. It so happened, that during the three or four years which followed, the duties of my service prevented my going to the country. I received one brief letter from my father each month; he rarely alluded to Ásya, and then only in passing. He was already over fifty, but he still seemed a young man.

“Picture to yourself my consternation: suddenly, without a suspicion on my part, I received from the agent a letter in which he informed me of my father’s mortal illness, and entreated me to

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come as speedily as possible if I wished to bid him farewell. I rushed off at headlong speed, and found my father alive, but already at his last gasp. He was extremely delighted to see me, embraced me with his emaciated arms, gazed long into my eyes with a look which was not precisely scrutinising nor yet precisely one of entreaty; and after having exacted from me a promise that I would fulfil his last request, he ordered his old valet to bring Ásya. The old man led her in; she could hardly stand on her feet, and was trembling all over.

“ ‘ Here,’—said my father to me with an effort:—‘ I bequeath to thee my daughter—thy sister. Thou wilt learn all from Yákoff,’—he added, pointing at the valet.

“ Ásya burst out sobbing and fell face downward on the bed. . . . Half an hour later, my father expired.

“ This is what I learned: Ásya was the daughter of my father and of my mother’s former maid, Tatyána. I vividly remember that Tatyána; I remember her tall, graceful figure, her comely, regular, intelligent face, with large, dark eyes. She bore the reputation of being a haughty and unapproachable girl. So far as I was able to make out from Yákoff’s respectful reticences, my father had entered into relations with her several years after my mother’s death. Tatyána was no longer living in the manor-house at that

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time, but in the cottage of a married sister of hers, the herd-woman. My father became strongly attached to her, and after my departure from the country he had even wished to marry her, but she herself had not consented to become his wife, in spite of his entreaties.

“ ‘The late Tatyána Vasílievna,’—concluded Yákoff, as he stood by the door with his hands behind him,—‘was sagacious in everything, and did not wish to disgrace your papa.—“What sort of a wife am I for him?” says she. “What sort of a gentlewoman am I?”—That was the way she deigned to speak,—and she said it in my presence, sir.’—Tatyána was not even willing to remove to our house, and continued to live with her sister, along with Ásya. In my childhood I had seen Tatyána only on festival days, in church; with her head bound up in a dark kerchief, and a yellow shawl on her shoulders, she stood among the crowd near a window,—her severe profile was distinctly defined against the light glass,—and prayed with submission and dignity, making lowly reverences in old-fashioned style. When my uncle carried me off, Ásya was only two years old, and in her ninth year she lost her mother.

“As soon as Tatyána died, my father took Ásya to himself in the house. He had previously expressed a desire to have her with him, but Tatyána had refused this also. Imagine to yourself what

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must have been Ásya's sensations when she was taken to the master. To this day she is unable to forget that moment, when they garbed her for the first time in a silken frock and kissed her hand. Her mother, as long as she lived, had reared her very strictly; with her father she enjoyed complete freedom. He was her teacher; she saw no one excepting him. He did not spoil her—that is to say, he did not fondle her; but he loved her passionately, and never denied her anything; in his soul he regarded himself as culpable toward her. Ásya speedily grasped the fact that she was the principal personage in the house; she knew that the master was her father; but she did not so speedily comprehend her false position; vanity was strongly developed in her, and distrust also; bad habits became rooted, simplicity vanished. She wished (she herself once confessed this to me) to make *the whole world* forget her extraction; she was ashamed of her mother and ashamed of her shame, and proud of it. You see that she knew and does know a great deal which one ought not to know at her age. . . . But is she to blame? Young forces had begun to ferment in her, her blood was seething, but there was not a single hand near by to guide her. She was absolutely independent in everything! And is that easy to endure? She wanted to be not inferior to other young ladies of noble birth; she flung herself upon books. Could any-

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thing judicious come of that? The life irregularly begun took an irregular turn, but her heart was not spoiled, her mind remained intact.

“And thus I, a young fellow of twenty, found myself with a girl of thirteen on my hands! During the first few days after my father’s death, she was seized with a fever at the very sound of my voice, my caresses inspired her with aversion, and it was only gradually, little by little, that she grew accustomed to me. Truth to tell, later on, when she became convinced that I really did recognise her as my sister, and loved her as a sister, she became passionately attached to me; none of her emotions go by halves.

“I took her to Petersburg. Painful as it was for me to part from her, I could not possibly live with her; I placed her in one of the best boarding-schools. Ásya understood the necessity for our parting, but began by falling ill and nearly dying. Then she summoned her patience, and lived through four years in the boarding-school; but, contrary to my expectations, she remained almost exactly the same as she had been before. The principal of the boarding-school made frequent complaints to me about her: ‘And it is impossible to punish her,’—she said to me:—‘and she does not yield to kindness.’

“Ásya was extremely quick of understanding, and studied well, better than all the rest; but she absolutely refused to conform to the general

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standard, became stubborn, and looked wild. . . . I could not blame her over-much; in her position she was bound either to cringe or stand aloof. Out of all her companions she made friends with one only—a homely, intimidated, poor girl. The other young gentlewomen with whom she was being reared, mostly from good families, did not like her, and wounded and stung her to the best of their ability. Ásya did not yield to them by so much as a hair's breadth. One day, during a lesson in religion,¹ the teacher began to speak of vices. 'Flattery and cowardice are the worst vices,' said Ásya aloud. In a word, she continued to pursue her own road; only her manners improved;—although, apparently, she is not a success in that respect either.

“At last she completed her seventeenth year; it was impossible to leave her in the boarding-school any longer. I found myself in a rather difficult position. Suddenly a happy thought occurred to me: to resign from the service and travel abroad for a year or two, taking Ásya with me. No sooner thought than done; and here we are, she and I, on the banks of the Rhine, where I am trying to occupy myself with painting, while she . . . plays pranks and behaves queerly as of old. But now, I hope, you will not judge her too severely; and she—although she pretends that she

¹ “The law of God” is the Russian phrase. It occupies a prominent place in all schools.—TRANSLATOR.

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does not care a jot—values every one's opinion, yours in particular."

And again Gágín smiled with his tranquil smile. I clasped his hand warmly.

"All this is so,"—Gágín began again:—"but I shall get into difficulties with her. She is regular powder. So far, no one has struck her fancy; but woe is me if she should fall in love with any one! I never know how to treat her. The other day this is what she took into her head: she suddenly began to assert that I had grown colder toward her than of old, that she loved me alone. . . . And thereupon, she fell to weeping so violently"

"So that is what" I began, and bit my tongue.

"But tell me, pray,"—I asked Gágín, "we are speaking frankly to each other,—is it possible that, up to this time, she has not taken a fancy to any one? She must have seen young men in Petersburg."

"She did not like them at all. No, Ásya must needs have a hero, a remarkable man—or a picturesque shepherd in a mountain gorge. But I have chattered too much with you, I have detained you,"—he added, rising.

"See here,"—I began:—"let 's go to your house; I don't want to go home."

"And how about your work?"

I made no reply; Gágín laughed good-hu-

ASYA

mouredly, and we returned to L. At the sight of the familiar vineyard and the little white house on the top of the hill, I experienced a certain sweetness,—precisely that, sweetness—in my heart: it was as though honey were silently flowing through it. I felt at ease since Gágin's narrative.

IX

ÁSYA met us on the very threshold of the house; I expected another laugh; but she came out to us all pale, silent, and with downcast eyes.

“Here he is again,”—said Gágin:—“and observe, he wanted to come back himself.”

Ásya darted an inquiring glance at me. I, in my turn, offered her my hand, and this time warmly grasped her cold little fingers. I felt very sorry for her; I now understood much in her which had previously thrown me off the track;—her inward uneasiness, her ignorance of how to behave herself, her desire to show off,—all had become clear to me. I had taken a look into that soul; a secret burden oppressed her constantly, her inexperienced vanity was tremulously perplexed and throbbing, but everything in her being aspired toward truth. I understood why that strange young girl attracted me; she attracted me not alone by the half-savage charm diffused over all her slender body: her soul pleased me.

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Gágin began to rummage among his drawings; I proposed to Ásya that she should take a stroll with me in the vineyard. She immediately assented, with blithe and almost submissive alacrity. We descended half-way down the hill, and seated ourselves on a broad slab of stone.

“And were n't you bored without us?”—began Ásya.

“And were you bored without me?”—I inquired.

Ásya darted a sidelong glance at me.

“Yes,”—she replied.—“Is it nice in the mountains?”—she immediately continued:—“are they high? Higher than the clouds? Tell me what you saw. You told my brother, but I did not hear anything.”

“Why did you go away?”—I remarked.

“I went away because I won't go away now,”—she added with confiding affection in her voice:—“you were angry to-day.”

“I?”

“Yes, you.”

“Why, pray?”

“I don't know; but you were angry, and went away angry. I was greatly vexed that you went away in that manner, and I am so glad that you have come back.”

“And I am glad that I have come back,”—said I.

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Ásya shrugged her shoulders, as children often do when they feel at ease.

“ Oh, I know how to guess! ”—she went on:—“ I used to be able to know, from papa’s cough alone in the next room, whether he was pleased with me or not.”

Up to that day Ásya had never spoken to me of her father. I was struck by this. “ Did you love your papa? ”—I said, and suddenly, to my intense vexation, I felt that I was blushing.

She made no reply, and blushed also. Both of us remained silent for a while. Far away on the Rhine a steamer was sailing and emitting smoke. We began to gaze at it.

“ But why don’t you tell me about your journey? ”—whispered Ásya.

“ Why did you burst out laughing to-day, as soon as you caught sight of me? ”—I asked.

“ I don’t know myself. Sometimes I feel like crying, yet I laugh. You must not condemn me . . . for what I do. Akh, by the way, what is that legend about the Lorelei? That is her rock which we can see, is n’t it? They say that she drowned every one at first, but when she fell in love she threw herself into the water. I like that legend. Frau Luise tells me all sorts of legends. Frau Luise has a black cat with yellow eyes. . . .”

Ásya raised her head and shook back her curls.

“ Akh, I feel so comfortable, ”—she said.

At that moment, abrupt, monotonous sounds

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were wafted to our ears. Hundreds of voices were repeating a prayerful chant simultaneously, and with measured pauses; a throng of pilgrims was winding along the road below, with crosses and banners. . . .

“ I ’d like to join them,”—said Ásya, as she listened to the bursts of voices which were gradually dying away.

“ Are you so devout? ”

“ I ’d like to go somewhere far away, to pray, on a difficult exploit,”—she went on.—“ Otherwise, the days go by, life will pass, and what have we done? ”

“ You are ambitious,”—I remarked:—“ you do not wish to live in vain, you want to leave a trail of glory behind you. . . . ”

“ And is that impossible? ”

“ Impossible,” I came near repeating. . . . But I glanced at her bright eyes and merely said: “ Try.”

“ Tell me,”—began Ásya, after a brief silence, in the course of which certain shadows had flitted across her face, that had already paled again:—“ were you very fond of that lady? You remember, my brother drank to her health on the ruin on the second day of our acquaintance.”

I burst out laughing.

“ Your brother was jesting. I have not been fond of any lady; at all events, I am not fond of any one now.”

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“And what pleases you in women?”—inquired Ásya, throwing back her head with innocent curiosity.

“What a strange question!”—I exclaimed.

Ásya was slightly disconcerted.

“I ought not to have put such a question to you, ought I? Pardon me; I have been accustomed to blurt out everything which comes into my head. That is why I am afraid to talk.”

“Talk, for Heaven’s sake; be not afraid!”—I interposed:—“I am so glad that you have, at last, ceased to be shy.”

Ásya dropped her eyes and began to laugh softly and lightly; I did not know she could laugh in that way.

“Come, tell me,”—she went on, smoothing the folds of her gown, and laying them over her feet, as though she did not intend to move for a long time:—“tell me something, or recite something, as when you recited to us from ‘Onyégin,’ you remember. . . .”

She suddenly became pensive. . . .

“Where is now the cross and the shadow of the bough
Over my poor mother!”

she said in a low tone.

“That is not the way Púshkin has it,”—I remarked.

“I should like to be Tatyána,”¹ she went on,

¹Tatyána is the famous heroine of Púshkin’s poem,

“Evgény Onyégin.”—TRANSLATOR.

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in the same thoughtful manner.—“Recite,”—she interjected with vivacity.

But I was in no mood for recitation. I gazed at her, all bathed in the sunlight, all composed and gentle. Everything was beaming joyously around us—the sky, the earth, and the waters; the very air seemed to be permeated with brilliancy.

“See, how beautiful it is,”—I said, involuntarily lowering my voice.

“Yes, it is beautiful,”—she replied with equal softness, and without looking at me.—“If you and I were only birds—how we would soar, would fly away. . . . We would fairly drown in that azure. . . . But we are not birds.”

“Yet wings might sprout on us,”—I returned.

“How so?”

“If you live long enough, you will find out. There are feelings which raise us above the earth. Don’t worry, you will have wings.”

“And have you had any?”

“What shall I say to you? . . . I don’t think I have flown up to the present moment.”

Again Ásya became pensive. I bent slightly toward her.

“Do you know how to waltz?”—she suddenly inquired.

“I do,”—I replied, somewhat surprised.

“Then let us go, let us go. . . . I will ask my brother to play a waltz for us. . . . We will im-

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agine that we are flying, that wings have sprouted on us.”

She ran toward the house. I ran after her, and a few moments later we were circling round the little room to the sweet sounds of Lanner. Ásya waltzed beautifully, with enthusiasm. Something soft and feminine suddenly pierced through her virginally-severe face. For a long time afterward my arm felt the contact of her dainty waist; for a long time I seemed to hear her accelerated breathing near at hand; for a long time visions of dark eyes almost closed, in a pale but animated face, with curls sportively fluttering around it, flitted before me.

X

THAT whole day passed off in the best possible manner. We made merry, like children. Ásya was very charming and simple. Gágin rejoiced as he looked at her. It was late when I went away. On reaching the middle of the Rhine, I requested the boatman to let the skiff float down the current. The old man elevated his oars, and the royal river bore us onward. As I gazed about me, listening and recalling, I suddenly felt a secret restlessness at my heart . . . and raised my eyes heavenward. But there was no rest in the sky either; besprinkled with stars, it was all

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astir, moving, quivering: I bent over the river, but there also, in those cold depths, the stars were undulating and throbbing; it seemed to me that there was tremulous animation everywhere, and the tremulousness within me increased. I leaned my elbows on the edge of the boat. . . . The whisper of the wind in my ears, the quiet purling of the water at the stern, and the cool breath of the waves did not refresh me; a nightingale began to warble on the shore and infected me with the sweet poison of its notes. Tears welled up in my eyes, but they were not the tears of objectless rapture. What I felt was not that troubled sensation which I had so recently experienced of all-embracing desire, when the soul widens out, reverberates; when it seems to it that it understands everything and loves everything. No! the thirst for happiness had been kindled in me. I did not, as yet, dare to call it by name,—but happiness, happiness to satiety,—that was what I wanted, that was what I was pining for. . . . And still the boat was borne onward, and the old boatman sat, and dozed, as he bent over his oars.

XI

WHEN I set out for the Gágins' on the following day, I did not ask myself whether I was in love with Ásya, but I meditated a great deal about

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her, her fate interested me, I rejoiced at our unexpected intimacy. I felt that only since the day before had I known her; up to that time she had turned away from me. And now, when she had blossomed out at last before me, with what an enchanting light was her image illuminated, how new it was to me, what secret witcheries bashfully pierced through it! . . .

I walked briskly along the familiar path, incessantly glancing at the little house which gleamed white in the distance; I not only did not think of the future, I did not think even of the morrow; I felt greatly at my ease.

Ásya blushed when I entered the room; I noticed that she had again arrayed herself gaily, but the expression of her face did not consort with her attire; it was sad. And I had arrived in such a merry mood! It even seemed to me that, according to her wont, she was preparing to flee, but exerted an effort over herself,—and remained. Gágin was in that peculiar condition of artistic ardour and fury which, in the shape of an attack, suddenly takes possession of dilettantes when they imagine that they have been successful, as they express it, in “seizing nature by the tail.” He was standing, all dishevelled and besmeared with paints, in front of a canvas stretched on a frame, and, sweeping the brush across it with a flourish, he nodded his head almost fiercely at me, retreated, screwed up his eyes, and again flung him-

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self at his picture. I did not interfere with him, and sat down beside Ásya. Her dark eyes slowly turned to me.

“You are not the same to-day as you were yesterday,”—I remarked, after futile efforts to evoke a smile on her lips.

“No, I am not the same,”—she returned in a dull, deliberate voice:—“but that is nothing. I did not sleep well; I thought all night long.”

“What about?”

“Akh, I thought of many things. It is a habit of mine since childhood; even at the time when I used to live with mamma. . . .”

She uttered that word with difficulty, and then repeated:

“When I lived with mamma. . . . I used to think, why it was that no one can find out what will become of us; and sometimes one has a presentiment of a catastrophe,—but it is impossible to be happy; and why it is that one must never tell the whole truth? Then I thought that I knew nothing, that I must study. I must be educated all over again. I am very badly brought up. I don't know how to play on the piano, I don't know how to draw, I even sew badly. I have no talents; people must find it very dull in my company.”

“You are unjust to yourself,”—I replied:—“you have read a great deal, you are cultured, and with your intelligence”

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“Am I intelligent?”—she asked with such an ingenuous thirst for information, that I involuntarily burst out laughing; but she did not even smile.—“Brother, am I intelligent?”—she asked Gágin.

He made her no reply, and went on with his labours, incessantly changing his brushes, and elevating his arm very high.

“I sometimes don’t know myself what there is in my head,”—pursued Ásya, with the same innocent mien.—“I am afraid of myself sometimes; God is my witness, I am. Akh, I would like. . . . Is it true that women ought not to read much?”

“Not much reading is necessary, but”

“Tell me what I ought to read. Tell me what I ought to do. I will do everything you tell me,”—she added, turning to me with innocent trustfulness.

I did not at once hit upon anything to say to her.

“You won’t find it boresome with me, will you?”

“Good gracious!” I began. . . .

“Well, thanks!”—returned Ásya;—“but I was thinking that you would find it tiresome.” And her hot little hand gripped mine forcibly.

“N.!”—exclaimed Gágin at that moment:—“is n’t this background too dark?”

I went to him. Ásya rose and withdrew.

SHE returned an hour later, halted in the doorway, and beckoned to me with her hand.

“Listen,”—said she:—“if I were to die, would you feel sorry for me?”

“What ideas you have to-day!”—I exclaimed.

“I have an idea that I shall die soon; it sometimes seems to me that everything around me is bidding me farewell. It is better to die than to live thus. . . Akh! don’t look at me like that; truly, I am not pretending. Otherwise I shall be afraid of you again.”

“Were you afraid of me?”

“Really, I am not to blame, if I am such a strange creature,”—she replied.—“As you see, I cannot laugh any more. . . .”

She remained sad and preoccupied until the evening. Something was taking place within her which I did not understand. Her gaze frequently rested on me; my heart contracted quietly beneath that enigmatical gaze. She seemed calm, —but when I looked at her, I kept wanting to say to her, that she must not agitate herself. —I admired her, found a touching charm in her pallid features, in her undecided, deliberate movements—but for some reason or other, she took it into her head that I was out of sorts.

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“Listen,”—she said to me not long before I took leave:—“I am tortured by the thought that I am considered giddy. . . . Henceforth you must always believe what I shall say to you, only you must be frank with me; and I will always speak the truth to you, I give you my word of honour. . . .”

This “word of honour” made me burst out laughing again.

“Akh,—don’t laugh,”—she said with vivacity:—“or I will say to you to-day what you said to me yesterday:—‘Why do you laugh?’”—And after a brief pause, she added:—“Do you remember, you spoke of wings yesterday? . . . My wings have sprouted,—but there is nowhere to fly.”

“Good gracious,”—said I:—“all roads are open to you. . . .”

Ásya looked me straight and intently in the eye.

“You have a bad opinion of me to-day,”—said she, contracting her brows in a frown.

“I? A bad opinion? Of you!”

“Why is it that you are just as though you had been dipped in the water?”—Gágin interrupted me:—“I’ll play a waltz for you, as I did yesterday;—shall I?”

“No, no,”—replied Ásya, clenching her fists:—“not on any account to-day!”

“I am not forcing you; calm yourself. . . .”

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“Not on any account,”—she repeated, turning pale.

“Can it be that she loves me?” I thought, as I approached the Rhine, which was flowing swiftly past in dark waves.

XIII

“CAN it be that she loves me?” I asked myself the next day, as soon as I awoke.—I did not wish to look within myself. I felt that her image, the image “of the girl with the strained laugh,” had imprinted itself on my soul, and that I should not soon rid myself of it.—I went to L. and remained there the entire day, but caught only a glimpse of Ásya. She was not well: she had a headache. She came down-stairs for a moment, with her brow bound up, pale, thin, with eyes almost closed; she smiled faintly, said:—“it will pass off, it is nothing, all will pass off, will it not?”—and went away. I found things tiresome, and, somehow, mournfully-empty; but I would not go away for a long time, and returned home late, without having seen her again.

The following morning passed by in a sort of semi-doze of consciousness. I tried to set to work, and could not; I tried to do things and not to think and did not make a success of that

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either. I wandered about the town; when I got home, I started out again.

“Are you Mr. N.?”—a childish voice suddenly rang out behind me. I glanced round; before me stood a small urchin.—“This is for you from Fräulein Annette,”—he added, handing me a note.

I unfolded it—and recognised Ásya’s hasty, irregular chirography.—“It is imperatively necessary that I should see you,”—she wrote me.—“Come to-day, at four o’clock, to the stone chapel on the road near the ruin. I have committed a great indiscretion to-day. . . . Come, for God’s sake, and you shall know all. . . . Say ‘yes’ to the messenger.”

“Will there be any answer?”—the boy asked me.

“Say that I answer ‘yes,’” I replied. The boy ran off.

XIV

I CAME to my senses in my own room, sat down, and became immersed in thought. My heart was beating violently within me. I read over Ásya’s note several times. I glanced at my watch: it was not yet twelve o’clock.

The door opened—Gágin entered.

His face was gloomy. He grasped my hand

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and shook it vigorously. He seemed greatly perturbed.

“What is the matter with you?”—I asked.

Gágin took a chair, and sat down opposite me.

“Three days ago,”—he began with a constrained smile, and hesitating as he spoke,—“I astonished you by my tale; to-day I shall astonish you still more.—With any one else I should not, probably, have made up my mind to speak so plainly. . . . But you are an honourable man, you are my friend, are you not?—Listen: my sister Ásya is in love with you.”

I trembled all over and half rose from my seat. . . .

“Your sister, you say”

“Yes, yes,”—Gágin interrupted me.—“I tell you that she is crazy and will drive me out of my senses. But, fortunately, she does not know how to lie—and she trusts me.—Akh, what a soul that little girl has! . . . but she will certainly ruin herself.”

“But you are mistaken,”—I began.

“No, I am not mistaken. Yesterday, you know, she was lying down almost all day; she ate nothing, but she did not complain of anything. . . . She never complains.—I was not uneasy, although toward evening a slight fever made its appearance. At two o'clock this morning, our landlady woke me: ‘Go to your sister,’ she said: ‘there ’s something wrong with her.’—I ran to

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Ásya, and found her fully dressed, in a fever, in tears; her head was burning, her teeth were chattering. ‘What aileth thee?’ I inquired:—‘Art thou ill?’—She threw herself on my neck and began to implore me to take her away as promptly as possible, if I wanted her to remain alive. . . . I understood nothing, I tried to soothe her. . . . Her sobs redoubled . . . and suddenly, through those sobs I heard. . . . Well, in a word, I heard that she loved you.—I assure you that you and I, sensible people, cannot even imagine to ourselves how deeply she feels, and with what incredible violence feelings manifest themselves in her: the attack comes over her as suddenly and as irresistibly as a thunder-storm.—You are a very charming man,”—pursued Gágin,—“but why she should have fallen in love with you, I do not understand, I must confess. She says that she became attached to you at first sight. That is why she wept the other day, when she assured me that she did not wish to love any one except me.—She imagines that you despise her, that you probably know who she is; she asked me whether I had not narrated her story to you,—and I, of course, said that I had not; but her sensitiveness is simply terrible. She wishes only one thing: to go away, to go away instantly.—I sat with her until morning; she made me promise that we should be gone from here to-morrow—and only then did she fall asleep.—I reflected, and reflected, and

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made up my mind to have a talk with you. In my opinion, Ásya is right: the very best thing is for us both to go away from here. And I would have taken her away to-day, had not an idea occurred to me which stopped me. Perhaps who knows?—my sister pleases you? If so, why should I take her away?—And so I decided, casting aside all shame. . . . Moreover, I have noticed something. . . . I decided to learn from you” Poor Gágín got entangled.—“ Pardon me, pray,”—he added:—“ I am not accustomed to such worries.”

I grasped his hand.

“ You wish to know,”—I enunciated in a firm voice:—“ whether I like your sister?—Yes, I do like her. . . .”

Gágín looked at me.—“ But,”—he said, faltering,—“ surely you will not marry her? ”

“ How do you wish me to answer such a question? Judge for yourself whether I can now. . . .”

“ I know, I know,”—Gágín interrupted me.—“ I have no right to demand an answer from you, and my question is the height of indecorum. . . . But what would you have me do? One cannot play with fire. You do not know Ásya; she is capable of falling ill, of running away, of appointing a tryst with you. . . . Any other woman would know how to conceal everything and wait—but not she. This is the first time it has happened to her—and therein lies the mischief!

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If you could have seen how she sobbed to-day at my feet, you would understand my apprehensions."

I reflected. Gágín's words: "of appointing a tryst with you," pricked me to the heart. It seemed to me shameful not to reply to his honourable frankness with frankness.

"Yes,"—I said at last:—"you are right. An hour ago, I received from your sister a note. Here it is."

Gágín took the note, ran his eyes hastily over it, and dropped his hands on his knees. The expression of amazement on his face was very amusing; but I was in no mood for laughter.

"You are an honourable man, I repeat it,"—said he:—"but what is to be done now? What? She herself wants to go away, and she writes to you and accuses herself of indiscretion . . . and when did she get a chance to write this? What does she want of you?"

I reassured him, and we began to discuss coolly, so far as we were able, what we ought to do.

This is what we finally decided upon: with the object of preventing a catastrophe, I was to go to the tryst and have an honest explanation with Ásya; Gágín promised to sit quietly at home, and not to appear to know about her note; and we agreed to meet together again in the evening.

"I place firm reliance on you,"—said Gágín, gripping my hand:—"spare her, and me. And

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we will go away to-morrow, all the same,"—he added, rising:—"for you will not marry Ásya, assuredly."

"Give me until evening,"—I returned.

"Certainly; but you will not marry her."

He went away, and I flung myself on the divan and closed my eyes. My head was reeling; too many impressions had descended upon it at once. I was vexed at Gágin's frankness, I was vexed at Ásya; her love both delighted and upset me. I could not comprehend what had made her tell her brother all; the inevitableness of a prompt, almost instantaneous decision worried me. . . .

"Marry a little girl of seventeen, with her disposition,—how is that possible?"—I said, as I rose.

XV

At the hour agreed upon I crossed the Rhine, and the first person who met me on the opposite shore was that same small urchin who had come to me in the morning. Evidently he was waiting for me.

"From Fräulein Annette,"—he said in a whisper, and handed me another note.

Ásya informed me that the place for our tryst had been changed. At the end of an hour and a half I was to go, not to the chapel, but to the

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house of Frau Luise, knock at the lower door, and ascend to the third story.

“ ‘ Yes ’ again? ”—the boy asked me.

“ Yes,”—I repeated, and strolled along the bank of the Rhine. There was not time to return home, and I did not wish to prowl about the streets. Outside the town wall there was a tiny garden, with a sign announcing skittles and tables for lovers of beer. I went thither. Several Germans, already advanced in years, were playing skittles; the wooden balls rolled with a clatter; now and then exclamations of approbation resounded. A pretty serving-maid with tear-stained eyes brought me a tankard of beer; I glanced at her face. She swiftly turned aside and went away.

“ Yes, yes,”—said a fat, red-cheeked burgher, who was sitting near by:—“ our Hänchen is much afflicted to-day;—her betrothed has gone to be a soldier.”—I looked at her; she had crouched down in a corner, and propped her cheek on her hand; the tears were dripping one by one through her fingers. Some one asked for beer; she brought him a tankard and returned again to her place. Her grief affected me; I began to think about my impending tryst, but my thoughts were anxious, cheerless thoughts. It was with no light heart that I was going to that meeting, there was no prospect of my surrendering myself to the joys of mutual love; what awaited me was the

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keeping of my word which had been pledged, the fulfilling of a difficult obligation.—“She is not to be jested with,”—those words of Gágin pierced my soul like arrows. And three days ago, in that boat borne away by the waves, had I not languished with the thirst for happiness? It had become possible—and I was wavering, I was repulsing it, I was bound to put it from me. . . . Its suddenness had disconcerted me. Ásya herself, with her fiery brain, with her past, her rearing,—that attractive, but peculiar being,—I must confess that she frightened me. For a long time did these feelings contend within me. The appointed hour was approaching. “I cannot marry her,”—I decided at last:—“she shall not know that I have fallen in love with her also.”

I rose,—and laying a thaler in the hand of poor Hänchen (she did not even thank me), I wended my way to Frau Luise’s house. The evening shadows were already diffused through the air, and the narrow strip of sky above the dark street was crimson with the sunset glow. I knocked feebly at the door; it immediately opened. I stepped across the threshold and found myself in total darkness.

“This way!”—an elderly voice made itself audible.—“You are expected.”

I advanced a couple of paces gropingly, and some one’s bony hand grasped my hand.

“Are you Frau Luise?”—I asked.

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“ I am,”—the same voice answered me:—“ I am, my very fine young man.”—The old woman led me up-stairs, by a winding staircase, and halted on the landing of the third story. By the faint light which fell through a tiny window I descried the wrinkled face of the burgomaster’s widow. A mawkishly-crafty smile distended her sunken lips, and puckered up her dim little eyes. She pointed out to me a tiny door. With a convulsive movement of the arm I opened it, and slammed it behind me.

XVI

IN the small room which I entered it was decidedly dark, and I did not at once perceive Ásya. Enveloped in a long shawl, she was sitting on a chair near the window, with her head turned away and almost concealed, like a frightened bird. I felt unspeakably sorry for her. She turned her head still further away. . . .

“ Anna Nikoláevna,”—I said.

She suddenly straightened herself up fully, and tried to look at me—and could not. I seized her hand; it was cold, and lay like dead in my palm.

“ I wanted,” . . . began Ásya, making an effort to smile; but her pale lips did not obey her:—“ I wanted. . . . No, I cannot,”—she said, and

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fell silent. In fact, her voice broke at every word.

I sat down by her side.

“Anna Nikoláevna,” I repeated, and I also was unable to add anything further.

A silence ensued. I continued to hold her hand and gaze at her. She, as before, shrank all together, breathed with difficulty, and quietly bit her under lip, to keep from weeping, to restrain the welling tears. . . . I gazed at her: there was something touchingly-helpless in her timid impassivity; it seemed as though she had barely made her way to the chair with fatigue, and had fairly collapsed upon it. My heart melted within me. . . .

“Ásya,”—I said, in a barely audible voice.

She slowly raised her eyes to mine. . . . Oh, glance of the woman who is in love, who shall describe thee? They implored, those eyes, they trusted, they interrogated, they surrendered themselves. . . . I could not resist their witchery. A thin fire ran through me, like red-hot needles; I bent down and pressed my lips to her hand. . . .

A tremulous sound, resembling a broken sob, resounded, and I felt on my hair the touch of a weak hand, which was quivering like a leaf. I raised my head and saw her face. How suddenly it had become transfigured! The expression of terror had vanished from it, her gaze had retreated somewhere far away, and drew me

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after it; her lips were slightly parted, her brow had become as pallid as marble, and her curls were floating backward, as though the wind had blown them. I forgot everything, I drew her to me—her hand obeyed submissively, her whole body was drawn after the hand; her shawl slipped from her shoulders, and her head sank softly on my breast and lay there beneath my ardent lips. . . .

“Yours,”—she whispered, in a barely audible voice.

My arms were already stealing round her waist. . . . But suddenly, the memory of Gágin illuminated me like a flash of lightning.—“What are we doing?”—I cried, and drew back with agitation. . . . “Your brother . . . he knows all. He knows that I am with you.”

Ásya dropped into a chair.

“Yes,”—I went on, rising and walking away to the other end of the room.—“Your brother knows everything. . . . I must tell him everything. . . .”

“You must?”—she said indistinctly. She evidently could not yet recover herself, and understood me imperfectly.

“Yes, yes,”—I repeated, with a certain obduracy:—“and for that you alone are to blame.—Why did you betray your secret? Who forced you to tell your brother all? He came to me to-day himself and repeated to me your conversation

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with him.”—I tried not to look at Ásya, and paced the room in long strides.—“ Now all is lost, all, all.”

Ásya endeavoured to rise from her chair.

“ Stay,”—I exclaimed:—“ stay, I beg of you. You have to deal with an honest man,—yes, with an honest man.—But, for God’s sake, what agitated you? Had you observed any change in me? But I could not dissimulate before your brother when he came to me to-day.”

“ I did not summon my brother,”—Ásya’s frightened whisper made itself heard:—“ he came of his own accord.”

“ Just see what you have done,”—I went on.—“ Now you want to go away. . . .”

“ Yes; I must go away,”—said she, as softly as before:—“ and I asked you to come hither merely for the purpose of bidding you farewell.”

“ And do you think,”—I retorted,—“ that it will be easy for me to part from you? ”

“ But why did you tell my brother? ”—repeated Ásya, in perplexity.

“ I tell you that I could not do otherwise. If you had not betrayed yourself”

“ I locked myself in my chamber,”—she returned ingenuously:—“ I did not know that my landlady had another key. . . .”

This innocent excuse, on her lips, at such a moment, almost drove me frantic then and

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even now I cannot recall it without emotion. Poor, honest, sincere child!

“And now, all is at an end!”—I began again.—“All. Now we must part.”—I cast a stealthy glance at Ásya . . . her face flushed swiftly. She was both ashamed and alarmed, I felt it. I myself was walking and talking as though in a fever.—“You did not allow the feeling to develop which was beginning to ripen; you yourself have ruptured our bond, you did not trust me, you doubted me. . . .”

While I was speaking, Ásya bent forward lower and lower,—and suddenly fell on her knees, bowed her head on her hands, and burst out sobbing. I ran to her, I tried to raise her, but she would not let me. I cannot endure woman’s tears; I immediately lose my self-control at the sight of them.

“Anna Nikoláevna, Ásya,”—I kept repeating:—“pray, I implore you, for God’s sake, stop. . . .” Again I took her hand.

But, to my great surprise, she suddenly sprang to her feet,—with the swiftness of lightning flew to the door, and vanished. . . .

When, a few moments later, Frau Luise entered the room, I was still standing in the middle of it as though I had been struck by a thunderbolt. I did not understand how that meeting could have ended so speedily, so stupidly—and when I had not said the hundredth part of what

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I had meant to say, of what I ought to have said, —when I myself had not yet known how it would turn out. . . .

“Has the Fräulein gone?”—Frau Luise asked me, elevating her yellow eyebrows to her very wig.

I stared at her like a fool—and left the room.

XVII

I MADE my way out of the town and set off straight across the open country. Vexation, fierce vexation gnawed me. I overwhelmed myself with reproaches. How could I have failed to understand the cause which had made Ásya change the place of our tryst, how could I have failed to appreciate what it had cost her to go to that old woman, why had I not held her back? Alone with her, in that dim, barely-lighted room, I had found the strength, I had had the heart—to repulse her, even to upbraid her. . . . And now her image haunted me, I entreated its forgiveness; the memory of that pale face, of those moist and timid eyes, of the uncurled hair on the bowed neck, the light touch of her head on my breast burned me. “Yours” . . . I heard her whisper. “I have acted according to my conscience,” I assured myself. . . . Untrue! Had I really desired such a solution? Was I in a condition

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to part from her? Could I do without her?
“Madman! madman!” I repeated viciously. . . .

In the meantime night had descended. With huge strides I wended my way to the house where Ásya lived.

XVIII

GÁGIN came out to meet me.

“Have you seen my sister?”—he shouted to me from afar.

“Is n’t she at home?”—I asked.

“No.”

“She has not returned?”

“No. . . . I am to blame,”—went on Gágin: —“I could not hold out: contrary to our compact I went to the chapel; she was not there: so she did not come?”

“She was not at the chapel.”

“And you have not seen her?”

I was obliged to admit that I had seen her.

“Where?”

“At Frau Luise’s.—I parted from her an hour ago,”—I added.—“I was convinced that she had returned home.”

“Let us wait.”—said Gágin.

We entered the house and sat down side by side. We maintained silence. We both felt extremely embarrassed. We kept incessantly ex-

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changing glances, gazing at the door, listening. At last Gágin rose.

“This is outrageous!”—he exclaimed:—“My heart will not keep still. She is torturing me, by Heaven. . . . Let us go and seek her.”

We went out. It was completely dark already out of doors.

“What did you and she talk about?”—Gágin asked me, pulling his hat down over his eyes.

“I only saw her for five minutes altogether,”—I replied:—“I talked to her in the way we had agreed upon.”

“Do you know what?”—he returned:—“We had better separate; we may hit upon her the more promptly in that way.—In any case, come hither an hour hence.”

XIX

I DESCENDED briskly from the vineyard, and rushed to the town. Swiftly did I make the round of the streets, looking everywhere, even into Frau Luise’s windows; returned to the Rhine and ran alone the shore. . . . From time to time I met feminine forms, but Ásya was nowhere to be seen. Irritation was already beginning to torment me. A secret alarm tortured me, and it was not alarm only that I felt. . . . No, I felt repentance, the most burning compassion, love—

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yes! the tenderest love. I wrung my hands, I called on Ásya athwart the gathering mists of night, at first in a low tone, then ever more and more loudly; I repeated a hundred times that I loved her, that I swore never to part from her; I would have given everything in the world to hold her cold hand once more, to hear once more her gentle voice, to behold her once more before me. . . . She had been so near, she had come to me with entire resolution, in full innocence of heart and feelings, she had brought to me her unsullied youth and I had not pressed her to my breast, I had deprived myself of the bliss of seeing how her lovely face would have blossomed forth with the joy and tranquillity of rapture. . . . That thought nearly drove me mad.

“Where can she have gone, what has she done with herself?”—I exclaimed in the grief of impotent despair. . . . Something white suddenly gleamed on the very brink of the river.—I knew that spot; there, over the grave of a man who had been drowned seventy years before, stood a stone cross, with an ancient inscription, half-buried in the ground.—My heart died within me. . . . I ran to the cross: the white figure disappeared. I shouted: “Ásya!” My wild voice frightened me—but no one answered. . . .

I decided to go and inquire whether Gágín had found her.

CLAMBERING alertly up the path of the vineyard, I descried a light in Ásya's room. . . . This reassured me somewhat.

I approached the house; the lower door was locked. I knocked. An unlighted window in the lower story was cautiously opened, and Gágin's head made its appearance.

"Have you found her?"—I asked him.

"She has returned,"—he replied to me in a whisper:—"she is in her room, and is undressing. All is as it should be."

"God be thanked!"—I exclaimed with an inexpressible outburst of joy:—"God be thanked! everything is splendid now. But you know we must confer together further."

"Some other time,"—he replied, softly drawing the casement toward him:—"some other time, but now good-bye."

"Until to-morrow," I said:—"to-morrow everything will be settled."

"Good-bye,"—repeated Gágin. The window closed.

I was on the point of knocking at the window. I wanted to tell Gágin then and there that I asked for his sister's hand. But such a wooing at such a time. . . . "Yes, to-morrow,"—I said to myself:—"to-morrow I shall be happy. . . ."

ASYA

To-morrow I shall be happy! There is no to-morrow for happiness; neither has it any yesterday, and it recks not of the future; it has the present, and not even a day at that—but a moment.

I do not remember how I got to Z. My feet did not bear me thither, neither did a boat convey me; I was lifted aloft on some sort of broad, mighty pinions. I passed the bush where a nightingale was singing, I halted and listened for a long time; it seemed to me that it was chanting my love and my bliss.

XXI

WHEN, on the following morning, I began to draw near to the familiar little house, I was struck by one circumstance: all its windows stood wide open, and the door also was open; some papers or other were trailing about in front of the threshold; the servant-maid with a broom made her appearance beyond the door.

I went up to her. . . .

“They have gone away!”—she blurted out, before I could manage to ask her whether the Gágins were at home.

“Gone away?” . . . I repeated. . . . “What do you mean by ‘gone away?’ Whither?”

“They went away this morning, at six o’clock,

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and did not say where. Wait, you are Mr. N., I think?"

"I am Mr. N."

"The landlady has a letter for you."—The maid went up-stairs and returned with the letter.—"Here it is, if you please."

"But it cannot be. . . . What does it mean?"—I was beginning. The maid stared dully at me and began to sweep.

I unfolded the letter. It was from Gágin; there was not a line from Ásya. He began by begging me not to be angry with him for his sudden departure; he was convinced that, on mature consideration, I would approve of his decision. He could discern no other issue from the situation, which might become difficult and dangerous.—"Last night,"—he wrote,— "while we were both waiting in silence for Ásya, I became definitively convinced of the necessity of a separation. There are prejudices which I respect; I understand that you cannot marry Ásya. She has told me all; for the sake of her peace of mind, I must yield to her repeated, urgent entreaties."—At the end of the letter he expressed his regret that our acquaintance had come to so speedy an end, wished me happiness, pressed my hand in friendly wise, and implored me not to try to hunt them up.

"What prejudices?"—I cried, as though he could hear me:—"What nonsense! Who gave

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him a right to steal her from me?" I clutched my head.

The maid-servant began to call loudly for the landlady; her fright made me recover my senses. One thought kindled in me:—to find them, to find them, at any cost. To accept this blow, to reconcile myself to this conclusion of the matter was impossible. I learned from the landlady that they had gone aboard a steamer at six o'clock, and sailed down the Rhine. I betook myself to the office; there I was informed that they had bought tickets for Cologne. I went home with the intention of immediately packing up and following them. I was obliged to pass Frau Luise's house. Suddenly I heard some one calling me. I raised my head, and beheld in the window of the room where I had met Ásya on the day before, the burgomaster's widow. She was smiling with her repulsive smile, and calling to me. I turned away, and was about to pass on; but she screamed after me that she had something for me. These words brought me to a standstill, and I entered her house. How shall I express my feelings, when I beheld that little room once more. . . .

"As a matter of fact,"—began the old woman, pointing out to me a tiny note:—"I ought to have given you this only in case you came to me of your own accord; but you are such a very fine young man. Take it."

I took the note.

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On the tiny scrap of paper stood the following words, hastily scrawled in pencil:

“Farewell, we shall see each other no more. ’Tis not out of pride that I am going away,—no; I cannot do otherwise. Yesterday, when I wept before you, if you had said to me but one word, only one word—I would have remained. You did not say it. Evidently, it is better so. . . . Farewell forever!”

One word. . . . Oh, madman that I am! That word. . . . I had repeated it with tears in my eyes the night before, I had scattered it on the wind, I had reiterated it amid the empty fields but I had not said it to her, I had not told her that I loved her. . . . But I had not been able to utter that word then. When I met her in that fateful chamber there was within me, as yet, no clear consciousness of my love; it had not even awakened while I was sitting with her brother in irrational and painful silence. . . . It had flamed up with irresistible force only some moments later when, affrighted by the possibility of unhappiness, I had begun to seek her and and call to her but then it was too late. “But this is impossible!” I shall be told. I know not whether it be possible,—I do know that it is true. Ásya would not have gone away had there been even a shade of coquetry in her, and if her position had not been a false one. She was

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not able to endure what any other woman would have borne; I had not understood that. My evil genius had stopped the avowal on my lips during my last meeting with Gágin in front of the darkened window, and the last thread at which I could still clutch had slipped out of my hands.

That same day I returned, with my trunk packed, to L., and embarked for Cologne. I remember that the steamer had not yet left the wharf, and I was mentally bidding farewell to those streets, to all those places which I was destined to behold no more,—when I caught sight of Hänchen. She was sitting by the shore, but not sad; a young and handsome man was standing by her side, laughing and narrating something to her; while, on the other side of the Rhine, my little Madonna was still gazing out as sadly as ever from the dark greenery of the ash-tree.

XXII

IN Cologne I came upon traces of the Gágins: I learned that they had gone to London, and I set out in pursuit of them; but in London all my researches proved vain. For a long time I would not submit, for a long time I persisted; but I was finally compelled to renounce all hopes of overtaking them.

And I never beheld them—I never beheld Ásya again. Obscure rumours reached me con-

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cerning him, but she had vanished from me forever. I do not even know whether she is alive. One day, several years afterward, I caught a glimpse, abroad, in a railway carriage, of a woman whose face vividly reminded me of the never-to-be-forgotten features but I was, in all probability, deceived by an accidental resemblance. Ásya has remained in my memory the same little girl as I knew her at the best period of my life, as I saw her for the last time, bowed over the back of a low, wooden chair.

I am bound to confess, however, that I did not grieve too long over her: I even thought that Fate had ordained matters rightly in not uniting me to Ásya; I comforted myself with the thought that I probably should not have been happy with such a woman. I was young then and the future, — that brief, swift future, — seemed to be limitless. May not that which has been repeat itself, I thought, and in still better, still more beautiful form? . . . I have known other women, — but the feeling awakened in me by Ásya, that glowing, tender, profound emotion, has not been repeated. No! No eyes have taken the place with me of those eyes which once were fixed upon me with love, and to no heart which has reclined on my breast has my own heart responded with such sweet and joyous swooning! Condemned to the solitude of an old bachelor without family, I am living out the wearisome years; but I pre-

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serve like sacred treasures her tiny notes and the withered spray of geranium, that same spray which she once tossed to me from the window. It still emits a faint fragrance, but the hand which gave it to me, that hand which I was fated to press but once to my lips, may have long been mouldering in the grave. . . . And I myself what has become of me? What is left in me of those blissful and troubled days, of those winged hopes and aspirations? Such a faint exhalation of an insignificant plant outlives all the joys and woes of a man—outlives even the man himself.



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