The Death of Ivan Ilyich and Other Stories

by Leo Tolstoy

Free public domain classic — Noveliopdf

The Project Gutenberg eBook of The death of Ivan Ilyitch, and other stories

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: The death of Ivan Ilyitch, and other stories

Author: graf Leo Tolstoy

Translator: Constance Garnett

Release date: November 13, 2026 [eBook #79990]

Language: English

Original publication: New York: John Lane Company, 1915

Other information and formats: www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/79990

Credits: Emmanuel Ackerman, Laura Natal and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team at https://www.pgdp.net (This book was produced from images made available by the HathiTrust Digital Library.)

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DEATH OF IVAN

ILYITCH, AND OTHER STORIES ***

THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYITCH AND OTHER STORIES

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

Translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett

ANNA KARENIN A NOVEL WAR AND PEACE A NOVEL

NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY

Title page of the book The Death of Ivan Ilyich by Leo Tolstoy.

THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYITCH AND OTHER STORIES

BY

Count Leo Tolstoy

A New Translation from the Russian by Constance Garnett

POPULAR EDITION

NEW YORK JOHN LANE COMPANY 1915

Printed in Great Britain

CONTENTS

THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYITCH FAMILY HAPPINESS POLIKUSHKA TWO HUSSARS THE SNOW-STORM THREE DEATHS

THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYITCH

THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYITCH

I

INSIDE the great building of the Law Courts, during the interval in the hearing of the Melvinsky case, the members of the judicial council and the public prosecutor were gathered together in the private room of Ivan Yegorovitch Shebek, and the conversation turned upon the celebrated Krasovsky case. Fyodor Vassilievitch hotly maintained that the case was not in the jurisdiction of the court. Yegor Ivanovitch stood up for his own view; but from the first Pyotr Ivanovitch, who had not entered into the discussion, took no interest in it, but was looking through the newspapers which had just been brought in.

‘Gentlemen!’ he said, ‘Ivan Ilyitch is dead!’

‘You don’t say so!’

‘Here, read it,’ he said to Fyodor Vassilievitch, handing him the fresh still damp-smelling paper.

Within a black margin was printed: ‘Praskovya Fyodorovna Golovin with heartfelt affliction informs friends and relatives of the decease of her beloved husband, member of the Court of Justice, Ivan Ilyitch Golovin, who passed away on the 4th of February. The funeral will take place on Thursday at one o’clock.’

Ivan Ilyitch was a colleague of the gentlemen present, and all liked him. It was some weeks now since he had been taken ill; his illness had been said to be incurable. His post had been kept open for him, but it had been thought that in case of his death Alexyeev might receive his appointment, and either Vinnikov or Shtabel would succeed to Alexyeev’s. So that on hearing of Ivan Ilyitch’s death, the first thought of each of the gentlemen in the room was of the effect this death might have on the transfer or promotion of themselves or their friends.

‘Now I am sure of getting Shtabel’s place or Vinnikov’s,’ thought Fyodor

Vassilievitch. ‘It was promised me long ago, and the promotion means eight hundred roubles additional income, besides the grants for office expenses.’

‘Now I shall have to petition for my brother-in-law to be transferred from Kaluga,’ thought Pyotr Ivanovitch. ‘My wife will be very glad. She won’t be able to say now that I’ve never done anything for her family.’

‘I thought somehow that he’d never get up from his bed again,’ Pyotr Ivanovitch said aloud. ‘I’m sorry!’

‘But what was it exactly that was wrong with him?’

‘The doctors could not decide. That’s to say, they did decide, but differently. When I saw him last, I thought he would get over it.’

‘Well, I positively haven’t called there ever since the holidays. I’ve kept meaning to go.’

‘Had he any property?’

‘I think there’s something, very small, of his wife’s. But something quite trifling.’

‘Yes, one will have to go and call. They live such a terribly long way off.’

‘A long way from you, you mean. Everything’s a long way from your place.’

‘There, he can never forgive me for living the other side of the river,’ said Pyotr Ivanovitch, smiling at Shebek. And they began to talk of the great distances between different parts of the town, and went back into the court.

Besides the reflections upon the changes and promotions in the service likely to ensue from this death, the very fact of the death of an intimate acquaintance excited in every one who heard of it, as such a fact always does, a feeling of relief that ‘it is he that is dead, and not I.’

‘Only think! he is dead, but here am I all right,’ each one thought or felt. The more intimate acquaintances, the so-called friends of Ivan Ilyitch, could not help thinking too that now they had the exceedingly tiresome social duties to perform of going to

the funeral service and paying the widow a visit of condolence.

The most intimately acquainted with their late colleague were Fyodor Vassilievitch and Pyotr Ivanovitch.

Pyotr Ivanovitch had been a comrade of his at the school of jurisprudence, and considered himself under obligations to Ivan Ilyitch.

Telling his wife at dinner of the news of Ivan Ilyitch's death and his reflections as to the possibility of getting her brother transferred into their circuit, Pyotr Ivanovitch, without lying down for his usual nap, put on his frockcoat and drove to Ivan Ilyitch's.

At the entrance before Ivan Ilyitch's flat stood a carriage and two hired flies. Downstairs in the entry near the hatstand there was leaning against the wall a coffin-lid with tassels and braiding freshly rubbed up with pipeclay. Two ladies were taking off their cloaks. One of them he knew, the sister of Ivan Ilyitch; the other was a lady he did not know. Pyotr Ivanovitch's colleague, Shvarts, was coming down; and from the top stair, seeing who it was coming in, he stopped and winked at him, as though to say: 'Ivan Ilyitch has made a mess of it; it's a very different matter with you and me.'

Shvarts's face, with his English whiskers and all his thin figure in his frockcoat, had, as it always had, an air of elegant solemnity; and this solemnity, always such a contrast to Shvarts's playful character, had a special piquancy here. So thought Pyotr Ivanovitch.

Pyotr Ivanovitch let the ladies pass on in front of him, and walked slowly up the stairs after them. Shvarts had not come down, but was waiting at the top. Pyotr Ivanovitch knew what for; he wanted obviously to settle with him where their game of 'screw' was to be that evening. The ladies went up to the widow's room; while Shvarts, with his lips tightly and gravely shut, and amusement in his eyes, with a twitch of his eyebrows motioned Pyotr Ivanovitch to the right, to the room where the

dead man was.

Pyotr Ivanovitch went in, as people always do on such occasions, in uncertainty as to what he would have to do there. One thing he felt sure of—that crossing oneself never comes amiss on such occasions. As to whether it was necessary to bow down while doing so, he did not feel quite sure, and so chose a middle course. On entering the room he began crossing himself, and made a slight sort of bow. So far as the movements of his hands and head permitted him, he glanced while doing so about the room. Two young men, one a high school boy, nephews probably, were going out of the room, crossing themselves. An old lady was standing motionless; and a lady, with her eyebrows queerly lifted, was saying something to her in a whisper. A deacon in a frockcoat, resolute and hearty, was reading something aloud with an expression that precluded all possibility of contradiction. A young peasant who used to wait at table, Gerasim, walking with light footsteps in front of Pyotr Ivanovitch, was sprinkling something on the floor. Seeing this, Pyotr Ivanovitch was at once aware of the faint odour of the decomposing corpse. On his last visit to Ivan Ilyitch Pyotr Ivanovitch had seen this peasant in his room; he was performing the duties of a sicknurse, and Ivan Ilyitch liked him particularly. Pyotr Ivanovitch continued crossing himself and bowing in a direction intermediate between the coffin, the deacon, and the holy pictures on the table in the corner. Then when this action of making the sign of the cross with his hand seemed to him to have been unduly prolonged, he stood still and began to scrutinise the dead man.

The dead man lay, as dead men always do lie, in a peculiarly heavy dead way, his stiffened limbs sunk in the cushions of the coffin, and his head bent back for ever on the pillow, and thrust up, as dead men always do, his yellow waxen forehead with bald spots on the sunken temples, and his nose that stood out sharply and as it were squeezed on the upper lip. He was much changed, even thinner since Pyotr Ivanovitch had seen him, but his face—as always with the dead—was more handsome, and, above all, more impressive than it had been when he was alive. On

the face was an expression of what had to be done having been done, and rightly done. Besides this, there was too in that expression a reproach or a reminder for the living. This reminder seemed to Pyotr Ivanovitch uncalled for, or, at least, to have nothing to do with him. He felt something unpleasant; and so Pyotr Ivanovitch once more crossed himself hurriedly, and, as it struck him, too hurriedly, not quite in accordance with the proprieties, turned and went to the door. Shvarts was waiting for him in the adjoining room, standing with his legs apart and both hands behind his back playing with his top hat. A single glance at the playful, sleek, and elegant figure of Shvarts revived Pyotr Ivanovitch. He felt that he, Shvarts, was above it, and would not give way to depressing impressions. The mere sight of him said plainly: the incident of the service over the body of Ivan Ilyitch cannot possibly constitute a sufficient ground for recognising the business of the session suspended,—in other words, in no way can it hinder us from shuffling and cutting a pack of cards this evening, while the footman sets four unsanctified candles on the table for us; in fact, there is no ground for supposing that this incident could prevent us from spending the evening agreeably. He said as much indeed to Pyotr Ivanovitch as he came out, proposing that the party should meet at Fyodor Vassilievitch's. But apparently it was Pyotr Ivanovitch's destiny not to play 'screw' that evening. Praskovya Fyodorovna, a short, fat woman who, in spite of all efforts in a contrary direction, was steadily broader from her shoulders downwards, all in black, with lace on her head and her eyebrows as queerly arched as the lady standing beside the coffin, came out of her own apartments with some other ladies, and conducting them to the dead man's room, said: 'The service will take place immediately; come in.'

Shvarts, making an indefinite bow, stood still, obviously neither accepting nor declining this invitation. Praskovya Fyodorovna, recognising Pyotr Ivanovitch, sighed, went right up to him, took his hand, and said, 'I know that you were a true friend of Ivan Ilyitch's....' and looked at him, expecting from him the suitable action in response to these words. Pyotr Ivanovitch knew that, just as before he had to cross

himself, now what he had to do was to press her hand, to sigh and to say, ‘Ah, I was indeed!’ And he did so. And as he did so, he felt that the desired result had been attained; that he was touched, and she was touched.

‘Come, since it’s not begun yet, I have something I want to say to you,’ said the widow. ‘Give me your arm.’

Pyotr Ivanovitch gave her his arm, and they moved towards the inner rooms, passing Shvarts, who winked gloomily at Pyotr Ivanovitch.

‘So much for our “screw”! Don’t complain if we find another partner. You can make a fifth when you do get away,’ said his humorous glance.

Pyotr Ivanovitch sighed still more deeply and despondently, and Praskovya Fyodorovna pressed his hand gratefully. Going into her drawing-room, that was upholstered with pink cretonne and lighted by a dismal-looking lamp, they sat down at the table, she on a sofa and Pyotr Ivanovitch on a low ottoman with deranged springs which yielded spasmodically under his weight. Praskovya Fyodorovna was about to warn him to sit on another seat, but felt such a recommendation out of keeping with her position, and changed her mind. Sitting down on the ottoman, Pyotr Ivanovitch remembered how Ivan Ilyitch had arranged this drawing-room, and had consulted him about this very pink cretonne with green leaves. Seating herself on the sofa, and pushing by the table (the whole drawing-room was crowded with furniture and things), the widow caught the lace of her black fichu in the carving of the table. Pyotr Ivanovitch got up to disentangle it for her; and the ottoman, freed from his weight, began bobbing up spasmodically under him. The widow began unhooking her lace herself, and Pyotr Ivanovitch again sat down, suppressing the mutinous ottoman springs under him. But the widow could not quite free herself, and Pyotr Ivanovitch rose again, and again the ottoman became mutinous and popped up with a positive snap. When this was all over, she took out a clean cambric handkerchief and began weeping. Pyotr Ivanovitch had been chilled off by the

incident with the lace and the struggle with the ottoman springs, and he sat looking sullen. This awkward position was cut short by the entrance of Sokolov, Ivan Ilyitch's butler, who came in to announce that the place in the cemetery fixed on by Praskovya Fyodorovna would cost two hundred roubles. She left off weeping, and with the air of a victim glancing at Pyotr Ivanovitch, said in French that it was very terrible for her. Pyotr Ivanovitch made a silent gesture signifying his unhesitating conviction that it must indeed be so.

'Please, smoke,' she said in a magnanimous, and at the same time, crushed voice, and she began discussing with Sokolov the question of the price of the site for the grave.

Pyotr Ivanovitch, lighting a cigarette, listened to her very circumstantial inquiries as to the various prices of sites and her decision as to the one to be selected. Having settled on the site for the grave, she made arrangements also about the choristers. Sokolov went away.

'I see to everything myself,' she said to Pyotr Ivanovitch, moving on one side the albums that lay on the table; and noticing that the table was in danger from the cigarette-ash, she promptly passed an ash-tray to Pyotr Ivanovitch, and said: 'I consider it affectation to pretend that my grief prevents me from looking after practical matters. On the contrary, if anything could—not console me ... but distract me, it is seeing after everything for him.' She took out her handkerchief again, as though preparing to weep again; and suddenly, as though struggling with herself, she shook herself, and began speaking calmly: 'But I've business to talk about with you.'

Pyotr Ivanovitch bowed, carefully keeping in check the springs of the ottoman, which had at once begun quivering under him.

'The last few days his sufferings were awful.'

'Did he suffer very much?' asked Pyotr Ivanovitch.

‘Oh, awfully! For the last moments, hours indeed, he never left off screaming. For three days and nights in succession he screamed incessantly. It was insufferable. I can’t understand how I bore it; one could hear it through three closed doors. Ah, what I suffered!’

‘And was he really conscious?’ asked Pyotr Ivanovitch.

‘Yes,’ she whispered, ‘up to the last minute. He said good-bye to us a quarter of an hour before his death, and asked Volodya to be taken away too.’

The thought of the sufferings of a man he had known so intimately, at first as a light-hearted boy, a schoolboy, then grown up as a partner at whist, in spite of the unpleasant consciousness of his own and this woman’s hypocrisy, suddenly horrified Pyotr Ivanovitch. He saw again that forehead, the nose that seemed squeezing the lip, and he felt frightened for himself. ‘Three days and nights of awful suffering and death. Why, that may at once, any minute, come upon me too,’ he thought, and he felt for an instant terrified. But immediately, he could not himself have said how, there came to his support the customary reflection that this had happened to Ivan Ilyitch and not to him, and that to him this must not and could not happen; that in thinking thus he was giving way to depression, which was not the right thing to do, as was evident from Shvarts’s expression of face. And making these reflections, Pyotr Ivanovitch felt reassured, and began with interest inquiring details about Ivan Ilyitch’s end, as though death were a mischance peculiar to Ivan Ilyitch, but not at all incidental to himself.

After various observations about the details of the truly awful physical sufferings endured by Ivan Ilyitch (these details Pyotr Ivanovitch learned only through the effect Ivan Ilyitch’s agonies had had on the nerves of Praskovya Fyodorovna), the widow apparently thought it time to get to business.

‘Ah, Pyotr Ivanovitch, how hard it is, how awfully, awfully hard!’ and she began to cry again.

Pyotr Ivanovitch sighed, and waited for her to blow her nose. When she had done so, he said, ‘Indeed it is,’ and again she began to talk, and brought out what was evidently the business she wished to discuss with him; that business consisted in the inquiry as to how on the occasion of her husband’s death she was to obtain a grant from the government. She made a show of asking Pyotr Ivanovitch’s advice about a pension. But he perceived that she knew already to the minutest details, what he did not know himself indeed, everything that could be got out of the government on the ground of this death; but that what she wanted to find out was, whether there were not any means of obtaining a little more? Pyotr Ivanovitch tried to imagine such means; but after pondering a little, and out of politeness abusing the government for its stinginess, he said that he believed that it was impossible to obtain more. Then she sighed and began unmistakably looking about for an excuse for getting rid of her visitor. He perceived this, put out his cigarette, got up, pressed her hand, and went out into the passage.

In the dining-room, where was the bric-à-brac clock that Ivan Ilyitch had been so delighted at buying, Pyotr Ivanovitch met the priest and several people he knew who had come to the service for the dead, and saw too Ivan Ilyitch’s daughter, a handsome young lady. She was all in black. Her very slender figure looked even slenderer than usual. She had a gloomy, determined, almost wrathful expression. She bowed to Pyotr Ivanovitch as though he were to blame in some way. Behind the daughter, with the same offended air on his face, stood a rich young man, whom Pyotr Ivanovitch knew too, an examining magistrate, the young lady’s fiancé, as he had heard. He bowed dejectedly to him, and would have gone on into the dead man’s room, when from the staircase there appeared the figure of the son, the high school boy, extraordinarily like Ivan Ilyitch. He was the little Ivan Ilyitch over again as Pyotr Ivanovitch remembered him at school. His eyes were red with crying, and had that look often seen in unclean boys of thirteen or fourteen. The boy, seeing Pyotr Ivanovitch, scowled morosely and bashfully. Pyotr Ivanovitch nodded to him

and went into the dead man's room. The service for the dead began—candles, groans, incense, tears, sobs. Pyotr Ivanovitch stood frowning, staring at his feet in front of him. He did not once glance at the dead man, and right through to the end did not once give way to depressing influences, and was one of the first to walk out. In the hall there was no one. Gerasim, the young peasant, darted out of the dead man's room, tossed over with his strong hand all the fur cloaks to find Pyotr Ivanovitch's, and gave it him.

'Well, Gerasim, my boy?' said Pyotr Ivanovitch, so as to say something. 'A sad business, isn't it?'

'It's God's will. We shall come to the same,' said Gerasim, showing his white, even, peasant teeth in a smile, and, like a man in a rush of extra work, he briskly opened the door, called up the coachman, saw Pyotr Ivanovitch into the carriage, and darted back to the steps as though bethinking himself of what he had to do next.

Pyotr Ivanovitch had a special pleasure in the fresh air after the smell of incense, of the corpse, and of carbolic acid.

'Where to?' asked the coachman.

'It's not too late. I'll still go round to Fyodor Vassilievitch's.'

And Pyotr Ivanovitch drove there. And he did, in fact, find them just finishing the first rubber, so that he came just at the right time to take a hand.

II

The previous history of Ivan Ilyitch was the simplest, the most ordinary, and the most awful.

Ivan Ilyitch died at the age of forty-five, a member of the Judicial Council. He was the son of an official, whose career in Petersburg through various ministries and departments had been such as leads people into that position in which, though it is distinctly obvious that they are unfit to perform any kind of real duty, they yet

cannot, owing to their long past service and their official rank, be dismissed; and they therefore receive a specially created fictitious post, and by no means fictitious thousands—from six to ten—on which they go on living till extreme old age. Such was the privy councillor, the superfluous member of various superfluous institutions, Ilya Efimovitch Golovin.

He had three sons. Ivan Ilyitch was the second son. The eldest son's career was exactly like his father's, only in a different department, and he was by now close upon that stage in the service in which the same sinecure would be reached. The third son was the unsuccessful one. He had in various positions always made a mess of things, and was now employed in the railway department. And his father and his brothers, and still more their wives, did not merely dislike meeting him, but avoided, except in extreme necessity, recollecting his existence. His sister had married Baron Greff, a Petersburg official of the same stamp as his father-in-law. Ivan Ilyitch was le phénix de la famille, as people said. He was not so frigid and precise as the eldest son, nor so wild as the youngest. He was the happy mean between them—a shrewd, lively, pleasant, and well-bred man. He had been educated with his younger brother at the school of jurisprudence. The younger brother had not finished the school course, but was expelled when in the fifth class. Ivan Ilyitch completed the course successfully. At school he was just the same as he was later on all his life—an intelligent fellow, highly good-humoured and sociable, but strict in doing what he considered to be his duty. His duty he considered whatever was so considered by those persons who were set in authority over him. He was not a toady as a boy, nor later on as a grown up person; but from his earliest years he was attracted, as a fly to the light, to persons of good standing in the world, assimilated their manners and their views of life, and established friendly relations with them. All the enthusiasms of childhood and youth passed, leaving no great traces in him; he gave way to sensuality and to vanity, and latterly when in the higher classes at school to liberalism, but always keeping within certain limits which were unfailingly marked

out for him by his instincts.

At school he had committed actions which had struck him beforehand as great vileness, and gave him a feeling of loathing for himself at the very time he was committing them. But later on, perceiving that such actions were committed also by men of good position, and were not regarded by them as base, he was able, not to regard them as good, but to forget about them completely, and was never mortified by recollections of them.

Leaving the school of jurisprudence in the tenth class, and receiving from his father a sum of money for his outfit, Ivan Ilyitch ordered his clothes at Sharmer's, hung on his watchchain a medallion inscribed respice finem, said good-bye to the prince who was the principal of his school, had a farewell dinner with his comrades at Donon's, and with all his new fashionable belongings—travelling trunk, linen, suits of clothes, shaving and toilet appurtenances, and travelling rug, all ordered and purchased at the very best shops—set off to take the post of secretary on special commissions for the governor of a province, a post which had been obtained for him by his father.

In the province Ivan Ilyitch without loss of time made himself a position as easy and agreeable as his position had been in the school of jurisprudence. He did his work, made his career, and at the same time led a life of well-bred social gaiety. Occasionally he visited various districts on official duty, behaved with dignity both with his superiors and his inferiors; and with exactitude and an incorruptible honesty of which he could not help feeling proud, performed the duties with which he was intrusted, principally having to do with the dissenters. When engaged in official work he was, in spite of his youth and taste for frivolous amusements, exceedingly reserved, official, and even severe. But in social life he was often amusing and witty, and always good-natured, well-bred, and bon enfant, as was said of him by his chief and his chief's wife, with whom he was like one of the family.

In the province there was, too, a connection with one of the ladies who obtruded

their charms on the stylish young lawyer. There was a dressmaker, too, and there were drinking bouts with smart officers visiting the neighbourhood, and visits to a certain outlying street after supper; there was a rather cringing obsequiousness in his behaviour, too, with his chief, and even his chief's wife. But all this was accompanied with such a tone of the highest breeding, that it could not be called by harsh names; it all came under the rubric of the French saying, Il faut que la jeunesse se passe. Everything was done with clean hands, in clean shirts, with French phrases, and, what was of most importance, in the highest society, and consequently with the approval of people of rank.

Such was Ivan Ilyitch's career for five years, and then came a change in his official life. New methods of judicial procedure were established; new men were wanted to carry them out. And Ivan Ilyitch became such a new man. Ivan Ilyitch was offered the post of examining magistrate, and he accepted it in spite of the fact that this post was in another province, and he would have to break off all the ties he had formed and form new ones. Ivan Ilyitch's friends met together to see him off, had their photographs taken in a group, presented him with a silver cigarette-case, and he set off to his new post.

As an examining magistrate, Ivan Ilyitch was as comme il faut, as well-bred, as adroit in keeping official duties apart from private life, and as successful in gaining universal respect, as he had been as secretary of private commissions. The duties of his new office were in themselves of far greater interest and attractiveness for Ivan Ilyitch. In his former post it had been pleasant to pass in his smart uniform from Sharmer's through the crowd of petitioners and officials waiting timorously and envying him, and to march with his easy swagger straight into the governor's private room, there to sit down with him to tea and cigarettes. But the persons directly subject to his authority were few. The only such persons were the district police superintendents and the dissenters, when he was serving on special commissions. And he liked treating such persons affably, almost like comrades; liked to make

them feel that he, able to annihilate them, was behaving in this simple, friendly way with them. But such people were then few in number. Now as an examining magistrate Ivan Ilyitch felt that every one—every one without exception—the most dignified, the most self-satisfied people, all were in his hands, and that he had but to write certain words on a sheet of paper with a printed heading, and this dignified self-satisfied person would be brought before him in the capacity of a defendant or a witness; and if he did not care to make him sit down, he would have to stand up before him and answer his questions. Ivan Ilyitch never abused this authority of his; on the contrary, he tried to soften the expression of it. But the consciousness of this power and the possibility of softening its effect constituted for him the chief interest and attractiveness of his new position. In the work itself, in the preliminary inquiries, that is, Ivan Ilyitch very rapidly acquired the art of setting aside every consideration irrelevant to the official aspect of the case, and of reducing every case, however complex, to that form in which it could in a purely external fashion be put on paper, completely excluding his personal view of the matter, and what was of paramount importance, observing all the necessary formalities. All this work was new. And he was one of the first men who put into practical working the reforms in judicial procedure enacted in 1864.

On settling in a new town in his position as examining magistrate, Ivan Ilyitch made new acquaintances, formed new ties, took up a new line, and adopted a rather different attitude. He took up an attitude of somewhat dignified aloofness towards the provincial authorities, while he picked out the best circle among the legal gentlemen and wealthy gentry living in the town, and adopted a tone of slight dissatisfaction with the government, moderate liberalism, and lofty civic virtue. With this, while making no change in the elegance of his get up, Ivan Ilyitch in his new office gave up shaving, and left his beard free to grow as it liked. Ivan Ilyitch’s existence in the new town proved to be very agreeable; the society which took the line of opposition to the governor was friendly and good; his income was larger, and

he found a source of increased enjoyment in whist, at which he began to play at this time; and having a faculty for playing cards good-humouredly, and being rapid and exact in his calculations, he was as a rule on the winning side.

After living two years in the new town, Ivan Ilyitch met his future wife. Praskovya Fyodorovna Mihel was the most attractive, clever, and brilliant girl in the set in which Ivan Ilyitch moved. Among other amusements and recreations after his labours as a magistrate, Ivan Ilyitch started a light, playful flirtation with Praskovya Fyodorovna.

Ivan Ilyitch when he was an assistant secretary had danced as a rule; as an examining magistrate he danced only as an exception. He danced now as it were under protest, as though to show ‘that though I am serving on the new reformed legal code, and am of the fifth class in official rank, still if it comes to a question of dancing, in that line too I can do better than others.’ In this spirit he danced now and then towards the end of the evening with Praskovya Fyodorovna, and it was principally during these dances that he won the heart of Praskovya Fyodorovna. She fell in love with him. Ivan Ilyitch had no clearly defined intention of marrying; but when the girl fell in love with him, he put the question to himself: ‘After all, why not get married?’ he said to himself.

The young lady, Praskovya Fyodorovna, was of good family, nice-looking. There was a little bit of property. Ivan Ilyitch might have reckoned on a more brilliant match, but this was a good match. Ivan Ilyitch had his salary; she, he hoped, would have as much of her own. It was a good family; she was a sweet, pretty, and perfectly comme il faut young woman. To say that Ivan Ilyitch got married because he fell in love with his wife and found in her sympathy with his views of life, would be as untrue as to say that he got married because the people of his world approved of the match. Ivan Ilyitch was influenced by both considerations: he was doing what was agreeable to himself in securing such a wife, and at the same time doing what

persons of higher standing looked upon as the correct thing.

And Ivan Ilyitch got married.

The process itself of getting married and the early period of married life, with the conjugal caresses, the new furniture, the new crockery, the new house linen, all up to the time of his wife's pregnancy, went off very well; so that Ivan Ilyitch had already begun to think that so far from marriage breaking up that kind of frivolous, agreeable, light-hearted life, always decorous and always approved by society, which he regarded as the normal life, it would even increase its agreeableness. But at that point, in the early months of his wife's pregnancy, there came in a new element, unexpected, unpleasant, tiresome and unseemly, which could never have been anticipated, and from which there was no escape.

His wife, without any kind of reason, it seemed to Ivan Ilyitch, de gaité de cœur, as he expressed it, began to disturb the agreeableness and decorum of their life. She began without any sort of justification to be jealous, exacting in her demands on his attention, squabbled over everything, and treated him to the coarsest and most unpleasant scenes.

At first Ivan Ilyitch hoped to escape from the unpleasantness of this position by taking up the same frivolous and well-bred line that had served him well on other occasions of difficulty. He endeavoured to ignore his wife's ill-humour, went on living light-heartedly and agreeably as before, invited friends to play cards, tried to get away himself to the club or to his friends. But his wife began on one occasion with such energy, abusing him in such coarse language, and so obstinately persisted in her abuse of him every time he failed in carrying out her demands, obviously having made up her mind firmly to persist till he gave way, that is, stayed at home and was as dull as she was, that Ivan Ilyitch took alarm. He perceived that matrimony, at least with his wife, was not invariably conducive to the pleasures and proprieties of life; but, on the contrary, often destructive of them, and that it was

therefore essential to erect some barrier to protect himself from these disturbances. And Ivan Ilyitch began to look about for such means of protecting himself. His official duties were the only thing that impressed Praskovya Fyodorovna, and Ivan Ilyitch began to use his official position and the duties arising from it in his struggle with his wife to fence off his own independent world apart.

With the birth of the baby, the attempts at nursing it, and the various unsuccessful experiments with foods, with the illnesses, real and imaginary, of the infant and its mother, in which Ivan Ilyitch was expected to sympathise, though he never had the slightest idea about them, the need for him to fence off a world apart for himself outside his family life became still more imperative. As his wife grew more irritable and exacting, so did Ivan Ilyitch more and more transfer the centre of gravity of his life to his official work. He became fonder and fonder of official life, and more ambitious than he had been.

Very quickly, not more than a year after his wedding, Ivan Ilyitch had become aware that conjugal life, though providing certain comforts, was in reality a very intricate and difficult business towards which one must, if one is to do one’s duty, that is, lead the decorous life approved by society, work out for oneself a definite line, just as in the government service.

And such a line Ivan Ilyitch did work out for himself in his married life. He expected from his home life only those comforts—of dinner at home, of housekeeper and bed which it could give him, and, above all, that perfect propriety in external observances required by public opinion. For the rest, he looked for good-humoured pleasantness, and if he found it he was very thankful. If he met with antagonism and querulousness, he promptly retreated into the separate world he had shut off for himself in his official life, and there he found solace.

Ivan Ilyitch was prized as a good official, and three years later he was made assistant public prosecutor. The new duties of this position, their dignity, the possibility of

bringing any one to trial and putting any one in prison, the publicity of the speeches and the success Ivan Ilyitch had in that part of his work,—all this made his official work still more attractive to him.

Children were born to him. His wife became steadily more querulous and ill-tempered, but the line Ivan Ilyitch had taken up for himself in home life put him almost out of reach of her grumbling.

After seven years of service in the same town, Ivan Ilyitch was transferred to another province with the post of public prosecutor. They moved, money was short, and his wife did not like the place they had moved to. The salary was indeed a little higher than before, but their expenses were larger. Besides, a couple of children died, and home life consequently became even less agreeable for Ivan Ilyitch.

For every mischance that occurred in their new place of residence, Praskovya Fyodorovna blamed her husband. The greater number of subjects of conversation between husband and wife, especially the education of the children, led to questions which were associated with previous quarrels, and quarrels were ready to break out at every instant. There remained only those rare periods of being in love which did indeed come upon them, but never lasted long. These were the islands at which they put in for a time, but they soon set off again upon the ocean of concealed hostility, that was made manifest in their aloofness from one another. This aloofness might have distressed Ivan Ilyitch if he had believed that this ought not to be so, but by now he regarded this position as perfectly normal, and it was indeed the goal towards which he worked in his home life. His aim was to make himself more and more free from the unpleasant aspects of domestic life and to render them harmless and decorous. And he attained this aim by spending less and less time with his family; and when he was forced to be at home, he endeavoured to secure his tranquillity by the presence of outsiders. The great thing for Ivan Ilyitch was having his office. In the official world all the interest of life was concentrated for him. And

this interest absorbed him. The sense of his own power, the consciousness of being able to ruin any one he wanted to ruin, even the external dignity of his office, when he made his entry into the court or met subordinate officials, his success in the eyes of his superiors and his subordinates, and, above all, his masterly handling of cases, of which he was conscious,—all this delighted him and, together with chat with his colleagues, dining out, and whist, filled his life. So that, on the whole, Ivan Ilyitch's life still went on in the way he thought it should go—agreeably and decorously.

So he lived for another seven years. His eldest daughter was already sixteen, another child had died, and there was left only one other, a boy at the high school, a subject of dissension. Ivan Ilyitch wanted to send him to the school of jurisprudence, while Praskovya Fyodorovna to spite him sent him to the high school. The daughter had been educated at home, and had turned out well; the boy too did fairly well at his lessons.

III

Such was Ivan Ilyitch's life for seventeen years after his marriage. He had been by now a long while prosecutor, and had refused several appointments offered him, looking out for a more desirable post, when there occurred an unexpected incident which utterly destroyed his peace of mind. Ivan Ilyitch had been expecting to be appointed presiding judge in a university town, but a certain Goppe somehow stole a march on him and secured the appointment. Ivan Ilyitch took offence, began upbraiding him, and quarrelled with him and with his own superiors. A coolness was felt towards him, and on the next appointment that was made he was again passed over.

This was in the year 1880. That year was the most painful one in Ivan Ilyitch's life. During that year it became evident on the one hand that his pay was insufficient for his expenses; on the other hand, that he had been forgotten by every one, and that what seemed to him the most monstrous, the cruelest injustice, appeared to other

people as a quite commonplace fact. Even his father felt no obligation to assist him. He felt that every one had deserted him, and that every one regarded his position with an income of three thousand five hundred roubles as a quite normal and even fortunate one. He alone, with a sense of the injustice done him, and the everlasting nagging of his wife and the debts he had begun to accumulate, living beyond his means, knew that his position was far from being normal.

The summer of that year, to cut down his expenses, he took a holiday and went with his wife to spend the summer in the country at her brother's.

In the country, with no official duties to occupy him, Ivan Ilyitch was for the first time a prey not to simple boredom, but to intolerable depression; and he made up his mind that things could not go on like that, and that it was absolutely necessary to take some decisive steps.

After a sleepless night spent by Ivan Ilyitch walking up and down the terrace, he determined to go to Petersburg to take active steps and to get transferred to some other department, so as to revenge himself on them, the people, that is, who had not known how to appreciate him.

Next day, in spite of all the efforts of his wife and his mother-in-law to dissuade him, he set off to Petersburg.

He went with a single object before him—to obtain a post with an income of five thousand. He was ready now to be satisfied with a post in any department, of any tendency, with any kind of work. He must only have a post—a post with five thousand, in the executive department, the banks, the railways, the Empress Marya's institutions, even in the customs duties—what was essential was five thousand, and essential it was, too, to get out of the department in which they had failed to appreciate his value.

And, behold, this quest of Ivan Ilyitch's was crowned with wonderful, unexpected success. At Kursk there got into the same first-class carriage F. S. Ilyin, an

acquaintance, who told him of a telegram just received by the governor of Kursk, announcing a change about to take place in the ministry—Pyotr Ivanovitch was to be superseded by Ivan Semyonovitch.

The proposed change, apart from its significance for Russia, had special significance for Ivan Ilyitch from the fact that by bringing to the front a new person, Pyotr Petrovitch, and obviously, therefore, his friend Zahar Ivanovitch, it was in the highest degree propitious to Ivan Ilyitch's own plans. Zahar Ivanovitch was a friend and schoolfellow of Ivan Ilyitch's.

At Moscow the news was confirmed. On arriving at Petersburg, Ivan Ilyitch looked up Zahar Ivanovitch, and received a positive promise of an appointment in his former department—that of justice.

A week later he telegraphed to his wife: 'Zahar Miller's place. At first report I receive appointment.'

Thanks to these changes, Ivan Ilyitch unexpectedly obtained, in the same department as before, an appointment which placed him two stages higher than his former colleagues, and gave him an income of five thousand, together with the official allowance of three thousand five hundred for travelling expenses. All his ill-humour with his former enemies and the whole department was forgotten, and Ivan Ilyitch was completely happy.

Ivan Ilyitch went back to the country more light-hearted and good-tempered than he had been for a very long while. Praskovya Fyodorovna was in better spirits, too, and peace was patched up between them. Ivan Ilyitch described what respect every one had shown him in Petersburg; how all those who had been his enemies had been put to shame, and were cringing now before him; how envious they were of his appointment, and still more of the high favour in which he stood at Petersburg.

Praskovya Fyodorovna listened to this, and pretended to believe it, and did not contradict him in anything, but confined herself to making plans for her new

arrangements in the town to which they would be moving. And Ivan Ilyitch saw with delight that these plans were his plans; that they were agreed; and that his life after this disturbing hitch in its progress was about to regain its true, normal character of light-hearted agreeableness and propriety.

Ivan Ilyitch had come back to the country for a short stay only. He had to enter upon the duties of his new office on the 10th of September; and besides, he needed some time to settle in a new place, to move all his belongings from the other province, to purchase and order many things in addition; in short, to arrange things as settled in his own mind, and almost exactly as settled in the heart too of Praskovya Fyodorovna.

And now when everything was so successfully arranged, and when he and his wife were agreed in their aim, and were, besides, so little together, they got on with one another as they had not got on together since the early years of their married life. Ivan Ilyitch had thought of taking his family away with him at once; but his sister and his brother-in-law, who had suddenly become extremely cordial and intimate with him and his family, were so pressing in urging them to stay that he set off alone.

Ivan Ilyitch started off; and the light-hearted temper produced by his success, and his good understanding with his wife, one thing backing up another, did not desert him all the time. He found a charming set of apartments, the very thing both husband and wife had dreamed of. Spacious, lofty reception-rooms in the old style, a comfortable, dignified-looking study for him, rooms for his wife and daughter, a school-room for his son, everything as though planned on purpose for them. Ivan Ilyitch himself looked after the furnishing of them, chose the wall-papers, bought furniture, by preference antique furniture, which had a peculiar comme-il-faut style to his mind, and it all grew up and grew up, and really attained the ideal he had set before himself. When he had half finished arranging the house, his arrangement

surpassed his own expectations. He saw the comme-il-faut character, elegant and free from vulgarity, that the whole would have when it was all ready. As he fell asleep he pictured to himself the reception-room as it would be. Looking at the drawing-room, not yet finished, he could see the hearth, the screen, the étagère, and the little chairs dotted here and there, the plates and dishes on the wall, and the bronzes as they would be when they were all put in their places. He was delighted with the thought of how he would impress Praskovya and Lizanka, who had taste too in this line. They would never expect anything like it. He was particularly successful in coming across and buying cheap old pieces of furniture, which gave a peculiarly aristocratic air to the whole. In his letters he purposely disparaged everything so as to surprise them. All this so absorbed him that the duties of his new office, though he was so fond of his official work, interested him less than he had expected. During sittings of the court he had moments of inattention; he pondered the question which sort of cornices to have on the window-blinds, straight or fluted. He was so interested in this business that he often set to work with his own hands, moved a piece of furniture, or hung up curtains himself. One day he went up a ladder to show a workman, who did not understand, how he wanted some hangings draped, made a false step and slipped; but, like a strong and nimble person, he clung on, and only knocked his side against the corner of a frame. The bruised place ached, but it soon passed off. Ivan Ilyitch felt all this time particularly good-humoured and well. He wrote: ‘I feel fifteen years younger.’ He thought his house-furnishing would be finished in September, but it dragged on to the middle of October. But then the effect was charming; not he only said so, but every one who saw it told him so too.

In reality, it was all just what is commonly seen in the houses of people who are not exactly wealthy but want to look like wealthy people, and so succeed only in being like one another—hangings, dark wood, flowers, rugs and bronzes, everything dark and highly polished, everything that all people of a certain class have so as to be like

all people of a certain class. And in his case it was all so like that it made no impression at all; but it all seemed to him somehow special. When he met his family at the railway station and brought them to his newly furnished rooms, all lighted up in readiness, and a footman in a white tie opened the door into an entry decorated with flowers, and then they walked into the drawing-room and the study, uttering cries of delight, he was very happy, conducted them everywhere, eagerly drinking in their praises, and beaming with satisfaction. The same evening, while they talked about various things at tea, Praskovya Fyodorovna inquired about his fall, and he laughed and showed them how he had gone flying, and how he had frightened the upholsterer.

‘It’s as well I’m something of an athlete. Another man might have been killed, and I got nothing worse than a blow here; when it’s touched it hurts, but it’s going off already; nothing but a bruise.’

And they began to live in their new abode, which, as is always the case, when they had got thoroughly settled in they found to be short of just one room, and with their new income, which, as always, was only a little—some five hundred roubles—too little, and everything went very well. Things went particularly well at first, before everything was quite finally arranged, and there was still something to do to the place—something to buy, something to order, something to move, something to make to fit. Though there were indeed several disputes between husband and wife, both were so well satisfied, and there was so much to do, that it all went off without serious quarrels. When there was nothing left to arrange, it became a little dull, and something seemed to be lacking, but by then they were making acquaintances and forming habits, and life was filled up again.

Ivan Ilyitch, after spending the morning in the court, returned home to dinner, and at first he was generally in a good-humour, although this was apt to be upset a little, and precisely on account of the new abode. Every spot on the tablecloth, on the

hangings, the string of a window blind broken, irritated him. He had devoted so much trouble to the arrangement of the rooms that any disturbance of their order distressed him. But, on the whole, the life of Ivan Ilyitch ran its course as, according to his conviction, life ought to do—easily, agreeably, and decorously. He got up at nine, drank his coffee, read the newspaper, then put on his official uniform, and went to the court. There the routine of the daily work was ready mapped out for him, and he stepped into it at once. People with petitions, inquiries in the office, the office itself, the sittings—public and preliminary. In all this the great thing necessary was to exclude everything with the sap of life in it, which always disturbs the regular course of official business, not to admit any sort of relations with people except the official relations; the motive of all intercourse had to be simply the official motive, and the intercourse itself to be only official. A man would come, for instance, anxious for certain information. Ivan Ilyitch, not being the functionary on duty, would have nothing whatever to do with such a man. But if this man's relation to him as a member of the court is such as can be formulated on official stamped paper—within the limits of such a relation Ivan Ilyitch would do everything, positively everything he could, and in doing so would observe the semblance of human friendly relations, that is, the courtesies of social life. But where the official relation ended, there everything else stopped too. This art of keeping the official aspect of things apart from his real life, Ivan Ilyitch possessed in the highest degree; and through long practice and natural aptitude, he had brought it to such a pitch of perfection that he even permitted himself at times, like a skilled specialist as it were in jest, to let the human and official relations mingle. He allowed himself this liberty just because he felt he had the power at any moment if he wished it to take up the purely official line again and to drop the human relation. This thing was not simply easy, agreeable, and decorous; in Ivan Ilyitch's hands it attained a positively artistic character. In the intervals of business he smoked, drank tea, chatted a little about politics, a little about public affairs, a little about cards, but most of all about

appointments in the service. And tired, but feeling like some artist who has skilfully played his part in the performance, one of the first violins in the orchestra, he returned home. At home his daughter and her mother had been paying calls somewhere, or else some one had been calling on them; the son had been at school, had been preparing his lessons with his teachers, and duly learning correctly what was taught at the high school. Everything was as it should be. After dinner, if there were no visitors, Ivan Ilyitch sometimes read some book of which people were talking, and in the evening sat down to work, that is, read official papers, compared them with the laws, sorted depositions, and put them under the laws. This he found neither tiresome nor entertaining. It was tiresome when he might have been playing ‘screw’; but if there were no ‘screw’ going on, it was anyway better than sitting alone or with his wife. Ivan Ilyitch’s pleasures were little dinners, to which he invited ladies and gentlemen of good social position, and such methods of passing the time with them as were usual with such persons, so that his drawing-room might be like all other drawing-rooms.

Once they even gave a party—a dance. And Ivan Ilyitch enjoyed it, and everything was very successful, except that it led to a violent quarrel with his wife over the tarts and sweetmeats. Praskovya Fyodorovna had her own plan; while Ivan Ilyitch insisted on getting everything from an expensive pastry-cook, and ordered a great many tarts, and the quarrel was because these tarts were left over and the pastry-cook’s bill came to forty-five roubles. The quarrel was a violent and unpleasant one, so much so that Praskovya Fyodorovna called him, ‘Fool, imbecile.’ And he clutched at his head, and in his anger made some allusion to a divorce. But the party itself was enjoyable. There were all the best people, and Ivan Ilyitch danced with Princess Trufonov, the sister of the one so well known in connection with the charitable association called, ‘Bear my Burden.’ His official pleasures lay in the gratification of his pride; his social pleasures lay in the gratification of his vanity. But Ivan Ilyitch’s most real pleasure was the pleasure of playing ‘screw,’ the

Russian equivalent for ‘poker.’ He admitted to himself that after all, after whatever unpleasant incidents there had been in his life, the pleasure which burned like a candle before all others was sitting with good players, and not noisy partners, at ‘screw’; and, of course, a four-hand game (playing with five was never a success, though one pretends to like it particularly), and with good cards, to play a shrewd, serious game, then supper and a glass of wine. And after ‘screw,’ especially after winning some small stakes (winning large sums was unpleasant), Ivan Ilyitch went to bed in a particularly happy frame of mind.

So they lived. They moved in the very best circle, and were visited by people of consequence and young people.

In their views of their circle of acquaintances, the husband, the wife, and the daughter were in complete accord; and without any expressed agreement on the subject, they all acted alike in dropping and shaking off various friends and relations, shabby persons who swooped down upon them in their drawing-room with Japanese plates on the walls, and pressed their civilities on them. Soon these shabby persons ceased fluttering about them, and none but the very best society was seen at the Golovins. Young men began to pay attention to Lizanka; and Petrishtchev, the son of Dmitry Ivanovitch Petrishtchev, and the sole heir of his fortune, an examining magistrate, began to be so attentive to Lizanka, that Ivan Ilyitch had raised the question with his wife whether it would not be as well to arrange a sledge drive for them, or to get up some theatricals. So they lived. And everything went on in this way without change, and everything was very nice.

IV

All were in good health. One could not use the word ill-health in connection with the symptoms Ivan Ilyitch sometimes complained of, namely, a queer taste in his mouth and a sort of uncomfortable feeling on the left side of the stomach.

But it came to pass that this uncomfortable feeling kept increasing, and became not

exactly a pain, but a continual sense of weight in his side and irritable temper. This irritable temper continually growing and growing, began at last to mar the agreeable easiness and decorum that had reigned in the Golovin household. Quarrels between the husband and wife became more and more frequent, and soon all the easiness and amenity of life had fallen away, and mere propriety was maintained with difficulty. Scenes became again more frequent. Again there were only islands in the sea of contention—and but few of these—at which the husband and wife could meet without an outbreak. And Praskovya Fyodorovna said now, not without grounds, that her husband had a trying temper. With her characteristic exaggeration, she said he had always had this awful temper, and she had needed all her sweetness to put up with it for twenty years. It was true that it was he now who began the quarrels. His gusts of temper always broke out just before dinner, and often just as he was beginning to eat, at the soup. He would notice that some piece of the crockery had been chipped, or that the food was not nice, or that his son put his elbow on the table, or his daughter's hair was not arranged as he liked it. And whatever it was, he laid the blame of it on Praskovya Fyodorovna. Praskovya Fyodorovna had at first retorted in the same strain, and said all sorts of horrid things to him; but on two occasions, just at the beginning of dinner, he had flown into such a frenzy that she perceived that it was due to physical derangement, and was brought on by taking food, and she controlled herself; she did not reply, but simply made haste to get dinner over. Praskovya Fyodorovna took great credit to herself for this exercise of self-control. Making up her mind that her husband had a fearful temper, and made her life miserable, she began to feel sorry for herself. And the more she felt for herself, the more she hated her husband. She began to wish he were dead; yet could not wish it, because then there would be no income. And this exasperated her against him even more. She considered herself dreadfully unfortunate, precisely because even his death could not save her, and she felt irritated and concealed it, and this hidden irritation on her side increased his irritability.

After one violent scene, in which Ivan Ilyitch had been particularly unjust, and after which he had said in explanation that he certainly was irritable, but that it was due to illness, she said that if he were ill he ought to take steps, and insisted on his going to see a celebrated doctor.

He went. Everything was as he had expected; everything was as it always is. The waiting and the assumption of dignity, that professional dignity he knew so well, exactly as he assumed it himself in court, and the sounding and listening and questions that called for answers that were foregone conclusions and obviously superfluous, and the significant air that seemed to insinuate—you only leave it all to us, and we will arrange everything, for us it is certain and incontestable how to arrange everything, everything in one way for every man of every sort. It was all exactly as in his court of justice. Exactly the same air as he put on in dealing with a man brought up for judgment, the doctor put on for him.

The doctor said: This and that proves that you have such-and-such a thing wrong inside you; but if that is not confirmed by analysis of this and that, then we must assume this and that. If we assume this and that, then—and so on. To Ivan Ilyitch there was only one question of consequence, Was his condition dangerous or not? But the doctor ignored that irrelevant inquiry. From the doctor's point of view this was a side issue, not the subject under consideration; the only real question was the balance of probabilities between a loose kidney, chronic catarrh, and appendicitis. It was not a question of the life of Ivan Ilyitch, but the question between the loose kidney and the intestinal appendix. And this question, as it seemed to Ivan Ilyitch, the doctor solved in a brilliant manner in favour of the appendix, with the reservation that analysis of the water might give a fresh clue, and that then the aspect of the case would be altered. All this was point for point identical with what Ivan Ilyitch had himself done in brilliant fashion a thousand times over in dealing with some man on his trial. Just as brilliantly the doctor made his summing-up, and triumphantly, gaily even, glanced over his spectacles at the prisoner in the dock.

From the doctor's summing-up Ivan Ilyitch deduced the conclusion—that things looked bad, and that he, the doctor, and most likely every one else, did not care, but that things looked bad for him. And this conclusion impressed Ivan Ilyitch morbidly, arousing in him a great feeling of pity for himself, of great anger against this doctor who could be unconcerned about a matter of such importance.

But he said nothing of that. He got up, and, laying the fee on the table, he said, with a sigh, 'We sick people probably often ask inconvenient questions. Tell me, is this generally a dangerous illness or not?'

The doctor glanced severely at him with one eye through his spectacles, as though to say: 'Prisoner at the bar, if you will not keep within the limits of the questions allowed you, I shall be compelled to take measures for your removal from the precincts of the court.' 'I have told you what I thought necessary and suitable already,' said the doctor; 'the analysis will show anything further.' And the doctor bowed him out.

Ivan Ilyitch went out slowly and dejectedly, got into his sledge, and drove home. All the way home he was incessantly going over all the doctor had said, trying to translate all these complicated, obscure, scientific phrases into simple language, and to read in them an answer to the question, It's bad—is it very bad, or nothing much as yet? And it seemed to him that the upshot of all the doctor had said was that it was very bad. Everything seemed dismal to Ivan Ilyitch in the streets. The sledge-drivers were dismal, the houses were dismal, the people passing, and the shops were dismal. This ache, this dull gnawing ache, that never ceased for a second, seemed, when connected with the doctor's obscure utterances, to have gained a new, more serious significance. With a new sense of misery Ivan Ilyitch kept watch on it now.

He reached home and began to tell his wife about it. His wife listened; but in the middle of his account his daughter came in with her hat on, ready to go out with her

mother. Reluctantly she half sat down to listen to these tedious details, but she could not stand it for long, and her mother did not hear his story to the end.

‘Well, I’m very glad,’ said his wife; ‘now you must be sure and take the medicine regularly. Give me the prescription; I’ll send Gerasim to the chemist’s!’ And she went to get ready to go out.

He had not taken breath while she was in the room, and he heaved a deep sigh when she was gone.

‘Well,’ he said, ‘may be it really is nothing as yet.’

He began to take the medicine, to carry out the doctor’s directions, which were changed after the analysis of the water. But it was just at this point that some confusion arose, either in the analysis or in what ought to have followed from it. The doctor himself, of course, could not be blamed for it, but it turned out that things had not gone as the doctor had told him. Either he had forgotten or told a lie, or was hiding something from him.

But Ivan Ilyitch still went on just as exactly carrying out the doctor’s direction, and in doing so he found comfort at first.

From the time of his visit to the doctor Ivan Ilyitch’s principal occupation became the exact observance of the doctor’s prescriptions as regards hygiene and medicine and the careful observation of his ailment in all the functions of his organism. Ivan Ilyitch’s principal interest came to be people’s ailments and people’s health. When anything was said in his presence about sick people, about deaths and recoveries, especially in the case of an illness resembling his own, he listened, trying to conceal his excitement, asked questions, and applied what he heard to his own trouble.

The ache did not grow less; but Ivan Ilyitch made great efforts to force himself to believe that he was better. And he succeeded in deceiving himself so long as nothing happened to disturb him. But as soon as he had a mischance, some unpleasant words with his wife, a failure in his official work, an unlucky hand at ‘screw,’ he was at

once acutely sensible of his illness. In former days he had borne with such mishaps, hoping soon to retrieve the mistake, to make a struggle, to reach success later, to have a lucky hand. But now he was cast down by every mischance and reduced to despair. He would say to himself: ‘Here I’m only just beginning to get better, and the medicine has begun to take effect, and now this mischance or disappointment.’ And he was furious against the mischance or the people who were causing him the disappointment and killing him, and he felt that this fury was killing him, but could not check it. One would have thought that it should have been clear to him that this exasperation against circumstances and people was aggravating his disease, and that therefore he ought not to pay attention to the unpleasant incidents. But his reasoning took quite the opposite direction. He said that he needed peace, and was on the watch for everything that disturbed his peace, and at the slightest disturbance of it he flew into a rage. What made his position worse was that he read medical books and consulted doctors. He got worse so gradually that he might have deceived himself, comparing one day with another, the difference was so slight. But when he consulted the doctors, then it seemed to him that he was getting worse, and very rapidly so indeed. And in spite of this, he was continually consulting the doctors.

That month he called on another celebrated doctor. The second celebrity said almost the same as the first, but put his questions differently; and the interview with this celebrity only redoubled the doubts and terrors of Ivan Ilyitch. A friend of a friend of his, a very good doctor, diagnosed the disease quite differently; and in spite of the fact that he guaranteed recovery, by his questions and his suppositions he confused Ivan Ilyitch even more and strengthened his suspicions. A homœopath gave yet another diagnosis of the complaint, and prescribed medicine, which Ivan Ilyitch took secretly for a week; but after a week of the homœopathic medicine he felt no relief, and losing faith both in the other doctor’s treatment and in this, he fell into even deeper depression. One day a lady of his acquaintance talked to him of the healing wrought by the holy pictures. Ivan Ilyitch caught himself listening attentively and

believing in the reality of the facts alleged. This incident alarmed him. ‘Can I have degenerated to such a point of intellectual feebleness?’ he said to himself. ‘Nonsense! it’s all rubbish. I must not give way to nervous fears, but fixing on one doctor, adhere strictly to his treatment. That’s what I will do. Now it’s settled. I won’t think about it, but till next summer I will stick to the treatment, and then I shall see. Now I’ll put a stop to this wavering!’ It was easy to say this, but impossible to carry it out. The pain in his side was always dragging at him, seeming to grow more acute and ever more incessant; it seemed to him that the taste in his mouth was queerer, and there was a loathsome smell even from his breath, and his appetite and strength kept dwindling. There was no deceiving himself; something terrible, new, and so important that nothing more important had ever been in Ivan Ilyitch’s life, was taking place in him, and he alone knew of it. All about him did not or would not understand, and believed that everything in the world was going on as before. This was what tortured Ivan Ilyitch more than anything. Those of his own household, most of all his wife and daughter, who were absorbed in a perfect whirl of visits, did not, he saw, comprehend it at all, and were annoyed that he was so depressed and exacting, as though he were to blame for it. Though they tried indeed to disguise it, he saw he was a nuisance to them; but that his wife had taken up a definite line of her own in regard to his illness, and stuck to it regardless of what he might say and do. This line was expressed thus: ‘You know,’ she would say to acquaintances, ‘Ivan Ilyitch cannot, like all other simple-hearted folks, keep to the treatment prescribed him. One day he’ll take his drops and eat what he’s ordered, and go to bed in good time; the next day, if I don’t see to it, he’ll suddenly forget to take his medicine, eat sturgeon (which is forbidden by the doctors), yes, and sit up at “screw” till past midnight.’

‘Why, when did I do that?’ Ivan Ilyitch asked in vexation one day at Pyotr Ivanovitch’s.

‘Why, yesterday, with Shebek.’

‘It makes no difference. I couldn’t sleep for pain.’

‘Well, it doesn’t matter what you do it for, only you’ll never get well like that, and you make us wretched.’

Praskovya Fyodorovna’s external attitude to her husband’s illness, openly expressed to others and to himself, was that Ivan Ilyitch was to blame in the matter of his illness, and that the whole illness was another injury he was doing to his wife. Ivan Ilyitch felt that the expression of this dropped from her unconsciously, but that made it no easier for him.

In his official life, too, Ivan Ilyitch noticed, or fancied he noticed, a strange attitude to him. At one time it seemed to him that people were looking inquisitively at him, as a man who would shortly have to vacate his position; at another time his friends would suddenly begin chaffing him in a friendly way over his nervous fears, as though that awful and horrible, unheard-of thing that was going on within him, incessantly gnawing at him, and irresistibly dragging him away somewhere, were the most agreeable subject for joking. Shvarts especially, with his jocoseness, his liveliness, and his comme-il-faut tone, exasperated Ivan Ilyitch by reminding him of himself ten years ago.

Friends came sometimes to play cards. They sat down to the card-table; they shuffled and dealt the new cards. Diamonds were led and followed by diamonds, the seven. His partner said, ‘Can’t trump,’ and played the two of diamonds. What then? Why, delightful, capital, it should have been—he had a trump hand. And suddenly Ivan Ilyitch feels that gnawing ache, that taste in his mouth, and it strikes him as something grotesque that with that he could be glad of a trump hand.

He looks at Mihail Mihailovitch, his partner, how he taps on the table with his red hand, and affably and indulgently abstains from snatching up the trick, and pushes the cards towards Ivan Ilyitch so as to give him the pleasure of taking them up, without any trouble, without even stretching out his hand. ‘What, does he suppose

that I'm so weak that I can't stretch out my hand?' thinks Ivan Ilyitch, and he forgets the trumps, and trumps his partner's cards, and plays his trump hand without making three tricks; and what's the most awful thing of all is that he sees how upset Mihail Mihailovitch is about it, while he doesn't care a bit, and it's awful for him to think why he doesn't care.

They all see that he's in pain, and say to him, 'We can stop if you're tired. You go and lie down.' Lie down? No, he's not in the least tired; they will play the rubber. All are gloomy and silent. Ivan Ilyitch feels that it is he who has brought this gloom upon them, and he cannot disperse it. They have supper, and the party breaks up, and Ivan Ilyitch is left alone with the consciousness that his life is poisoned for him and poisons the life of others, and that this poison is not losing its force, but is continually penetrating more and more deeply into his whole existence.

And with the consciousness of this, and with the physical pain in addition, and the terror in addition to that, he must lie in his bed, often not able to sleep for pain the greater part of the night; and in the morning he must get up again, dress, go to the law-court, speak, write, or, if he does not go out, stay at home for all the four-and-twenty hours of the day and night, of which each one is a torture. And he had to live thus on the edge of the precipice alone, without one man who would understand and feel for him.

V

In this way one month, then a second, passed by. Just before the New Year his brother-in-law arrived in the town on a visit to them. Ivan Ilyitch was at the court when he arrived. Praskovya Fyodorovna had gone out shopping. Coming home and going into his study, he found there his brother-in-law, a healthy, florid man, engaged in unpacking his trunk. He raised his head, hearing Ivan Ilyitch's step, and for a second stared at him without a word. That stare told Ivan Ilyitch everything. His brother-in-law opened his mouth to utter an 'Oh!' of surprise, but checked

himself. That confirmed it all.

‘What! have I changed?’

‘Yes, there is a change.’

And all Ivan Ilyitch’s efforts to draw him into talking of his appearance his brother-in-law met with obstinate silence. Praskovya Fyodorovna came in; the brother-in-law went to see her. Ivan Ilyitch locked his door, and began gazing at himself in the looking-glass, first full face, then in profile. He took up his photograph, taken with his wife, and compared the portrait with what he saw in the looking-glass. The change was immense. Then he bared his arm to the elbow, looked at it, pulled the sleeve down again, sat down on an ottoman, and felt blacker than night.

‘I mustn’t, I mustn’t,’ he said to himself, jumped up, went to the table, opened some official paper, tried to read it, but could not. He opened the door, went into the drawing-room. The door into the drawing-room was closed. He went up to it on tiptoe and listened.

‘No, you’re exaggerating,’ Praskovya Fyodorovna was saying.

‘Exaggerating? You can’t see it. Why, he’s a dead man. Look at his eyes—there’s no light in them. But what’s wrong with him?’

‘No one can tell. Nikolaev’ (that was another doctor) ‘said something, but I don’t know. Leshtchetitsky’ (this was the celebrated doctor) ‘said the opposite.’

Ivan Ilyitch walked away, went to his own room, lay down, and fell to musing. ‘A kidney—a loose kidney.’ He remembered all the doctors had told him, how it had been detached, and how it was loose; and by an effort of imagination he tried to catch that kidney and to stop it, to strengthen it. So little was needed, he fancied. ‘No, I’ll go again to Pyotr Ivanovitch’ (this was the friend who had a friend a doctor). He rang, ordered the horse to be put in, and got ready to go out.

‘Where are you off to, Jean?’ asked his wife with a peculiarly melancholy and exceptionally kind expression.

This exceptionally kind expression exasperated him. He looked darkly at her.

‘I want to see Pyotr Ivanovitch.’

He went to the friend who had a friend a doctor. And with him to the doctor’s. He found him in, and had a long conversation with him.

Reviewing the anatomical and physiological details of what, according to the doctor’s view, was taking place within him, he understood it all. It was just one thing—a little thing wrong with the intestinal appendix. It might all come right. Only strengthen one sluggish organ, and decrease the undue activity of another, and absorption would take place, and all would be set right. He was a little late for dinner. He ate his dinner, talked cheerfully, but it was a long while before he could go to his own room to work. At last he went to his study, and at once sat down to work. He read his legal documents and did his work, but the consciousness never left him of having a matter of importance very near to his heart which he had put off, but would look into later. When he had finished his work, he remembered that the matter near his heart was thinking about the intestinal appendix. But he did not give himself up to it; he went into the drawing-room to tea. There were visitors; and there was talking, playing on the piano, and singing; there was the young examining magistrate, the desirable match for the daughter. Ivan Ilyitch spent the evening, as Praskovya Fyodorovna observed, in better spirits than any of them; but he never forgot for an instant that he had the important matter of the intestinal appendix put off for consideration later. At eleven o’clock he said good night and went to his own room. He had slept alone since his illness in a little room adjoining his study. He went in, undressed, and took up a novel of Zola, but did not read it; he fell to thinking. And in his imagination the desired recovery of the intestinal appendix had taken place. There had been absorption, rejection, re-establishment of the regular

action.

‘Why, it’s all simply that,’ he said to himself. ‘One only wants to assist nature.’ He remembered the medicine, got up, took it, lay down on his back, watching for the medicine to act beneficially and overcome the pain. ‘It’s only to take it regularly and avoid injurious influences; why, already I feel rather better, much better.’ He began to feel his side; it was not painful to the touch. ‘Yes, I don’t feel it—really, much better already.’ He put out the candle and lay on his side. ‘The appendix is getting better, absorption.’ Suddenly he felt the familiar, old, dull, gnawing ache, persistent, quiet, in earnest. In his mouth the same familiar loathsome taste. His heart sank, his brain felt dim, misty. ‘My God, my God!’ he said, ‘again, again, and it will never cease.’ And suddenly the whole thing rose before him in quite a different aspect. ‘Intestinal appendix! kidney!’ he said to himself. ‘It’s not a question of the appendix, not a question of the kidney, but of life and ... death. Yes, life has been and now it’s going, going away, and I cannot stop it. Yes. Why deceive myself? Isn’t it obvious to every one, except me, that I’m dying, and it’s only a question of weeks, of days—at once perhaps. There was light, and now there is darkness. I was here, and now I am going! Where?’ A cold chill ran over him, his breath stopped. He heard nothing but the throbbing of his heart.

‘I shall be no more, then what will there be? There’ll be nothing. Where then shall I be when I’m no more? Can this be dying? No; I don’t want to!’ He jumped up, tried to light the candle; and fumbling with trembling hands, he dropped the candle and the candlestick on the floor and fell back again on the pillow. ‘Why trouble? it doesn’t matter,’ he said to himself, staring with open eyes into the darkness. ‘Death. Yes, death. And they—all of them—don’t understand, and don’t want to understand, and feel no pity. They are playing. (He caught through the closed doors the far away cadence of a voice and the accompaniment.) They don’t care, but they will die too. Fools! Me sooner and them later; but it will be the same for them. And they are merry. The beasts!’ Anger stifled him. And he was agonisingly, insufferably

miserable. ‘It cannot be that all men always have been doomed to this awful horror!’ He raised himself.

‘There is something wrong in it; I must be calm, I must think it all over from the beginning.’ And then he began to consider. ‘Yes, the beginning of my illness. I knocked my side, and I was just the same, that day and the days after; it ached a little, then more, then doctors, then depression, misery, and again doctors; and I’ve gone on getting closer and closer to the abyss. Strength growing less. Nearer and nearer. And here I am, wasting away, no light in my eyes. I think of how to cure the appendix, but this is death. Can it be death?’ Again a horror came over him; gasping for breath, he bent over, began feeling for the matches, and knocked his elbow against the bedside table. It was in his way and hurt him; he felt furious with it, in his anger knocked against it more violently, and upset it. And in despair, breathless, he fell back on his spine waiting for death to come that instant.

The visitors were leaving at that time. Praskovya Fyodorovna was seeing them out. She heard something fall, and came in.

‘What is it?’

‘Nothing. I dropped something by accident.’

She went out, brought a candle. He was lying, breathing hard and fast, like a man who has run a mile, and staring with fixed eyes at her.

‘What is it, Jean?’

‘No—nothing, I say. I dropped something.’—‘Why speak? She won’t understand,’ he thought.

She certainly did not understand. She picked up the candle, lighted it for him, and went out hastily. She had to say good-bye to a departing guest. When she came back, he was lying in the same position on his back, looking upwards.

‘How are you—worse?’

‘Yes.’

She shook her head, sat down.

‘Do you know what, Jean? I wonder if we hadn’t better send for Leshtchetitsky to see you here?’

This meant calling in the celebrated doctor, regardless of expense. He smiled malignantly, and said no. She sat a moment longer, went up to him, and kissed him on the forehead.

He hated her with all the force of his soul when she was kissing him, and had to make an effort not to push her away.

‘Good night. Please God, you’ll sleep.’

‘Yes.’

VI

Ivan Ilyitch saw that he was dying, and was in continual despair.

At the bottom of his heart Ivan Ilyitch knew that he was dying; but so far from growing used to this idea, he simply did not grasp it—he was utterly unable to grasp it.

The example of the syllogism that he had learned in Kiseveter’s logic—Caius is a man, men are mortal, therefore Caius is mortal—had seemed to him all his life correct only as regards Caius, but not at all as regards himself. In that case it was a question of Caius, a man, an abstract man, and it was perfectly true, but he was not Caius, and was not an abstract man; he had always been a creature quite, quite different from all others; he had been little Vanya with a mamma and papa, and Mitya and Volodya, with playthings and a coachman and a nurse; afterwards with Katenka, with all the joys and griefs and ecstasies of childhood, boyhood, and youth. What did Caius know of the smell of the leathern ball Vanya had been so fond of? Had Caius kissed his mother’s hand like that? Caius had not heard the silk rustle of

his mother's skirts. He had not made a riot at school over the pudding. Had Caius been in love like that? Could Caius preside over the sittings of the court?

And Caius certainly was mortal, and it was right for him to die; but for me, little Vanya, Ivan Ilyitch, with all my feelings and ideas—for me it's a different matter. And it cannot be that I ought to die. That would be too awful.

That was his feeling.

'If I had to die like Caius, I should have known it was so, some inner voice would have told me so. But there was nothing of the sort in me. And I and all my friends, we felt that it was not at all the same as with Caius. And now here it is!' he said to himself. 'It can't be! It can't be, but it is! How is it? How's one to understand it?' And he could not conceive it, and tried to drive away this idea as false, incorrect, and morbid, and to supplant it by other, correct, healthy ideas. But this idea, not as an idea merely, but as it were an actual fact, came back again and stood confronting him.

And to replace this thought he called up other thoughts, one after another, in the hope of finding support in them. He tried to get back into former trains of thought, which in old days had screened off the thought of death. But, strange to say, all that had in old days covered up, obliterated the sense of death, could not now produce the same effect. Latterly, Ivan Ilyitch spent the greater part of his time in these efforts to restore his old trains of thought which had shut off death. At one time he would say to himself, 'I'll put myself into my official work; why, I used to live in it.' And he would go to the law-courts, banishing every doubt. He would enter into conversation with his colleagues, and would sit carelessly, as his old habit was, scanning the crowd below dreamily, and with both his wasted hands he would lean on the arms of the oak arm chair just as he always did; and bending over to a colleague, pass the papers to him and whisper to him, then suddenly dropping his eyes and sitting up straight, he would pronounce the familiar words that opened the

proceedings. But suddenly in the middle, the pain in his side, utterly regardless of the stage he had reached in his conduct of the case, began its work. It riveted Ivan Ilyitch's attention. He drove away the thought of it, but it still did its work, and then It came and stood confronting him and looked at him, and he felt turned to stone, and the light died away in his eyes, and he began to ask himself again, 'Can it be that It is the only truth?' And his colleagues and his subordinates saw with surprise and distress that he, the brilliant, subtle judge, was losing the thread of his speech, was making blunders. He shook himself, tried to regain his self-control, and got somehow to the end of the sitting, and went home with the painful sense that his judicial labours could not as of old hide from him what he wanted to hide; that he could not by means of his official work escape from It. And the worst of it was that It drew him to itself not for him to do anything in particular, but simply for him to look at It straight in the face, to look at It and, doing nothing, suffer unspeakably.

And to save himself from this, Ivan Ilyitch sought amusements, other screens, and these screens he found, and for a little while they did seem to save him; but soon again they were not so much broken down as let the light through, as though It pierced through everything, and there was nothing that could shut It off.

Sometimes during those days he would go into the drawing-room he had furnished, that drawing-room where he had fallen, for which—how bitterly ludicrous it was for him to think of it!—for the decoration of which he had sacrificed his life, for he knew that it was that bruise that had started his illness. He went in and saw that the polished table had been scratched by something. He looked for the cause, and found it in the bronze clasps of the album, which had been twisted on one side. He took up the album, a costly one, which he had himself arranged with loving care, and was vexed at the carelessness of his daughter and her friends. Here a page was torn, here the photographs had been shifted out of their places. He carefully put it to rights again and bent the clasp back.

Then the idea occurred to him to move all this établissement of the albums to another corner where the flowers stood. He called the footman; or his daughter or his wife came to help him. They did not agree with him, contradicted him; he argued, got angry. But all that was very well, since he did not think of It; It was not in sight.

But then his wife would say, as he moved something himself, ‘Do let the servants do it, you’ll hurt yourself again,’ and all at once It peeped through the screen; he caught a glimpse of It. He caught a glimpse of It, but still he hoped It would hide itself. Involuntarily though, he kept watch on his side; there it is just the same still, aching still, and now he cannot forget it, and It is staring openly at him from behind the flowers. What’s the use of it all?

‘And it’s the fact that here, at that curtain, as if it had been storming a fort, I lost my life. Is it possible? How awful and how silly! It cannot be! It cannot be, and it is.’

He went into his own room, lay down, and was again alone with It. Face to face with It, and nothing to be done with It. Nothing but to look at It and shiver.

VII

How it came to pass during the third month of Ivan Ilyitch’s illness, it would be impossible to say, for it happened little by little, imperceptibly, but it had come to pass that his wife and his daughter and his son and their servants and their acquaintances, and the doctors, and, most of all, he himself—all were aware that all interest in him for other people consisted now in the question how soon he would leave his place empty, free the living from the constraint of his presence, and be set free himself from his sufferings.

He slept less and less; they gave him opium, and began to inject morphine. But this did not relieve him. The dull pain he experienced in the half-asleep condition at first only relieved him as a change, but then it became as bad, or even more agonising,

than the open pain. He had special things to eat prepared for him according to the doctors' prescriptions; but these dishes became more and more distasteful, more and more revolting to him.

Special arrangements, too, had to be made for his other physical needs, and this was a continual misery to him. Misery from the uncleanliness, the unseemliness, and the stench, from the feeling of another person having to assist in it.

But just from this most unpleasant side of his illness there came comfort to Ivan Ilyitch. There always came into his room on these occasions to clear up for him the peasant who waited at table, Gerasim.

Gerasim was a clean, fresh, young peasant, who had grown stout and hearty on the good fare in town. Always cheerful and bright. At first the sight of this lad, always cleanly dressed in the Russian style, engaged in this revolting task, embarrassed Ivan Ilyitch.

One day, getting up from the night-stool, too weak to replace his clothes, he dropped on to a soft low chair and looked with horror at his bare, powerless thighs, with the muscles so sharply standing out on them.

Then there came in with light, strong steps Gerasim, in his thick boots, diffusing a pleasant smell of tar from his boots, and bringing in the freshness of the winter air. Wearing a clean hempen apron, and a clean cotton shirt, with his sleeves tucked up on his strong, bare young arms, without looking at Ivan Ilyitch, obviously trying to check the radiant happiness in his face so as not to hurt the sick man, he went up to the night-stool.

'Gerasim,' said Ivan Ilyitch faintly.

Gerasim started, clearly afraid that he had done something amiss, and with a rapid movement turned towards the sick man his fresh, good-natured, simple young face, just beginning to be downy with the first growth of beard.

'Yes, your honour.'

‘I’m afraid this is very disagreeable for you. You must excuse me. I can’t help it.’

‘Why, upon my word, sir!’ And Gerasim’s eyes beamed, and he showed his white young teeth in a smile. ‘What’s a little trouble? It’s a case of illness with you, sir.’

And with his deft, strong arms he performed his habitual task, and went out, stepping lightly. And five minutes later, treading just as lightly, he came back.

Ivan Ilyitch was still sitting in the same way in the armchair.

‘Gerasim,’ he said, when the latter had replaced the night-stool all sweet and clean, ‘please help me; come here.’ Gerasim went up to him. ‘Lift me up. It’s difficult for me alone, and I’ve sent Dmitry away.’

Gerasim went up to him; as lightly as he stepped he put his strong arms round him, deftly and gently lifted and supported him, with the other hand pulled up his trousers, and would have set him down again. But Ivan Ilyitch asked him to carry him to the sofa. Gerasim, without effort, carefully not squeezing him, led him, almost carrying him, to the sofa, and settled him there.

‘Thank you; how neatly and well ... you do everything.’

Gerasim smiled again, and would have gone away. But Ivan Ilyitch felt his presence such a comfort that he was reluctant to let him go.

‘Oh, move that chair near me, please. No, that one, under my legs. I feel easier when my legs are higher.’

Gerasim picked up the chair, and without letting it knock, set it gently down on the ground just at the right place, and lifted Ivan Ilyitch’s legs on to it. It seemed to Ivan Ilyitch that he was easier just at the moment when Gerasim lifted his legs higher.

‘I’m better when my legs are higher,’ said Ivan Ilyitch. ‘Put that cushion under me.’

Gerasim did so. Again he lifted his legs to put the cushion under them. Again it seemed to Ivan Ilyitch that he was easier at that moment when Gerasim held his legs raised. When he laid them down again, he felt worse.

‘Gerasim,’ he said to him, ‘are you busy just now?’

‘Not at all, sir,’ said Gerasim, who had learned among the town-bred servants how to speak to gentlefolks.

‘What have you left to do?’

‘Why, what have I to do? I’ve done everything, there’s only the wood to chop for to-morrow.’

‘Then hold my legs up like that—can you?’

‘To be sure, I can.’ Gerasim lifted the legs up. And it seemed to Ivan Ilyitch that in that position he did not feel the pain at all.

‘But how about the wood?’

‘Don’t you trouble about that, sir. We shall have time enough.’

Ivan Ilyitch made Gerasim sit and hold his legs, and began to talk to him. And, strange to say, he fancied he felt better while Gerasim had hold of his legs.

From that time forward Ivan Ilyitch would sometimes call Gerasim, and get him to hold his legs on his shoulders, and he liked talking with him. Gerasim did this easily, readily, simply, and with a good-nature that touched Ivan Ilyitch. Health, strength, and heartiness in all other people were offensive to Ivan Ilyitch; but the strength and heartiness of Gerasim did not mortify him, but soothed him.

Ivan Ilyitch’s great misery was due to the deception that for some reason or other every one kept up with him—that he was simply ill, and not dying, and that he need only keep quiet and follow the doctor’s orders, and then some great change for the better would be the result. He knew that whatever they might do, there would be no result except more agonising sufferings and death. And he was made miserable by this lie, made miserable at their refusing to acknowledge what they all knew and he knew, by their persisting in lying over him about his awful position, and in forcing him too to take part in this lie. Lying, lying, this lying carried on over him on the eve

of his death, and destined to bring that terrible, solemn act of his death down to the level of all their visits, curtains, sturgeons for dinner ... was a horrible agony for Ivan Ilyitch. And, strange to say, many times when they had been going through the regular performance over him, he had been within a hair's-breadth of screaming at them: 'Cease your lying! You know, and I know, that I'm dying; so do, at least, give over lying!' But he had never had the spirit to do this. The terrible, awful act of his dying was, he saw, by all those about him, brought down to the level of a casual, unpleasant, and to some extent indecorous, incident (somewhat as they would behave with a person who should enter a drawing-room smelling unpleasant). It was brought down to this level by that very decorum to which he had been enslaved all his life. He saw that no one felt for him, because no one would even grasp his position. Gerasim was the only person who recognised the position, and felt sorry for him. And that was why Ivan Ilyitch was only at ease with Gerasim. He felt comforted when Gerasim sometimes supported his legs for whole nights at a stretch, and would not go away to bed, saying, 'Don't you worry yourself, Ivan Ilyitch, I'll get sleep enough yet,' or when suddenly dropping into the familiar peasant forms of speech, he added: 'If thou weren't sick, but as 'tis, 'twould be strange if I didn't wait on thee.' Gerasim alone did not lie; everything showed clearly that he alone understood what it meant, and saw no necessity to disguise it, and simply felt sorry for his sick, wasting master. He even said this once straight out, when Ivan Ilyitch was sending him away.

'We shall all die. So what's a little trouble?' he said, meaning by this to express that he did not complain of the trouble just because he was taking this trouble for a dying man, and he hoped that for him too some one would be willing to take the same trouble when his time came.

Apart from this deception, or in consequence of it, what made the greatest misery for Ivan Ilyitch was that no one felt for him as he would have liked them to feel for him. At certain moments, after prolonged suffering, Ivan Ilyitch, ashamed as he would

have been to own it, longed more than anything for some one to feel sorry for him, as for a sick child. He longed to be petted, kissed, and wept over, as children are petted and comforted. He knew that he was an important member of the law-courts, that he had a beard turning grey, and that therefore it was impossible. But still he longed for it. And in his relations with Gerasim there was something approaching to that. And that was why being with Gerasim was a comfort to him. Ivan Ilyitch longs to weep, longs to be petted and wept over, and then there comes in a colleague, Shebek; and instead of weeping and being petted, Ivan Ilyitch puts on his serious, severe, earnest face, and from mere inertia gives his views on the effect of the last decision in the Court of Appeal, and obstinately insists upon them. This falsity around him and within him did more than anything to poison Ivan Ilyitch's last days.

VIII

It was morning. All that made it morning for Ivan Ilyitch was that Gerasim had gone away, and Pyotr the footman had come in; he had put out the candles, opened one of the curtains, and begun surreptitiously setting the room to rights. Whether it were morning or evening, Friday or Sunday, it all made no difference; it was always just the same thing. Gnawing, agonising pain never ceasing for an instant; the hopeless sense of life always ebbing away, but still not yet gone; always swooping down on him that fearful, hated death, which was the only reality, and always the same falsity. What were days, or weeks, or hours of the day to him?

'Will you have tea, sir?'

'He wants things done in their regular order. In the morning the family should have tea,' he thought, and only said—

'No.'

'Would you care to move on to the sofa?'

'He wants to make the room tidy, and I'm in his way. I'm uncleanness, disorder,' he

thought, and only said—

‘No, leave me alone.’

The servant still moved busily about his work. Ivan Ilyitch stretched out his hand. Pyotr went up to offer his services.

‘What can I get you?’

‘My watch.’

Pyotr got out the watch, which lay just under his hand, and gave it him.

‘Half-past eight. Are they up?’

‘Not yet, sir. Vladimir Ivanovitch’ (that was his son) ‘has gone to the high school, and Praskovya Fyodorovna gave orders that she was to be waked if you asked for her. Shall I send word?’

‘No, no need. Should I try some tea?’ he thought.

‘Yes, tea ... bring it.’

Pyotr was on his way out. Ivan Ilyitch felt frightened of being left alone. ‘How keep him? Oh, the medicine. Pyotr, give me my medicine. Oh well, may be, medicine may still be some good.’ He took the spoon, drank it. ‘No, it does no good. It’s all rubbish, deception,’ he decided, as soon as he tasted the familiar, mawkish, hopeless taste. ‘No, I can’t believe it now. But the pain, why this pain; if it would only cease for a minute.’ And he groaned. Pyotr turned round. ‘No, go on. Bring the tea.’

Pyotr went away. Ivan Ilyitch, left alone, moaned, not so much from the pain, awful as it was, as from misery. Always the same thing again and again, all these endless days and nights. If it would only be quicker. Quicker to what? Death, darkness. No, no. Anything better than death!

When Pyotr came in with the tea on a tray, Ivan Ilyitch stared for some time absent-mindedly at him, not grasping who he was and what he wanted. Pyotr was disconcerted by this stare. And when he showed he was disconcerted, Ivan Ilyitch

came to himself.

‘Oh yes,’ he said, ‘tea, good, set it down. Only help me to wash and put on a clean shirt.’

And Ivan Ilyitch began his washing. He washed his hands slowly, and then his face, cleaned his teeth, combed his hair, and looked in the looking-glass. He felt frightened at what he saw, especially at the way his hair clung limply to his pale forehead. When his shirt was being changed, he knew he would be still more terrified if he glanced at his body, and he avoided looking at himself. But at last it was all over. He put on his dressing-gown, covered himself with a rug, and sat in the armchair to drink his tea. For one moment he felt refreshed; but as soon as he began to drink the tea, again there was the same taste, the same pain. He forced himself to finish it, and lay down, stretching out his legs. He lay down and dismissed Pyotr.

Always the same. A gleam of hope flashes for a moment, then again the sea of despair roars about him again, and always pain, always pain, always heartache, and always the same thing. Alone it is awfully dreary; he longs to call some one, but he knows beforehand that with others present it will be worse. ‘Morphine again—only to forget again. I’ll tell him, the doctor, that he must think of something else. It can’t go on; it can’t go on like this.’

One hour, two hours pass like this. Then there is a ring at the front door. The doctor, perhaps. Yes, it is the doctor, fresh, hearty, fat, and cheerful, wearing that expression that seems to say, ‘You there are in a panic about something, but we’ll soon set things right for you.’ The doctor is aware that this expression is hardly fitting here, but he has put it on once and for all, and can’t take it off, like a man who has put on a frockcoat to pay a round of calls.

In a hearty, reassuring manner the doctor rubs his hands.

‘I’m cold. It’s a sharp frost. Just let me warm myself,’ he says with an expression, as though it’s only a matter of waiting a little till he’s warm, and as soon as he’s warm

he'll set everything to rights.

'Well, now, how are you?'

Ivan Ilyitch feels that the doctor would like to say, 'How's the little trouble?' but that he feels that he can't talk like that, and says, 'How did you pass the night?'

Ivan Ilyitch looks at the doctor with an expression that asks—

'Is it possible you're never ashamed of lying?'

But the doctor does not care to understand this look.

And Ivan Ilyitch says—

'It's always just as awful. The pain never leaves me, never ceases. If only there were something!'

'Ah, you're all like that, all sick people say that. Come, now I do believe I'm thawed; even Praskovya Fyodorovna, who's so particular, could find no fault with my temperature. Well, now I can say good morning.' And the doctor shakes hands.

And dropping his former levity, the doctor, with a serious face, proceeds to examine the patient, feeling his pulse, to take his temperature, and then the tappings and soundings begin.

Ivan Ilyitch knows positively and indubitably that it's all nonsense and empty deception; but when the doctor, kneeling down, stretches over him, putting his ear first higher, then lower, and goes through various gymnastic evolutions over him with a serious face, Ivan Ilyitch is affected by this, as he used sometimes to be affected by the speeches of the lawyers in court, though he was perfectly well aware that they were telling lies all the while and why they were telling lies.

The doctor, kneeling on the sofa, was still sounding him, when there was the rustle of Praskovya Fyodorovna's silk dress in the doorway, and she was heard scolding Pyotr for not having let her know that the doctor had come.

She comes in, kisses her husband, and at once begins to explain that she has been up

a long while, and that it was only through a misunderstanding that she was not there when the doctor came.

Ivan Ilyitch looks at her, scans her all over, and sets down against her whiteness and plumpness, and the cleanness of her hands and neck, and the glossiness of her hair, and the gleam full of life in her eyes. With all the force of his soul he hates her. And when she touches him it makes him suffer from the thrill of hatred he feels for her.

Her attitude to him and his illness is still the same. Just as the doctor had taken up a certain line with the patient which he was not now able to drop, so she too had taken up a line with him—that he was not doing something he ought to do, and was himself to blame, and she was lovingly reproaching him for his neglect, and she could not now get out of this attitude.

‘Why, you know, he won’t listen to me; he doesn’t take his medicine at the right times. And what’s worse still, he insists on lying in a position that surely must be bad for him—with his legs in the air.’

She described how he made Gerasim hold his legs up.

The doctor smiled with kindly condescension that said, ‘Oh well, it can’t be helped, these sick people do take up such foolish fancies; but we must forgive them.’

When the examination was over, the doctor looked at his watch, and then Praskovya Fyodorovna informed Ivan Ilyitch that it must of course be as he liked, but she had sent to-day for a celebrated doctor, and that he would examine him, and have a consultation with Mihail Danilovitch (that was the name of their regular doctor).

‘Don’t oppose it now, please. This I’m doing entirely for my own sake,’ she said ironically, meaning it to be understood that she was doing it all for his sake, and was only saying this to give him no right to refuse her request. He lay silent, knitting his brows. He felt that he was hemmed in by such a tangle of falsity that it was hard to disentangle anything from it.

Everything she did for him was entirely for her own sake, and she told him she was

doing for her own sake what she actually was doing for her own sake as something so incredible that he would take it as meaning the opposite.

At half-past eleven the celebrated doctor came. Again came the sounding, and then grave conversation in his presence and in the other room about the kidney and the appendix, and questions and answers, with such an air of significance, that again, instead of the real question of life and death, which was now the only one that confronted him, the question that came uppermost was of the kidney and the appendix, which were doing something not as they ought to do, and were for that reason being attacked by Mihail Danilovitch and the celebrated doctor, and forced to mend their ways.

The celebrated doctor took leave of him with a serious, but not a hopeless face. And to the timid question that Ivan Ilyitch addressed to him while he lifted his eyes, shining with terror and hope, up towards him, Was there a chance of recovery? he answered that he could not answer for it, but that there was a chance. The look of hope with which Ivan Ilyitch watched the doctor out was so piteous that, seeing it, Praskovya Fyodorovna positively burst into tears, as she went out of the door to hand the celebrated doctor his fee in the next room.

The gleam of hope kindled by the doctor’s assurance did not last long. Again the same room, the same pictures, the curtains, the wall-paper, the medicine-bottles, and ever the same, his aching suffering body. And Ivan Ilyitch began to moan; they gave him injections, and he sank into oblivion. When he waked up it was getting dark; they brought him his dinner. He forced himself to eat some broth; and again everything the same, and again the coming night.

After dinner at seven o’clock, Praskovya Fyodorovna came into his room, dressed as though to go to a soirée with her full bosom laced in tight, and traces of powder on her face. She had in the morning mentioned to him that they were going to the theatre. Sarah Bernhardt was visiting the town, and they had a box, which he had

insisted on their taking. By now he had forgotten about it, and her smart attire was an offence to him. But he concealed this feeling when he recollected that he had himself insisted on their taking a box and going, because it was an æsthetic pleasure, beneficial and instructive for the children.

Praskovya Fyodorovna came in satisfied with herself, but yet with something of a guilty air. She sat down, asked how he was, as he saw, simply for the sake of asking, and not for the sake of learning anything, knowing indeed that there was nothing to learn, and began telling him how absolutely necessary it was; how she would not have gone for anything, but the box had been taken, and Ellen, their daughter, and Petrishtchev (the examining lawyer, the daughter's suitor) were going, and that it was out of the question to let them go alone. But that she would have liked much better to stay with him. If only he would be sure to follow the doctor's prescription while she was away.

'Oh, and Fyodor Dmitryevitch' (the suitor) 'would like to come in. May he? And Liza?'

'Yes, let them come in.'

The daughter came in, in full dress, her fresh young body bare, while his body made him suffer so. But she made a show of it; she was strong, healthy, obviously in love, and impatient of the illness, suffering, and death that hindered her happiness.

Fyodor Dmitryevitch came in too in evening dress, his hair curled à la Capoul, with his long sinewy neck tightly fenced round by a white collar, with his vast expanse of white chest and strong thighs displayed in narrow black trousers, with one white glove in his hand and a crush opera hat.

Behind him crept in unnoticed the little high school boy in his new uniform, poor fellow, in gloves, and with that awful blue ring under his eyes that Ivan Ilyitch knew the meaning of.

He always felt sorry for his son. And pitiable indeed was his scared face of

sympathetic suffering. Except Gerasim, Ivan Ilyitch fancied that Volodya was the only one that understood and was sorry.

They all sat down; again they asked how he was. A silence followed. Liza asked her mother about the opera-glass. An altercation ensued between the mother and daughter as to who had taken it, and where it had been put. It turned into an unpleasant squabble.

Fyodor Dmitryevitch asked Ivan Ilyitch whether he had seen Sarah Bernhardt? Ivan Ilyitch could not at first catch the question that was asked him, but then he said, ‘No, have you seen her before?’

‘Yes, in Adrienne Lecouvreur.’

Praskovya Fyodorovna observed that she was particularly good in that part. The daughter made some reply. A conversation sprang up about the art and naturalness of her acting, that conversation that is continually repeated and always the same.

In the middle of the conversation Fyodor Dmitryevitch glanced at Ivan Ilyitch and relapsed into silence. The others looked at him and became mute too. Ivan Ilyitch was staring with glittering eyes straight before him, obviously furious with them. This had to be set right, but it could not anyhow be set right. This silence had somehow to be broken. No one would venture on breaking it, and all began to feel alarmed that the decorous deception was somehow breaking down, and the facts would be exposed to all. Liza was the first to pluck up courage. She broke the silence. She tried to cover up what they were all feeling, but inadvertently she gave it utterance.

‘If we are going, though, it’s time to start,’ she said, glancing at her watch, a gift from her father; and with a scarcely perceptible meaning smile to the young man, referring to something only known to themselves, she got up with a rustle of her skirts.

They all got up, said good-bye, and went away. When they were gone, Ivan Ilyitch

fancied he was easier; there was no falsity—that had gone away with them, but the pain remained. That continual pain, that continual terror, made nothing harder, nothing easier. It was always worse.

Again came minute after minute, hour after hour, still the same and still no end, and ever more terrible the inevitable end.

‘Yes, send Gerasim,’ he said in answer to Pyotr’s question.

IX

Late at night his wife came back. She came in on tiptoe, but he heard her, opened his eyes, and made haste to close them again. She wanted to send away Gerasim and sit up with him herself instead. He opened his eyes and said, ‘No, go away.’

‘Are you in great pain?’

‘Always the same.’

‘Take some opium.’

He agreed, and drank it. She went away.

Till three o’clock he slept a miserable sleep. It seemed to him that he and his pain were being thrust somewhere into a narrow, deep, black sack, and they kept pushing him further and further in, and still could not thrust him to the bottom. And this operation was awful to him, and was accompanied with agony. And he was afraid, and yet wanted to fall into it, and struggled and yet tried to get into it. And all of a sudden he slipped and fell and woke up. Gerasim, still the same, is sitting at the foot of the bed half-dozing peacefully, patient. And he is lying with his wasted legs clad in stockings, raised on Gerasim’s shoulders, the same candle burning in the alcove, and the same interminable pain.

‘Go away, Gerasim,’ he whispered.

‘It’s all right, sir. I’ll stay a bit longer.’

‘No, go away.’

He took his legs down, lay sideways on his arm, and he felt very sorry for himself. He only waited till Gerasim had gone away into the next room; he could restrain himself no longer, and cried like a child. He cried at his own helplessness, at his awful loneliness, at the cruelty of people, at the cruelty of God, at the absence of God.

‘Why hast Thou done all this? What brought me to this? Why, why torture me so horribly?’

He did not expect an answer, and wept indeed that there was and could be no answer. The pain grew more acute again, but he did not stir, did not call.

He said to himself, ‘Come, more then; come, strike me! But what for? What have I done to Thee? what for?’

Then he was still, ceased weeping, held his breath, and was all attention; he listened, as it were, not to a voice uttering sounds, but to the voice of his soul, to the current of thoughts that rose up within him.

‘What is it you want?’ was the first clear idea able to be put into words that he grasped.

‘What? Not to suffer, to live,’ he answered.

And again he was utterly plunged into attention so intense that even the pain did not distract him.

‘To live? Live how?’ the voice of his soul was asking.

‘Why, live as I used to live before—happily and pleasantly.’

‘As you used to live before—happily and pleasantly?’ queried the voice. And he began going over in his imagination the best moments of his pleasant life. But, strange to say, all these best moments of his pleasant life seemed now not at all what they had seemed then. All—except the first memories of childhood—there, in his

childhood there had been something really pleasant in which one could have lived if it had come back. But the creature who had this pleasant experience was no more; it was like a memory of some one else.

As soon as he reached the beginning of what had resulted in him as he was now, Ivan Ilyitch, all that had seemed joys to him then now melted away before his eyes and were transformed into something trivial, and often disgusting.

And the further he went from childhood, the nearer to the actual present, the more worthless and uncertain were the joys. It began with life at the school of jurisprudence. Then there had still been something genuinely good; then there had been gaiety; then there had been friendship; then there had been hopes. But in the higher classes these good moments were already becoming rarer. Later on, during the first period of his official life, at the governor's, good moments appeared; but it was all mixed, and less and less of it was good. And further on even less was good, and the further he went the less good there was.

His marriage ... as gratuitous as the disillusion of it and the smell of his wife's breath and the sensuality, the hypocrisy! And that deadly official life, and anxiety about money, and so for one year, and two, and ten, and twenty, and always the same thing. And the further he went, the more deadly it became. 'As though I had been going steadily downhill, imagining that I was going uphill. So it was in fact. In public opinion I was going uphill, and steadily as I got up it life was ebbing away from me.... And now the work's done, there's only to die.'

'But what is this? What for? It cannot be! It cannot be that life has been so senseless, so loathsome? And if it really was so loathsome and senseless, then why die, and die in agony? There's something wrong.'

'Can it be I have not lived as one ought?' suddenly came into his head. 'But how not so, when I've done everything as it should be done?' he said, and at once dismissed this only solution of all the enigma of life and death as something utterly out of the

question.

‘What do you want now? To live? Live how? Live as you live at the courts when the usher booms out: “The judge is coming!...” The judge is coming, the judge is coming,’ he repeated to himself. ‘Here he is, the judge! But I’m not to blame!’ he shrieked in fury. ‘What’s it for?’ And he left off crying, and turning with his face to the wall, fell to pondering always on the same question, ‘What for, why all this horror?’

But however much he pondered, he could not find an answer. And whenever the idea struck him, as it often did, that it all came of his never having lived as he ought, he thought of all the correctness of his life and dismissed this strange idea.

X

Another fortnight had passed. Ivan Ilyitch could not now get up from the sofa. He did not like lying in bed, and lay on the sofa. And lying almost all the time facing the wall, in loneliness he suffered all the inexplicable agonies, and in loneliness pondered always that inexplicable question, What is it? Can it be true that it’s death? And an inner voice answered, ‘Yes, it is true.’ ‘Why these agonies?’ and a voice answered, ‘For no reason.’ Beyond and besides this there was nothing.

From the very beginning of his illness, ever since Ivan Ilyitch first went to the doctor’s, his life had been split up into two contradictory moods, which were continually alternating—one was despair and the anticipation of an uncomprehended and awful death; the other was hope and an absorbed watching over the actual condition of his body. First there was nothing confronting him but a kidney or intestine which had temporarily declined to perform their duties, then there was nothing but unknown awful death, which there was no escaping.

These two moods had alternated from the very beginning of the illness; but the further the illness progressed, the more doubtful and fantastic became the conception

of the kidney, and the more real the sense of approaching death.

He had but to reflect on what he had been three months before and what he was now, to reflect how steadily he had been going downhill, for every possibility of hope to be shattered.

Of late, in the loneliness in which he found himself, lying with his face to the back of the sofa, a loneliness in the middle of a populous town and of his numerous acquaintances and his family, a loneliness than which none more complete could be found anywhere—not at the bottom of the sea, not deep down in the earth;—of late in this fearful loneliness Ivan Ilyitch had lived only in imagination in the past. One by one the pictures of his past rose up before him. It always began from what was nearest in time and went back to the most remote, to childhood, and rested there. If Ivan Ilyitch thought of the stewed prunes that had been offered him for dinner that day, his mind went back to the damp, wrinkled French plum of his childhood, of its peculiar taste and the flow of saliva when the stone was sucked; and along with this memory of a taste there rose up a whole series of memories of that period—his nurse, his brother, his playthings. ‘I mustn’t ... it’s too painful,’ Ivan Ilyitch said to himself, and he brought himself back to the present. The button on the back of the sofa and the creases in the morocco. ‘Morocco’s dear, and doesn’t wear well; there was a quarrel over it. But the morocco was different, and different too the quarrel when we tore father’s portfolio and were punished, and mamma bought us the tarts.’ And again his mind rested on his childhood, and again it was painful, and he tried to drive it away and think of something else.

And again at that point, together with that chain of associations, quite another chain of memories came into his heart, of how his illness had grown up and become more acute. It was the same there, the further back the more life there had been. There had been both more that was good in life and more of life itself. And the two began to melt into one. ‘Just as the pain goes on getting worse and worse, so has my whole

life gone on getting worse and worse,' he thought. One light spot was there at the back, at the beginning of life, and then it kept getting blacker and blacker, and going faster and faster 'In inverse ratio to the square of the distance from death,' thought Ivan Ilyitch. And the image of a stone falling downwards with increasing velocity sank into his soul. Life, a series of increasing sufferings, falls more and more swiftly to the end, the most fearful sufferings. 'I am falling.' He shuddered, shifted himself, would have resisted, but he knew beforehand that he could not resist; and again, with eyes weary with gazing at it, but unable not to gaze at what was before him, he stared at the back of the sofa and waited, waited expecting that fearful fall and shock and dissolution. 'Resistance is impossible,' he said to himself. 'But if one could at least comprehend what it's for? Even that's impossible. It could be explained if one were to say that I hadn't lived as I ought. But that can't be alleged,' he said to himself, thinking of all the regularity, correctness, and propriety of his life. 'That really can't be admitted,' he said to himself, his lips smiling ironically as though some one could see his smile and be deceived by it. 'No explanation! Agony, death.... What for?'

XI

So passed a fortnight. During that fortnight an event occurred that had been desired by Ivan Ilyitch and his wife. Petrishtchev made a formal proposal. This took place in the evening. Next day Praskovya Fyodorovna went in to her husband, revolving in her mind how to inform him of Fyodor Dmitryevitch's proposal, but that night there had been a change for the worse in Ivan Ilyitch. Praskovya Fyodorovna found him on the same sofa, but in a different position. He was lying on his face, groaning, and staring straight before him with a fixed gaze.

She began talking of remedies. He turned his stare on her. She did not finish what she had begun saying; such hatred of her in particular was expressed in that stare.

'For Christ's sake, let me die in peace,' he said.

She would have gone away, but at that moment the daughter came in and went up to say good morning to him. He looked at his daughter just as at his wife, and to her inquiries how he was, he told her drily that they would soon all be rid of him. Both were silent, sat a little while, and went out.

‘How are we to blame?’ said Liza to her mother. ‘As though we had done it! I’m sorry for papa, but why punish us?’

At the usual hour the doctor came. Ivan Ilyitch answered, ‘Yes, no,’ never taking his exasperated stare from him, and towards the end he said, ‘Why, you know that you can do nothing, so let me be.’

‘We can relieve your suffering,’ said the doctor.

‘Even that you can’t do; let me be.’

The doctor went into the drawing-room and told Praskovya Fyodorovna that it was very serious, and that the only resource left them was opium to relieve his sufferings, which must be terrible. The doctor said his physical sufferings were terrible, and that was true; but even more terrible than his physical sufferings were his mental sufferings, and in that lay his chief misery.

His moral sufferings were due to the fact that during that night, as he looked at the sleepy, good-natured, broad-cheeked face of Gerasim, the thought had suddenly come into his head, ‘What if in reality all my life, my conscious life, has been not the right thing?’ The thought struck him that what he had regarded before as an utter impossibility, that he had spent his life not as he ought, might be the truth. It struck him that those scarcely detected impulses of struggle within him against what was considered good by persons of higher position, scarcely detected impulses which he had dismissed, that they might be the real thing, and everything else might be not the right thing. And his official work, and his ordering of his daily life and of his family, and these social and official interests,—all that might be not the right thing. He tried to defend it all to himself. And suddenly he felt all the weakness of what he was

defending. And it was useless to defend it.

‘But if it’s so,’ he said to himself, ‘and I am leaving life with the consciousness that I have lost all that was given me, and there’s no correcting it, then what?’ He lay on his back and began going over his whole life entirely anew. When he saw the footman in the morning, then his wife, then his daughter, then the doctor, every movement they made, every word they uttered, confirmed for him the terrible truth that had been revealed to him in the night. In them he saw himself, saw all in which he had lived, and saw distinctly that it was all not the right thing; it was a horrible, vast deception that concealed both life and death. This consciousness intensified his physical agonies, multiplied them tenfold. He groaned and tossed from side to side and pulled at the covering over him. It seemed to him that it was stifling him and weighing him down. And for that he hated them.

They gave him a big dose of opium; he sank into unconsciousness; but at dinner-time the same thing began again. He drove them all away, and tossed from side to side.

His wife came to him and said, ‘Jean, darling, do this for my sake’ (for my sake?). ‘It can’t do harm, and it often does good. Why, it’s nothing. And often in health people——’

He opened his eyes wide.

‘What? Take the sacrament? What for? No. Besides....’

She began to cry.

‘Yes, my dear? I’ll send for our priest, he’s so nice.’

‘All right, very well,’ he said.

When the priest came and confessed him he was softened, felt as it were a relief from his doubts, and consequently from his sufferings, and there came a moment of hope. He began once more thinking of the intestinal appendix and the possibility of

curing it. He took the sacrament with tears in his eyes.

When they laid him down again after the sacrament for a minute, he felt comfortable, and again the hope of life sprang up. He began to think about the operation which had been suggested to him. ‘To live, I want to live,’ he said to himself. His wife came in to congratulate him; she uttered the customary words and added—

‘It’s quite true, isn’t it, that you’re better?’

Without looking at her, he said, ‘Yes.’

Her dress, her figure, the expression of her face, the tone of her voice,—all told him the same: ‘Not the right thing. All that in which you lived and are living is lying, deceit, hiding life and death away from you.’ And as soon as he had formed that thought, hatred sprang up in him, and with that hatred agonising physical sufferings, and with these sufferings the sense of inevitable, approaching ruin. Something new was happening; there were screwing and shooting pains, and a tightness in his breathing.

The expression of his face as he uttered that ‘Yes’ was terrible. After uttering that ‘Yes,’ looking her straight in the face, he turned on to his face, with a rapidity extraordinary in his weakness, and shrieked—

‘Go away, go away, let me be!’

XII

From that moment there began the scream that never ceased for three days, and was so awful that through two closed doors one could not hear it without horror. At the moment when he answered his wife he grasped that he had fallen, that there was no return, that the end had come, quite the end, while doubt was still as unsolved, still remained doubt.

‘Oo! Oo—o! Oo!’ he screamed in varying intonations.

He had begun screaming, ‘I don’t want to!’ and so had gone on screaming on the same vowel sound—oo!

All those three days, during which time did not exist for him, he was struggling in that black sack into which he was being thrust by an unseen resistless force. He struggled as the man condemned to death struggles in the hands of the executioner, knowing that he cannot save himself. And every moment he felt that in spite of all his efforts to struggle against it, he was getting nearer and nearer to what terrified him. He felt that his agony was due both to his being thrust into this black hole and still more to his not being able to get right into it. What hindered him from getting into it was the claim that his life had been good. That justification of his life held him fast and would not let him get forward, and it caused him more agony than all.

All at once some force struck him in the chest, in the side, and stifled his breathing more than ever; he rolled forward into the hole, and there at the end there was some sort of light. It had happened with him, as it had sometimes happened to him in a railway carriage, when he had thought he was going forward while he was going back, and all of a sudden recognised his real direction.

‘Yes, it has all been not the right thing,’ he said to himself, ‘but that’s no matter.’ He could, he could do the right thing. ‘What is the right thing?’ he asked himself, and suddenly he became quiet.

This was at the end of the third day, two hours before his death. At that very moment the schoolboy had stealthily crept into his father’s room and gone up to his bedside. The dying man was screaming and waving his arms. His hand fell on the schoolboy’s head. The boy snatched it, pressed it to his lips, and burst into tears.

At that very moment Ivan Ilyitch had rolled into the hole, and caught sight of the light, and it was revealed to him that his life had not been what it ought to have been, but that that could still be set right. He asked himself, ‘What is the right thing?’—and became quiet, listening. Then he felt some one was kissing his hand.

He opened his eyes and glanced at his son. He felt sorry for him. His wife went up to him. He glanced at her. She was gazing at him with open mouth, the tears unwiped streaming over her nose and cheeks, a look of despair on her face. He felt sorry for her.

‘Yes, I’m making them miserable,’ he thought. ‘They’re sorry, but it will be better for them when I die.’ He would have said this, but had not the strength to utter it. ‘Besides, why speak, I must act,’ he thought. With a glance to his wife he pointed to his son and said—

‘Take away ... sorry for him.... And you too....’ He tried to say ‘forgive,’ but said ‘forgo’ ... and too weak to correct himself, shook his hand, knowing that He would understand whose understanding mattered.

And all at once it became clear to him that what had tortured him and would not leave him was suddenly dropping away all at once on both sides and on ten sides and on all sides. He was sorry for them, must act so that they might not suffer. Set them free and be free himself of those agonies. ‘How right and how simple!’ he thought. ‘And the pain?’ he asked himself. ‘Where’s it gone? Eh, where are you, pain?’

He began to watch for it.

‘Yes, here it is. Well what of it, let the pain be.’

‘And death. Where is it?’

He looked for his old accustomed terror of death, and did not find it. ‘Where is it? What death?’ There was no terror, because death was not either.

In the place of death there was light.

‘So this is it!’ he suddenly exclaimed aloud.

‘What joy!’

To him all this passed in a single instant, and the meaning of that instant suffered no

change after. For those present his agony lasted another two hours. There was a rattle in his throat, a twitching in his wasted body. Then the rattle and the gasping came at longer and longer intervals.

‘It is over!’ some one said over him.

He caught those words and repeated them in his soul.

‘Death is over,’ he said to himself. ‘It’s no more.’

He drew in a breath, stopped midway in the breath, stretched and died.

March 25, 1886.

FAMILY HAPPINESS

FAMILY HAPPINESS PART I

I

WE were in mourning for my mother, who had died in the autumn, and we spent the whole winter in the country—Katya, Sonya, and I.

Katya was an old friend of the family, the governess who had brought us up, and whom I had known and loved ever since I had known anything. Sonya was my younger sister. We passed a gloomy and sorrowful winter in our old house at Pokrovskoe. The weather was cold and windy, so that the snowdrifts were heaped up higher than our windows; the windows were almost always frozen over and dimmed; and almost the whole winter we neither walked nor drove out anywhere. It was not often that any one came to see us, and the few visitors who did come did not add to the gaiety and cheerfulness in our house. They all had mournful faces; they all talked in subdued tones as though afraid of waking some one; never laughed, but sighed, and often shed tears, when they looked at me, and still more at little Sonya,

in her black frock. There seemed still a feeling of death in the house; the gloom and horror of death were still in the air. Mamma's room was kept shut up, and a feeling of awe came upon me, and something impelled me to peep into that cold empty room when I passed it on my way up to bed.

I was at that time seventeen; and the very year of her death mamma had intended moving to town for me to come out. The loss of my mother was a great grief to me; but I must confess that behind this grief there was a feeling too that I was young and pretty, as every one told me, and that here I was wasting a second winter in solitude in the country. Before the end of the winter this sense of depression and loneliness, of boredom, in fact, became so intense that I hardly left my room, did not open the piano, and did not look at a book. When Katya tried to persuade me to take up either occupation, I answered, 'I don't care to, I can't,' while in my soul something said to me, 'What for?' What reason was there to do anything while my best time was being lost, wasted like this? What for? And to the question 'What for?' there was no answer but tears.

They told me I was growing thinner and losing my looks in those days, but even that did not interest me. What did it matter? For whom?... It seemed to me that all my life was to be passed like this in this remote solitude and helpless dreariness, from which by myself, all alone, I had not the force, nor even the will, to escape. Towards the end of the winter Katya began to be uneasy about me, and made up her mind that come what might she would take me abroad. But to do this we must have money, and we hardly knew what was left us after my mother's death, and every day we were expecting her executor, who was to come and go into our affairs.

In March the executor came.

'Well, thank God!' Katya said to me one day as I wandered aimlessly about like a shadow, with nothing to do, no thought, no wish in my mind. 'Sergey Mihalovitch has come home again; he has sent to inquire after us, and is coming to dinner. You

must pull yourself together, my little Masha,' she added, 'or what will he think of you? He was so fond of you all.'

Sergey Mihalovitch was a near neighbour of ours, and had been a friend of my father's, though he was many years younger. Apart from the effect of his arrival on our plans, and the possibility through it of our getting away from the country, I had been used from a child to love and respect him; and Katya in advising me to rouse myself had guessed rightly that of all my acquaintances I should most dislike to appear to disadvantage before Sergey Mihalovitch. Like every one in the house, from Katya and Sonya, his godchild, down to the humblest coachman, I liked him from habit; but apart from that, he had a peculiar importance in my eyes from a word my mother had once dropped in my presence. She had said that he was the sort of husband she would be glad of for me. At the time this had seemed to me amazing and positively unpleasant; the hero of my dreams was utterly different. My hero was delicate, slender, pale, and melancholy. Sergey Mihalovitch was a man no longer youthful, tall, squarely built, and, as I fancied, always cheerful. But in spite of that, these words of mamma's had made a deep impression on my imagination; and even six years before, when I was only eleven, and he used to address me by my pet name and play with me, and used to call me 'little-girl-violet,' I sometimes wondered, not without dismay, what I should do if he were suddenly to want to marry me.

Before dinner, to which Katya added a cream tart and spinach sauce, Sergey Mihalovitch arrived. From the window I saw how he drove up in a little sledge; but as soon as he drove round the corner, I hastened to the drawing-room and tried to pretend that I was not in the least expecting him. But hearing the tramp of feet in the hall, his loud voice and Katya's footsteps, I could not restrain myself, and went out to meet him. He was talking loudly, holding Katya's hand and smiling. Catching sight of me, he stopped short, and for a little while gazed at me, without greeting me. I was disconcerted, and I felt that I was blushing.

‘Ah, is it really you?’ he said in his unhesitating direct manner, gesticulating with his hands and coming up to me. ‘Can any one change so? How you have grown up! So this is the little violet! You’ve become quite a rose!’

He took my hand in his big one and squeezed it so warmly, so heartily, that it almost hurt. I expected he would kiss my hand, and was bending towards him, but he pressed my hand once more, and looked me straight in the face with his resolute, good-humoured eyes.

It was six years since I had seen him. He was very much altered; he looked older, darker, and had grown whiskers, which did not suit him at all. But he had just the same direct manner, the same open honest face with large features, the same shrewd, bright eyes and friendly, as it were, childlike smile.

In five minutes he was no longer a visitor; he became like one of the family to all of us, even to the servants, who, as could be seen by their eagerness to please him, were delighted at his arrival. He behaved quite differently from the other neighbours who had called on us since my mother’s death, and had thought it necessary to sit in silence or shed tears while they were with us. He was, on the contrary, very talkative and cheerful, and did not say a word about my mother, so that at first such callousness struck me as strange, and even unseemly, in so intimate a friend of the family. But afterwards I felt that it was not callousness, but sincerity, and was grateful for it. In the evening Katya sat down to pour out tea in the old place in the drawing-room, just as she used to do in mamma’s lifetime. Sonya and I sat down near her. Old Grigory brought him a pipe he had sought out, that had been papa’s, and he fell to walking up and down the room just as in old days.

‘What terrible changes there have been in this house when one thinks of it!’ he said, stopping short.

‘Yes,’ said Katya with a sigh, and, putting the lid on the samovar, she looked at him, already on the point of tears.

‘You remember your father, I suppose?’ he said, turning to me.

‘A little,’ I answered.

‘And how happy you would have been with him now!’ he said softly, and dreamily, gazing at my head above my eyes. ‘I was very fond of your father,’ he added still more softly, and it seemed to me that his eyes were brighter.

‘And now God has taken her too!’ said Katya, and immediately she put the dinner napkin down on the teapot, took out her handkerchief, and began to cry.

‘Yes, there have been terrible changes in this house,’ he repeated, turning away. ‘Sonya, show me your playthings,’ he added a few instants later, and he went into the parlour. With eyes full of tears I looked at Katya when he had gone out.

‘He is such a good friend!’ she said. And certainly I felt a sort of warmth and comfort from the sympathy of this goodhearted man from the outside world.

From the drawing-room we could hear Sonya’s shrieks and his romping games with her. I sent him some tea into the parlour, and we could hear him sitting down to the piano and striking the keys with Sonya’s little hands.

‘Marya Alexandrovna!’ I heard him call: ‘come here and play me something.’

I liked his addressing me so simply in this tone of affectionate peremptoriness; I got up and went to him.

‘Here, play this,’ he said, opening a volume of Beethoven at the adagio of the sonata quasi una fantasia. ‘Let me see how you play,’ he added, and walked away with his glass of tea to a corner of the parlour.

I somehow felt it impossible with him to refuse and make excuses for playing badly; I seated myself obediently at the piano, and began to play as best I could, though I was afraid of his criticism, knowing that he understood music and loved it. The adagio was in harmony with that feeling of reminiscence that had been called up by the conversation at tea, and I played it, I think, decently. But the scherzo he would

not let me play.

‘No, that you don’t play well,’ he said, coming up to me, ‘let it be. But the first thing wasn’t bad. You’ve a notion of music, I see.’ This measured praise so delighted me that I positively blushed. It was so new and agreeable to me that he, the friend and equal of my father, was talking to me by ourselves seriously, and not treating me as a child, as in old days. Katya went upstairs to put Sonya to bed, and we remained alone together in the parlour.

He talked to me of my father, told me how he had come to know him, and what good times they had had together while I was still busy with my lessons and my playthings. And in what he told me I saw my father for the first time as a simple, lovable man, such as I had never known him till then.

He questioned me too about my tastes, my reading, my plans, and gave me advice. He was not now for me the light-hearted friend, full of jokes, who used to tease me and make playthings for me, but a serious man, frank and affectionate, for whom I felt an instinctive respect and liking. I was at ease and happy, and yet at the same time I could not help feeling a certain constraint as I talked to him. I was apprehensive over every word I uttered; I had such a longing to deserve, on my own account, the love that was bestowed on me now merely as the daughter of my father.

After putting Sonya to bed, Katya joined us and complained to him of my apathy, of which I had said nothing to him.

‘The most important thing she didn’t tell me,’ he said, smiling and shaking his head at me reproachfully.

‘What was there to tell?’ I said; ‘that’s very dull, and besides it’s passing off.’ It actually did seem to me now that my depression was not merely passing away, but had passed away already, or in fact had never been at all.

‘It’s bad to be unable to stand solitude,’ he said; ‘surely you’re not a young lady.’

‘Of course I’m a young lady,’ I answered, laughing.

‘No, it’s a bad sort of young lady who’s only alive when she’s being admired, and as soon as she’s alone lets herself go altogether and finds no charm in anything—who’s all for show, and nothing for herself.’

‘You’ve a nice opinion of me,’ I said, in order to say something.

‘No,’ he said after a brief pause, ‘it’s not for nothing you’re so like your father; there’s something in you,’ and his kindly, intent eyes again flattered me and put me to joyful confusion.

Only now I noticed in his face, the first impression of which was cheerfulness, that look in the eyes, peculiar to him, at first bright, then growing more and more intent, and rather mournful.

‘You ought not to be and can’t be bored,’ he said. ‘You have music, which you understand, books, and study. You have a whole life before you, for which you can only prepare yourself now so as not to feel regret later. In a year even it will be getting too late.’

He talked to me like a father or an uncle, and I felt that he was continually putting a check on himself so as to keep on my level. I felt both offended at his considering me on a lower level, and pleased that he should think it necessary to try and adapt himself simply on my account.

The rest of the evening he talked about business with Katya.

‘Well, good-bye, dear friends,’ he said, getting up, and coming up to me, he took my hand.

‘When shall we see you again?’ asked Katya.

‘In the spring,’ he answered, still keeping hold of my hand. ‘Now I’m going to Danilovka’ (our other estate). ‘I’ll look into things there and arrange what I can, then I’m going on to Moscow to see to my own business, and in the summer we shall meet again.’

‘Oh, how is it you are staying such a little while?’ I said, with extreme mournfulness; and indeed I had been hoping to see him every day, and I felt suddenly so miserable and afraid that my depression would come back again. This must have been apparent in my eyes and my tone.

‘But you must try and work a little more; don’t give way to depression,’ he said, in a tone, as I thought, too coolly direct, ‘and in the spring I shall put you through an examination,’ he added, letting go my hand and not looking at me.

In the hall where we stood seeing him off he made haste to put on his fur coat, and again his eyes looked past me. ‘He needn’t trouble himself,’ I thought. ‘Does he suppose I’m so pleased at his looking at me? He’s a nice man, very nice, but ... that’s all.’

That evening, however, Katya and I sat up talking a long while, not about him, but of how we would spend the summer, and where and how we would stay for the winter. The terrible question—What for?—did not occur to me. It seemed to me very simple and evident that we must live to be happy, and a great deal of happiness seemed lying before me in the future. It seemed as though our dark old house at Pokrovskoe were suddenly full of life and light.

II

Spring had come. My former depression had completely gone, and was replaced by the dreamy spring melancholy of vague hopes and desires. Though I did not spend my time as I had done at the beginning of the winter, but was busily occupied with Sonya and music and reading, I often went off into the garden and spent long, long hours wandering alone about the garden walks or sitting on a garden seat. God only knows what I was dreaming of, what I was hoping and longing for. Sometimes, especially when there was moonlight, I would sit the whole night long till dawn at my bedroom window. Sometimes with nothing on but my dressing-gown I would slip out into the garden, unnoticed by Katya, and run through the dew as far as the

pond; once I went as far as the open fields, and alone at night made the round of the whole garden.

I find it hard to recall now the dreams that filled my imagination then. Even when I do remember them, I can hardly believe that those were really my dreams, so strange they were and remote from real life.

At the end of May, Sergey Mihalovitch came back, as he had promised, from his travels. The first time he came to see us was in the evening, when we did not at all expect him. We were sitting in the verandah, just going to have tea. The garden was already all in green, and among the overgrown shrubs the nightingales had been building all through St. Peter's fast. The leafy lilac bushes looked as though they had been sprinkled at the top with something white and lilac, where the flowers were just going to come out. The foliage of the birch avenue was all transparent in the setting sun. It was cool and shady in the verandah. There must have been a heavy evening dew on the grass. From the yard behind the garden came the last sounds of the day, the noise of the herd being brought home. The half-witted Nikon, passed along the path before the verandah with a water-barrel, and a cool trickle of water from the watering-hose made dark rings on the loose earth round the stems of the dahlias and the sticks that held them up. On the white cloth set before us on the verandah stood the brilliantly polished samovar boiling, cream, and biscuits and cakes. Katya, like a careful housewife, was rinsing the cups with her plump hands. I was hungry after bathing; and without waiting for the tea to be ready, I was eating some bread heaped with thick, fresh cream. I had on a linen blouse with open sleeves, and had tied a kerchief over my wet hair. Katya was the first to see him from the verandah window.

'Ah, Sergey Mihalovitch!' she cried; 'why, we were only just talking about you.'

I got up, and would have retreated to change my dress, but he came upon me just as I was in the doorway.

‘Come, why stand on ceremony in the country? Where’s the need of being so proper?’ he said, looking at my head in the kerchief and smiling. ‘Why, you don’t mind Grigory, and I’m the same as Grigory to you really.’ But precisely at that moment I fancied he was looking at me not at all as Grigory might have done, and I felt awkward.

‘I’ll be back in a minute,’ I said, moving away.

‘What’s amiss with that?’ he called after me. ‘You look like a peasant-girl.’

‘How queerly he looked at me!’ I thought, as I hurriedly changed my dress upstairs. ‘Well, thank God, he’s come; things will be more lively now.’ After looking at myself in the glass I ran gaily downstairs, and not disguising my haste, I went panting out on to the verandah. He was sitting at the table and telling Katya about our affairs. He glanced at me, smiled, and went on talking. Our affairs were, to judge by his account, going very favourably. Now we had only to spend the summer in the country, and then to go either to Petersburg for Sonya’s education or abroad.

‘Now if only you could come abroad with us,’ said Katya. ‘We shall be utterly lost there by ourselves.’

‘Ah, I should like to go round the world with you!’ he said, half in jest, half in earnest.

‘Well, do then,’ I said; ‘let’s go round the world.’

He smiled and shook his head.

‘What about my mother? and business?’ he said. ‘Well, that’s not the question. Tell me how you’ve been getting on all this time. Not depressed again, surely?’

When I told him that I had been working hard in his absence and had not been dull, and Katya confirmed my words, he praised me, and in words and looks caressed me like a child, as though he had a right to do so. I felt bound to tell him in detail and with peculiar sincerity all that I had done right, and to acknowledge, as though at

confessional, all that he might be displeased at. The evening was so fine that after they had taken away the tea-things we stayed out on the verandah, and the conversation was so interesting to me that I did not notice that gradually all sounds of human life were hushed. The scent of flowers from all round us grew stronger, a thick dew drenched the grass, a nightingale trilled not far off in a lilac bush, and ceased when it heard our voices. The starlit sky seemed sinking over our heads.

I became aware that it was getting dark, because a bat suddenly flew noiselessly under the awning of the verandah and fluttered about my white dress. I shrank back against the wall, and should have liked to scream, but the bat just as swiftly and noiselessly darted out again from under the awnings and disappeared in the dusk of the garden.

‘How I love your Pokrovskoe,’ he said, breaking off from the conversation; ‘I could sit all my life here on the verandah.’

‘Well, do then, sit still,’ said Katya.

‘Sit still, indeed,’ said he; ‘life doesn’t sit still.’

‘How is it you don’t get married?’ said Katya. ‘You would make such a good husband!’

‘Just because I like sitting still,’ and he laughed. ‘No, Katerina Karlovna, marriage is not for you and me. Every one’s long ago given up looking upon me as a man who might marry. And I’ve given it up myself for some time past too, and I’ve felt so comfortable since then really.’

It seemed to me that it was with a sort of unnatural vehemence that he said this.

‘What nonsense; thirty-six years old, and done with life already!’ said Katya.

‘I should think I have done with life!’ he went on; ‘why, all I want is to sit still. But you want something very different for marriage. You should ask her now,’ he added, with a motion of his head towards me. ‘It’s they who’ve to think of getting married,

while you and I will look on and rejoice in them.’

In his tone there was a suppressed melancholy and constraint which did not escape me. He paused for a while; neither I nor Katya said anything.

‘Just imagine,’ he went on, turning round on his chair, ‘if I were all of a sudden to get married by some unhappy chance to a girl of seventeen like Mash—Marya Alexandrovna. That’s an excellent example, I’m very glad it has happened to come up, and it’s the best example possible.’

I laughed, and was unable to comprehend what he was glad of, and what it was that had come up.

‘Come, tell me the truth, with your hand on your heart,’ he said, turning jestingly to me, ‘would it not be misery for you to bind your life up with some one elderly, who had lived his life, whose only wish was to sit still, while God only knows what’s working in you, what you are longing for?’

I felt uncomfortable; I was silent, not knowing what to answer.

‘Oh, it’s not an offer I’m making you!’ he said, laughing; ‘but tell me truly, it’s not of such a husband that you dream when you wander about the garden in the evening, and it would be misery for you, wouldn’t it?’

‘Not misery,’ I began.

‘Not the right thing, though,’ he finished for me.

‘Yes; but of course I may be mistaken.’

But again he interrupted me.

‘There, you see, and she’s perfectly right, and I’m grateful to her for her sincerity, and very glad we have had this conversation! And what’s more, it would be the greatest calamity for me too,’ he added.

‘What a queer fellow you are, you’re not changed a bit!’ said Katya, and she went in from the verandah to order supper.

We were both silent after Katya had gone, and all was still around us. Only the nightingale was flooding all the garden with melody, not now the jerky faltering notes of evening, but the serene, unhurried song of the night. And another nightingale, from the ravine below, for the first time that evening answered him in the distance. The nearer one ceased, seemed listening for a moment, and then still more shrilly, more intensely, poured out drop by drop his melodious trill. And with sovereign calm these voices rang out in their night world, so remote from us. The gardener went by on his way to sleep in the greenhouse; his steps in thick boots echoed retreating along the path. Twice some one uttered a shrill whistle at the bottom of the hill, and all was silence again. Scarcely audibly the leaves rustled, the curtain of the verandah fluttered, and some sweet fragrance hovering in the air was wafted into the verandah and flooded it. I felt awkward at being silent after what had been said, but what to say I did not know. I looked at him. His shining eyes in the dusk looked round at me.

‘It’s good to be alive!’ he said.

For some reason I sighed.

‘Eh?’

‘It’s good to be alive!’ I repeated.

And again we were silent, and again I felt ill at ease. I was haunted by the thought that I had wounded him by agreeing with him that he was elderly, and I wanted to soothe him, but I didn’t know how to do it.

‘I must say good-bye, though,’ he said, getting up, ‘mother expects me back to supper. I’ve hardly seen her to-day.’

‘And I wanted to play you a new sonata,’ I said.

‘Another time,’ he said, coldly I thought. ‘Good-bye.’

It seemed to me now more than ever that I had wounded him, and I felt sorry. Katya

and I went with him as far as the steps, and stood in the courtyard looking down the road along which he had vanished. When the thud of his horse's hoofs had died away, I went round to the verandah, and again I fell to gazing into the garden; and in the dewy darkness, where the night sounds now were still, for a long while yet I saw and heard all that I longed to see and hear.

He came a second time and a third, and the awkwardness arising from the strange conversation that had passed between us had completely disappeared, and was never renewed again. During the whole summer he used to come two or three times a week to see us; and I became so used to him, that when he did not come for some time I felt it strange to be going on with life by myself, and I was angry with him, and considered he was behaving badly in deserting me. He treated me like some favourite young comrade, asked me questions, drew me into frankness on the deepest subjects, gave me advice and encouragement, sometimes scolded me and checked me. But in spite of his continual efforts to put himself on my level, I felt that behind what I understood in him there remained a whole unknown world into which he did not think fit to initiate me, and this somehow more than anything increased my respect for him and attracted me to him. I knew from Katya and from the neighbours that besides his care of his old mother, with whom he lived, besides looking after his property and ours, he had a great deal to do with the public affairs of the provincial nobility, and that he had much vexatious opposition to encounter in it. But what was his attitude to all this, what were his convictions, his plans, his hopes, I could never find out from him. Whenever I turned the conversation on his affairs, he wrinkled his brows in his peculiar way that seemed to say, 'Stop that, please, what's that to do with you?' and changed the subject. At first this used to offend me, but later on I got so used to our always talking only of what concerned me that I thought it quite natural.

What I disliked too at first, though afterwards it pleased me, was his complete indifference and, as it were, contempt for my appearance. Never by a glance or a

word did he hint that he thought me pretty; on the contrary, he wrinkled his brows and laughed when people called me pretty before him. He took a positive pleasure in finding defects in my appearance and teasing me about them. The fashionable dresses and elaborate coiffure in which Katya liked to make me elegant on festive occasions only called forth jeers from him, mortifying kind-hearted Katya, and at first disconcerting me. Katya, who had made up her mind that he thought me attractive, could never make out his not liking to see the girl he admired shown off to the best advantage. I soon saw what he wanted. He was eager to feel sure that I had no frivolous vanity. And as soon as I saw that, there actually was not left in me a trace of vanity in regard to what I wore, how I did my hair, and how I moved. But in place of that there was transparently obvious an affectation of simplicity, just at the moment when I had ceased to be able to be simple. I knew that he loved me; but how, whether as a child or as a woman, I had not as yet asked myself. I prized his love; and feeling that he considered me the best girl in the world, I could not help wishing to keep up this delusion in him. And involuntarily I deceived him. But while deceiving him, I did myself become better. I felt how much better and more dignified it was for me to show off the finer side of my soul than of my body. My hair, my hands, my face, my ways, whatever they might be, bad or good, it seemed to me that he had summed up once for all, and knew so well that I could add nothing—except a desire to deceive—to his estimate by attention to my looks. My soul he did not know, because he loved it, because at this very time it was growing and developing, and there I could deceive him, and I did deceive him. And how safe I felt with him when I clearly perceived this! All my causeless bashfulness, my awkwardness in moving, disappeared completely. I felt that whether he saw me full face, or in profile, sitting or standing, with my hair done up high or hanging low, he knew all of me, and I fancied was satisfied with me as I was. I think that if, contrary to his practice, he had suddenly told me, as others did, that I had a fine face, I should really have been anything but pleased. But, on the other hand, what comfort and

gladness there was in my soul when, after some word I had uttered, he gazed intently at me, and in a voice of emotion, to which he tried to give a jesting tone, said—

'Yes, yes, there's something in you.... You're a splendid girl, that I must tell you.' And what was it for which I received such a reward, filling my heart with pride and gladness? For saying that I felt so for old Grigory's love for his little grandchild, or for being moved to tears by some poem or story I had read, or for preferring Mozart to Schulhoff. And it's marvellous, when I think of it, the extraordinary instinct by which I guessed at that time what was fine and what I ought to like, though in those days I had not really the least notion of what was fine and what was to be liked. The greater number of my old habits and tastes were not to his liking; and he had but by the twitching of an eyebrow, by a glance, to show that he did not like what I was going to say, to make his peculiar grimace of commiseration and faint contempt, and it seemed to me already that I didn't care for what I had liked till then. Sometimes when he had hardly begun to give me some piece of advice, it seemed to me that I knew already what he was saying. He would question me, looking into my eyes, and his eyes drew from me the thought he wanted to find in me. All my ideas at that time, all my feelings were not mine; but his ideas and feelings, which had suddenly become mine, passed into my life and lighted it up. Quite unconsciously I had come to look at everything with different eyes—at Katya, at our servants, and at Sonya and at myself and my pursuits. Books which I used to read simply to escape from ennui suddenly became one of the greatest pleasures of my life; and all simply because we talked together about books, read them together, and he brought them to me. Before this time looking after Sonya and giving her lessons had been a burdensome task which I forced myself to perform simply from a sense of duty. He sat by during the lessons, and to watch over Sonya's progress became a delight to me. To learn a piece of music all through thoroughly had seemed to me hitherto an impossible feat; but now, knowing that he would hear and perhaps praise it, I would

play the same passage forty times over, till poor Katya stuffed her ears up with cotton wool, while I was still unwearied. The same old sonatas were played somehow quite differently now, and sounded quite different and far finer. Even Katya, whom I knew and loved like another self—even she was transformed in my eyes. Only now I understood for the first time that she was under no compulsion to be the mother, the friend, the slave that she was to us. I grasped all the self-sacrifice and devotion of this loving nature, felt all that I owed to her, and learned to love her more than ever. He taught me to look at our people—peasants, house-serfs, and serf-girls—quite differently from how I had done. It sounds an absurd thing to say, but I had grown up to seventeen among these people more remote from them than from people I had never seen. I had never once reflected that these people had their loves, desires, and regrets just as I had. Our garden, our copses, our fields, which I had known so long, had suddenly become new and beautiful in my eyes. It was not for nothing that he said that in life there is only one certain happiness—living for others. At the time this seemed to me strange, I did not understand it; but this conviction without conscious thought had already come into my heart. He opened to me a whole world of pleasures in the present, without changing anything in my daily existence, without adding anything except himself to any impression. Everything that from my childhood had been voiceless around suddenly blossomed into life. He had but to come into it for all to become speaking, rushing headlong into my soul and flooding it with happiness.

Often during that summer I would go upstairs to my own room, lie down on my bed; and instead of the melancholy of spring, the hopes and longings for the future that had absorbed me, a thrill of happiness in the present took possession of me. I could not sleep, got up, sat on Katya's bed, and told her that I was perfectly happy, which, as now I recall, it was utterly unnecessary to tell her—she could see it for herself. But she told me that she too had nothing to wish for, and that she too was very happy, and kissed me. I believed her—it seemed so right and inevitable that every

one should be happy. But Katya could think of sleep too, and even pretending to be angry, sometimes drove me away from her bed and fell asleep, while I would spend long hours going over all that made me so happy. Sometimes I got up and said my prayers a second time, praying in my own words to thank God for all the happiness He had given me.

And in the room all was still; only Katya breathed drowsily and evenly, the clock ticked by her side, and I turned from side to side, murmuring words, or crossing myself and kissing the cross on my neck. The doors were closed, the shutters were on the windows, some fly or gnat buzzed, stirring continually in the same spot. And I would have liked never to leave this room; I did not want morning to come, I did not want the spiritual atmosphere that enfolded me ever to be dissipated. It seemed to me that my dreams, my thoughts, and prayers were live things, living with me in the darkness, flying about my bed, hovering over me. And every idea was his idea, and every feeling was his feeling. I did not know then that this was love—I thought that this might always be so, that of itself, for no other end, this feeling had come to me.

III

One day during harvest-time Katya and Sonya and I had gone after dinner out into the garden to our favourite seat in the shade of the lime-trees above the ravine, beyond which stretched a view of forest and fields. Sergey Mihalovitch had not been to see us for three days, and that day we were expecting him, especially as our bailiff told us he had promised to come to the fields. About two o’clock we saw him on horseback riding towards the ryefield. Katya, glancing with a smile at me, sent for some peaches and cherries, of which he was very fond, lay down on the seat, and began to doze. I tore off a flat, crooked branch of lime-tree with juicy leaves and sappy bark that moistened my hand; and waving it over Katya, I went on reading, breaking off continually to look towards the field track by which he would come.

Sonya was rigging up an arbour for her dolls at the root of an old lime-tree. The day was hot, windless, steamy, the clouds kept packing closer and growing blacker, a storm had been brewing since the morning. I was excited, as always before a storm. But after midday the clouds began to break up at the edges, the sun floated out into clear sky, and only on one edge there was grumbling thunder; and from a lowering storm-cloud that hung over the horizon and melted into the dust of the fields, pale zigzags of lightning now and then cleft their way through to the earth. It was evident that the storm had passed off for that day, from us at least. Along the road that could be seen in parts beyond the garden there was a continual slow string of high creaking waggons laden with sheaves, and rapidly rattling to meet them a line of the unladen carts returning, with legs swinging and skirts fluttering in them. The thick dust did not fly away nor settle, but hung in the air behind the hedge between the transparent foliage of the garden trees. Further away at the threshing-floor the same voices could be heard and the same creaking of wheels; and the same yellow sheaves, after slowly making their way past the fence, were there flying in the air, and before my eyes the oval stacks were growing up, the pointed roofs were taking shape, and the figures of peasants swarmed bustling about them. In front, too, in the dusty fields, carts were moving and yellow sheaves were to be seen, and the sounds of carts, of voices, and of singing floated across from far away. On one side the stubble was growing more and more bare, with lines of hedge overgrown with wormwood. More to the right, below, all about the cut field that lay in unseemly confusion, were dotted the bright gowns of the peasant-women tying sheaves, bending down and spreading out their arms, and the untidy field was being put in order, and handsome sheaves were ranged close about it. It was as though straightway before my eyes summer was turning into autumn. The dust and the sultry heat hung over all except our favourite nook in the garden. On every side in this dust and sultry heat, in the scalding sunshine, the labouring peasants were talking, noisily working and moving.

But Katya was so sweetly snoring under her white cambric handkerchief, on our cool garden seat, the cherries glistened with such juicy blackness on the plate, our dresses were so cool and fresh, the water in the jug sparkled with such rainbow-coloured brightness in the sun, and all was so well with me. ‘I can’t help it,’ I thought; ‘am I to blame for being happy? But how share my happiness, how and to whom am I to give up all myself and all my happiness?...’

The sun had already gone down behind the tree-tops of the birch avenue, the dust was settling in the fields, the distance showed clearer and more distinct in the slanting sunshine, the storm-clouds had quite disappeared, at the threshing-floor behind the trees three new stacks could be seen, and the peasants had gone away from them. Carts went trotting by with loud shouts, clearly making their last journey; peasant-women with rakes on their shoulders and sheaf-ties stuck in their girdles were strolling homewards singing loudly, and still Sergey Mihalovitch did not come, although I had long ago seen him ride off under the hill. Suddenly his figure appeared in the avenue, from the direction in which I had not at all looked for him (he had gone round the ravine). Taking off his hat, with a good-humoured beaming face, he was coming with rapid steps towards me. Seeing that Katya was asleep, he bit his lip, shut his eyes, and advanced on tiptoe. I saw at once that he was in that characteristic mood of irrational gaiety which I liked extremely in him, and we used to call ‘wild delight.’ He was like a schoolboy playing truant; the whole of him, from his face down to his feet, was radiant with content, happiness, and childlike frolic.

‘Well, good day, young violet! How are you? quite well?’ he said in a whisper, coming up to me and pressing my hand. ‘Oh, I’m first-rate!’ he said in answer to my inquiry; ‘to-day I’m thirteen; should like to play horses and climb trees.’

‘Wild delight!’ I said, looking at his laughing eyes, and feeling that this wild delight was infecting me too.

‘Yes,’ he answered, winking and keeping back a smile. ‘But why beat Katerina Karlovna on the nose?’

I had not noticed as I looked at him, and went on waving the branch, that I had twitched the handkerchief off Katya and was stroking her face with the leaves. I laughed.

‘And she will say she has not been asleep,’ I whispered, as though to avoid waking Katya; but really not for that—it was simply that I enjoyed whispering with him.

He moved his lips, mimicking me, pretending I had spoken so softly that he could hear nothing. Seeing the plate of cherries, he snatched it, as it were, slily, walked off to Sonya under the lime-tree, and sat on her dolls. Sonya was angry at first, but he soon made peace with her, starting a game in which he was to race her in eating the cherries.

‘Would you like me to send for some more?’ I said. ‘Or shall we go and get some ourselves?’

He took the plate, sat the dolls in it, and we all three walked to the walled-in garden. Sonya ran laughing after us, tugging at his coat to make him give up the dolls. He gave her them and turned seriously to me.

‘Yes, there is no doubt you are a violet,’ he said to me still as softly, though there was no one here to be afraid of waking; ‘as I came near you, after all that dust and heat and work, there was the scent of violets. Not the scented violet, but you know ... that early, dark, little one that smells of the thawing snow and the spring grass.’

‘Oh, and is everything going well in the fields?’ I asked him, to disguise the blissful confusion produced by his words.

‘Splendidly! The peasants are everywhere so splendid.... The more one knows of them, the better one likes them.’

‘Yes,’ I said, ‘to-day, before you came, I looked from the garden at their work, and I

felt all at once so ashamed that they should be working, while I was so comfortable, that——’

‘No affectation on that subject, my dear!’ he interrupted me, with sudden seriousness, but glancing affectionately into my face, ‘that’s a holy thing. God forbid you should trifle with that.’

‘But it’s only to you I say it.’

‘Oh yes, I know. Well, how about the cherries?’

The walled-in garden was shut up, and there were no gardeners about (they had all been sent off to the harvest). Sonya ran off to get the key; but without waiting for her to come back, he climbed up at a corner, lifted the netting, and jumped down on the other side.

‘Like some?’ I heard him asking from there; ‘pass the plate.’

‘No, I want to pick them myself too; I’ll go for the key,’ I said. ‘Sonya won’t find it.’

But at the same time I longed to look at what he was doing there, how he was looking, how he was moving, supposing that no one could see him. It simply was that at that time I did not want to lose sight of him for a minute. I ran on tiptoe through the nettles round the enclosure to the other side where the wall was lower, and standing on an empty barrel, so that the wall did not reach to my bosom, I leant over. I scanned the enclosure with its old gnarled trees and its broad saw-edged leaves, behind which the heavy juicy black fruit hung down straight; and poking my head under the net, I saw Sergey Mihalovitch under the knotted branches of an old cherry-tree. He undoubtedly thought I had gone away, and that no one was seeing him. With his hat off and his eyes closed, he was sitting on a broken-down old cherry-tree, carefully rolling a bit of cherry gum into a ball. Suddenly he shrugged his shoulders, opened his eyes, and saying something, he smiled. So unlike him was that word and that smile that I felt ashamed of having spied on him. I fancied the

word was ‘Masha.’ ‘It can’t be!’ I thought. ‘Darling Masha!’ he repeated, still more softly and tenderly. But this time I distinctly heard those two words. My heart throbbed so violently, and such an agitating, as it were forbidden, joy suddenly took possession of me, that I clutched at the wall with both hands that I might not fall and betray myself. He heard my movement, looked round in alarm, and suddenly looking down, he flushed, crimsoned like a child. He tried to say something to me, but could not, and more and more hotly his face flamed. He smiled, though, looking at me. I smiled too. His whole face beamed with delight. He was not now like an old uncle, petting and instructing me, but a man equal with me, who loved and feared me, and whom I feared and loved. We said nothing, and simply gazed at each other. But suddenly he frowned, the smile and the light in his eyes died away, and coldly, in his fatherly way again, he addressed me, as though we were doing something wrong, and he had come to his senses and advised me to do the same.

‘Get down, you’ll hurt yourself,’ he said. ‘And put your hair straight. What do you look like?’

‘Why is he pretending? Why does he want to hurt me?’ I thought with vexation. And at the same instant I felt an irresistible desire to confuse him once more and to try my power over him.

‘No, I want to pick some myself,’ I said, and clutching hold of the nearest branch, I swung my feet up on to the wall. Before he had time to assist me, I had jumped down on to the ground inside the enclosure.

‘What silly things you do!’ he said, flushing again, and trying to conceal his confusion under the guise of anger. ‘Why, you might have hurt yourself. And how are you to get out from here?’

He was even more confused than before, but now this confusion did not rejoice, but dismayed me. It infected me; I blushed, and avoiding him and not knowing what to say, I began picking cherries though I had nowhere to put them. I blamed myself, I

felt remorseful and frightened, and it seemed to me that I had ruined myself for ever in his esteem. We were both mute, and both were wretched. Sonya running up with the key rescued us from this painful position. For long after this we said nothing to one another, but both addressed Sonya. When we got back to Katya, who declared she had not been asleep, but had heard all we said, I regained my composure. He tried to drop back into his fatherly, patronising tone, but he did not quite succeed with it, and did not impose on me. I vividly recalled now a conversation that had taken place between us a few days before.

Katya was saying how much easier it was for a man to love and to express his love than for a woman.

‘A man can say that he loves, but a woman can’t,’ she said.

‘But it seems to me that a man cannot and ought not to say that he loves,’ he said.

‘Why not?’ I asked.

‘Because it will always be a lie. As though it were a strange sort of discovery that some one is in love! Just as if, as soon as he says that, something went snap-bang—he loves. Just as if, when he utters that word, something extraordinary is bound to happen, with signs and portents, and all the cannons firing at once. It seems to me,’ he went on, ‘that people who solemnly utter those words, “I love you,” either deceive themselves, or what’s still worse, deceive others.’

‘Then how is a woman to find out that she is loved when she’s not told it?’ asked Katya.

‘That I can’t say,’ he answered. ‘Every man has his own way of telling things. And where there’s feeling it finds expression. When I read novels I always fancy the perplexed countenance that Lieutenant Strelsky or Alfred must have when he says, “I love thee, Eleonora!” imagining that something extraordinary will suddenly happen; and nothing is changed in either her or him—the same eyes and nose and everything!’

Even at the time I felt instinctively in this jesting saying something serious relating to me, but Katya could not tolerate such irreverent treatment of the heroines of romance.

‘Your everlasting paradoxes!’ she said. ‘Come, tell us the truth, do you mean to say you have never told a woman that you loved her?’

‘I never said such a thing, and never fell on one knee,’ he answered, laughing, ‘and I’m not going to.’

‘Yes, he has no need to tell me he loves me,’ I thought now, vividly recalling that conversation. ‘He loves me, I know it, and his efforts to seem indifferent will not alter my conviction.’

All that evening he spoke little to me, but in every word he said to Katya and to Sonya, in every gesture and glance of his, I saw love, and had no doubt of it. I only felt sore and angry with him for thinking it necessary to go on being reserved and affecting coldness, when everything was now so clear, and when it might have been so easy and simple to be so incredibly happy. But what tormented me like a crime was my having jumped down into the cherry garden to him. I was continually thinking that through this he had lost all respect for me and was angry with me.

After tea I went towards the piano, and he followed me.

‘Play something; it’s a long while since I’ve heard you,’ he said, overtaking me in the drawing-room.

‘Yes, I wanted to ... Sergey Mihalovitch!’ I said suddenly, looking him straight in the face. ‘You are not angry with me?’

‘What for?’ he asked.

‘For not minding what you said this afternoon,’ I said, reddening.

He understood, shook his head, and smiled. His face said that he ought to scold me, but he could not find it in his heart to do so.

‘It didn’t matter, we’re friends again?’ I said, sitting down to the piano.

‘I should hope so!’ he said.

In the big lofty hall there were only two candles on the piano; the rest of the room was in half-darkness. The clear summer night looked in at the open windows. Everything was still except Katya’s footsteps creaking at intervals in the dark drawing-room; and his horse, tied up under the window, snorting and stamping his hoofs on the burdocks. He was sitting behind me so that I could not see him; but everywhere—in the half-dark of this room, in the sounds of the night, in myself—I felt his presence. Every glance, every movement of his, though I did not see them, was echoed in my heart. I played a sonata fantasia of Mozart’s, which he had brought me, and I had practised in his presence and for him. I was not thinking at all of what I was playing, but I fancy I played it well, and it seemed to me that he liked it. I felt the pleasure he was feeling in it; and without looking at him, I felt his eyes fastened on me from behind. Quite involuntarily, while still moving my fingers unconsciously, I looked round at him. His head stood out against the light background of the clear night. He was sitting leaning on his elbow with his head in his hands, and looking intently at me with shining eyes. I smiled, seeing the look on his face, and stopped playing. He smiled too, and shook his head reproachfully at the music for me to go on. When I had finished the moon was higher and shone brightly, and now besides the dim light of the candles a different silvery light came in at the window and was cast on the floor. Katya said that it was beyond everything, how I had stopped in the finest passage, and how badly I had played. But he said, on the contrary, I had never played so well as to-day, and began walking up and down the rooms, across the hall into the dark drawing-room, and back again into the hall, every time looking round at me and smiling. And I smiled, I wanted to laugh indeed for no reason—so glad I was at something that was happening to-day, just now. As soon as he had disappeared through the doorway I embraced Katya, with whom I was standing at the piano, and began kissing her in my favourite spot, in the plump

neck under her chin. As soon as he returned, I put on a serious face, and with difficulty kept myself from laughing.

‘What has come to her to-day?’ Katya said to him.

But he did not answer, he simply looked at me and laughed. He knew what had come to me.

‘Look what a night!’ he said from the drawing-room, stopping before the balcony window that opened on to the garden.

We went up to him, and truly it was a night such as I have never seen since. The full moon stood over the house behind us so that it could not be seen; and half the shadow of the roof, of the columns and the verandah awning, lay slanting en raccourci on the sandy path and the circular lawn. All the rest was light, and bathed in silver dew and moonlight. The broad flowery path, all bright and cold, with shadows of the dahlias and their sticks lying slanting on one edge, and its rough gravel glistening, ran into the mist in the distance. Behind the trees there gleamed the roof of the conservatory, and below the ravine rose the gathering mist. The lilac bushes, already beginning to lose their leaves, were bright all over in every twig. The flowers, all drenched with dew, could be distinguished from one another. In the avenues the light and shade were so mingled that they seemed not trees and little paths between, but transparent, quivering, and trembling houses. To the right of the house all was black, indistinct, and weird. All the more brilliant rising up out of this darkness was the fantastically-shaped top of the poplar, which seemed as though, for some strange inexplicable cause, it had halted near the house, in the dazzling brightness above it, instead of flying far, far away into the distant dark blue sky.

‘Let us go for a walk,’ said I.

Katya agreed, but said I must put on my goloshes.

‘Oh no, Katya,’ I said. ‘Sergey Mihalovitch will give me his arm.’

As though that could save me from getting my feet wet! But at the time, that was to

all three of us quite intelligible and not at all strange. He never did offer me his arm, but now I took it of myself, and he did not think it strange. We all three went out of the verandah. All that world, that sky, that garden, that air, were not the same as I had known.

When I looked ahead down the avenue, along which we were walking, it seemed to me continually that over there further we could not go; that there the world of the possible ended, that it must all be crystallised for ever in its beauty. But we moved on, and the magic wall of beauty parted, admitted us, and there too it seemed was our old familiar garden with the trees and paths and dry leaves. And we did actually walk along the paths, stepped into the rings of light and shadow, and there were real dry leaves that rustled under our feet, and a real fresh twig that struck me in the face. And this was really he, walking gently and smoothly beside me, carefully supporting my arm, and it was really Katya who walked with creaking shoes beside us. And doubtless that was the moon in the sky that gleamed at us through the motionless twigs.

But at every step the magic wall closed up again before us and behind us, and I could not believe that it was possible to walk further, could not believe in all as it really was.

‘Ah, a frog!’ said Katya.

‘Who’s saying that, what for?’ I thought. But then I recollected that it was Katya, that she was afraid of frogs, and I looked down at my feet. A little frog hopped and stopped motionless before me, and its little shadow could be seen in the light on the clay of the path.

‘But you’re not afraid,’ he said.

I looked round at him. One lime-tree was missing in the part of the avenue we were passing—I could see his face clearly. It was so handsome and happy.

He said, ‘You’re not afraid’; but I heard him saying, ‘I love you, sweet girl! I love

you, I love you!' repeated his eyes, his arm; and the light and the shadow and the air, everything repeated the same.

We walked round the whole garden. Katya walked beside us with her little steps, breathing heavily from fatigue. She said it was time to turn back, and I felt sorry, so sorry for her, poor thing. 'Why isn't she feeling the same as we?' I thought. 'Why isn't every one young and every one happy like this night, and me and him?'

We went home, but for a long while yet he stayed on though the cocks were crowing, every one in the house was asleep, and his horse more and more often stamped on the weeds and snorted under the window. Katya did not remind us that it was late, and we sat on chatting of the most trivial things, unaware of the time till past two o'clock. The cocks were crowing for the third time, and the dawn was beginning when he went away. He said good-bye as usual, saying nothing special; but I knew that from that day he was mine, and that now I should not lose him. As soon as I had owned to myself that I loved him, I told Katya too all about it. She was glad and touched by my telling her, though she, poor thing, could go to sleep that night; but I, for a long, long while yet, walked up and down the verandah, and out into the garden, and recalling every word, every gesture, I walked along the garden paths along which I had walked with him. I did not sleep all that night, and for the first time in my life I saw the sun rise and the early morning. And such a night and such a morning I have never seen again. 'Only why doesn't he tell me simply that he loves me?' I mused. 'Why does he invent some sort of difficulties, and call himself old, when it's all so simple and so splendid? Why does he waste the precious time which may be will never return? Only let him say, "I love," say it in words; let him take my hand in his, bend his head over it, and say, "I love you." Let him blush and drop his eyes before me, and then I will tell him all. Not tell him even, but embrace him, clasp him to me, and weep. But what if I'm mistaken, if he does not love me?' suddenly occurred to me.

I was frightened at my own feeling. God knows what lengths it might lead me to, and his and my confusion in the orchard when I had jumped over to him came back to my mind, and my heart ached and ached. Tears streamed from my eyes, and I began to pray. And there came to me a strange reassuring thought and hope. I resolved to fast and prepare myself from that day to take the sacrament on my birthday and the same day to be betrothed.

By what means, in what way, how this could come to pass, I knew not, but from that minute I believed and knew it would be so. It was broad daylight, and the peasants had begun getting up when I went back to my room.

IV

It was the time of the Fast of the Assumption, so no one in the house was surprised at my intention of fasting during these days.

During the whole of that week he did not once come to see us; and far from wondering, being disturbed and angry with him, I was glad he did not come, and looked for him only on my birthday. All that week I got up early every day; and while they were putting the horses in, I walked alone about the garden, going over in my mind the sins of the previous day, and considering what I had to do to-day to be satisfied with the day and not once to fall into sin. It seemed to me at that time so easy to be perfectly sinless—it only needed trying a little, it seemed. The horses were brought round, and with Katya or the maid I got into the trap and drove three miles to the church. As I entered church I always recalled the prayer for all ‘who enter in the fear of God,’ and tried with that feeling in my heart to mount the two steps of the porch overgrown with grass. In the church there were usually at that time not more than some ten persons, peasant-women and house-serfs, keeping the fast. With studied meekness I tried to respond to their low bows, and walked myself—it seemed to me a great achievement—to the candle drawer to take candles from the old elder, a soldier, and placed them myself in the sockets. Through the

doors could be seen the altar cover, embroidered by mamma; above the holy picture-stand were two angels with stars, who used to seem to me so huge when I was little, and a dove with a yellow halo which used to attract my attention in early days. Behind the choir one could see the font where I had assisted at the christening of so many children of our house-serfs and had been christened myself. The old priest came out wearing a stole made out of my father's pall, and officiated in the same voice in which ever since I remember anything I had heard the church service in our house, and Sonya's christening and the last mass for my father and my mother's burial service. And the same jarring voice of the deacon rang out in the choir, and the same old woman whom I always remember in church at every service stood bent over at the wall, gazed with tearful eyes at the holy picture in the choir, pressed her cramped fingers to her faded kerchief, and mumbled something in her toothless mouth. And all this seemed no longer curious, nor through a single memory familiar to me; it was all now grand and holy in my eyes, and seemed to me full of profound significance. I listened to every word of the prayer, tried to respond in feeling to it; and if I could not understand it, I prayed inwardly to God to enlighten me, or made a prayer of my own in place of the one I could not follow. When the Confessions were read, I thought of my past, and that childish innocent past seemed to me so black in comparison with the pure condition of my soul now that I wept and was horrified at myself. But at the same time I felt that it would all be forgiven, and that if there had been even more sin in me, sweeter still would have been my repentance. When the priest at the end of the service said, 'The blessing of God be with you,' it seemed to me that I felt instantly passing into me a physical sensation of wellbeing, as though a sort of light and warmth had rushed into my heart. The service was over, the good father came up to me and inquired should he not come to us for the all night service and when; but I touchingly thanked him for what he wished, as I imagined, to do for my sake, and said that I would myself walk or drive over.

‘You want to put yourself to that trouble?’ he said.

And I did not know what to answer for fear of falling into the sin of pride.

I always let the horses go back from the service if I were without Katya, and walked home alone, bowing low and meekly to all who met me, and trying to find opportunities to help, to advise, to sacrifice myself for some one, to assist in lifting a load, to dandle a baby, to make way by stepping into the mud. One evening I heard the bailiff, in giving his account to Katya, say that the peasant Semyon had come to beg some planks for his daughter’s coffin and a rouble for the funeral service, and that he’d given it him.

‘Are they really so poor?’ I asked.

‘Very poor, madam, not a pinch of salt in the house,’ answered the bailiff.

I felt a pang at my heart, and at the same time I felt a sort of joy at hearing this. Deluding Katya with the pretext that I was going for a walk, I ran upstairs, and got out all my money (it was very little, but all that I had). Crossing myself, I went alone through the verandah and the garden to the village to Semyon’s hut. It was at the edge of the village, and unseen by any one I ran up to the window, laid the money in the window, and tapped on it. A door creaked, some one came out of the hut and called after me. Shaking and chill with panic like a guilty creature, I ran home. Katya asked me where I had been, what was the matter with me, but I did not even understand what she said to me, and made no answer. Everything seemed all at once so worthless and petty to me. I locked myself in my own room and walked up and down a long while alone, unable to do anything, unable to think, to get a clear idea of my own feelings. I thought of the joy of all the family, of the words they would say of the person who had brought the money, and I felt sorry too that I had not given it myself. I thought of what Sergey Mihalovitch would say when he heard of it, and at the same time rejoiced that no one would ever hear of it. And I was full of joy, and all people and I myself seemed so bad to me, and so tenderly I looked on

myself and every one, that the thought of death came to me like a dream of bliss. I smiled and prayed and wept; and with such passionate fervour I loved every one in the world, and myself too at that moment. Between the services I read the gospel, and more and more comprehensible it had become to me, and more and more touching and simple the history of that divine life, and more awful and inconceivable the depths of feeling and thought I found in its teaching. But, on the other hand, how clear and simple everything seemed to me when getting up from that book I looked into my heart and pondered on the life surrounding me. It seemed so difficult to be bad, and so simple to love every one and be loved by them. Every one was so kind and gentle with me; even Sonya, whose lessons I still went on with, was quite different, tried to understand, to please me and not to vex me. As I was, so were all of them to me. Going over my enemies, of whom I had to beg forgiveness before making my confession, I could only remember one young lady, whom I had a year ago made ridiculous in the presence of guests, and who had given up coming to see us. I wrote a letter to her, confessing my fault, and begging her forgiveness. She answered with a letter, in which she too begged my forgiveness, and forgave me. I wept with joy, reading those simple lines, in which at that time I saw such deep and touching feeling. My old nurse cried when I begged her forgiveness. ‘Why were they all so good to me? How had I deserved such love?’ I asked myself. And I could not help thinking of Sergey Mihalovitch, and for a long while I thought of him. I could not help it, and did not even look on it as a sin. But I thought of him now not at all as I had done on the night when I first knew that I loved him. I thought of him as of myself, unconsciously associating him with every thought of my future. The overwhelming influence of which I was conscious in his presence had entirely disappeared in my imagination. I felt myself now his equal, and from the height of my present spiritual condition I completely understood him. What had hitherto seemed strange in him was quite clear to me now. Only now I understood why he had said that happiness is only to be found in living for others, and now I perfectly

agreed with him. It seemed to me that we should be so endlessly and calmly happy. And I pictured to myself not tours abroad, not society, and a brilliant life, but something quite different, a quiet family life in the country with continual self-sacrifice continual love for one another, and a continual sense in all things of a kind and beneficent Providence.

I took the sacrament, as I had intended, on my birthday. In my heart there was such complete happiness when I came home that day from church that I was afraid of life, afraid of every impression, of anything that could disturb that happiness. But we had hardly got out of the trap at the steps when a familiar vehicle rattled on the bridge, and I caught sight of Sergey Mihalovitch. He congratulated me, and we went together into the drawing-room. Never since I had known him had I been as calm and self-possessed as that morning. I felt that there was a whole new world in me which he did not understand, which was above him. I did not feel the slightest embarrassment with him. He must have understood what this was due to, and there was a peculiar tender gentleness and reverent consideration in his manner to me. I was going to the piano, but he locked it and put the key in his pocket.

‘Don’t spoil your mood,’ he said. ‘There is music now in your soul, better than any in the world.’

I was grateful to him for this, and at the same time I rather disliked his so easily and clearly understanding all that should have been hidden from all in my soul. At dinner he said he had come to congratulate me on my birthday, and at the same time to say good-bye, as he was going next day to Moscow. As he said this he looked at Katya, but then glanced stealthily at me, and I saw that he was afraid he would detect emotion in my face. But I was not surprised nor agitated. I did not even ask whether he were going for long. I knew he would say this, and I knew he would not go. How I knew it I cannot explain to this day; but on that memorable day it seemed to me that I knew everything that had been and would be. I was as though in a happy

dream when whatever happens seems as though it has been already, and that one has known it long ago, and it all seems, too, as though it were to come, and one knows that it will come.

He had meant to leave soon after dinner; but Katya, tired after the service, had gone to lie down, and he was obliged to wait till she waked up to say good-bye to her. The hall was hot with the sun on it. We went out into the verandah. As soon as we had sat down, I began with perfect composure speaking of what was bound to decide the fate of my love. And I began to speak neither too soon nor too late, but the very moment we were seated, before anything had been said, before there had been a conversation of some tone or character that might have hindered what I wanted to say. I can't understand how I came by such composure, such decision, and such exactness in my phrases. It was as though it were not I, but something apart from my own will was speaking in me. He sat opposite me, his elbow leaning on the rail, and drawing a branch of lilac to him, he was stripping off its leaves. When I began to speak, he let the branch go, and leaned his head on his hand. It might be the attitude of a man in perfect repose or in great agitation.

'What are you going away for?' I asked deliberately and significantly, looking him straight in the face.

He did not at once answer.

'Business!' he said, dropping his eyes.

I saw that it was not easy for him to lie to me, and in answer to a question put to him so frankly.

'Listen,' I said. 'You know what to-day is for me. For many reasons this day is very important to me. If I ask you this, it is not to show my interest (you know how well I know you, and how I care for you), I ask because I must know.... What are you going for?'

'It's very difficult for me to tell you the true reason why I am going away,' he said.

‘During this week I have been thinking a great deal about you and myself, and have decided that I ought to go. You understand why, and if you care for me you will not ask.’ He passed his hand over his forehead, and covered his eyes with it. ‘It’s painful to me.... And easy for you to understand.’

My heart began to beat violently.

‘I can’t understand,’ I said; ‘I can’t; but you—do tell me, for God’s sake, for the sake of to-day, tell me—I can hear anything calmly,’ I said.

He shifted his position, glanced at me, and again drew the branch to him.

‘Well,’ he said, after a brief pause, in a voice that tried in vain to be steady, ‘though it’s absurd and impossible to put it into words, though it’s painful even, I will try and explain to you ....’ he added, pausing as though in physical pain.

‘Well?’ said I.

‘Imagine that there was a certain Monsieur A., let us say,’ he said, ‘elderly and blasé, and a Mademoiselle B., young and happy, knowing nothing of men or of life. Through various family circumstances he loved her as a daughter, and was not afraid of loving her in any other way.’

He paused, but I did not interrupt.

‘But he forgot that B. was so young, that life was still a plaything for her,’ he went on, with sudden swiftness and determination, not looking at me, ‘and that it was easy to love her in a different way, and that that would be an amusement to her. And he made a mistake, and suddenly was aware that another feeling, as bitter as remorse, had forced its way into his soul, and he was afraid. He was afraid of destroying their old affectionate relations, and resolved to go away rather than destroy those relations.’ As he said this, again as it were carelessly, he passed his hand over his eyes and hid them.

‘Why was he afraid of loving in another way?’ I said, scarcely audibly, suppressing

my emotion, and my voice was steady; to him it probably seemed playful. He answered in a tone, as it were, of offence.

‘You are young,’ he said. ‘I am not young. You want to amuse yourself, but I want something else. Amuse yourself, only not with me, or I shall believe in it, and it will do me harm, and you will be sorry for it. That was what A. said,’ he added. ‘Oh, well, that’s all nonsense, but you understand why I’m going. And we won’t talk any more about it. Please don’t.’

‘No, no, we will talk about it,’ I said, and there was a quiver of tears in my voice. ‘Did he love her, or not?’

He did not answer.

‘And if he didn’t love her, why did he play with her as if she were a baby?’ I said.

‘Yes, yes, A. was to blame,’ he answered, hurriedly interrupting me, ‘but it was all over, and they parted ... friends.’

‘But that’s awful! And could there be no other ending?...’ I uttered faintly, and was terrified at what I had said.

‘Yes, there is,’ he said, uncovering his agitated face and looking straight at me. ‘There are two different endings. Only, for God’s sake, don’t interrupt, and listen to me quietly. Some say,’ he began, standing up and smiling a sickly, bitter smile, ‘some say that A. went out of his mind, fell madly in love with B., and told her so. And she only laughed. For her it was a jest, but for him it was the question of his whole life.’

I started, and would have interrupted him to say that he must not speak for me, but he laid his hand on mine, restraining me.

‘Wait a minute,’ he said in a shaking voice. ‘Others say that she took pity on him; fancied, poor girl, having seen no one else, that she really could love him, and consented to become his wife. And he in his madness believed it—believed that life

would begin over again for him—but she saw herself that she had deceived him, and that he was deceiving her.... We won't talk any more about it,' he concluded, apparently unable to go on, and he began walking up and down facing me.

He had said, 'We won't talk of it,' but I saw that with all the strength of his soul he was waiting for my words. I tried to speak, but couldn't—something ached poignantly in my bosom. I glanced at him; he was pale, and his lower lip was quivering. I felt sorry for him. I made an effort, and suddenly, bursting through the spell of silence that seemed enchaining me, I began speaking in a subdued inner voice, which I feared every second would break.

'There's a third ending,' I said, and stopped, but he did not speak, 'a third ending, that he did not love her, but he hurt her, hurt her, and thought he was right, and went away, and seemed proud too for some reason. It's you, not I, you, that it's a jest to; from the first day I've loved you—loved!' I repeated, and at that word 'loved' my voice involuntarily passed from a soft murmur into a wild shriek that frightened me myself.

He stood facing me, his lips quivering more and more, and two tears stood out on his pale cheeks.

'It's a shame!' I almost screamed, feeling that I was choking with angry, unshed tears. 'What's it for?' I articulated, and stood up to get away from him.

But he did not let me go. His head lay on my knees, his lips were kissing my trembling hands, and his tears wetted them.

'My God! if I had known,' he said.

'What for? what for?' I was still repeating, but my soul was full of happiness, happiness that seemed to have gone for ever and was coming back to me.

Five minutes later Sonya was running upstairs to Katya and shouting to all the household that Masha was going to marry Sergey Mihalovitch.

V

There was no reason for delaying our marriage, and neither of us desired to do so. Katya would indeed have liked us to go to Moscow to purchase and order the trousseau, and his mother urged his providing himself with a new carriage and furniture, and having the house repapered, before he was married. But we both insisted that all this should be done afterwards if it really were so necessary, and that we should be married a fortnight after my birthday, quite quietly, without a trousseau, without guests and bridesmen, without a wedding supper, champagne, and all the conventional accompaniments of a wedding. He told me how disappointed his mother was that his wedding was to take place without music, without mountains of boxes, and without the complete redecoration of the whole house (like her own wedding, which had cost thirty thousand roubles), and how seriously and surreptitiously she was turning out her chest of stores and consulting with her housekeeper, Maryushka, about certain rugs, curtains, and tea-trays essential to our happiness. Katya too, on my behalf, was busy in the same way with my old nurse, Kuzminishna, and it did not do to speak lightly of it to her. She was firmly persuaded that when we were talking of our future together we were simply babbling the lovers' nonsense peculiar to persons in our position; but that our real future happiness would depend entirely on the correct cutting and careful stitching of chemises and the hemming of tablecloths and dinner-napkins. Mysterious communications on the progress of the preparations passed several times a day between Nikolskoe and Pokrovskoe; and though the relations between Katya and his mother appeared on the surface to be of the tenderest, one had a sense of a somewhat antagonistic but most delicate diplomacy in their intercourse. Tatyana Semyonovna, his mother, with whom I now became more intimately acquainted, was a ceremonious, old-fashioned lady, very correct in the management of her household. He loved her not simply as a son, from duty, but as a man, from feeling, considering her as the best, the wisest, the kindest, and most loving woman in the

world. Tatyana Semyonovna was always kind to us, to me particularly so, and she was glad her son should marry; but when I was with her as her future daughter-in-law, it seemed to me that she tried to make me feel that as a match for her son I might have been better, and that it would not be amiss for me to keep that in mind, and I perfectly understood her and agreed with her.

During that fortnight we saw each other every day. He used to come to dinner and to stay on till midnight; but although he said—and I knew he spoke the truth—that he had no life apart from me, he never spent the whole day with me, and tried to go on with his usual work. Our external relations remained the same as before right up to our wedding. We still addressed each other formally by our full names; he did not kiss even my hand; and far from seeking opportunities of being alone with me, seemed positively to avoid them. It was as though he feared the too violent, disquieting tenderness that was within him. I don't know whether he or I had changed, but now I felt completely on an equality with him, saw no trace in him of that effort after simplicity that I had once disliked in him; and often, to my satisfaction, I seemed to see before me, instead of a man inspiring respect and awe, a soft-hearted child dazed with happiness. 'So that was all there was in him,' I often thought. 'He's just the same sort of person as I am, nothing more.' Now it seemed to me that the whole of him was before my eyes, and that I had learned to know him fully, and all that I had learned was so simple and so perfectly in harmony with me. Even his plans for our life together in the future were just my plans, only better and more clearly defined in his words.

The weather was bad during those days, and the greater part of the time we spent indoors. Our best, most intimate talks took place in the corner between the piano and the little window. The light of the candles was reflected on the black window close by, and on the glistening pane there was often the patter and drip of raindrops. On the roof the rain beat, and in the pool below there was the splash of water; there was a damp draught from the window under the eaves, and it made it seem all the

brighter, warmer, and more joyful in our corner.

‘Do you know, I’ve long been wanting to say one thing to you,’ he said late one evening when we were sitting alone together in our corner. ‘When you were playing, I thought of it.’

‘You need not tell me; I know all about it,’ I said.

‘Yes, that’s true. We won’t talk of it.’

‘No, tell me, what is it?’ I asked.

‘Why, do you remember when I told you the story of A. and B.?’

‘I should think you’d better not recall that silly story! It’s a good thing it ended as it did.’

‘Yes, a little more, and all my happiness would have been shattered by my own hand. You saved me. But the thing is, I was always telling lies then, and it’s on my conscience. I want to speak out now.’

‘Oh, please, you needn’t.’

‘Don’t be afraid,’ he said, smiling. ‘I only want to justify myself. When I began to speak I was trying to be reasonable.’

‘Why be reasonable?’ I said. ‘You never ought to.’

‘Yes, I was wrong in my reasoning. After all my disappointments and mistakes in life, when I came this year into the country I said to myself so resolutely that love was over for me; that all that was left me was the duties of the decline of life; that for a long while I failed to recognise what my feeling for you was, and what it might lead me to. I hoped and did not hope. At one time it seemed to me you were flirting, at another I had faith—and I didn’t know myself what I was going to do. But after that evening—do you remember, when we walked in the garden at night?—I was frightened; my present happiness seemed too great and impossible. Think what it would have been if I had let myself hope and in vain? But, of course, I thought only

of myself, because I'm a sickening egoist.'

He paused, looking at me.

'But still you know it was not altogether nonsense that I talked then. I might well, and ought to, feel afraid. I am taking so much from you, and I can give so little. You are a child still; you are a bud not yet fully out, which will blossom more fully later; you love for the first time; while I——'

'Yes, tell me truly,' I said, but all at once I felt frightened of his answer. 'No, I don't want you to,' I added.

'Whether I have been in love before, eh?' he said, at once guessing my thought; 'that I can tell you. No, I haven't. Never anything like this feeling.' But suddenly it seemed as though some bitter recollection had flashed into his mind. 'No, and now I ought to have your heart to have the right to love you,' he said mournfully. 'So hadn't I good reason to think twice before saying that I loved you? What do I give you? Love, it is true.'

'Is that so little?' I said, looking into his eyes.

'Little, my dear, little for you,' he went on. 'You have beauty and youth. Often now I can't sleep at night for happiness, and all the time I'm thinking of how we will live our life together. I have lived through a great deal, and it seems to me that I have found what one wants to be happy—a quiet, secluded life in our remote countryside, with the power of doing good to people, to whom it's so easy to do good, who are so little used to it; then work, work which seems to be bringing forth fruit; then leisure, nature, books, music, love for one's neighbours; that is my happiness, and I dreamed of none higher. And now to crown all that, such a friend as you, a family perhaps, and all that a man can desire.'

'Yes,' I said.

'For me, who have outlived my youth, yes, but not for you,' he went on. 'You have seen nothing of life; you may perhaps want to seek happiness in something else, and

perhaps you may find it in something else. You fancy now that this is happiness because you love me.'

'No, I have always loved this quiet home life, and wished for nothing else,' I said. 'And you are only saying what I have thought.'

He smiled.

'That only seems so to you, my dear. But it's little for you. You have beauty and youth,' he repeated musingly.

But I was irritated at his not believing me, and as it were reproaching me with my beauty and my youth.

'Then what do you love me for?' I said angrily—'for my youth or for myself?'

'I don't know, but I love you,' he answered, looking at me with his intent gaze that fascinated me.

I made no answer, and involuntarily I looked into his eyes. All at once something strange happened to me. At first I ceased to see what was around me, then his face vanished before my eyes, only his eyes shone it seemed just opposite my eyes, then it seemed to me that his eyes were piercing into me, everything was a blur, I saw nothing, and had to shut my eyes to tear myself away from the sensation of delight and terror produced in me by that gaze.

On the eve of the day fixed for our wedding the weather cleared. It had been summer when the rains had begun, now after they had ceased came the first cold fine evening of autumn. Everything was wet and cold and bright, and in the garden one observed for the first time the openness, the bright tints, and bareness of autumn. The sky was clear and chill and pale. I went to bed happy in the thought that the next day, the day of my wedding, would be fine. On the day I waked with the sun, and the thought that it was to-day ... as it were, scared and amazed me. I went out into the garden. The sun had only just risen, and its light filtered in patches through the lime-trees of the avenue, which were losing their yellow leaves. The

path was strewn with rustling leaves. The wrinkled bright red bunches of berries on the mountain ash gleamed on the branches among the few frost-bitten, curling leaves. The dahlias were withered and blackened. Frost lay for the first time like silver on the pale green of the grass and the trampled burdocks round the house. In the clear cold sky there was not, and could not be, a single cloud. ‘Can it really be to-day?’ I asked myself, not believing in my own happiness. ‘Shall I really to-morrow wake up not here, but in the unfamiliar Nikolskoe house with colonnades? Shall I never any more meet him in the evenings and talk of him at night with Katya? Shall I never sit with him at the piano in the Pokrovskoe drawing-room, nor see him off and tremble for his safety in the dark night?’ But I remembered that he had said yesterday that he should come for the last time, and Katya had made me try on my wedding dress, and had said, ‘For to-morrow’; and for an instant I believed in it, and then doubted again. ‘Can I truly be going from to-day to live there with my mother-in-law, without Nadyozha, without old Grigory, without Katya? Shall I go to bed without kissing my old nurse and hearing her say in her old way as she crosses me, “Good night, miss”? Shall I give Sonya no more lessons, nor play with her, nor knock through the wall to her in the morning, and hear her ringing laugh? Can it be that to-day I shall become some one that I don’t know myself, and a new life, the realisation of my hopes and wishes, is opening before me? Will that new life be for always?’

Impatiently I awaited his arrival. I was unhappy alone with these thoughts. He came early, and it was only with him that I fully believed that I should be his wife to-day, and that thought lost its terrors for me.

Before dinner we walked to our church to attend a memorial service for my father.

‘If only he could have been living now!’ I thought, as we returned home, and without speaking I clung to the arm of the man who had been his dearest friend. During the prayers, kneeling with my head bowed down to the cold stone of the

chapel floor, I so thoroughly believed that his soul was understanding me and blessing my choice, that even now it seemed to me that his spirit was hovering about us, and that I felt his blessing upon me. And memories and hopes and happiness and sorrow all melted together into one sweet and solemn feeling in harmony with the still keen air, the quietness, the bareness of the fields, and the pale sky, shedding on everything a bright but feeble sunshine that tried in vain to burn my cheek. I fancied that the man at my side understood and shared my feeling. He was walking slowly and in silence, and in his face, into which I peeped from time to time, showed the same grave emotion between sorrow and joy that was to be seen in nature, and was in my heart. All at once he turned to me. I saw he was going to say something. 'What if he speaks of something else, not what I am thinking of?' flashed into my mind. But he began speaking of my father without even mentioning his name.

'Once he said to me jokingly: "You had better marry my Masha!"' he said.

'How happy he would have been now!' I said, squeezing the arm on which mine was lying.

'Yes, you were a child then,' he went on, looking into my eyes. 'I used to kiss those eyes then, and loved them only because they were like his, and never dreamed they would be so dear to me on their own account. I used to call you Masha then.'

'Call me "thee,"' I said.

'I was just meaning to call thee so,' he said; 'it's only now that I feel thee quite mine.' And a serene and happy gaze that drew my eyes to him rested upon me.

And we went on walking slowly along the indistinct field-path through the trampled, broken stubble, and our steps and our voices were all that we could hear. On one side across the ravine as far as the distant, bare-looking copse stretched the brownish stubble, on which on the side away from us a peasant was noiselessly at work with a wooden plough making wider and wider the black strip of earth. A drove of horses scattered over the hillside below seemed quite close. On the other side, and in front

right up to the garden and our house, which could be seen beyond it, stretched the dark thawing field, with here and there strips of green winter-corn. The sun was shining on it all, bright but not hot, and on everything lay the long threads of spider webs. They were floating in the air about us, lying on the stubble where the frost had dried, falling into our eyes, on to our hair and our clothes. When we talked our voices resounded and seemed to hang in the still air above us, as though we were the only creatures in the midst of the whole world, and were alone under that blue dome, in which the mild sunshine played flashing and quivering.

I too longed to call him ‘thee,’ but I was ashamed to.

‘Why art thou walking so fast?’ I said hurriedly, almost in a whisper, and I could not help blushing. He walked more slowly and looked still more fondly, still more gladly and happily at me.

When we got home his mother was already there with the guests, whom we had not been able to avoid having, and up to the moment when we came out of church and got into the carriage to drive to Nikolskoe I was not alone with him.

The church was almost empty; at a glance I saw only his mother, standing on a rug in the choir, Katya in a cap with lilac ribbons, and two or three of our servants looking inquisitively at me. At him I did not look, but I felt his presence beside me. I listened intently to the words of the service and repeated them, but there was no response to them in my soul. I could not pray, and gazed blankly at the holy pictures, at the lights, at the embroidered cross on the back of the priest’s stole, at the picture-stand, at the church window, and understood nothing. I only felt that something extraordinary was being performed on me. When the priest turned to me with the cross, congratulated me, and said that he had christened, and now, by God’s blessing, he had married me, and Katya and his mother kissed us, and I heard Grigory’s voice calling the carriage, I wondered and was dismayed that everything was over, with no extraordinary feeling in my soul to correspond with the

mysterious ceremony I had passed through. We kissed each other, and that kiss was so strange and remote from my feeling. ‘And is that all?’ I thought. We came out into the porch; the rumbling of the wheels resounded with a deeper note under the church roof; the fresh air blew into our faces; he put on his hat and gave me his arm to the carriage. From the carriage window I had a glimpse of a frosty moon with a ring round it. He sat down beside me and closed the door after him. Something seemed to stab me to the heart. It was as though I felt insulted by the assurance with which he did this. Katya’s voice called for me to cover my head, the wheels rattled over the pavement, and then along the soft road, and we had driven off. Huddled up in a corner, I looked out of the window at the far away moonlit fields, and at the road flying by in the chill light of the moon. And without looking at him, I felt him here beside me. ‘Why, is this all from this minute of which I expected so much?’ I thought, and it still seemed somehow degrading and humiliating to be sitting alone so close to him. I turned to him with the intention of saying something. But the words would not be uttered; it seemed as though there were no trace of my former feeling of tenderness in me, but a feeling of humiliation and dread had taken its place.

‘Till this minute I could not believe that it was possible,’ he said softly in response to my glance.

‘Yes, but I’m somehow afraid,’ I said.

‘Afraid of me, my darling?’ he said, taking my hand and letting his hand drop into it.

My hand lay lifeless in his hand, and my heart ached with cold.

‘Yes,’ I whispered.

But at that moment my heart suddenly began to beat more violently, my hand trembled and squeezed his hand; I felt warm, my eyes sought his in the dusk, and I suddenly felt that I was not afraid of him, that that dread was love, a new and still more tender and passionate love than before. I felt that I was altogether his, and that

I was happy in his power over me.

PART II

I

DAYS, weeks, two months of solitary country life had slipped by, imperceptibly it seemed at the time; but meanwhile there had been feeling, emotion, and happiness for a whole lifetime in those two months. My dreams and his of the ordering of our lives together in the country were fulfilled not at all as we had expected. But our life did not fall short of our dreams. There was none of that hard work, doing one's duty and sacrificing one's life for one's neighbour, that I had pictured to myself when I was engaged. There was, on the contrary, simply the egoistic feeling of love for each other, the desire to be loved, and a causeless, continual gaiety and forgetfulness of all else in the world. He did, it is true, go off at times to his study to do some sort of work; at times he did drive to the town on business, and superintend the management of the land. But I saw what an effort it was to him to tear himself away from me. And he would acknowledge himself, later, that everything in the world in which I had no share seemed to him so absurd that he could not understand how one could be interested in it. It was just the same with me. I used to read, and to interest myself with music, with his mother, and with the village school; but it was all simply because each of those pursuits was associated with him and won his approbation. But as soon as there was no idea of him associated with my pursuit, my hands dropped at my side, and it seemed to me quite amusing to think there was anything in the world besides him. Possibly this was a bad, selfish feeling, but this feeling gave me happiness, and lifted me high above the whole world. He was the only person existing on earth for me, and I regarded him as the best, the most faultless, man in the world. Consequently I could have no other object in life than him—than being in his eyes what he believed me to be. And he considered me the

first and best woman in the world, endowed with every possible virtue; and I tried to be that woman in the eyes of the first and best man in the whole world.

One day he came into the room just as I was saying my prayers. I looked round at him and went on with my prayers. He sat down at the table so as not to disturb me, and opened a book. But I fancied he was watching me, and I looked round. He smiled, I laughed outright, and could not go on praying.

‘Have you said your prayers already?’ I asked.

‘Yes; but you go on, I’ll go away.’

‘But you do say prayers, I hope?’

He would have gone out without answering; but I stopped him.

‘My love, please, for my sake, read the prayers with me!’

He stood beside me, and letting his hands drop awkwardly, with a serious face he began hesitatingly to read. From time to time he turned to me and sought approval and encouragement in my face.

When he had finished, I laughed and hugged him.

‘It’s all you, all you! It’s as though I were ten years old again,’ he said, blushing and kissing my hands.

Our house was one of those old country houses in which several generations of a family have passed their lives, respecting and loving one another. Everything breathed of good, honourable, family memories which at once when I entered that house seemed to become my memories. The arrangement and the management of the house were all ordered by Tatyana Semyonovna in the old style. I cannot say that everything was elegant and beautiful; but from the servants, down to the furniture and the food, all was plentiful, all was neat, solid, and orderly, inspiring respect. In symmetrical arrangement the furniture stood in the drawing-room, and the portraits hung on the walls, and the home-made rugs and strips of matting were laid on the

floors. In the divan-room there was an old harpsichord, two chiffoniers of different patterns, sofas, and little tables with lattice-work and raised ornaments. In my boudoir, decorated by Tatyana Semyonovna with special care, stood the best furniture of different ages and patterns, and among other things an old pier-glass, at which at first I could not look without feeling shy, though later on it became dear to me as an old friend. Tatyana Semyonovna's voice was never heard, but everything in the house went as though by clock-work. Though there were many superfluous servants, all those servants wearing soft boots without heels (Tatyana Semyonovna considered creaking shoes and clacking heels as the most disagreeable things in the world), all those servants seemed proud of their position, stood in awe of their old mistress, looked on my husband and me with patronising affection, and seemed to take a particular pleasure in doing their work.

Every Saturday regularly all the floors in the house were scrubbed and the carpets were beaten; on the first day of each month a service was held with sprinkling of holy water; always on Tatyana Semyonovna's name-day and her son's (mine, too, for the first time, that autumn) a banquet was given to the whole neighbourhood. And all this had been done without change for as long as Tatyana Semyonovna could remember. My husband took no part in the management of the house; he confined himself to looking after the land and the peasants, and a great deal of work that gave him. He used to get up even in the winter very early, so that when I waked up I did not find him. He usually came back to morning tea, which we drank alone together; and almost always at that time, after the exertions and worries of his work on the estate, he was in that particularly cheerful state of mind which we used to call wild delight. Often I used to ask him to tell me what he had been doing in the morning, and he would tell me such nonsense that we went into fits of laughter. Sometimes I insisted on a serious account, and he would restrain a smile and tell me. I looked at his eyes, at his moving lips, and did not understand a word, but simply enjoyed seeing him and hearing his voice.

‘Come, what did I say, repeat it?’ he would ask. But I could never repeat anything, so ludicrous it seemed that he should talk to me, not of himself or me, but of something else, as though it mattered what happened outside us. Only much later I began to have some slight understanding of his cares and to be interested in them. Tatyana Semyonovna did not make her appearance till dinner-time; she drank her tea alone in the morning, and only sent greetings to us by messengers. In our private world of frantic happiness a voice from her staid, decorous nook, so different, sounded so strange that often I could not restrain myself, and simply giggled in response to the maid who, standing with folded hands, announced sedately that ‘Tatyana Semyonovna desired me to inquire how you slept after yesterday’s walk, and about herself desired me to inform you that all night long she had a pain in her side, and a stupid dog in the village barked so and prevented her sleeping. And I was desired to inquire also how you liked to-day’s baking, and to beg you to observe that Taras did not do the baking to-day, but Nikolasha for the first time as an experiment, and very fairly well, she says, he has done, especially the dough-rings, but he has over-baked the tea-rusks.’ Till dinner-time we were not much together. I played the piano and read alone, while he was writing and going his rounds on the land again. But at dinner-time, at four o’clock, we met together in the dining-room; mamma sailed out of her room; and the poor ladies, of whom there were always two or three staying in the house, appeared on the scene. Regularly every day my husband gave his arm in the old fashion to his mother to take her in to dinner. But she insisted on his offering me the other, and regularly every day we were squeezed and got in each other’s way at the door. At dinner my mother-in-law presided, and a conversation was maintained decorously reasonable and rather solemn in tone. The simple phrases that passed between my husband and me made an agreeable break in the solemnity of these ceremonious dinners. Sometimes disputes would spring up between mother and son, and they mocked at each other. I particularly loved these disputes and their mockery of one another, because the tender and enduring love that

bound them together was never more strongly expressed than on these occasions. After dinner mamma settled herself in a big armchair in the drawing-room, and powdered snuff, or cut the leaves of some newly-purchased book, while we read aloud, or went off to the divan-room to the harpsichord. We read a great deal together at that time, but music was our best and favourite pleasure, every time touching new chords in our hearts, and as it were revealing us to each other anew. When I played his favourite pieces, he sat on a sofa at some distance where I could scarcely see him, and from a sort of shame at his emotion tried to conceal the impression the music made on him. But often when he was not expecting it, I got up from the piano, ran to him, and tried to catch on his face traces of his emotion, an unnatural brightness and moisture in his eyes, which he tried in vain to conceal from me. Mamma often wanted to look at us in the divan-room, but no doubt she sometimes was afraid of being a constraint to us, and she would pass through the room with a serious and indifferent face, pretending not to look at us. But I knew she had no reason really for going so often to her room and returning again. Evening tea was poured out by me in the big drawing-room, and again all the family circle gathered round the table. This duty of solemnly presiding before the sacred shrine of the samovar and the array of glasses and cups was for a long while a source of confusion to me. I always felt that I was not yet worthy of this honour; that I was too young and frivolous to turn the tap of such a big samovar, to set the glasses on the tray for Nikita, and to say as I did so, ‘For Pyotr Ivanovitch, for Marya Minitchna’; to inquire, ‘Is it sweet?’ and to leave pieces of sugar for the old nurse and other deserving persons.

‘Capital! capital!’ my husband would often say, ‘quite like a grown up person’; and that only increased my confusion.

After tea mamma played patience or listened to Marya Minitchna fortune-telling with the cards; then she kissed us both and made the sign of the cross on us, and we went to our own room. For the most part though, we used to sit up together till

midnight, and this was our best and pleasantest time. He talked to me about his past; we made plans, philosophised sometimes, and tried to speak very softly all the time, so that we should not be heard upstairs and reported to Tatyana Semyonovna, who expected us to go to bed early. Sometimes getting hungry, we would steal quietly to the sideboard, procure a cold supper through the good offices of Nikita, and eat it by the light of one candle in my boudoir. We lived like strangers in that big, old house in which the stern spirit of the old world and of Tatyana Semyonovna held sway over all. Not she only, but the house-serfs, the old maidservants, the furniture, the pictures, aroused in me respect, a sort of awe and a sense that he and I were a little out of our element, that we must live here very circumspectly and discreetly. Looking back now, I can see that many things, that fettering, unvarying routine, and that mass of idle, inquisitive people in our house, were inconvenient and burdensome, but at the time the very constraint added a zest to our love. He was as far as I was from showing any sign that anything was not to his liking. On the contrary, he positively shut his eyes as it were to what was amiss. Mamma's footman, Dmitry Sidorov, who was very fond of the pipe, used regularly, every day after dinner, when we were in the divan-room, to go into my husband's study and take his tobacco out of the drawer. And it was worth seeing the good-humoured consternation with which Sergey Mihalovitch would come up to me on tiptoe, and holding up his finger and winking, point to Dmitry Sidorov, who had not the slightest suspicion that he was seen. And when Dmitry Sidorov had retreated without noticing us, my husband, delighted that everything had ended so satisfactorily, would declare, as at every other opportunity, that I was 'a darling,' and kiss me. Sometimes I did not like this easy-going readiness to forgive everything, this sort of disregard of everything, and without noticing that it was just the same with me, I considered it a weakness, 'Like a child who dare not show his will!' I thought.

'Ah, my dear,' he answered, when I said to him one day that I was surprised at his

weakness, ‘how can one be displeased at anything when one is as happy as I am? It’s easier to give way oneself than to overrule others—of that I have long been convinced—and there is no position in which one cannot be happy. And we are so happy, I cannot be angry; for me now there is nothing wrong, it is all only pitiful or amusing. And above all—le mieux est l’ennemi du bien. Would you believe it, when I hear the bell ring, when I receive a letter, when I simply wake up, I’m in terror—terror at having to go on with life, at some change coming in it; for better than the present there can never be?’

I believed him, but I did not understand him; I was happy, but it seemed to me that this was always so and could not be otherwise, and was always so with every one, and that somewhere ahead there was another happiness, not greater, but different.

So passed two months. Winter had come with its frosts and its storms, and I had begun, in spite of his being with me, to feel lonely. I had begun to feel that life was a repetition of the same thing; that there was nothing new either in me or in him; and that, on the contrary, we kept going back as it were on what was old. He began to give himself up to his work apart from me more than before, and I began to feel again that he had in his soul a sort of private world of his own into which he did not wish to admit me. His everlasting serenity irritated me. I loved him no less than before, and was as happy as before in his love. But my love had come to a standstill, and was not growing greater, and besides my love a sort of new feeling of restlessness had begun to steal into my soul. Loving was not enough for me after the happiness I had known in learning to love him. I longed for activity, not for a peaceful evenly flowing life. I longed for excitement, danger, and sacrifice for my feeling. I had a surplus of energy that found no outlet in our quiet life. I had attacks of depression, which I tried to hide from him, as something wrong, and attacks of frenzied gaiety and passion that alarmed him. He was aware of my state of mind before I was, and suggested our going to town. But I begged him not to go, not to change our mode of life, not to break up our happiness. And I really was happy; but

my torment was that this happiness cost me no sort of effort, no sort of sacrifice, while energy for effort, for sacrifice, was fretting me. I loved him, and saw that I was everything to him; but I longed for every one to see our love, for people to try and hinder my loving him, so that I could love him in spite of everything. My mind, and even my feelings, were occupied, but there was another feeling—the feeling of youth, the need of activity, which found no satisfaction in our quiet life. Why had he suggested that we might go to town when that was all I desired? If he had not said that, may be I should have seen that the feeling that made me miserable was harmful nonsense, was my fault; that the sacrifice I was looking for was here before me in the conquering of that feeling. The idea that I could escape from my depression simply by moving to town had involuntarily occurred to me; and at the same time I should have been ashamed and sorry to tear him away from all he loved for my sake. But time went by, the snow drifted higher and higher against the walls of the house, and we were still alone and alone, and were still the same to one another; while far away somewhere, in bright light and noise, crowds of people were in movement, were suffering and rejoicing, without a thought of us and our existence as it passed away. What was worst of all to me was the feeling that every day the routine of our life was nailing our life down into one definite shape; that our feeling was becoming not spontaneous, but was affected by bondage to the monotonous, passionless action of time. In the morning we were cheerful, at dinner polite, in the evening tender. ‘Good!...’ I said to myself, ‘that’s all very well, to do good and lead an upright life, as he says, but we’ve plenty of time for that, and there is something else for which I only have the energy now.’ That was not what I needed, I needed strife; I wanted feeling to guide us in life, and not life to be the guide to feeling. I longed to go with him to the edge of a precipice and to say, ‘Another step, and I fling myself down! another movement and I am lost!’ and for him, pale at the edge of the abyss, to snatch me up in his strong arms, hold me over it, so that my heart would stand still, and bear me away whither he would.

My state of mind positively affected my health, and my nerves began to suffer. One morning—I was worse than usual—he came back from his counting-house out of humour, which was rare with him. I noticed it at once, and asked him what was the matter; but he would not tell me, saying it was of no consequence. As I found out later, the captain of the district police had summoned our peasants, and from ill-will to my husband had made illegal exactions from them, and had used threats to them. My husband had not yet been able to stomach all this so as to feel it all simply pitiful and absurd; he was irritated, and so did not want to speak of it to me. But I fancied that he did not care to tell me about it because he regarded me as a child who could not understand what interested him. I turned away from him, was silent, and then sent to Marya Minitchna, who was staying with us, to ask her to come to tea. After tea, which I finished unusually quickly, I took Marya Minitchna off to the divan-room and began a loud conversation with her about some nonsense which was utterly uninteresting to me. He walked about the room, glancing now and then at us. Those glances for some reason or other had the effect on me of making me want to talk and even laugh more and more. Everything I said seemed funny to me, and everything Marya Minitchna said. Without saying anything to me he went away into his study and closed the door after him. As soon as he was not there to hear, all my gaiety suddenly vanished, so that Marya Minitchna wondered and asked me what was the matter.... I did not answer, but sat down on a sofa and felt inclined to cry. ‘And what is he inventing to worry over?’ I thought. ‘Some nonsense which he thinks important; but if he will only tell me, I’ll show him it’s all rubbish. No; he must needs suppose I shouldn’t understand, must needs humiliate me with his stately composure, and always be in the right with me. But I’m right too when I’m bored and dreary, when I want to live, to move about,’ I thought, ‘and not to stick in the same place and feel that time is passing over me. I want to go forward, and every day, every hour, I want novelty; while he wants to stop still and to keep me stopping still with him. And how easy it would be for him! There’s no need for this to take

me to town; all he needs to do is to be as I am, not to school himself away from his nature, not to hold himself in, but to live simply. That's the very thing he tells me to do, but he's not simple himself. So there!' I felt that tears were gathering, and that I was angry with him. I was dismayed at this anger, and went in to him. He was sitting in his study writing. Hearing my footsteps, he looked round for an instant, carelessly and calmly, and went on writing. That glance displeased me; instead of going up to him I stood at the table at which he was writing, and opening a book began looking at it. He broke off once more and looked at me.

'Masha, are you cross?' he said.

I responded by a cold glance, which said, 'You needn't ask—why this politeness?' He shook his head and smiled timidly and tenderly, but for the first time my smile did not respond to his smile.

'What happened to-day?' I asked. 'Why wouldn't you tell me?'

'Nothing of consequence, a trifling annoyance!' he answered. 'I can tell you now, though. Two peasants had gone to the town....'

But I did not let him finish his tale.

'Why was it you wouldn't tell me when I asked you at tea?'

'I should have said something stupid; I was angry then.'

'It was then I wanted you to.'

'What for?'

'Why do you imagine that I can never be any help to you in anything?'

'What do I imagine?' he said, flinging down his pen. 'I imagine that I can't live without you. In everything, everything you're not merely a help to me, but you do everything. So that's the discovery you've been making!' he laughed. 'I only live through you. It seems to me that all is well simply because you are here, because you....'

‘Yes, I know all that; I’m a dear child who must be tranquillised!’ I said, in such a tone that he looked at me in wonder, as though he was seeing me for the first time. ‘I don’t want tranquillity, there’s enough of it in you, quite enough,’ I added.

‘Well, do you see this was what was the matter,’ he began hurriedly, interrupting me, evidently afraid to let me give utterance to all I was feeling. ‘What would you say about it?’

‘I don’t care to hear it now!’ I answered. Though I did want to hear him, it was so agreeable to me to trouble his tranquillity of mind. ‘I don’t want to play at life, I want to live,’ I said, ‘just as you do.’

On his face, which always reflected every feeling so quickly and so vividly, there was a look of pain and of intense attention.

‘I want to live with you on equal terms.’ But I could not go on; such sadness, such profound sadness, was apparent in his face. He was silent for a little.

‘But in what way are you not on equal terms with me?’ he said. ‘Is it because I, and not you, have to deal with the police captain and drunken peasants?’

‘Oh, not only that,’ I said.

‘For God’s sake, understand me, my dear,’ he went on. ‘I know that we are always hurt by shocks; I have lived and learned that. I love you, and consequently I can’t help wanting to save you from shocks. That’s my life, my love for you, so don’t you hinder my living either.’

‘You are always right!’ I said, not looking at him.

It annoyed me that again in his soul all was clear and calm, while I was full of vexation and a feeling like remorse.

‘Masha! what is the matter with you?’ he said. ‘The point is not whether I am right or you are right, but of something quite different. What have you against me? Don’t speak at once, think a little, and tell me all you are thinking about. You are vexed

with me, and you're probably right, but do let me know what I've done wrong?'

But how could I tell him all that was in my heart? The fact that he understood me at once; that again I was a child before him; that I could do nothing that he would not understand and have foreseen, exasperated me more than ever.

'I have nothing against you,' I said; 'it's simply that I'm dull, and I don't want to be dull. But you say it must be so, and again you are right!'

I said this and glanced at him. I had attained my aim; his tranquillity had gone, alarm and pain were visible in his face.

'Masha,' he began in a gentle, troubled voice, 'this is no jesting matter what we are doing now. It is our fate that is being decided now. I beg you to make no answer, but to listen to me. Why do you want to make me suffer?'

But I interrupted him.

'I know you will be right. You'd better not speak—you are right!' I said coldly, as though not I, but some evil spirit in me were speaking.

'If you only knew what you are doing!' he said in a shaking voice.

I burst into tears, and I felt better. He sat down beside me and kept silence. I felt sorry for him and ashamed of myself, and vexed at what I had done. I did not look at him. It seemed to me that he must be looking at me either severely or in perplexity at that moment. I looked round; a soft tender glance was fixed upon me as though asking forgiveness. I took him by the hand and said—

'Forgive me—I don't know what I said myself.'

'No; but I know what you said, and you said what is true.'

'What?' I asked.

'That we must go to Petersburg,' he said; 'there's nothing for us to do here now.'

'As you wish,' I said.

He put his arms round me and kissed me.

‘You forgive me,’ he said; ‘I have acted wrongly towards you.’

That evening I played to him a long while, and he walked about the room murmuring something. He had the habit of murmuring to himself, and I often used to ask him what he was whispering, and he would always after a moment’s thought tell me exactly what he had been saying; generally, lines of verse, and sometimes fearful nonsense, but always of a kind which showed me his humour at the time.

‘What are you whispering to-day?’ I asked.

He stopped, thought a little, and with a smile quoted the two lines of Lermontov—

‘And in his madness prays for storms,

As though in storms he might find peace.’

‘No, he’s more than a man, he knows everything!’ I thought. ‘How can one help loving him?’

I got up, took him by the arm, and began walking with him, trying to keep step with him.

‘Yes?’ he asked smiling, and watching me.

‘Yes,’ I said in a whisper, and a sort of mood of mirth came upon us both, our eyes laughed, and we made our strides longer and longer, and rose more and more upon tiptoe. And with this stride, to the great horror of Grigory and the amazement of mamma, who was playing patience in the drawing-room, we pranced through all the rooms as far as the dining-room, and there stopped, looked at each other, and went off into a roar of laughter.

A fortnight later, before Christmas, we were in Petersburg.

II

Our journey to Petersburg, the week in Moscow, my relations and his, settling into a new home, the road, the new places and persons—all this passed like a dream. It was

all so varied, so new, so gay; it was all so warmly and brightly lighted up by his presence, his love, that our quiet country life seemed to me something long past and of no importance. To my great astonishment, instead of the worldly haughtiness and frigidity I had expected to find in people, every one met me with such unfeigned cordiality and pleasure (not only our kinsfolk, but strangers too), that it seemed as though they had been thinking of nothing but me, had only been waiting for me to be happy themselves. It was also something quite unexpected by me that in the circle of society, which seemed to me the very best, my husband had, as it appeared, many acquaintances of whom he had never talked to me. And often it seemed strange and unpleasant to me to hear from him severe criticisms of some of those people who seemed to me so nice. I could not understand why he was so reserved with them, and tried to avoid making many acquaintances which seemed to me flattering. It seemed to me that the more nice people one knew the better, and that all were nice.

‘This is how we will manage, do you see,’ he had said to me just before we left the country: ‘here I am a little Croesus, but there we shall be people of very modest means, and so we must only stay in town till Easter, and not go into society, or else we shall get into difficulties; and besides, I shouldn’t care to for your sake.’

‘Why go into society?’ I answered; ‘we’ll only see the theatres and our relations, hear the opera and some good music, and even before Easter will go back to the country.’

But as soon as we had arrived in Petersburg these plans were forgotten. I found myself all of a sudden in such a new happy world, so many delights encompassed me, such new interests opened out before me, that at once, though unconsciously, I renounced all my past and all the plans of that past. ‘That was after all mere trifling; it hadn’t begun, but this is the thing! And what will come next?’ I thought. The restlessness and the fits of depression that had worried me in the country had all at

once, as though by magic, completely vanished. My love for my husband had become calmer, and it never occurred to me here to wonder whether he loved me less. And indeed I could not doubt his love; every thought I had was instantly understood, every feeling was shared, every desire fulfilled. His tranquillity disappeared here or no longer irritated me. Besides I felt that here, besides his former love for me, he was admiring me too. Often after paying a call, on being introduced to some new acquaintance, or entertaining a party of friends in the evening, when I had performed the duties of hostess, trembling inwardly in fear of making some blunder, he would say: 'Ah! bravo, little girl, capital, don't be frightened! That's capital, really!' And I was highly delighted. Soon after our arrival he wrote a letter to his mother; and when he called me to add a word from myself, he would not let me read what he had written, which led me of course to insist, and I read: 'You would not know Masha,' he wrote; 'indeed, I hardly know her myself. Where can she have picked up this charming, gracious composure, affability, social tact, and high breeding, in fact. And it's all so simple, charming, sweet. Every one's in ecstasies over her, and I myself am never tired of admiring her, and, if it were possible, I should love her more than before.'

'Oh! so that's what I am like!' I thought. And I was so gay and happy, I even fancied that I loved him more than ever. My success with all our acquaintances was a complete surprise to me. I was continually being told on all hands that there I had made a particularly good impression on an uncle; that here an aunt had been quite bewitched by me; here a man declared that there were no women like me in Petersburg; and there a lady assures me that I have but to wish it in order to become the woman most sought after in society. A cousin of my husband's, in particular, a Princess D., a society woman no longer young, who had impetuously fallen in love with me, used more than any one to say flattering things to me that turned my head. When this cousin invited me for the first time to go to a ball, and asked my husband about it, he turned to me, and with a scarcely perceptible sly smile, asked, 'Did I

want to go?' I bent my head in token of assent, and felt that I blushed.

'She's like a criminal confessing what she wants,' he said, laughing good-humouredly.

'But, you know, you said that we couldn't go into society, and besides, you don't like it,' I answered, smiling, and looking with imploring eyes at him.

'If you want to very much, we'll go,' he said.

'We had better not, really.'

'Do you want to ... very much?' he asked again.

I did not answer.

'Society is no great calamity so far,' he went on; 'but an unsatisfied craving for society, that's bad, and ugly too. We certainly must go, and we will go,' he wound up resolutely.

'To tell you the truth,' I said, 'I never longed for anything in the world so much as this ball.'

We went to the ball, and my enjoyment of it surpassed all my expectations. At the ball, even more than before, it seemed to me that I was the centre round which everything was moving; that it was only for me that the great hall was lighted up, the music was playing, and that crowd of people, ecstatically admiring me, had come together. Every one, from the hairdresser and the ladiesmaid, to my partners and the old gentlemen walking about the hall, told me, or gave me to understand, that they loved me. The general criticism passed upon me at that ball, and reported to me afterwards by our cousin, was that I was utterly unlike other women, that there was something individual in me, the charm of the country, simple and exquisite. This success so flattered me that I frankly told my husband how I should like that year to go to two or three more balls, 'so as to have had quite enough of them,' I added hypocritically.

My husband readily agreed, and at first accompanied me with evident pleasure, enjoying my triumph, and apparently quite forgetting or giving up the decision he had expressed before.

Later on he became obviously bored and weary of the life we were leading. But I had no thoughts for that; if I did sometimes notice his intent, serious gaze, fixed inquiringly upon me, I refused to understand its significance. I was so blinded by that devotion to me I seemed to see suddenly aroused in all outsiders, that atmosphere of luxury, pleasure, and novelty, which I was breathing here for the first time, his moral influence that had repressed me had so quickly vanished here. It was so pleasant for me in this world to feel not merely on a level with him, but superior to him, and for that to love him even more and more independently than before, that I could not imagine what drawbacks he could see for me in fashionable life. I had a feeling of pride and self-satisfaction quite new to me when, as we entered a ball-room, all eyes were turned upon me; while he, as though ashamed to claim his ownership of me before the crowd, made haste to leave me and obliterate himself in the throng of black coats.

‘Wait a little!’ I often thought while my eyes sought him, an inconspicuous, often weary-looking figure at the further end of the hall. ‘Wait a little!’ I thought: ‘we shall go home, and you will see and understand for whose sake I tried to be beautiful and brilliant, and what it is I love out of all that surrounds me this evening.’ I quite sincerely fancied, indeed, that my triumphs only delighted me by enabling me to sacrifice them to him. The only way in which fashionable life might be harmful to me was, I thought, the possibility of being attracted by one of the men I met in society, of arousing my husband’s jealousy. But he had such trust in me, he seemed so tranquil and indifferent, and all the young men I met seemed so unimportant in comparison with him, that the sole danger of society, as I considered it, did not frighten me. But, all the same, the attentions of many men in society afforded me gratification, flattered my vanity, led me to imagine that there was a sort of merit in

my love for my husband, and made my behaviour with him more self-confident and, as it were, more casual.

‘Oh, I saw how eagerly you were talking with N. N.,’ I said one evening on the way home from a ball, shaking my finger at him, and mentioning a well-known Petersburg lady with whom he had been talking that evening. I said this to rouse him—he was particularly silent and bored.

‘Oh, why talk like that? And you it is talking like that, Masha!’ he murmured through his teeth, knitting his brow as though in physical pain. ‘How unsuitable it is with you and me! Leave that to others; these false relations may spoil our real ones, and I still hope the real will come back.’

I felt ashamed, and I did not speak.

‘Will they come back, Masha? What do you think?’ he asked.

‘They have never been spoilt, and will not be spoilt,’ I said. And at the time I really thought so.

‘God grant it may be so,’ he commented, ‘or else it would be high time for us to be back in the country.’

But it was only once that he spoke like this, the rest of the time it seemed to me that he was as well content as I was, and I was so delighted and happy. If he really were dull sometimes, I comforted myself by reflecting I too had been dull for his sake in the country. If our relations really had altered somewhat, it would all come back again as soon as we were by ourselves again in the summer with Tatyana Semyonovna in our house at Nikolskoe.

So the winter slipped away without my noticing it, and, regardless of our plans, we spent Holy Week too in Petersburg. On Low Sunday, when we were making preparations for our departure, everything had been packed, and my husband, who had already made purchases of presents, flowers, and various things for our country life, was in a particularly warm and cheerful state of mind, his cousin arrived

unexpectedly, and began begging me to stay till Saturday so as to go to a soirée at Countess R.'s. She said that Countess R. was most pressing in her invitation; that a certain foreign Prince M. had been eager to make my acquaintance ever since the last ball; that it was simply with that object that he was coming to the soirée, and that he said that I was the prettiest woman in Russia. All Petersburg was to be there, and in fact it would be simply monstrous if I were not to go.

My husband was at the other end of the drawing-room talking to some one.

'Well, so you'll come, Marie, eh?' said his cousin.

'We meant to go into the country the day after to-morrow,' I answered irresolutely, glancing at my husband. Our eyes met; he hurriedly turned away.

'I will persuade him to stay,' said his cousin, 'and we'll go on Saturday to break hearts, eh?'

'That would upset our plans, and we've packed,' I answered, beginning to yield.

'Why, she'd better drive round this evening and pay her respects to the prince,' my husband said from the other end of the room, in a tone of repressed anger, such as I had never heard from him.

'Oh, he's jealous; why, it's the first time I've seen it!' laughed his cousin. 'Why, it's not for the prince's sake, Sergey Mihalovitch, but for all of us, I'm trying to persuade her. How Countess R. did entreat her to come!'

'It rests with her,' my husband commented frigidly, and he went out of the room.

I saw that he was moved beyond his wont. This distressed me, and I made no promise to his cousin. As soon as she had gone, I went in to my husband. He was walking up and down absorbed in thought, and neither saw nor heard me come into the room on tiptoe.

'He's picturing his dear Nikolskoe,' I thought, looking at him, 'and his morning coffee in the light drawing-room, and his fields and the peasants, and the evenings in

the divan-room, and our secret suppers in the night.... No,' I decided inwardly, 'I'd give up all the balls in the world, and the flattery of all the princes in the world, for his glad confusion, his gentle caress.' I was going to tell him that I wouldn't go to the soirée, and didn't want to go, when he suddenly looked round, and seeing me, frowned, and the gently dreamy expression of his face changed. Again penetration, sagacity, and patronising composure were expressed in his eyes. He did not care for me to see him as a plain man; he wanted always to be a demigod standing on a pedestal before me.

'What is it, my dear?' he asked, turning carelessly and calmly to me.

I did not answer. It annoyed me that he was reserved with me, would not remain as I loved him.

'You want to go on Saturday to the soirée?' he queried.

'I did want to,' I answered, 'but you dislike it. Besides, everything's packed,' I added.

Never had he looked at me so coldly, never had he spoken so coldly to me.

'I won't go till Tuesday, and will order the things to be unpacked,' he said, 'so that you can go if you are disposed. As a favour to me, do go. I'm not going away.'

He began, as he always did when he was troubled, to walk jerkily up and down the room, without looking at me.

'I positively don't understand you,' I said, standing still and following him with my eyes: 'you say you are always so calm.' He never had said so. 'Why do you talk to me so strangely? I am ready to sacrifice this pleasure for your sake, and in a sort of ironical way in which you've never spoken to me before you insist on my going?'

'Well! you make sacrifices (he laid special stress on this word), and I make sacrifices—what can be better? It's a conflict of generosity. Isn't that what you call domestic happiness?'

It was the first time I had heard from him such bitterly sneering words. And the sneer did not put me to shame, but offended me; and the bitterness did not alarm me, but infected me. Did he say this, he who had always shunned phrases in our relations, he always genuine and direct? And in return for what? For my really having wanted to sacrifice for him a pleasure in which I could see nothing wrong, and for my having so well understood and loved him a minute before. Our parts were changed; he avoided direct and simple statements, while I sought them.

‘You are very much changed,’ I said, sighing; ‘in what way have I been in fault? It’s not the soirée, but something before that that you have in your heart against me. Why this want of straightforwardness? Didn’t you feel such dread of it yourself once? Tell me straight out what you have against me?’ ‘What can he say?’ I wondered, reflecting complacently that there had been nothing he could reproach me with all that winter.

I came forward into the middle of the room, so that he was obliged to pass close by me, and looked at him. He would come up, embrace me, and all would be over, was the thought that occurred to me, and I felt positively sorry I should not have the chance of showing him how wrong he was. But he stopped at the end of the room and stared at me.

‘Do you still not understand?’ he said.

‘No.’

‘Well, then, I will tell you. It’s loathsome to me, for the first time what I feel and cannot help feeling is loathsome to me....’ He stopped, evidently shocked at the harsh sound of his own voice.

‘But what is it?’ I asked, with tears of indignation in my eyes.

‘It’s loathsome that the prince thought you pretty, and that consequently you are rushing to meet him, forgetting your husband and yourself and womanly dignity, and refuse to understand what your husband must feel about you, if you’ve no

feeling of dignity in yourself. On the contrary, you come to tell your husband that you will sacrifice it, that is, “to exhibit myself to His Highness, would have been a great happiness, but I sacrifice it.”’

The longer he spoke, the more furious he grew with the sound of his own voice, and that voice had a cruel, malignant, coarse note in it. I had never seen, had never expected to see him like this. The blood rushed to my heart, I was frightened, but a feeling of undeserved shame and wounded vanity excited me, and I longed to revenge myself on him.

‘I have long been expecting this,’ I said; ‘say it, say it!’

‘I don’t know what you’ve been expecting,’ he went on. ‘I might well have expected the worst, seeing you every day in the uncleanness and idleness and luxury of this silly society, and I’ve got it too. I’ve come to feeling ashamed and sick to-day, as I have never felt for myself. When your friend with her unclean hands pryed into my heart and began talking of jealousy, my jealousy—of whom?—a man whom neither I nor you know. And you, on purpose it seems—refuse to understand me and want to sacrifice to me—what?... I’m ashamed of you, ashamed of your degradation!... Sacrifice!’ he repeated.

‘Ah, here we have it, the power of the husband,’ I thought, ‘to insult and humiliate his wife, who is in no way to blame. These are a husband’s rights, but I won’t submit to it.’

‘No, I won’t sacrifice anything to you,’ I declared, feeling my nostrils dilating unnaturally and the blood deserting my face. ‘I’m going to the soirée on Saturday; I shall certainly go!’

‘And God grant you may enjoy it, only everything’s over between us!’ he shouted in a fit of ungovernable fury. ‘But you will never torture me any more. I was a fool to ...’ he began again, but his lips quivered, and with a visible effort he refrained from finishing what he was saying.

I feared and hated him at that moment. I wanted to say a great deal to him and to revenge all his insults. But if I had opened my mouth, I should have cried and lowered myself before him. I walked out of the room without a word. But as soon as I ceased to hear his steps, I was at once aghast at what we had done. I was in terror that the tie which made up my whole happiness would be severed for ever, and I wanted to go back. 'But has he sufficiently recovered his composure to understand me when I mutely hold out my hand to him and look at him?' I wondered. 'Will he understand my generosity? What if he calls my sorrow hypocrisy? Or with a sense of his rectitude and haughty composure, accepts my repentance and forgives me? And why, why has he, whom I loved so much, so cruelly insulted me?'

I went not to him, but to my own room, where I sat a long while alone, and wept with terror, going over every word of the conversation between us, substituting for those words others, adding other kind words, and again with horror and a feeling of humiliation remembering what had happened. When I went in to tea in the evening, and in the presence of S., who had called, met my husband, I felt that from that day a gulf had opened between us. S. asked me when we were going? Before I had time to answer, my husband replied, 'On Tuesday; we're going to the soirée at Countess R.'s? You're going, of course?' he said, turning to me.

I was frightened at the sound of this direct speech, and looked timidly at my husband. His eyes were looking straight at me, their expression was vindictive and sneering, his voice was cold and steady.

'Yes,' I answered.

In the evening when we were alone, he came up to me and held out his hand.

'Please forget what I said to you!' he said. I took his hand, a faltering smile was on my face, and tears were ready to gush from my eyes, but he drew back his hand; and as though dreading a sentimental scene, sat down in a low chair at some distance from me. 'Can he possibly still consider himself in the right?' I wondered, and the

words of reconciliation and the entreaty not to go to the soirée that were on the tip of my tongue were never uttered.

‘We must write to mother that we’ve put off leaving,’ he said, ‘or else she’ll be uneasy.’

‘But when are you thinking of going?’ I asked.

‘On Tuesday, after the soirée,’ he answered.

‘I hope that’s not on my account?’ I said, looking into his eyes. But his eyes looked blankly at me and told me nothing, as though they were hidden by a cloud from me. His face struck me suddenly as old and disagreeable.

We went to the soirée, and good, friendly relations seemed re-established between us; but these relations were quite different from what had been once.

At the soirée I was sitting among some ladies when the prince came up to me in such a way that I had to get up to talk to him. As I got up, I could not help looking for my husband, and I saw him look at me from the other end of the room and turn away. I felt suddenly so ashamed and sick that I was miserably confused, and blushed all over my face and neck under the prince’s eyes. But I was obliged to stand up and listen to what he said to me, as he scanned me, looking down at me. Our conversation did not last long—there was nowhere for him to sit down beside me, and he probably felt that I was very uncomfortable with him. We talked of the last ball, of where I was to spend the summer, and so on. On leaving me, he expressed a desire to be introduced to my husband, and I saw them brought together and talking at the other end of the room. The prince probably said something about me, for in the middle of the conversation he looked with a smile in my direction.

My husband all at once flushed hotly, made a low bow, and walked away from the prince. I blushed too; I was ashamed to think what an impression the prince must have received of me, and still more of my husband. It seemed to me that every one noticed my awkward embarrassment while I was talking to the prince and my

husband's strange behaviour in leaving his side. There was no knowing what interpretation they would put on it. Didn't they know by now of my talk with my husband about the prince? His cousin took me home, and on the way I talked to her about my husband. I could not restrain myself, and told her all that had passed between us in regard to this luckless soirée. She comforted me, assuring me that it was just an ordinary tiff, of no importance, and leaving no traces. She explained to me my husband's character from her point of view, saying that he had grown very haughty and unsociable. I agreed with her, and it seemed to me that I myself understood him better and more sensibly now.

But afterwards, when I was alone with my husband, this criticism of him lay on my conscience like a crime, and I felt that the gulf that separated us had grown wider.

III

From that day our life and our relations were completely changed. We were not so happy by ourselves as before. There were questions we avoided touching upon, and conversation came easier to us before a third person than face to face. Whenever the conversation turned on life in the country or touched on the ball, we were both as it were a little dizzy, and had an awkwardness in looking at one another. It was as though we were both aware where the gulf lay that parted us, and dreaded going near it. I was persuaded that he was proud and hot-tempered, and that I must be on my guard not to irritate him on his weak points. He was convinced that I could not live without society, that the country was distasteful to me, and that he must submit to this unfortunate taste; and we both avoided plain speech about these subjects, and both judged each other falsely. We had long ceased to be the most perfect creatures in the world in each other's eyes; now we made comparisons with others, and secretly judged each other. I fell ill just before we were to leave town; and instead of going back to the country, we moved to a summer villa in the outskirts, and from there my husband went home alone to see his mother. When he left me, I had

recovered sufficiently to have gone with him, but he persuaded me to stay where I was, on the pretext of anxiety about my health. I felt that he was not afraid for my health, but of our not getting on well in the country; I did not insist very warmly, and was left behind. Without him I felt dull and solitary; but when he came back, I saw that he did not add to my life what he had added once. Our old relations—when any thought, any impression, not shared with him, weighed on me like a crime, when every act, every word of his, seemed to me the pattern of perfection, when we wanted to laugh for glee, looking at each other,—these relations had so imperceptibly passed into others that we had not discovered that they were no more. Each of us had found our separate interests, which we did not now attempt to share. It had even ceased to trouble us that each had a separate private world, shut off from the other. We had grown used to that idea, and a year later we no longer felt awkward when we looked at each other. Utterly vanished were his moods of wild gaiety with me, his boyishness, his readiness to forgive everything, and carelessness of everything, which had once worried me; there was no more that deep gaze that had once troubled and rejoiced me, no more prayers and ecstasies together. We did not often see each other even. He was continually absent on journeys, and did not dread, did not regret leaving me, while I was continually in society where I had no need of him.

There were no more scenes and quarrels between us; I tried to satisfy him; he did everything I wished, and we loved one another in a way.

When we were left alone, which rarely happened, I felt no joy, no emotion, no confusion, in being with him; it was as though I were by myself. I knew very well that this was my husband—not any new, unknown person, but a good man—my husband, whom I knew as I knew myself. I was certain that I knew everything he would do, what he would say, and how he would look; and if he acted or looked not as I had expected, it seemed to me indeed that it was by mistake. I expected nothing from him. In fact, he was my husband and nothing more. It seemed to me that this

was as it should be indeed, and that any other relations do not generally exist, and, indeed, between us never had existed. When he was away, particularly at first, I had felt lonely, nervous; in his absence, I recognised more keenly the value of his support to me. When he returned, I flung myself on his neck in delight, though two hours later I had completely forgotten this delight, and I had nothing to say to him. Only in the moments of quiet, sober tenderness, which did occur between us, it seemed to me that something was wrong, that I had an ache at my heart, and in his eyes it seemed to me I read the same thing. I was conscious of that limit of feeling beyond which he, it seemed, would not and I could not step. Sometimes this was a grief to me, but I had no time for brooding over anything, and I tried to forget this grief at the vaguely felt change in diversions which were always in readiness for me. Society life, which at first had dazzled me by its brilliance and the flattery of my vanity, soon had a complete hold on my inclinations, became a habit, laid its shackles upon me, and occupied in my heart all the space there was for feeling. I never remained alone, and dreaded brooding over my position. All my time, from late in the morning to late at night, was occupied and did not belong to me, even if I did not go out anywhere. This was now neither pleasing nor boring to me, but it seemed that so and not otherwise it must always have been.

So passed three years, during which our relations remained the same, came as it were to a full stop, crystallised, and could become neither worse nor better. In these three years two events of importance occurred in our family life, but neither of them affected my life. They were the birth of my first baby and the death of Tatyana Semyonovna. At first the feeling of motherhood came upon me with such force, and produced such unexpected ecstasy in me, that I thought a new life was beginning for me; but two months later, when I began to go out into society again, this feeling, growing less and less, passed into habit and coldly doing my duty. My husband, on the contrary, from the time of the birth of our first child, became the gentle, tranquil man he had been in the past, always in his own home, and the same tenderness and

gaiety he had shown in the past was now devoted to the child. Often when I went into the nursery in a ball dress to sign my child with the cross for the night, and found my husband in the nursery, I caught his eyes fixed on me, as it were reproachfully and sternly scrutinising, and I felt ashamed. I was suddenly horrified at my indifference to my child, and asked myself, ‘Can I be worse than other women? But what can I do?’ I thought. ‘I love my son, but I can’t sit for days at a time with him; it bores me, and I’m not going to sham feeling for anything.’ His mother’s death was a great grief to him. It was painful to him, as he said, to be at Nikolskoe after her loss; but for me, though I was sorry for her and sympathised with my husband’s grief, it was pleasanter and more comfortable now in the country. The greater part of all these three years we spent in town. I was only once for two months in the country, and in the third year we went abroad.

We spent the summer at a watering-place. I was then twenty-one. Our circumstances were, I supposed, in a flourishing condition; from my home life I demanded nothing more than it gave. Every one I knew, it seemed to me, loved me; my health was good, my dresses were the smartest at the springs; I knew that I was handsome. The weather was magnificent; a peculiar atmosphere of beauty and elegance surrounded me, and I was very happy. I was not happy as I used to be at Nikolskoe, when I felt that I was happy in myself, that I deserved that happiness, that my happiness was great, but that it must be even greater because one longed for more and more happiness. Then it was different, but this summer, too, I was well content. I wanted nothing; I hoped for nothing; I feared nothing. My life, it seemed to me, was full, and my conscience, it seemed, was at rest. Of all the young men I met that season, there was not one whom I distinguished in any way from the rest, or even from old Prince K., our ambassador, who was very attentive to me. One was young, another was old; one was a light-haired Englishman, another a Frenchman with a beard; all were alike to me, but all were indispensable. It was all these equally indistinguishable persons that made up the joyous atmosphere of life about me. Only

one of them, an Italian, Marchese D——, drew my attention more than the rest by the boldness with which he expressed his adoration to me. He never let slip a chance of being with me, of dancing, riding, being at the casino and so on with me, and of telling me that I was beautiful. Sometimes I saw him out of window near our house, and often the unpleasant intent stare of his brilliant eyes made me blush and look round. He was young, handsome, elegant, and, above all, in his smile and the expression of his brow he resembled my husband, though he was far better looking. This likeness struck me in him, although in general, in his lips, in his eyes, in his long chin, instead of the exquisite expression of kindliness and idealistic serenity of my husband, there was something coarse and animal. I imagined at the time that he loved me passionately, and sometimes thought of him with proud commiseration. I sometimes tried to pacify him, to lead him into a tone of gentle, half-affectionate confidence, but he abruptly repelled those attempts and continued to disturb me disagreeably by his unexpressed passion, that threatened every moment to find expression. Though I did not own it to myself, I was afraid of this man, and against my will I often thought of him. My husband was acquainted with him, and he behaved even more coldly and superciliously with him than with our other acquaintances, to whom he existed only as the husband of his wife. Towards the end of the season I was ill, and did not leave the house for a fortnight. When, for the first time after my illness, I went out in the evening to listen to the music, I found out that a certain Lady S., a famous beauty, who had long been expected, had arrived during this interval. A circle gathered round me, people met me with delight; but an even better circle had gathered around the celebrated beauty. Every one about me was talking of nothing but her and her beauty. She was pointed out to me, and she certainly was charming; but what struck me disagreeably was the conceited expression of her face, and I said so. That day everything seemed to me dull that had before seemed so agreeable. Next day Lady S. got up a party to visit the castle, which I declined to join. Scarcely any one remained with me, and everything was

utterly transformed in my eyes. Everything and every one seemed to me stupid and dull; I wanted to cry, to make haste and finish our cure, and to return to Russia. In my soul there was a sort of evil feeling, but I had not yet acknowledged it to myself. I declared myself still not strong, and gave up showing myself in society, merely going out now and then in the morning alone to drink the waters, or taking drives into the neighbouring country with L. M., a Russian lady of my acquaintance. My husband was not there at that time; he had gone away for a few days to Heidelberg, while waiting for the end of my cure to return to Russia, and he only came over to see me from time to time.

One day Lady S. carried off all the fashionable society of the place to a hunt, and L. M. and I drove after dinner to the castle. While we were driving slowly in our carriage up the winding road under the venerable chestnut trees through which the pretty, elegant environs of Baden lay before us in the distance lighted up by the setting sun, we talked seriously, as we had not talked before. L. M., whom I had known for a long while, struck me now for the first time as a good intelligent woman, to whom one could say anything, and with whom it was pleasant to be friends. We talked of home and children, and the emptiness of the life here; we longed to be in Russia, in the country, and felt a sort of pleasant melancholy. Under the influence of this serious feeling we went into the castle. Within the walls it was cool and shady, overhead the sun played about the ruins, steps and voices were audible. Framed as it were by the doorway, we saw that view of Baden, exquisite, though frigid to our Russian eyes. We sat down to rest, and gazed in silence at the setting sun. The voices reached us more distinctly, and it seemed to me that my surname was mentioned. I began listening, and unconsciously we heard every word. The voices I knew; it was Marchese D. and the Frenchman, a friend of his, whom I knew too. They were talking about me and Lady S. The Frenchman compared her with me, and analysed the beauty of each. He said nothing insulting, but the blood rushed to my heart when I heard his words. He enumerated minutely the good points

in me and in Lady S. I had already had a child, while Lady S. was only nineteen. My hair was better, but Lady S. had a more graceful figure; Lady S. was a grand lady; 'while yours,' said he, 'is only middling, one of those little Russian princesses who so often turn up here nowadays.' He wound up by saying that I did well not to fight it out with Lady S., and that I was as good as buried in Baden.

'I'm sorry for her.'

'If only she doesn't want to console herself with you ...' he added with a cruel laugh of amusement.

'If she goes away, I go after her!' a voice declared coarsely in an Italian accent.

'Happy mortal, he can still love!' laughed the Frenchman.

'Love!' said the voice, and paused. 'I can't not love—there's no life without it. To make a romance of life is the one thing worth while. And my romance never stops in the middle, and this I will carry through to the end.'

'Bonne chance, mon ami,' said the Frenchman.

We heard no further, for they had gone round the corner, and we heard their steps on the other side. They came down the stairs, and a few minutes later came out of a side door, and were much surprised to see us. I blushed when Marchese D. approached me, and felt frightened when, on leaving the castle, he gave me his arm. I could not refuse, and we walked together to our carriage behind L. M., who was walking with his friend. I was mortified by what the Frenchman had said about me, though I secretly owned that he only put into words what I had myself been feeling. But the Marchese's words had astounded and shocked me by their coarseness. I was miserable at the thought that I had heard his words, and in spite of that he was not afraid of me. I was disgusted at feeling him so close to me; and without looking at him, without answering him, I tried to hold my arm so as not to hear what he said while I walked hurriedly after L. M. and the Frenchman. The Marchese said something about the fine view, about the unexpected happiness of meeting me, and

something more, but I did not hear him. I was thinking just then of my husband, my child, Russia; I felt ashamed of something, regretted something, longed for something; and I was in a hurry to get home to my solitary room in the Hôtel de Bade so as to ponder at my leisure over all that had only just begun to stir in my heart. But L. M. walked slowly; it was still some distance to the carriage; my escort, as I fancied, obstinately slackened his pace, as though trying to keep me. 'Impossible!' I thought, and resolutely walked faster. But he positively detained me, and even squeezed my arm. L. M. turned the corner of the road, and we were completely alone. I felt frightened 'Excuse me!' I said coldly, and tried to get my hand free, but the lace of my sleeve caught in his button. Bending down with his chest towards me, he began to disentangle it, and his ungloved fingers touched my hand. A feeling new to me—half terror, half pleasure—ran like a shiver down my back. I glanced at him to show by a cold look all the contempt I felt for him. But my glance expressed not that—it expressed alarm and excitement. His glowing, moist eyes, close up to my very face, stared passionately at me, at my neck, at my bosom, both his hands fingered my arm above the wrist, his open lips said something—said that he loved me, that I was everything to him—and those lips were approaching me, and those hands squeezed mine more tightly, and seemed to burn me. A flame ran through my veins, a mist was before my eyes, I shuddered, and the words with which I tried to stop him died away in my throat. Suddenly I felt a kiss on my cheek, and all chill and shivering I stopped and looked at him. Incapable of either speaking or moving, I stood in terror, expecting and desiring something. It all lasted for one moment. But that moment was awful! I saw the whole of him so completely at that moment. I understood his face so thoroughly; under the straw hat, that steep, low brow, so like my husband's, that handsome straight nose with dilated nostrils, those long moustaches and little beard waxed into points, those smooth shaven cheeks and sunburnt neck. I hated, I feared him—he belonged to a different world. But at that moment something in me responded so intensely to the excitement and passion of

that hated alien man. Such an insuperable longing was in me to abandon myself to the kisses of that coarse and handsome mouth, to the embraces of those white hands with delicate veins and rings on their fingers. Such a craving possessed me to fling myself headlong into the inviting abyss of forbidden pleasures that had suddenly opened at my feet.

'I'm so miserable,' I thought; 'let more and more misery gather about me.'

He put one arm about me, and bent down to my face.

'Let more and more shame and sin be heaped up on my head.'

'Je vous aime,' he whispered, in the voice which was so like my husband's voice. It brought back to me my husband and child, beings so long precious to me, with whom now all was over. But suddenly at that moment L. M., out of sight round the turn in the road, called to me. I came to myself, tore my hand away, and not looking at him almost ran after L. M. We got into the carriage, and only then I glanced at him. He took off his hat and asked me something, smiling. He had no notion of the unutterable loathing I was feeling for him at that instant.

My life seemed to me so miserable, the future so hopeless, the past so black. L. M. talked to me, but I did not take in what she said. It seemed to me that she was talking to me simply from pity, to conceal the contempt I aroused in her. In every word, in every look, I seemed to detect that contempt and insulting pity. The kiss burnt my cheek with shame, and the thought of my husband and child was more than I could bear. I had hoped to think over my position when I was alone in my room, but I was afraid to be alone. I did not drink the tea they brought me; and, not knowing why I did so, began at once with feverish haste to get ready for the evening train to go to Heidelberg to my husband. When I was sitting with my maid in an empty carriage, when the engine had started and the fresh air blew on me from the window, I began to recover my self-possession, and to picture my past and my future more clearly. All my married life from the day when we moved to Petersburg suddenly presented

itself to me in a new light, and lay like a reproach on my conscience. For the first time I vividly recalled our early days together in the country, our plans; for the first time it occurred to me to ask, What had been his joys all this time? And I felt that I had wronged him. 'But why didn't he stop me? Why was he hypocritical with me? Why did he avoid frank discussion? Why did he humiliate me?' I asked myself. 'Why did he not use all the power love gave him over me? Or did he not love me?' But however he might be to blame, a stranger's kiss lay on my cheek, and I felt it. The nearer I got to Heidelberg, the more definitely I imagined my husband, and the more terrible did the approaching interview with him seem to me. 'I will tell him all, all; I will wipe out all with tears of repentance,' I thought, 'and he will forgive me.' But I could not have said what was the 'all' I would tell him, and I did not believe myself that he would forgive me.

But as soon as I went into the room to my husband, and saw his tranquil, though surprised, face, I felt that I had nothing to tell him, nothing to confess, and nothing to ask his forgiveness for. My grief and remorse must remain locked up within me.

'What fancy is this?' he said. 'Why, I meant to come to you to-morrow.' But looking more closely into my face, he seemed alarmed. 'What is it? what's the matter?' he said.

'Nothing,' I answered, hardly able to restrain my tears. 'I've come for good. Let's start to-morrow for Russia.'

He bent a rather long, silent, and intent look upon me.

'But tell me what has happened to you?' he said.

I could not help blushing and dropping my eyes. In his eyes there was a gleam of mortification and anger. I was dismayed at the ideas that might occur to him; and with a ready hypocrisy I had never expected of myself, I said—

'Nothing has happened, simply I felt dull and depressed alone, and I have been thinking a great deal of our life and of you. For such a long time I have been to

blame towards you! Why should you come out here with me, where you've no wish to be? I've long been to blame in my behaviour to you,' I repeated, and again tears came into my eyes. 'Let us go back to the country and stay there for ever.'

'Oh, my dear, spare me sentimental scenes,' he said coldly. 'So far as wanting to go back to the country goes, it's a good thing indeed, for our money's running short; but your "for ever's" a dream. I know you won't stay long. Now drink some tea, and you'll feel better,' he concluded, getting up to ring for the waiter.

I imagined all he might be thinking of me, and I was humiliated at the fearful thought I ascribed to him, as I met his incredulous, and, as it were, shame-stricken eyes fixed upon me. No, he cannot and will not understand me! I said I would go and have a look at the baby, and went out of the room. I longed to be alone and to weep and weep and weep.

IV

The Nikolskoe house, so long empty and unwarmed, was full of life again, but not so those who lived in it. My mother-in-law was no more, and we were alone face to face with each other. But now we were far from wanting solitude; it was a constraint to us indeed. The winter was all the worse for me from my being unwell; and I only recovered my health, indeed, after the birth of my second son. My relations with my husband continued to be the same cold, friendly relations as during our life in town. But in the country every board, every wall, every sofa recalled to me what he had been to me, and what I had lost. It was as if an unforgiven injury lay between us, as though he were punishing me for something, and affecting to be himself unaware of it. There was nothing to beg forgiveness for, nothing to ask for mercy from; he punished me simply by not giving me up all himself, all his soul as before. But to no one, to nothing did he give it, as though he had it not. Sometimes it occurred to me that he was only pretending to be like this to torment me; that the old feeling was still living in him, and I tried to evoke it. But every time he seemed to shun

frankness, as though he suspected me of affectation and dreaded all sentiment as ludicrous. His look and tone said: 'I know it all; I know it all—no need to talk about it; and all you want to say I know too. And I know, too, that you say one thing and do another.' At first I was offended by this avoidance of openness, but afterward I got used to think that it was not the fear of openness, but the absence of the desire for openness. I could not easily bring my tongue now to tell him that I loved him, or to ask him to read the prayers with me, or to invite him to listen while I played. One could feel the existence of certain settled stipulations of propriety between us now. We lived each our separate life; he with his pursuits, in which I had no need and no desire now to share; I with my idleness, which did not vex or grieve him now as before. The children were too little, and could not as yet be a bond between us.

But spring came. Katya and Sonya had come for the summer to the country, alterations were to be made in the house at Nikolskoe, and we removed to Pokrovskoe. The old house was just the same, with its verandah, its folding table and piano in the bright hall, and my old room, with its white curtains and dreams of girlhood, that seemed left forgotten in that house. In that room there were two beds—one, in old days mine, in which my fat little Kokosha lay when I made the sign of the cross over him in the evenings, while in the other, a little one, Vanya's little face peeped out of his nightclothes. After signing them with the cross, I often used to stand still in the middle of the quiet room; and all at once, from every corner, from the walls, from the curtains, there rose up the old forgotten visions of youth. The old voices of the songs of girlhood began singing again. And where were those visions? What had become of those sweet, tender songs? All had come to pass that I had scarcely dared to hope for. The vague dreams melting into one another had become reality, and the reality had become a dreary, difficult, and joyless life. And everything was the same; the same garden one could see from the window, the same path, the same seat out there above the ravine, the same nightingale's songs floating in from near the pond, the same lilac in full flower, and the same moon over our

house—and yet all so terribly, so incredibly changed! Everything so cold that might be so precious and so near one's heart! Just as in old days, sitting in the drawing-room, Katya and I, we talk softly together, and we talk of him. But Katya is yellow and wrinkled, her eyes do not sparkle with joy and hope, but express sympathetic distress and commiseration. We do not sing his praises as we did of old, we criticise him; we don't wonder what we have done to be so happy; nor long, as of old, to tell all the world what we think. Like conspirators, we whisper to one another, and ask each other for the hundredth time, Why has it all changed so sadly? And he is still the same, except that the line is deeper between his brows, and there is more grey hair about his temples; but the profound, intense look in his eyes is clouded over for ever from me. I, too, am still the same, but I have no love nor the desire of love, no longing for work, nor content with myself. And so remote and impossible seemed to me now my old religious ecstasies, my old love for him, and my old intense life, I could not have understood now what had once seemed so dear and right to me—the happiness of living for others. Why for others, when one did not care even to live for oneself?

I had completely given up music ever since we moved to Petersburg; but now the old piano, the old music-books were a refuge for me again.

One day I was not well, I stopped at home alone; Katya and Sonya had driven with him to Nikolskoe to look at the new building there. The table was set for tea, I went down, and while waiting for them sat down to the piano. I opened the sonata quasi una fantasia, and began playing it. No one was within sight or hearing, the windows were open into the garden, and the familiar, majestically melancholy music resounded in the room. I finished the first part, and quite unconsciously, from old habit, looked round to the corner in which he used once to sit listening to me. But he was not there. The chair, long unmoved, stood in the corner; and past the open window I could see the lilac in the bright sunset, and the evening freshness flowed into the room. I leaned my elbows on the piano, hid my face in both hands, and

pondered. I sat a long while so, with a heartache recalling all the past that could not come back, and timidly considering what was to come. But before me it seemed that there was nothing; it seemed that I desired nothing and hoped for nothing. ‘Can I have lived out my life?’ I thought with horror; and lifting my head, I tried to forget myself, to escape thinking by playing again, and began again the same andante. ‘My God!’ I thought, ‘forgive me, if I am in fault, or restore me what was once so good in my soul, and teach me what to do, how to live now!’ The sound of wheels over the grass and at the entrance reached me, and familiar steps could be heard stepping cautiously in the verandah and ceasing. But the old feeling did not stir in response to those familiar footsteps. When I had finished, I heard the steps behind me, and a hand was laid on my shoulder.

‘What a clever girl you are to play that sonata!’ he said.

I did not speak.

‘Have you had tea?’

I shook my head, and did not look round at him for fear of betraying the traces of emotion left on my face.

‘They’ll be here directly; the horse was too fresh, and they’ve come on foot from the highroad,’ he said.

‘Let’s wait for them,’ I said, and went out into the verandah, hoping he would come after me; but he asked after the children and went up to them. Again his presence, his simple, kindly voice made me doubt whether anything had been lost by me. ‘What more could I desire? He’s kind and gentle, he’s a good father, and I don’t know myself what more I want.’ I went out on the balcony and sat under the verandah awning on the very seat on which I had sat on the day of our avowal of love to one another. The sun had set now; it was beginning to get dusk; and one of the dark rainclouds of springtime was hanging over the house and garden. Only through the trees could be seen the clear rim of the sky with the fading glow and the

evening star beginning to shine. Over all hung the shadow of a transparent cloud, and everything seemed waiting for a gentle spring shower. The wind had dropped; not one leaf, not one blade of grass was stirring; the scent of the lilac and the wild cherry, strong as though all the air were in flower, hovered over the garden and verandah suddenly in gusts growing fainter, and intenser, so that one wanted to close one's eyes and see nothing, hear nothing, shutting out everything but this sweet fragrance. The dahlias and the rose-bushes, not yet in flower, stood immovably erect on their well-dug black bed as though they were slowly growing upwards on their white-shaved sticks. In piercing chorus the frogs croaked with all their might from the ravine, as though for the last time before the rain which would drive them to the water. The single continuous sound of water rose above their harsh croak. The nightingales called at intervals, and one could hear them flitting in alarm from spot to spot. Again this spring a nightingale was building in a bush under the window; and when I came out, I heard him fly away to the avenue, and there utter one note; then he ceased, waiting too.

In vain I tried to be calm, and waited and grieved for something. He came back from upstairs and sat down beside me.

'I think they'll get wet,' he said.

'Yes,' I assented, and we were both for a long while silent.

The cloud sank lower and lower in the windless sky; everything became more hushed, more fragrant, and more still; and all at once a drop fell and, as it were, leaped up again on the sailcloth awning of the verandah, another splashed on the gravel of the path, there was a patter on the burdocks, and the fresh rain began falling more heavily in big drops. The nightingales and the frogs were quite silent, only the thin sound of water, though it seemed further off through the rain, still persisted; and some bird hidden in the dry leaves, probably near the verandah, repeated regularly its monotonous two notes. He got up, and was about to go away.

‘Where are you going?’ I asked, detaining him. ‘It’s so nice here.’

‘I meant to send them an umbrella and goloshes,’ he said.

‘There’s no need; it will soon be over.’ He agreed with me, and we remained together by the verandah balustrade. I rested my arm on the slippery, wet rail and put my head out. The fresh rain pattered unevenly on my hair and neck. The cloud, getting lighter and thinner, was passing over us; the even patter of the rain changed into drops, dripping irregularly from above and from the leaves. Again the frogs began croaking below, again the nightingales began to stir, and from the wet bushes called to one another from one side and then from the other. All the sky was clear again in front of us.

‘How nice it is!’ he said, sitting near me on the balustrade, and passing his hand over my wet hair.

This simple caress affected me like a reproach. I wanted to cry.

‘And what more can a man want?’ he said. ‘I am so contented now that I want nothing; perfectly happy!’

‘That was not how you used once to speak of your happiness!’ I thought. ‘However great it was, you used to say that you always wanted more and more. But now you are satisfied and content, while my heart is full as it were of unuttered repentance and unshed tears.’

‘And I feel it’s nice,’ I said; ‘but I’m sad just from it’s all being so nice before my eyes. It’s all so disconnected, so incomplete in me, there’s a continual longing for something, though it’s so peaceful and happy here. Surely you too have a sort of melancholy mingling in your enjoyment of nature, as though you longed for some thing of the past?’

He took his hand from my head and was silent for a while.

‘Yes, it used to be so with me, particularly in the spring,’ he said, as though recalling

it. ‘And I used to sit up the whole night too, longing and hoping, and happy nights they were!... But then everything was in the future, and now it’s all behind; now what is, is enough for me, and I find it splendid,’ he concluded, with such convincing carelessness, that painful as it was to hear it, the belief forced itself on me that he was speaking the truth.

‘And is there nothing you wish for?’ I asked.

‘Nothing impossible,’ he answered, guessing my feeling. ‘See, you’re getting your head wet,’ he added, once more passing his hand over my hair as though caressing a child; ‘you envy the leaves and the grass for the rain wetting them; you would like to be the grass and the leaves and the rain; while I merely rejoice in them, as I do in everything in the world that is good and young and happy.’

‘And do you regret nothing of the past?’ I went on questioning, feeling that my heart was growing heavier and heavier.

He pondered and was silent again. I saw that he wanted to answer quite sincerely.

‘No!’ he answered briefly.

‘Not true, not true!’ I said, turning to him and looking into his eyes. ‘You don’t regret the past?’

‘No,’ he repeated once more. ‘I am thankful for it, but I don’t regret the past.’

‘Do you mean to say you would not desire to have it back?’ I said.

He turned and began looking into the garden.

‘I don’t desire it, as I don’t desire to have wings,’ he said. ‘It’s impossible!’

‘And would you not correct the past; don’t you reproach yourself or me?’

‘Never! All has been for the best.’

‘Listen!’ I said, touching his arm to make him look round at me. ‘Listen: why did you never tell me that you wanted me to live just as you did want me to? Why did you give me a freedom I did not know how to use? Why did you give up teaching

me? If you had cared, if you had managed me differently, nothing, nothing would have happened!' I said in a voice more and more intensely expressive of cold anger and reproach, and not the love of old days.

'What wouldn't have happened?' he said in surprise, turning to me; 'why nothing did, as it is. All's well. Very well!' he added, smiling.

'Can it be he does not understand, or, worse still, doesn't want to understand?' I thought, and tears came into my eyes.

'It wouldn't have happened that though I have done you no wrong, I am punished by your indifference, your contempt even!' I burst out suddenly. 'It wouldn't have happened that for no fault of mine you took away from me all that was precious to me.'

'What do you mean, my dear?' he said, as though not understanding what I was saying.

'No, let me speak.... You took away from me your confidence, your love, your respect even, because I don't believe that you love me now after what it was in old days. No; I want to have out once for all what has been making me miserable a long while,' I said, preventing his speaking again. 'Was it my fault that I knew nothing of life, and you left me to find it out alone?... Is it my fault that now when of myself I have come to see what is essential, when for nearly a year I've been struggling to get back to you—you repel me as though not understanding what I want, and all in such a way that it's impossible to reproach you while I'm either to blame or unhappy? Yes, you want to fling me back into that life, which might well make the misery of us both.'

'But in what way have I shown you that?' he asked, in genuine dismay and surprise.

'Didn't you only yesterday say, and you're for ever saying that I can't stand being here, and that we shall have to go back for the winter to Petersburg, which is hateful to me?' I went on. 'Instead of being a support to me, you avoid all frank speech, any

sincere tender word with me. And then when I fall utterly, you will reproach me and rejoice at my fall.'

'Stop, stop!' he said sternly and coldly; 'that's wrong what you're saying now. That only proves that you feel ill-will against me, that you do not——'

'That I don't love you?... Say it, say it!' I completed his sentence, and tears streamed from my eyes. I sat down on the seat and hid my face in my handkerchief.

'This is how he understands me!' I thought, trying to restrain the sobs that choked me. 'Our old love is over, over!' a voice said in my heart. He did not come to me, did not comfort me. He was offended by what I had said. His voice was dry and composed.

'I don't know what it is you reproach me with,' he began; 'if it is that I don't love you as once I did....'

'Did love!' I exclaimed in the handkerchief, and the bitter tears streamed more violently into it.

'Time is to blame for that and we ourselves. Each stage has its love.' He paused. 'And shall I tell you the whole truth if you desire frank speech?... Just as that year when I got to know you I spent sleepless nights thinking of you and created my love for myself, and that love grew and grew in my heart, in the same way in Petersburg and abroad I spent awful nights without sleep, and crushed, tore to shreds, that love that was my torture. I did not crush it, but only what tortured me. I found peace, and still I love you, but with a different love.'

'Yes, you call it love, but it's a torture!' I said. 'Why did you let me go into society if you thought it so harmful that you lost your love for me on account of it?'

'It was not society, my dear!' he said.

'Why didn't you use your authority?' I went on. 'Why didn't you tie me up, kill me? It would have been better for me now than to be deprived of all that made my

happiness. I should be happy, I shouldn't be ashamed.'

I sobbed again, and hid my face.

At that moment Katya and Sonya, wet and good-humoured, came into the verandah, loudly chattering and laughing; but seeing us, they were quiet, and at once went in.

We sat a long while silent when they had gone; I wept away my tears, and felt better. I glanced at him. He was sitting with his head propped in his hands, and he wanted to say something in response to my look, but he only sighed heavily, and again leaned on his elbow. I went up to him and took away his hand. His eyes rested dreamily upon me.

'Yes,' he began, as though going on with his thoughts. 'All of us, especially you women, have to go for themselves through all the nonsense of life to come back to life itself; they can't believe any one else. You were far then from having got through all that sweet charming nonsense, which I used to admire as I watched you, and I left you to get through it, and felt that I had no right to hinder you, though for me that time had long gone by.'

'Why did you live through it with me and let me live through that nonsense if you loved me?' I said.

'Because you would have tried, but would not have been able, to believe me; you had to find out for yourself ... and you have found it out.'

'You reasoned, you reasoned much,' said I. 'You loved little.'

Again we were silent.

'That's cruel what you said just now, but it's the truth!' he said suddenly, getting up and walking about the verandah. 'Yes, it's the truth. I was to blame,' he added, stopping opposite me. 'Either I ought not to have let myself love you at all, or I ought to have loved you more simply, yes!'

'Let us forget it all ...' I said timidly.

‘No, what’s past will not come back, one can never bring it back!’ and his voice softened as he said this.

‘Everything has returned now ...’ I said, laying my hand on his shoulder.

He took my hand away and pressed it.

‘No; it was not true when I said I did not regret the past. No, I do regret it, I weep for our past love—love which is no more, and can never come again. Who is to blame for it, I don’t know. Love is left, but not the same; its place is left, but it is all wasted away; there is no strength and substance in it, there are left memories and gratitude, but——’

‘Don’t say so!’ I interrupted. ‘Let it all be again as it was before.... It can be, can’t it?’ I asked, looking into his eyes. But his eyes were clear and untroubled, and they did not look deeply into mine. At the moment I was saying it, I felt that what I desired and asked him about was impossible. He smiled a quiet, gentle, as it seemed to me, elderly smile.

‘How young you are still, and I am so old!’ he said. ‘There is not in me what you are looking for.... Why deceive ourselves?’ he added, still with the same smile.

I stood mutely beside him, and there was greater peace in my heart.

‘Don’t let us try to repeat life,’ he went on; ‘we won’t lie to ourselves. And that we are rid of the heartaches and emotions of old days, thank God indeed! We have no need to seek and be troubled. We have found what we sought, and happiness enough has fallen to our lot. It’s time now for us to stand aside and make way, see, for this person!’ he said, pointing to Vanya, in the arms of the nurse, who was standing at the verandah doors. ‘That’s so, dear one,’ he ended, drawing my head to him and kissing it. It was not a lover, but an old friend kissing me. And from the garden the fragrant freshness of the night rose sweeter and stronger, the night sounds and stillness grew more and more solemn, and the stars thronged more thickly in the sky. I looked at him, and there was a sudden sense of ease in my soul, as though that sick

moral nerve which made me suffer had been removed. All at once I felt clearly and calmly that the feeling of that time had gone never to return, like the time itself, and that to bring it back now would be not only impossible, but painful and forced. And indeed was that time so good which seemed to me so happy? And it was all so long, so long ago!

‘It’s time for tea, though!’ he said, and we went together into the drawing-room. At the door we met again the nurse and Vanya. I took the baby into my arms, covered his bare red little toes, hugged him to me and kissed him, just touching him with my lips. He moved his little hand with outspread wrinkled fingers, as though in his sleep, and opened vague eyes, as though seeking or recalling something. Suddenly those little eyes rested on me, a spark of intelligence flashed in them, the full pouting lips began to work, and parted in a smile. ‘Mine, mine, mine!’ I thought, with a blissful tension in all my limbs, pressing him to my bosom, and with an effort restraining myself from hurting him.

And I began kissing his little cold feet, his little stomach, his hand and his little head, scarcely covered with soft hair. My husband came up to me; I quickly covered the child’s face and uncovered it again.

‘Ivan Sergeitch!’ said my husband, chucking him under the chin. But quickly I hid Ivan Sergeitch again. No one but I was to look at him for long. I glanced at my husband, his eyes laughed as he watched me, and for the first time for a long while it was easy and sweet to me to look into them.

With that day ended my love-story with my husband, the old feeling became a precious memory never to return; but the new feeling of love for my children and the father of my children laid the foundation of another life, happy in quite a different way, which I am still living up to the present moment.

1859.

POLIKUSHKA

POLIKUSHKA

I

‘IT’s as you’re pleased to command, madam, only I’m sorry for the Dutlovs! They’re all—every one of them—good lads; but since there’s not a house-serf to send, one of them’s bound to go,’ said the bailiff. ‘As it is, every one’s pointing to them. It’s as your honour wills, of course.’

And he shifted his right hand over his left, holding both before his stomach, bent his head on the other side, drew in his thin lips, almost with a whistle, turned up his eyes, and sank into silence, with the unmistakable intention of remaining silent a long while and hearing without comment all the nonsense his mistress would be sure to say upon the subject. He was a bailiff, a serf, a close-shaven man in a long coat, of the peculiar bailiff cut, who was standing one autumn evening before his mistress with his report. Receiving the report consisted from the lady’s point of view in listening to the accounts of past agricultural operations and giving directions for future ones. From the point of view of Yegor Mihalovitch, the bailiff, the presentation of the report was a ceremonial that consisted of standing evenly on both bandy legs, in a corner, with his face to the sofa, listening to all sorts of irrelevant chatter, and leading the mistress by various devices up to the point of saying quickly and impatiently, ‘Very well, very well,’ to all Yegor Mihalovitch’s suggestions.

At that moment the question was the furnishing of conscripts. Three had to be sent from Pokrovskoe. Two were unmistakably pointed out by the very finger of fate, by the conjunction of domestic, moral, and financial considerations. As regards them, there could be no hesitation nor dispute on the part of the mir, on the part of their mistress, or on the part of public opinion. The third was the subject under

discussion. The bailiff wanted to save Dutlov, who had three lads in his household eligible, and to send the family house-serf Polikushka, who had a very bad reputation, and had more than once been guilty of stealing bags, harness, and hay. The mistress, who had often petted Polikushka's ragged children, and was attempting to reform his morals by exhortations from the gospel, did not want to give him up. At the same time, she had no ill-will towards the Dutlovs, whom she did not know, and had never noticed. But for some reason she was unable to grasp the fact that, if Polikushka did not go, Dutlov must go, and the bailiff hesitated to explain this point in so many words to her. 'Oh, I don't wish the Dutlovs to be unhappy!' she said with feeling. 'If you don't wish it, then pay the three hundred roubles in lieu of a recruit,' was the answer that ought to have been made to that. But policy forbade it.

And so Yegor Mihalovitch remained standing quietly, leaned a little towards the doorpost, and fell to gazing at his mistress's lips moving, at the ruche in her cap dancing up and down, together with her shadow on the wall under the picture. But he did not feel it in the least necessary to penetrate to the meaning of her remarks. The lady talked a long while, and said a great deal. He felt a twitching impulse to yawn behind his ears, but he adroitly changed this nervous quiver into a cough, covering his mouth with his hand, and affecting to clear his throat. I had not long before seen Lord Palmerston sitting with his hat on, while a member of the Opposition thundered against the ministry; then, suddenly rising, he replied in a three hours' speech to every point his adversary had made. I saw this, and did not marvel at it, because I had seen something like it a thousand times over between Yegor Mihalovitch and his mistress. Either because he was afraid of dropping asleep, or because it struck him that she was getting very much wrought up, he shifted the weight of his person from the left leg to the right, and began with the time-honoured formula with which he used always to begin:—

'It's as you will, madam, only, only—the mir meeting's standing before the

counting-house now, and one must make an end. In the order it says they must take recruits before Intercession to the town. And of the peasants it's the Dutlovs that all point to, and no one else. The mir cares nothing for your interests; it's all one to them if we do ruin the Dutlovs. I know, to be sure, what a struggle they've had. Why, ever since I've been bailiff, they've always been living in poverty. The old man's gone on, only reckoning on his younger nephews growing up to be a help, and now we must put them back to ruin again. But I, as your honour's well aware, care for your property as for my own. It's a pity, madam, it's as you're pleased to command! They're no kith nor kin to me, and I've taken nothing from them——'

'Oh, I never thought of such a thing, Yegor,' put in his mistress, and she suspected at once that he had been bribed by the Dutlovs.

'Only it's the best homestead in all Pokrovskoe—God-fearing, hard-working peasants. The old man was for thirty years church elder, never touches a drop, nor uses a bad word, goes to church' (the bailiff knew what sop would be acceptable); 'and what's the great thing I put before you, he has only two sons, and then the nephews. The mir pitches on him, but in reality he ought to be reckoned among the households of two. Others with three sons have divided into separate households in their foolishness, and now they're right enough, while these have to suffer for their prudence.'

Here his mistress failed to grasp anything; she had no notion what 'separate households' and 'households of two' meant in this connection. She simply heard the sound of the bailiff's voice, and looked at the nankin buttons on his coat; the top one he probably did not often button, so it was quite firmly on; but a middle one was dragged out and hanging, and ought to have been sewed on long ago. But as we are all aware, for purposes of conversation, especially on matters of business, it is not at all necessary to understand what is said to you—the only thing necessary is to remember what you want to say yourself. And that the lady did on this occasion.

‘How is it you won’t understand me, Yegor Mihalovitch?’ she said; ‘I don’t in the least desire a Dutlov to be sent for a soldier. I should have thought you might judge from what you know of me, that I do all I can to assist my peasants, and don’t desire their unhappiness. You know that I’m ready to make every sacrifice to escape from this melancholy necessity, and not to let either Dutlov go or Horyushkin.’ (I don’t know whether it occurred to the bailiff that to escape from this melancholy necessity there was no need to make every sacrifice, the sacrifice of three hundred roubles would be sufficient; but that reflection easily might have occurred to him.) ‘But one thing I tell you plainly, that I won’t let Polikey go on any account. After that affair with the clock, when he confessed of himself to me, and wept and swore that he would reform, I talked a long while to him, and saw that he was touched and sincerely penitent.’ (‘Well, she’s off now!’ thought Yegor Mihalovitch, and he began scrutinising the marmalade which had been put in her glass of water—orange or lemon was it? ‘Bitter it’s sure to be,’ he thought.) ‘Here it’s seven months since then, and he’s never once been tipsy, and his conduct is excellent. His wife told me that he’s become a different man. And how would you have me punish him now when he’s reformed? And besides, wouldn’t it be inhumanity to send a man who has five children and only he to keep them? No; you’d better not talk to me about that, Yegor.’

And the lady took a sip from the glass. Yegor Mihalovitch watched the progress of the water down her throat, and then replied shortly and drily—

‘Then your orders are to fix upon Dutlov?’

His mistress flung up her hands.

‘How is it you can’t understand me? Do I want to make the Dutlovs miserable? Do you suppose I have anything against them? God is my witness that I’m ready to do anything for them.’ (She glanced at the picture on the wall, but bethought herself that it was not God. ‘Well, that’s no matter, though,’ she thought. It was strange

again that she did not stumble upon the idea of the three hundred roubles.) ‘But what am I to do? Do I know how and why? I can’t know that. Well, I rely upon you, you know what I want. You act so that all may be content according to law. What’s one to do? They’re not the only ones, all have their painful moments. Only Polikey can’t be sent away. You understand that would be a horrid thing for me to do.’

She would have gone on longer—she was so deeply stirred; but at that moment a maidservant came into the room.

‘What is it, Dunyasha?’

‘A peasant has come, bid me ask Yegor Mihalovitch is it his orders the meeting’s to wait?’ said Dunyasha, and she glanced wrathfully at Yegor Mihalovitch. (‘Ugh, that bailiff!’ she thought, ‘upsetting the mistress; now she won’t let us get to sleep till one o’clock again.’)

‘You can go then, Yegor,’ said the lady. ‘Do the best you can.’

‘Yes, ma’am.’ He said no more now of Dutlov. ‘And whom do you bid me send to the gardener for the money?’

‘Is Petrusha not yet back from the town?’

‘No, ma’am.’

‘Can’t Nikolay go?’

‘Father’s laid up with lumbago,’ said Dunyasha.

‘Wouldn’t your honour desire me to go myself to-morrow?’ asked the bailiff.

‘No; you’re wanted here, Yegor.’ The lady pondered. ‘How much is it?’

‘Four hundred and sixty-two roubles.’

‘Send Polikey!’ said the lady, glancing resolutely into the face of Yegor Mihalovitch.

Yegor Mihalovitch, without parting his teeth, drew his lips back, as though he smiled, and did not change countenance.

‘Yes, ma’am.’

‘Send him to me.’

‘Yes, ma’am,’ and Yegor Mihalovitch went off to the counting-house.

II

Polikey, being a man of no importance, and of tarnished reputation, and coming, too, from another village, had had no chance of obtaining privileges through the housekeeper or the butler, through the bailiff or the lady’s-maid, and his corner was of the very poorest, although he and his wife and children made a family of seven. The corners had been built by the late master in this way. In a stone hut twenty-three feet square a Russian stove was placed in the centre; all round it was the collider (as the house-serfs called it), and at each angle a corner was partitioned off with boards. Space was consequently not plentiful, especially in Polikey’s corner, which was nearest the door. The conjugal couch with quilted counterpane and cotton chintz pillows, the hanging cradle with the baby, the three-legged table at which the cooking and the washing were done, and on which all the household goods were put, and at which Polikey himself did his work (he was a horse-doctor), tubs, clothes, fowls, a calf, and the seven of themselves filled up the whole corner; and they could not have stirred had not the common stove offered them one quarter of its surface on which things and persons could impartially be laid, and had it not been possible, too, to find an outlet on the steps. That, though, was hardly possible; in October it was cold, and their winter clothes consisted of a solitary sheepskin for the seven; but then the children could keep warm by running, and the grown up folks by work, and both could creep on to the stove where the warmth rose to forty degrees Réaumur. It must be terrible, one imagines, to live in such conditions, but it did not trouble them—one could get on all right. Akulina washed and mended for her husband and children, spun and wove and bleached her linen, cooked and baked in the common oven, quarrelled and gossiped with the neighbours. There were not only monthly

rations enough for the children, but litter for the cow as well. Kindling wood was free, and food for the beasts too. Hay too from the stable sometimes came their way. There was a strip of kitchen garden. Their cow had calved; they had their own chickens. Polikey worked in the stables, looked after two colts, and bled the horses and cattle; cleaned their hoofs, cured them of worms, and applied an ointment of his own invention, and a few coppers and provisions were bestowed on him for this. There were leavings of the oats too to be picked up. In the village there was a peasant who regularly, every month, gave him twenty pounds of mutton for two measures of oats. One could have got on well enough if there had been no trouble at heart. But trouble there was, and plenty of it for all the family. Polikey had been in his youth in another village at a stud stable. The stable-keeper into whose hands he came was the greatest thief in the whole district; at last he was sent away to a penal settlement. From this stable-keeper Polikey received his training; and owing to his youth, he had grown so used to ‘such silly ways,’ that he couldn’t give them up even when he’d have been glad to. He was a young man, and weak; he had no father or mother, and no one to teach him. Polikey liked drink, and did not like anything lying about in the wrong place. Whether it was a rope or a pad, or a lock or a bolt, or something of more value, Polikey Ilyitch found a place for everything. There were people everywhere who would take these articles and pay for them in spirits or money, according to agreement. Such wages are the easiest earned, as the people say; no apprenticeship nor labour—nothing is needed—and if once you try it, you never care for other work after. There’s only one drawback to such gains, though everything’s to be had cheap and without toil, and the life’s pleasant as a rule; all of a sudden this line of business will come to grief through evil-disposed folk, and one has to pay for everything, and may find life a burden.

That was just what happened with Polikey. Polikey had married; God had given him good luck; his wife, the cow-herd’s daughter, had turned out a healthy, clever, hard-working woman, had borne him children, each finer than the last. Polikey still

stuck to his line of business, and all went well. All at once a mischance befell him, and he was caught. And caught for the merest trifle; he had popped away some leather reins at a peasant's. They found them, beat him, reported it to the mistress, and began to keep an eye on him. A second and a third time he was caught. Folk began to cry shame on him, the bailiff threatened sending him for a soldier, the mistress reprimanded him, his wife began crying and fretting.... Everything went utterly wrong! He was a good-natured fellow, and no harm in him, only weak, liked a drop of drink, and had dropped into such a habit of this sort of thing that he could not give it up anyhow. Sometimes his wife would start rating at him, even beating him when he came home drunk, and he'd cry. 'Unlucky fellow I am,' he would say. 'What can I do? Blind my eyes, but I'll give it up, I will.' A month later you'd see him leaving home again, going off drinking, and staying away for two days. 'He must have got the money from somewhere for his spree,' folks reasoned. His last exploit was with the counting-house clock. There was in the counting-house an old clock hanging on the wall; it hadn't gone for a long while. He chanced to go into the counting-house alone; he took a fancy to the clock, carried it off, and disposed of it in the town. As ill-luck would have it, the shopkeeper to whom he sold the clock happened to be related by marriage to one of the house-serfs, and he came to the village for a feast-day, and told them about the clock. Folks began making inquiries, just as though it were any concern to anybody. The bailiff in particular did not like Polikey. And they found the culprit. They reported it to the mistress. The mistress sent for Polikey. He fell at her feet at once, and with feeling, touchingly, made a full confession, as his wife had told him to do. He carried out all her instructions very well. The mistress began reasoning with him, talked away, preached away; talked of God, and of virtue, and of the future life, and of his wife, and of his children, and reduced him to tears. The mistress said—

'I forgive you; only promise me you will never do it again.'

'I never will; damn my soul, confound me, rip me open if I do!' said Polikey, and he

wept pathetically.

Polikey went home, and lay on the stove, bellowing like a calf all day. Since then nothing had once been traced to Polikey. But his life had not been a gay one; folks looked on him as a thief, and as the time for levying recruits drew near, every one began to point to him.

Polikey was a horse-doctor, as already stated. How he had all at once become so no one knew, and he less than any one. In the stud stables, under the man who had been sent to a settlement, he had performed no duty except clearing the dung out of the horse-boxes, sometimes rubbing down the horses, and bringing water. There he could not have learnt his art. Then he had been a weaver; then he had worked in the garden, weeding paths; then, as a punishment, he had been sent to the brickyard; then, being allowed to go off on payment of a fixed sum a year to his master, he went into service as house-porter to a merchant. So there too he could not have had practice in his art. But the last time he came home a belief gradually somehow gained ground in his extraordinary, almost supernatural, in fact, knowledge of the veterinary art. He let blood—once, and a second time—then laid a horse on its back, and probed something in its leg, then insisted on the horse being fastened to a bench, and began cutting its pastern till the blood came, in spite of the struggles and even screams of the horse, and said that this meant ‘letting off the under-hoof blood.’ Then he explained to the peasant that it was essential to take blood from both veins ‘for greater ease,’ and began tapping with a mallet on his blunt lancet. Next he bound a bandage made of the selvedge of a woman’s headkerchief round the belly of the porter’s horse. Finally he took to sprinkling all sorts of sores with vitriol, wetting rags from a bottle, and sometimes giving internally what he thought fit. And the more horses he tortured and did to death, the more they believed in him, and the more horses were brought to him.

I feel that it’s not quite for us gentlefolks to laugh at Polikey. The means to which he

resorted to inspire confidence were exactly the same as those which have been effectual with our fathers and with us, and will be so with our children. The peasant lies with his belly on the head of his solitary nag, who is not merely his chief wealth, but almost one of his family, and gazes with faith and horror at Polikushka's significantly puckered-up face, and his thin arms with the sleeves tucked up, as he purposely pinches the very spot that is painful, and boldly cuts into the living flesh, with the private reflection, 'Here goes, come what may!' while he puts on an air of knowing where there is blood, and where matter, and where a dry vein, and where a wet one, holding in his teeth a healing rag or a bottle of vitriol. The peasant, watching him, cannot conceive that Polikushka's hand is raised to cut in ignorance. Himself he could not do that. And as soon as the wound is made, he cannot face the self-reproach of having given the poor beast to be wounded for nothing. I don't know how it may be with you, reader, but in my dealings with a doctor, torturing at my request those dearest to my heart, I have had precisely the same experience. The lancet and the mysterious whitish bottle of corrosive sublimate, and the words, 'the staggers,' 'farcy,' 'let blood,' 'matter,' and so on, are not they much the same as neurosis, rheumatism, organisms, and so on? Wage du zu irren und zu träumen—that does not apply so much to poets as to doctors and to veterinary surgeons.

III

On the same evening, while the village meeting buzzed round the counting-house in the still October darkness, choosing the recruits, Polikey was sitting on the edge of the bed, pounding with a bottle on the table a horse mixture which was new to himself. It contained corrosive sublimate, sulphur, Glauber's salts, and a herb which Polikey had gathered, bethinking himself all at once that this herb would be very good for a broken-winded horse, and fancying it would not be amiss to give it also for other ailments. The children were already in bed—two on the stove, two in the

bed, and one in the hanging cradle, at which Akulina was sitting busy with her yarn. A candle end, a relic of some candles from the mistress' house that had been left lying about, stood in a wooden candlestick in the window; and that her husband might not break off from his important occupation, Akulina got up to snuff it with her fingers. There were independent spirits who considered Polikey a poor sort of doctor and a poor sort of man. Others, and they were the majority, regarded him as not much of a man, but a great master in his own line. Akulina, although she often scolded and even beat her husband, believed him to be incontestably the best horse-doctor and the best man in the world. Polikey scattered in a handful of some simple. (He never made use of weights, and would allude ironically to Germans, who use weights. 'This,' he would say, 'is not an apothecary's!') Polikey weighed his simple in his hand, and shook it; but it seemed too little to him, and he scattered in ten times as much. 'I'll put it all in; it'll pick it up,' he said to himself. Akulina looked round quietly at the voice of her lord and master, expecting some command; but seeing that the matter did not concern her, she shrugged her shoulders. 'He's a deep one! How does he come by it all?' she thought, and took up her spinning again. The paper from which the drug was shaken fell under the table. Akulina did not let that pass unnoticed.

'Anyutka!' she called; 'see what father's lost; pick it up.'

Anyutka drew her thin, bare legs from under the old gown that served her as a quilt, crept like a kitten under the table, and picked up the paper.

'Here, daddy,' she said, and dived into the bed again with her frozen little feet.

'Why are you pushing me?' whined her younger sister, lisping in a sleepy voice.

'I'll give it you!' said Akulina, and both heads vanished under the old gown.

'Three silver roubles he'll give,' said Polikey, corking the bottle. 'I shall cure the horse. Cheap, too,' he added. 'You rack your brains, and see!... Akulina, run round and ask Nikita to lend me a pinch of tobacco. I'll pay him back to-morrow.'

And Polikey took out of his trousers a limewood pipe, once painted, with sealing-wax at the mouthpiece, and began filling it.

Akulina left her spindle and went out without coming into collision with anything, which was a feat of some difficulty. Polikey opened a cupboard, put the bottle in it, and raised to his lips an empty flask, but there was no spirit left in it. He groaned; but when his wife brought the tobacco, and he had filled up his pipe, lighted it, and sat down on the bed, his face beamed with the pride and satisfaction of a man who has completed his day's work. Whether he was thinking how next day he would catch hold of the horse's tongue and pour into its mouth that amazing mixture, or whether he was reflecting that when a man's an indispensable person no one will refuse him anything, and Nikita had just sent him the tobacco,—anyway he was in good spirits. Suddenly the door, which hung on one hinge, was flung back, and into their corner came a maid from up yonder—not the second maid, but the third, the little one who was kept for errands. Up yonder, as every one knows, always means the master's house, even though it be downhill. Aksyutka (that was the girl's name) always flew like a bullet; and as she ran, her arms hung straight and swung like a pendulum in time with her rapid movement, not at her sides, but in front of her person. Her cheeks were always rosier than her pink dress; her tongue always moved as rapidly as her legs. She flew into the room, and clutching for some reason at the stove, began swaying to and fro; and as though she were in such haste that she seemed to try to bring out two or three words at once, she suddenly articulated breathlessly, addressing Akulina:—

'Mistress gave orders for Polikey Ilyitch to come this minute; up yonder she gave orders....' She stopped, and drew a deep breath. 'Yegor Mihalovitch has been with the mistress; they've been talking of the recruits, mentioned Polikey Ilyitch.... Avdotya Mikolavna sent word to come this minute. Avdotya Mikolavna sent word ...' (again a breath); 'he's to come this minute.'

For half a minute Aksyutka stared at Polikey, at Akulina, at the children, who peeped out from under the quilt, snatched up a nutshell which was lying on the stove, flung it at Anyutka, and articulating once more, ‘To come this minute,’ she flew like a whirlwind out of the room, and the pendulums swung with their usual rapidity before the line of her flight.

Akulina got up again and got her husband his boots—they were wretched, torn, soldiers’ boots—took his coat from the stove and gave it him, without looking at him.

‘Ilyitch, won’t you change your shirt?’

‘No,’ said Polikey.

Akulina did not once glance at his face while he was putting on his boots and his coat, and she did well not to glance at him. Polikey’s face was pale, his lower jaw was twitching, and in his eyes there was that tearful, meek, profoundly unhappy expression which is only seen in good-natured, weak, sinful persons. He combed his hair and would have gone out, but his wife stopped him and tucked in a tape of his shirt, which was hanging out on his coat, and put on his cap.

‘What, Polikey Ilyitch, is it the mistress is wanting you?’ they heard the voice of the carpenter’s wife asking behind the screen. The carpenter’s wife had only that morning had an intensely unpleasant scene with Akulina over a pot of soapsuds, which the Polikey children had upset in her place, and she was delighted at the first minute to hear that Polikey was summoned to the mistress; it was sure to be for no good. Moreover, she was a subtle, diplomatic, and malignant lady. No one knew better than she did how to take the shine out of any one with a word; such, at least, was her own conviction about herself.

‘I suppose they want to send to town for some purchases,’ she went on. ‘I imagine that they chose a trustworthy man, and so they’re sending you. You might buy me a quarter of a pound of tea there, Polikey Ilyitch.’

Akulina suppressed her tears, and her lips tightened into an expression of fury. She could have pulled the nasty hair of that wretch, the carpenter's wife. But as she glanced at her children and thought that they would be left orphans, and she a soldier's widow, she forgot the spiteful carpenter's wife, hid her face in her hands, sat down on the bed, and her head sank into the pillows.

'Muvver, you're squashing me,' lisped the little girl, pulling the covering from under her mother's elbows.

'I wish you were all dead! For sorrow I brought you into the world!' cried Akulina, and the whole corner was filled with her sobs, to the glee of the carpenter's wife, who had not yet forgotten the soapsuds of the morning.

IV

Half an hour passed by. The baby began to cry. Akulina got up and fed it. She was not crying now; but with her still handsome, thin face propped in her hand, she sat still with her eyes on the burnt-down candle, and pondered the question why she had married, why so many soldiers were wanted, and how, too, she was to pay out the carpenter's wife.

She heard her husband's steps; she wiped away the traces of her tears and got up to make way for him. Polikey came in as bold as brass, flung his cap on the bed, drew a long breath, and began undoing his belt.

'Well, why did she send for you?'

'H'm ... we all know! Polikushka's the least of men; but when there's business to be done, then who's wanted?—Polikushka.'

'What sort of business?'

Polikey was in no haste to reply; he lighted his pipe and spat.

'I'm to go to the merchant's to fetch some money.'

'To fetch money?' asked Akulina.

Polikey chuckled and wagged his head.

‘A clever one she is, too, with words.... You, says she, were under observation that you were an untrustworthy man, but I trust you more than any other.’ (Polikey spoke loudly, so that the neighbours might hear.) ‘You promised me to reform, says she, so here’s the first proof that I trust you; set off, says she, to the merchant, take the money, and bring it here. I says, madam, says I, we are all your serfs, and bound, as we would serve God, so to serve you, whereas I feel myself that I can do anything for your welfare, and from no duty could I cry off; what you command, that I do, since I am your slave.’ (Again he smiled that peculiar smile of a weak, good-natured, and guilty man.) ‘So, says she, you’ll do it faithfully? You understand, says she, that your fate depends on it? Could I fail to understand that I can do everything? If they have slandered me, why, there’s none that can’t be blamed; but I never could, I do believe, ever think of anything against your welfare.... So, to be sure, I talked to her, till my lady became quite soft. You, says she, shall be my chief man....’ (He paused, and again the same smile lingered on his face.) ‘I know just how to talk to them. When I was away working for hire, didn’t I come across queer customers! But only let me come to talk to them. I’d soften them till they were like silk.’

‘And is it a lot of money?’ asked Akulina.

‘Fifteen hundred roubles,’ Polikey responded carelessly.

She shook her head.

‘When are you to go?’

‘To-morrow, she said. Take a horse, says she, which you like, go to the counting-house, and set off in God’s name.’

‘Praise be to Thee, O Lord!’ said Akulina, getting up and crossing herself. ‘God help you, Ilyitch,’ she added in a whisper, that they might not hear the other side of the partition, and pulling him by the sleeve of his shirt. ‘Ilyitch, listen to me! For

Christ's sake, I beseech you, kiss the cross when you set off, that you won't let a drop of anything pass your lips.'

'As if I would drink with all that money with me!' he snorted. 'But, I say, there was some one playing away smartly on the piano there, grand!' he added, pausing and chuckling. 'The young lady, no doubt. I stood like this before the old lady, at the whatnot; while the young lady there, through the door, didn't she rattle up and down the piano, and dash it off in fine style. I should like to play, upon my word I should. I know I could do it, that I could. I'm a smart chap at such things. Give me a clean shirt for to-morrow.'

And they went to bed happy.

V

The meeting meanwhile was noisy about the counting-house. It was no jesting matter that was in question. The peasants were almost all present; and while Yegor Mihalovitch had gone to their mistress, they put their hats on, more voices were audible in the general buzz and talk, and the voices were louder. The roar of bass voices, broken now and then by a breathless, husky, shrill speech, filled the air; and that roar floated across, like the sound of a booming sea, to the windows of the mistress, who was sensible of a nervous uneasiness at that sound, like the feeling before the outbreak of a violent storm. It was a feeling between dread and dislike. She kept fancying that now the voices were growing louder and noisier, and that something was happening. 'As though they couldn't do it all quietly, peaceably, without strife and shouting,' she thought, 'according to the Christian law, in brotherly love and meekness.'

Many voices were speaking at once, but loudest of all shouted Fyodor Ryezun, the carpenter. He was the head of a household with two sons, and was attacking the Dutlovs. Old Dutlov was defending himself; he stepped out in front of the crowd, behind which he had at first been standing; and waving his arms and pulling his

beard, he talked with such frequent snufflings in his throat and nose, that it would have been hard for him to make out himself what he was saying. His children and nephews, strapping fellows, stood huddled behind him, and old Dutlov suggested the hen in the game of ‘Hawk and Chickens.’ The hawk was Ryezun, and not Ryezun only, but all the heads of families of twos and fathers of only sons, almost all the meeting, in fact, pouncing down on Dutlov. The point was that Dutlov’s brother had, thirty years before, been sent for a soldier, and so he did not want to take his turn with the families with three eligible members, but wanted his brother’s service to be reckoned, and said that he should be put on an equality with the families of two only for a general drawing of lots, and that from that drawing of lots the third recruit should be taken. There were four other families with three men eligible for recruits in them besides Dutlov’s. But one was the village elder, and he had been exempted by the mistress; from another family a recruit had been sent at the last levy; from the remaining two families two recruits had been chosen, and one of them had not even come to the meeting, though his wife was standing mournfully behind every one, blankly awaiting some turn in her fortunes. The father of the other chosen recruit, red-haired Roman, in a torn smock, though he was not poor, stood leaning against the steps with downcast head, mute all the time, though he sometimes gazed intently at any one who was talking loudly, and looked down again. His whole figure was eloquent of misery. Old Semyon Dutlov was a man to whom any one who had the slightest acquaintance with him would have readily intrusted hundreds and thousands of roubles. He was a steady, God-fearing, responsible man; he was, moreover, the church elder. All the more striking was his violent excitement at this moment.

Ryezun, the carpenter, was, on the contrary, a tall, black-haired, drunken, turbulent man, bold and particularly clever in disputes and discussions at village meetings, at bazaars, with workmen, merchants, peasants, and gentry alike. Now he was self-possessed and malignant; and with all the height of his tall figure, all the force

of his loud voice and oratorical talent, he overpowered the husky church elder, who was so completely thrown out of the steady groove he always moved in. Among others taking part in the discussion was a round-faced, squat, youngish fellow, with a square head and curly beard, Garaska Kopilov, one of the regular talkers of the younger generation, who followed Ryezun's lead. He was always conspicuous for his abrupt speech, and had already gained a certain weight in the village meetings. Then there was Fyodor Melnitchny, a long, thin, yellow-faced, stooping peasant, young too, with a scanty beard and little eyes, always bitter and gloomy, always seeing the bad side of everything, and often bewildering the meeting by his unexpected and disconnected questions and remarks. Both these speakers were on the side of Ryezun. Besides these, there were two chatterboxes, who put in their word continually; one with a good-natured face and a bushy flaxen beard, Hrapkov, who was always beginning, 'But, my dear fellow!' and the other, a little man, with a bird-like countenance, Zhidkov, who also began with an invariable preface, 'It follows, my lads!' addressing every one, and talking away without rhyme or reason. Both of these were first on one side and then on the other, but no one heeded them. There were others of the same sort, but these two seemed to pervade the whole crowd. They shouted louder than all, alarming the mistress; they were listened to less than any; and intoxicated with the noise and shouting, gave themselves up entirely to the pleasure of letting their tongues wag. There were many more peasants of different characters; they were gloomy, decorous, indifferent, and depressed. There were peasant-women, too, behind the men, with sticks in their hands, but of all of them, please God, I will tell another time. The bulk of the crowd consisted of peasants, who stood in the meeting, as they did in church, talking in a whisper behind the others of domestic matters, of when they will cart home the faggots in the copse, or waiting in silence for the racket to be soon over. There were rich ones, too, for whom the meeting could do nothing to increase or detract from their prosperity. Such was Yermil, with his broad, shiny face, whom the peasants nicknamed Fat

Belly, because he was rich. Such, too, was Starostin, whose face wore a complacent expression of power. ‘You may talk as you like,’ he seemed to say, ‘but no one can touch me. I’ve four sons, but not one of them will they take.’ Now and then some free-lance, like Kopilov and Ryezun, would try to pick a quarrel with them, and they answered, but calmly and firmly, with a sense of their own security. If Dutlov were like the hen in the game of ‘Hawk and Chickens,’ his lads did not quite suggest chickens; they did not fidget uneasily, nor cackle, but stood calmly behind him. The elder, Ignat, was thirty years old; the second, Vassily, was married too, but not suitable for a recruit; the third, Ilyushka, the nephew, who had only just been married, a pink-and-white young fellow in a smart sheepskin (he used to go out as a driver), stood watching the people, and sometimes scratching his head under his hat, as though it were all no concern of his, though he it was whom the hawks were trying to pounce upon.

‘And so did my grandfather go for a soldier,’ said one, ‘and so I’ll cry off the lots too.’

‘There’s no law like that, brother! Last levy they took Miheitchev, and his uncle’s not come home yet.’

‘You’ve neither father nor uncle that served the Tsar, Dutlov was saying at the same time. ‘No, and you yourself have served neither your masters nor your mir. You do nothing but drink, and your children have parted from you because there’s no living with you; so, do you point to others? But I was village constable ten years; I’ve been elder; twice I’ve been burned out—no one helped me; and just because in our house it’s all peaceable and honest, am I to be ruined? Give me back my brother. He’s dead out there, for sure. Judge in truth, in God’s way, brethren in the faith, and be not led away by a drunkard’s ravings.’

At precisely the same moment Garaska was saying to Dutlov—

‘You talk about your brother, but he wasn’t sent by the mir, but the masters sent him

for his debauchery; so he's nothing for you to get off by.'

Garaska had not finished when the lank, bilious Fyodor Melnitchny, stepping forward, began—

'Yes, the gentry send whom they think they will, and then the mir may choose. The mir has decreed for your son to go; and if you don't like it, ask the mistress. She'll may be send me, single-handed as I am, to shave my head and leave my children. That's your law!' he said bitterly, and waving his arm again, he went back to his former position.

Red-haired Roman, whose son had been chosen, lifted his head, and brought out, 'Yes, that's so, that's so!' and sank back on to the step in vexation.

But these were not all the voices that were speaking at once. Besides those who, standing in the background, were talking of their own affairs, the chatterboxes, too, did not forget to do their part.

'To be sure, brethren in the faith,' said little Zhidkov, repeating Dutlov's words, 'we must judge like Christians. Like Christians, to be sure, my lads, we must judge.'

'We must decide by our conscience, my good friend,' put in the simple-hearted Hrapkov, repeating the words of Kopilov, and pulling Dutlov by his sheepskin; 'that was a matter of the master's will, and not the decision of the mir.'

'True! So it was, sure,' said others.

'Who's a drunkard raving?' retorted Ryezun. 'Did you give me drink, eh? or is your son, who's been picked up by the roadside, going to reproach me for drinking? Come, lads, we must come to a decision. If you want to spare Dutlov, you'd best pitch on a lad out of a family of two, or an only son, while you're about it; and he'll make a laughing-stock of us.'

'It's for a Dutlov to go. Why talk about it?'

'We all know it's for those that have three sons to take the lots first,' said voices.

‘It’s still to see what the mistress’s orders are. Yegor Mihalovitch was saying they meant to send a house-serf,’ said a voice.

This remark checked the dispute a little, but soon it flickered up again, and again passed into personalities.

Ignat, of whom Ryezun had said that he had been picked up by the roadside, began proving to Ryezun that he had stolen a saw from some travelling carpenters, and had almost beaten his wife to death when he was drunk.

Ryezun replied that he beat his wife both drunk and sober, and even so never beat her enough, and made every one laugh thereby. But about the saw, he became suddenly offended, stepped closer up to Ignat, and began asking—

‘Who stole it?’

‘You stole it!’ the sturdy Ignat answered boldly, stepping still nearer up to him.

‘Who stole it? Wasn’t it you?’ shouted Ryezun.

‘No, you!’ shouted Ignat.

After the saw they passed to the theft of a horse, to a sack of oats, to a certain strip of vegetable garden in the big village, to a certain dead body; and the two peasants said such awful things of each other, that if a hundredth part of their accusations had been true, they ought both by the law to be at least sent to Siberia.

Old Dutlov meanwhile had chosen another line of defence. He did not like his son’s shouting. Stopping him, he said, ‘Shame! give over, I tell you!’ and himself began to argue that families of three were not only those who had three sons living together, but those families which had broken up too; and he referred too to Starostin.

Starostin smiled faintly, cleared his throat, and stroking his beard with the manner of a well-to-do peasant, answered that the mistress’s will had decided that. His son must have deserved it if the order was to pass him over.

As to divided families, Garaska too shattered Dutlov’s arguments, observing that

families ought never to have been allowed to break up, as it was in the old master's time; but that after the summer was over, there was no picking raspberries; that, as it was, families of only one couldn't send a recruit.

'Is it to please themselves they're divided? Why utterly ruin them now?' cried the voices of members of divided families, and the regular chatterboxes joined those voices.

'You buy a recruit, if you don't like it; you can afford it,' said Ryezun to Dutlov.

Dutlov wrapped his coat about him despairingly, and stood behind the other peasants.

'You've counted my money, it seems,' he remarked malignantly. 'Let's see what Yegor Mihalovitch will say from the mistress.'

VI

Yegor Mihalovitch did in fact come out of the house at that moment. One cap after another was lifted over the heads, and as the bailiff approached one head after another uncovered—bald, at the top and in front, grey, grizzled, red, black, and flaxen—and gradually the voices subsided, till at last all were perfectly still. Yegor Mihalovitch stood on the steps, and made a sign that he was going to speak. In his long coat, with his hands thrust awkwardly into his front pockets, in a town-made forage-cap, pulled down in front, Yegor Mihalovitch stood firmly, his legs wide apart, and in his elevated position towering above those mostly old and mostly handsome bearded heads, raised and turned towards him. He looked very different from how he had looked before his mistress. He was majestic.

'Here, lads, is the mistress's decision. It's not her pleasure to punish any of the house-serfs; but when you fix on one of yourselves, he will go. This time we want three; by rights, two and a half, but a half will have to go in advance. It's all the same; if not now, it would be next time.'

‘To be sure, that’s the fact!’ said voices.

‘In my judgment,’ continued Yegor Mihalovitch, ‘for Horyushkin and Mityuhin’s Vaska to go, is God’s own will.’

‘And so it is, indeed!’ said voices.

‘The third must be a Dutlov, or else one out of the families with two sons. What do you say?’

‘Dutlov,’ said voices—‘the Dutlovs have three!’

And again little by little the shouting began, and again it came back to the strip of garden in the big village, and to certain pieces of sacking stolen from the mistress’s yard. Yegor Mihalovitch had managed the estate now for twenty years, and was a shrewd and experienced man. He stood a while, listened for a quarter of an hour, and all at once commanded all to be silent, and the Dutlovs to draw lots which of the three they would send. The lots were cut. Hrapkov began to draw them out of a hat in which they were shaken, and he drew Ilyushka’s. All were silent.

‘Mine, is it? Show it here,’ said Ilyushka in a breaking voice.

All were silent. Yegor Mihalovitch bade them bring on the morrow the recruit’s money, seven copecks from each family, and announcing that all was at an end, dismissed the meeting. The crowd moved off, putting on their caps round the corner, with a hum of talk and footsteps. The bailiff stood on the steps, looking after the retreating figures. When the younger Dutlovs had gone round the corner, he beckoned to the old man, who had of his own accord lingered, and went with him into the counting-house.

‘I’m sorry for you, old man,’ said Yegor Mihalovitch, sitting down in an elbow chair before the table; ‘it was your turn. Will you buy your nephew off or not?’

The old man glanced significantly at Yegor Mihalovitch without replying.

‘There’s no getting out of it,’ Yegor Mihalovitch said in reply to his look.

‘And glad we’d be to buy him off, but we haven’t the money to do it, Yegor Mihalovitch! Two horses died in the summer, and my nephew’s wedding. It seems our fate would have it so ... because we live honestly. It’s very well for him to talk.’ (He meant Ryezun.)

Yegor Mihalovitch rubbed his face with his hand and yawned. He was unmistakably weary of the business, and it was time for his tea.

‘Ah, old man, don’t fall into sin!’ he said. ‘Look well under your floor, may be you’ll find the old silver roubles to make up the four hundred. I’d buy you such a substitute, a perfect wonder! The other day a man offered himself....’

‘In the province?’ asked Dutlov, meaning by province the provincial town.

‘Why, will you buy him?’

‘And I’d be glad to, before God, but....’

Yegor Mihalovitch cut him short sternly.

‘Well, then, listen to me, old man; mind Ilyushka doesn’t do himself a mischief, and produce him at once when I send for him—either to-day or to-morrow. You produce him, you will have to answer for him; but if, God forbid, anything were to happen to him, I shall take your elder son to be shaved for a soldier. You hear?’

‘But can’t any of the families of two, Yegor Mihalovitch? Why, it’s unfair!’ he said after a pause—‘when my brother’s dead a soldier, to take the son too, why should such a calamity fall on me?’ he said, almost weeping, and ready to fall at his feet.

‘Come, go along, go along,’ said Yegor Mihalovitch; ‘there’s nothing can be done, it’s the law. Keep an eye on Ilyushka; you must answer for him.’

Dutlov went homewards, mournfully flicking at the clods of the road with a limewood switch.

VII

Next day, early in the morning, there stood at the steps of the house-serf's quarters the cart in which the bailiff used to drive about on his rounds, with a big-boned bay gelding, for some unknown reason called Drum, in the shafts. In spite of the rain and hail and the cold wind, Anyutka, Polikey's eldest daughter, was standing barefoot at the horse's head, in obvious alarm, holding him a long way off with one hand on the bridle, while with the other she kept on her head the yellow-green wadded jacket, which filled in the family the functions of quilt, cloak, headdress, carpet, overcoat for Polikey, and many other uses. A great bustle was going on within. It was still dark; the morning light of the rainy day faintly glimmered in at the window, pasted up here and there with paper. Akulina had left for a while her baking in the oven; and her children, of whom the smaller ones were shivering in bed, as their covering had been taken to be used as a garment, and in its place they had been given only their mother's head shawl. Akulina was busy in getting her husband ready for the journey. His shirt was clean. His boots, which, as they say, were begging for porridge, caused her particular anxiety. To begin with, she took off her own solitary pair of thick woollen stockings and gave them to her husband; and secondly, out of a saddle cloth, which had been lying about in the stable, and been brought to their hut by Polikey a couple of days before, she had contrived to make inner soles in such a way as to stop up the holes, and to preserve Polikey's feet from getting wet. Polikey, seated with his feet on the bedstead, was engrossed in twisting his sash round him so that it should not look like a dirty cord. And the cross, lisping little girl in a cloak, which even put on over her head still tripped up her feet, had been despatched to Nikita to beg the loan of a cap. The bustle was increased by house-serfs coming in to ask Polikey to buy for them in the town—needles for one, tea for another, olive oil for a third, tobacco for a fourth, and sugar for the carpenter's wife, who had already managed to have the samovar ready; and to propitiate Polikey, had brought him in a jug a decoction which she called tea. Though Nikita refused to lend the cap, and it was necessary to get his own into a fit state, that is, to poke in the stuffing that had

burst and was hanging out, and with a veterinary needle to sew up the hole; though the boots with the saddle-cloth patches would not at first go on to his feet; though Anyutka got too frozen and was letting go Drum, and then Mashka had to go in the cloak to take her place, and then Mashka had to take off the cloak, and Akulina herself went to hold Drum—in the end Polikey had at last put on all the clothing of the family, leaving only one jacket and a pair of slippers, and fully equipped, seated himself in the cart, wrapped himself up, arranged the hay, once more wrapped himself up, picked up the reins, wrapped himself still more compactly, as very precise persons do, and started.

His little boy, Mishka, running out on to the steps, begged for a ride. The lisping Mashka too began begging, ‘Let me wide and I shall be warm wivout a cloak’; and Polikey pulled up Drum, smiled his weak smile, while Akulina sat the children in beside him; and bending over to him, besought him in a whisper to remember his oath and not to touch a drop on the way. Polikey took the children as far as the smithy, put them down, muffled himself up again, again set his cap straight, and drove off alone at a steady little trot, his cheeks quivering with the jolting, and his feet knocking on the bark lining of the cart. Mashka and Mishka ran barefoot home down the slippery hillside with such swiftness and such shrieks, that a dog, running from the village to the serfs’ quarters, stared at them; and suddenly putting its tail between its legs, fled home barking, at which the heirs of Polikey redoubled their shrieks.

It was miserable weather, the wind cut his face, and something between snow and rain and hail beat persistently in Polikey’s face and on his bare hands, which he stuffed, holding the chilly reins, up the sleeves of his coat. The wet sleet blew on the leather cover of the horse-collar too, and on the head of old Drum, who twitched his ears and blinked.

Then it suddenly ceased and cleared all in an instant; bluish snow clouds could be

seen distinctly; and the sun began as it were to peep out, but uncertainly and cheerlessly, like the smile of Polikey himself. In spite of that, Polikey was plunged in agreeable reflections. He whom they'd wanted to send to a settlement, whom they threatened to send for a soldier, whom every one, not too lazy, abused and beat, whom they always shoved into the worst place,—he was driving now to receive a sum of money, and a large sum too, and the mistress trusted him, and he was driving in the bailiff's cart with Drum, with whom the mistress drove out sometimes, driving like some upper servant, with leather straps and reins. And Polikey sat up straighter, set the stuffing in his cap right, and wrapped himself up once more. If Polikey supposed, however, that he was exactly like some well-to-do upper servant, he was in error. It is true, indeed, as every one knows, that men who do business with tens of thousands drive about in carts with leather harness, but that's the same thing with a difference. A man with a beard, in a blue or a black long coat, comes along driving a sleek horse and sitting alone on the box. One's only to look whether his horse is well fed, whether he's well fed himself how he's sitting, how the horse is harnessed, what the tyres of the wheels are like, how the man is belted; and one can see at once whether it's a peasant who's doing business with hundreds or with thousands. Any man of experience would only have had to look close at Polikey, at his hands, at his face, at his beard that he had lately let grow, at his sash, at the hay flung anyhow in the cart, at thin Drum, at the worn tyres, to see at once that this was a poor serf driving and not a merchant, not a drover, not a hall-porter; nor was he doing business with thousands, nor even with hundreds, nor with tens of roubles. But Polikey did not think so. He was in error, and the error was an agreeable one. He was to carry back fifteen hundred paper roubles in his bosom. If he liked, he could turn Drum's head towards Odesta instead of homewards, and drive off God knows where. Only that he would not do, but would faithfully bring the money to his mistress, and would tell people that larger sums than that he'd had to bring. On reaching an inn, Drum began pulling at the left rein, slackening his pace, and turning

towards it. But Polikey, although he had the money given him to make purchases with, cracked the whip at Drum and drove by. He did the same thing too at another inn, and towards midday got out of the cart, and opening the gate of the tavern at which all his mistress's people used to stop, he led in the horse, unharnessed the cart, gave the horse some hay, dined with the innkeeper's workmen, not omitting to mention what important business he had come about, and went off with the letter in his cap to the gardener's. The gardener, who knew Polikey, read the letter, and with evident doubt cross-questioned him, whether he really had been told to take the money. Polikey would have liked to resent this, but did not know how to, and simply smiled his smile. The gardener read the letter again and handed him the money. Polikey took the money, put it in his bosom, and went back to the tavern. Neither beer-house nor gin-shop—nothing tempted him. He was conscious of an agreeable tension in all his being, and more than once he stopped at shops with tempting wares—boots, coats, caps, cotton goods, and things to eat. And after stopping a little while, he walked away with an agreeable feeling, 'I can buy it all, but see I'm not doing it.' He went to a bazaar to buy what he had been commissioned, got everything, and discussed the price of a lined cloak, for which he was asked twenty-five roubles. The salesman, staring for some reason at Polikey, did not believe that he could buy it; but Polikey pointed to his bosom, saying he could buy up all the shop if he liked, and asked to try on the cloak, fingered it, stroked it, blew into the fur, even smelt at it, and at last with a sigh took it off.

'The price doesn't suit me. If you'd say a little less than fifteen roubles,' said he. The shopkeeper angrily flung the cloak across a table, while Polikey went out, and in excellent spirits made his way to the tavern. After having supper, giving water and oats to Drum, he got up on the stove; and pulling out the envelope, looked at it a long while, and asked a man who could read to read him the address and the words, 'With enclosure of a thousand, six hundred, and seventeen roubles in notes.' The envelope was made of plain paper, the seal was of brown wax, with anchors on it;

one big one in the middle, four at the corner; there was a drop of sealing wax on the side. Polikey gazed at all this and studied it, and even felt the sharp edges of the notes. He felt a sort of childish pleasure in knowing there was so much money in his hands. He thrust the envelope into the lining of his cap, put the cap under his head, and lay down. But even in the night he waked up several times and felt the envelope. And every time finding the envelope in its place, he had an agreeable sensation in realising that here was he, Polikey, disgraced, degraded, taking such a sum, and bringing it faithfully—more faithfully than if the bailiff himself had brought it.

VIII

About midnight the innkeeper's servants and Polikey were waked by a knocking at the gate and the shouting of peasants. It was the recruits who were being brought from Pokrovskoe. There were ten men: Horyushkin, Mityuhin, and Ilya (Dutlov's nephew), a couple of men to replace them in case of accident, the village elder, old Dutlov, and three peasants who drove them. A night light was burning in the hut; the cook was asleep on the locker under the holy images. She jumped up and began lighting a candle. Polikey, too, waked, and stooping over from the stove, began looking at the peasants as they came in. They all came in, crossed themselves, and sat down on the benches. They were all quite self-possessed, so that no one could have said which were the recruits and which were their escorts. They greeted the persons in the hut, chatted merrily, and asked for something to eat. Some, it is true, were silent and depressed; but others were exceptionally lively, having unmistakably been drinking. Among the latter was Ilya, who had never drunk spirits before.

'Well, lads, will you sup or go to sleep?' asked the elder.

'Supper!' answered Ilya, throwing open his overcoat and settling himself on a bench. 'Send for some vodka.'

'Nonsense with your vodka!' the elder dropped casually, and he turned again to the others. 'Take a bite of bread then, lads. Why wake the folk up?'

‘Give me some vodka!’ repeated Ilya, not looking at any one in particular, and speaking in a tone that suggested that he would not easily give way.

The peasants followed the elder’s advice, got their bread out of the cart, ate a little, and asked for some rye-beer, and lay down, some on the stove, and some on the floor.

Ilya kept repeating at intervals, ‘Give us some vodka; I tell you, vodka!’ Suddenly he caught sight of Polikey. ‘Polikey, hey, Polikey! You here, my dear fellow? I’m going for a soldier, you see; I’ve said the last good-bye to my mother and my wife.... How she did wail! They’ve sent me for a soldier.... Stand us some vodka.’

‘No money,’ answered Polikey; ‘but still, please God, they may reject you,’ added Polikey, to comfort him.

‘No, brother, I’m like a clean birch-tree; never a sign of any disease have I in me. What chance of my being rejected? What better soldier could the Tsar want?’

Polikey began to tell an anecdote of how a peasant had given the doctor a bribe, and he had got him off for it.

Ilya moved nearer the stove and began to be talkative.

‘No, Polikey, it’s all over now, and I don’t want to stay myself. Uncle’s sent me off. Do you suppose he couldn’t have bought me off? No, he grudged his son, and he grudged his money. They’re giving me up.... Now, I don’t care to stay myself.’ (He talked softly, confidentially, under the influence of subdued sadness.) ‘The only thing is, I’m sorry for mother; she’s simply broken-hearted! And my wife too; they’ve simply ruined the poor wench for nothing; she’s done for now—a soldier’s wife, that’s all you can say. Better not have married. What did they marry me for? They’re coming to-morrow.’

‘But why did they bring you away so early?’ asked Polikey; ‘there was nothing heard about it, and now all of a sudden you’re off.’

‘They’re frightened, d’ye see, I might do myself a mischief,’ answered Ilyushka, smiling. ‘No fear, I’ll not do anything. I shall be all right if I’m a soldier, only it’s mother I’m sorry for. Why did they marry me?’ he said softly and dejectedly.

The door opened, shut with a slam, and old Dutlov, shaking his cap, walked in in his immense basket-work shoes, which were like boats on his feet.

‘Afanasy,’ said he, crossing himself and addressing the innkeeper’s man, ‘haven’t you a lantern for me to put the oats out by?’

Dutlov did not glance at Ilya, and began quietly lighting a candle end. His gloves and whip were stuffed into his belt, and his smock was carefully belted; he looked as collected as though he had come on some other business; his hard-working face was as simple, peaceable, and occupied with his work as usual.

Ilya, seeing that his uncle had ceased speaking, again let his eyes rest gloomily on the locker, and began again, addressing the elder—

‘Give us some vodka, Yermila. I want drink.’

His voice was gloomy and wrathful.

‘Drink at this time?’ answered the elder, sipping his cup. ‘Don’t you see folks have eaten and laid down, and why are you making a row?’

The word ‘row’ obviously suggested an idea to Ilya.

‘Elder, I’ll do a mischief if you don’t give me vodka!’

‘If you’d just make him listen to reason,’ said the elder to Dutlov, who had lighted his candle, but was stopping still, evidently to hear what would come next; and was looking askance, with commiseration at his nephew, as though marvelling at his childishness.

Ilya, looking down, said again—

‘Give me vodka; I’ll do mischief.’

‘Give over, Ilya!’ said the elder mildly, ‘give over. Really now, it will be better.’

But he had hardly uttered these words when Ilya jumped up, struck his fist into the window, and shouted with all his might—

‘You wouldn’t listen, so there you are!’ and rushed to the other window to smash that one too.

Polikey, in the twinkling of an eye, rolled over twice and hid himself in the furthest corner of the stove, so that he frightened all the beetles. The elder flung down his spoon and ran up to Ilya. Dutlov slowly put down the candle, untied his belt, and shaking his head and clucking with his tongue, he went up to Ilya, who was by now struggling with the elder and the innkeeper’s man, who would not let him get near the window. They had caught hold of him by his arms, and held him, it seemed, firmly; but as soon as Ilya saw his uncle with his belt, his strength seemed redoubled, he tore himself away and, with rolling eyes, stepped with clenched fists up to Dutlov.

‘I’ll kill you; don’t come near me, brute! You’ve been the ruin of me; you with your ruffianly sons, you’ve ruined me. Why did you marry me?... Don’t come near, I’ll kill you.’

Ilyushka was terrible. His face was purple, his eyes were wild, all his healthy young body was shaking as though in fever. He would, it seemed, and could have killed all the three peasants who were approaching him.

‘You’ll drink your own brother’s blood, bloodsucker!’

There was a gleam of something in Dutlov’s ever-serene face. He took a step forward.

‘If you won’t obey of yourself ...’ he said suddenly. With inexplicable energy he caught hold of his nephew by a sudden movement, rolled with him on the ground, and with the help of the elder began to bind his hands. They were struggling for five minutes. At last Dutlov, with the peasant’s assistance, got up, pulling Ilya’s hands away from his coat, at which he was clutching; he got up himself, then lifted up Ilya

with his hands tied behind him, and seated him on the locker in a corner.

‘I said it would be the worse for you!’ he said, still breathing hard from the struggle, and setting straight his shirt band. ‘Why sin? We shall all come to die. Put a cloak under his head,’ he added, turning to the innkeeper’s man, ‘or else his head will ache’; and he took up the candle, tied a bit of cord round his waist, and went out again to the horses.

Ilya, with ruffled hair, with a pale face and rumpled shirt, looked about the room, as though trying to remember where he was. The innkeeper’s man collected the broken bits of window-pane and stuffed a coat into the window to prevent a draught. The elder sat down to his cup again.

‘Ay, Ilyuha, Ilyuha! I’m sorry for you, truly. What can one do? Here’s Horyushkin too a married man; there was no getting you off, it seems.’

‘It’s to my scoundrelly uncle I owe my ruin!’ Ilya repeated with intense fury. ‘He wouldn’t give his own son. Mother told me, the bailiff bade him buy a recruit. He won’t; he can’t do it, he says. Have my brother and I brought so little into the house? He’s a scoundrel!’

Dutlov came into the hut, said his prayer to the holy pictures, took off his overcoat, and sat down with the elder. The servant gave him some rye-beer too, and a spoon. Ilya was silent, and shutting his eyes, lay down on the cloak. The elder pointed to him without speaking and shook his head. Dutlov made a gesture with his hand.

‘Do you suppose I’m not sorry? My own brother’s son. As if it’s not sorrow enough, they’ve made me out a scoundrel to him. It’s been put into his head by his wife, I suppose—a sly wench, for all she’s so young—that we’ve money, so that we could buy a recruit, and so here he brings it up against me. But how sorry I am for the lad!’

‘Ah, a fine lad!’ said the elder.

‘But I can do nothing with him. To-morrow I shall send Ignat to him, and his wife wanted to come.’

‘Send them; it’ll do him good,’ said the elder, and he got up and went to the stove. ‘What is money? Money’s dust and ashes.’

‘If one had the money, who would grudge it?’ said one of the workmen, lifting up his head.

‘Ah, money, money! Many a sin comes from it,’ Dutlov responded. ‘Nothing in the world brings so much sin as money is said indeed in the Scriptures.’

‘All is said there,’ assented the workman. ‘And so a man told me; there was a merchant, he piled up a great deal of money, and did not want to leave anything behind; he so loved his money that he took it with him to the grave. When he came to die, all he bade them do was to lay his pillow with him in the coffin. They suspected nothing, and so they did. Then the sons began looking for his money; there was none anywhere. One son guessed that the money must be in the pillow. The matter was brought to the Tsar—he allowed them to dig him up. And would you believe it? They opened the coffin; there was nothing in the pillow, but the coffin was full of maggots; so they buried it again. So that’s what money brings!’

‘To be sure, many a sin it brings,’ said Dutlov, and he got up and began saying his prayers.

When he had prayed, he looked at his nephew. He was asleep. Dutlov went up, took the belt off his hands, and lay down. The other peasant went off to sleep with the horses.

IX

As soon as everything was still, Polikey crept stealthily out, as though he were somehow guilty, and began making ready to set off. For some reason he felt wretched at spending the night here with the recruits. The cocks were already crowing to one another more often. Drum had eaten all his oats, and was trying to get to the drinking-trough. Polikey harnessed him and led him past the peasants’

carts. The cap with its contents was in safety, and the wheels of the cart rattled again along the half-frozen Pokrovskoe road. Polikey felt more at ease only when he had driven out of the town. Till then he kept fancying for some reason that he would hear pursuers behind him, that they would stop him, and tie his hands behind him, and take him next day to the recruiting station in Ilya's place. A chill ran down his back, half from cold, half from fright, and he kept urging on and urging on Drum. The first man to meet him was a priest, in a high winter cap, walking with a one-eyed workman. Polikey felt still more uneasy. But outside the town this terror gradually passed away. Drum went at walking pace; the road could be seen more distinctly in front. Polikey took off his cap and began feeling the money. 'Should I put it in my bosom?' he thought; 'I should have to undo my belt again. Let me get beyond the turning uphill, and I'll get out of the cart and set myself to rights. The cap's sewed up strongly at the top, and it couldn't come out below under the lining. And I won't take my cap off till I get home.' As he approached the turning, Drum of his own accord galloped uphill; and Polikey, who was as eager as Drum to get home, did not hinder his doing so. Everything was right—so at least it seemed to him—and he abandoned himself to dreams of the gratitude of his mistress, of the five roubles she would give him, and of the joy of all at home. He took off his cap, felt the letter once more, stuck it more firmly on to his head, and smiled. The cloth of the cap was rotten, and just because Akulina had sewed it up so carefully where it was torn, it began to go at the other end; and the very movement by which Polikey, when he took the cap off, thought to thrust the letter further under the stuffing—that very action made a hole in the stuff and drove the letter at one corner out of the cloth.

It began to get light; and Polikey, who had not slept all night, dozed. Pulling his cap forwarder, and in so doing driving the letter further out, Polikey, half asleep, began nodding his head against the side of the cart. He waked up near home. His first action was to clutch at his cap; it was sitting firmly on his head; he did not even take

it off, feeling certain that the envelope was in it. He touched up Drum, set the hay in order, assumed once more the air of an upper servant, and looking about him with dignity, rattled homewards.

Here he could see the kitchens, here the servants' wing, yonder the carpenter's wife carrying linen; yonder the counting-house; and over there the mistress's house, where Polikey would prove immediately that he was a trustworthy and honest man, 'that any one may be slandered.' And the mistress would say, 'Well, thank you, Polikey, here's for yourself three'—or may be five, or may be even ten roubles, and would tell them to give him some tea too, and may be a drop of vodka. And it wouldn't be half bad in the cold. For ten roubles we can have a spree on the holiday, buy boots; and Nikita too, to be sure, we'll pay back his four and a half roubles, for he's begun to be very worrying. A hundred paces from home, Polikey wrapped himself up again, set his belt straight and his collar, took off his cap, smoothed his hair, and without hurry thrust his hand under the lining. His hand fumbled about in the cap, more and more quickly; the other was thrust in there too, his face grew paler and paler, one hand was poked through. Polikey fell on his knees, stopped the horse, and began looking about the cart, the hay, the parcels, fumbling in his bosom, in his trousers; the money was nowhere.

'Heavens! What does it mean? What will happen?' he howled, clutching at his hair.

But then recollecting that he might be seen, he turned Drum's head round, pulled his cap down, and drove the astonished and disgusted Drum back along the road.

'I can't stand being driven by Polikey!' Drum must have been thinking. 'For once in my life he has fed me and watered me at the right time, and only to deceive me so horribly. How I tried to race home! I'm tired, and I'd hardly got a whiff of our hay, and he drives me back.'

'Come up, you devil's jade!' Polikey shrieked through his tears, standing up in the cart, tugging at Drum's mouth with the reins, and lashing him with the whip.

X

The whole of that day no one in Pokrovskoe saw Polikey. The mistress made inquiries several times after dinner, and Aksyutka flew to Akulina. But Akulina said that he had not come; that doubtless the merchant had detained him, or something had gone wrong with the horse. ‘Hasn’t it gone lame?’ she said. ‘Last time Mihail was gone full twenty-four hours just the same; he had to come the whole way on foot!’ And Aksyutka swung her pendulums back to the house again; while Akulina sought for causes for her husband’s being detained, and tried to soothe her fears, but did not succeed. She had an ache at her heart, and no sort of work for the holiday on the morrow went well in her hands. She was the more worried because the carpenter’s wife affirmed that she had seen with her own eyes ‘a man exactly like Polikey come into view, and then turn back again.’ The children, too, awaited their father with impatience and uneasiness, though on other grounds. Anyutka and Mashka were left without either cloak or overcoat, which articles had enabled them, if only by turns, to get out into the street; and so, wearing nothing but their frocks, they were forced to confine themselves to making circles with exaggerated speed round the house, occasioning thereby no little inconvenience to all the inhabitants of the servants’ lodge in their comings in and goings out. Once Mashka darted into the lap of the carpenter’s wife as she was carrying water; and though she roared beforehand on knocking against her knees, she still received a good cuffing about her curly head, and cried still louder. When she did not run up against any one, she flew straight indoors, and, by means of a tub, clambered on to the stove. Only the mistress and Akulina were genuinely anxious about Polikey individually; the children’s anxiety related to the question of his wearing apparel. But Yegor Mihalovitch, going with his report to his mistress, in reply to her question, ‘Has not Polikey come, and where can he be?’ smiled as he answered, ‘I can’t say,’ and was obviously pleased that his presuppositions were realised. ‘He ought to have come by dinner-time,’ he said significantly. All that day no one in Pokrovskoe knew anything

about Polikey; only later it was learned that some neighbouring peasants had seen him without a cap running along the road and asking every one, ‘Hadn’t they found a letter?’ Another man had seen him asleep by the wayside, near a cart and horse tied up to a post. ‘And I did think, too’ this man said, ‘that he was drunk, and the horse had had no food or water for two days, so lean it looked.’ Akulina did not sleep all night; she was listening all the time; but even in the night Polikey did not come. If she had been alone, or if she had had a cook and a housemaid, she would have been even more miserable. But as soon as the cocks had crowed for the third time, and the carpenter’s wife was stirring, Akulina was obliged to get up and to set to work at the stove. It was a holiday; before daylight she must have her bread out, must make rye-beer, bake cakes, milk the cow, iron out frocks and smocks, wash the children, bring in water, and not let her neighbour keep the oven all to herself. Akulina, though she never ceased listening, set to work on those duties. Daylight came, the bells had begun ringing, the children were getting up, and still Polikey had not come. The day before had been like winter, the snow in patches covered the fields, the road, and the roofs; but to-day, as though for the holiday, it was fine, sunny and frosty, so that one could see and hear at a distance. But Akulina, standing at the stove, poking her head into its opening, was so busy with the baking of the cakes that she did not hear Polikey come in, and only found out from the children’s shouts that her husband had returned. Anyutka, being the eldest, had greased her head and dressed herself. She was in a pink chintz gown, new but crumpled, a present from the mistress, which stood out as stiffly as the bark of a tree, and was the envy of all beholders. Her hair glistened, she had rubbed half a candle end on it; her slippers, though not new, were elegant. Masha was still in the old jacket and dirty, and Anyutka would not let her come near her for fear of her making her in a mess. Mashka was out of doors when her father drove up with the sack full of his commissions. ‘Daddy’s come,’ she shrieked, and dashed headlong in at the door past Anyutka, making her dirty. Anyutka, laying aside her fears of getting dirty, at once

proceeded to beat Mashka, while Akulina could not tear herself away from her work. She only shouted to the children, ‘Now, then, I’ll thrash you all!’ and looked round at the door. Polikey, with a sack in his hands, came into the entry, and at once made his way to his corner. Akulina fancied that he was pale, and his face looked as though he were half crying, half smiling. But she hadn’t time to make it out.

‘Well, Polikey, successful?’ she asked him from the oven. Polikey muttered something that she did not catch.

‘Eh?’ she called. ‘Have you seen the mistress?’ Polikey in his corner sat down on the bed, looked wildly round him, and smiled his guilty and intensely miserable smile. For a long time he made no answer.

‘Polikey, why so long gone?’ Akulina’s voice called again.

‘I gave the money to the mistress, Akulina. How she did thank me!’ he said suddenly, and began still more uneasily looking about him and smiling. Two objects particularly caught his restless, feverishly wide-open eyes—the cord tied to the hanging cradle, and the baby. He went up to the cradle, and with his deft fingers began hurriedly untying the knot of the cord. Then his eyes rested on the baby; but at that moment Akulina came into the ‘corner’ with a tray of cakes. Polikey quickly hid the cord in his bosom and sat down on the bed.

‘How is it, Polikey, you don’t seem yourself?’ said Akulina.

‘I haven’t slept,’ he answered.

Suddenly something flashed by the window, and in an instant the girl from up yonder, Aksyutka, darted in like an arrow.

‘The mistress gave orders for Polikey Ilyitch to come to her this minute,’ she said. ‘This minute, Avdotya Mikolavna said, this minute.’

Polikey looked at Akulina, at the girl.

‘Directly! What more does she want?’ he said so simply, that Akulina was

reassured. ‘Perhaps she wants to reward me.... Say I’ll come directly.’

He got up and went out. Akulina took a deep tub, set it on the locker, poured water in from the buckets standing at the door, and from a caldron of hot water on the stove, tucked up her sleeves, and tried the water.

‘Come, Mashka, I’ll wash you.’

The cross, lisping little girl began to roar.

‘Come, you dirty girl, I’ll put you on a clean smock! Now then, none of your nonsense.... Come, I’ve your sister to wash too.’

Polikey meanwhile had not followed the errand-girl to the mistress, but had gone to quite a different place. In the entry close to the wall was a steep ladder leading to the loft. Polikey, going out into the entry, looked round, and seeing no one, bending nearly double, climbed nimbly and quickly, almost running, up this ladder.

‘What can be the meaning of Polikey’s not coming?’ said the mistress, impatiently turning to Dunyasha, who was combing her hair. ‘Where is Polikey? Why is it he doesn’t come?’

Aksyutka again flew to the serfs’ quarters, and again flew into the entry, and summoned Polikey to go to the mistress.

‘But he went long ago,’ answered Akulina, who had finished washing Mashka, and at that moment had just sat her baby boy in the trough, and, in spite of his screams, was wetting his scanty locks of hair. The baby screamed, puckering up its face, and tried to clutch at something with its helpless little hands.

With one large hand Akulina supported his fat, soft little back, all in dimples, while with the other she washed him.

‘Look and see if he’s dropped asleep anywhere,’ she said, looking round with anxiety.

At that moment the carpenter’s wife, with her hair uncombed and her bosom open,

went, holding up her petticoats, to the loft, to get down her clothes that were drying there. Suddenly a shriek of horror was heard in the loft; and, like one possessed, the carpenter's wife, with her eyes shut, came flying backwards on all fours, falling rather than running down the ladder.

'Polikey!' she shrieked.

Akulina let the baby drop out of her hands.

'Strangled himself!' roared the carpenter's wife.

Akulina, not noticing that the baby had fallen backwards all of a heap, and was head downwards in the water, kicking its legs, ran out into the entry.

'On the beam ... hanging,' brought out the carpenter's wife, but she stopped short on seeing Akulina.

Akulina rushed to the ladder; and before they had time to prevent her she had run up, but with a fearful scream she fell down the ladder like a dead body, and would have been killed, if the people who ran in from everywhere had not been in time to catch her.

XI

For some minutes it was impossible to distinguish anything in the general uproar. Masses of people ran together, all were shouting, all were talking, children and old people were crying. Akulina lay unconscious. At last some men, the carpenter, and the bailiff, who had run up, went up above; and the carpenter's wife for the twentieth time described how she, 'thinking nothing, went after my cape, looked round like this: what do I see?—a man; I stared; a cap lies beside him, turned inside out. Mercy! why, the legs are swinging! A cold shudder ran down me. To think of a man's hanging himself, and I must be the one to see him! How I flew down, I couldn't say myself. And a marvel it is how God's mercy preserved me. Truly, the Lord had mercy on me. To think of it; so steep, and such a height! It might have

been my death.’

The men who had gone up told the same story. Polikey was hanging from a beam, wearing nothing but his shirt and his breeches, by the very cord he had taken from the cradle. His cap, turned inside out, lay there too. His coat and cloak had been taken off, and were tidily folded up beside him. His feet reached the ground, and there were no signs of life.

Akulina came to herself and made a dash again towards the ladder, but they did not let her go.

‘Mammy, Syomka’s choked himself,’ the lisping child whined suddenly from the ‘corner.’ Akulina broke away again, and ran to the ‘course.’ The baby lay quite still, face downwards, in the tub, and its legs were not kicking now. Akulina snatched him out, but the baby did not breathe or move. Akulina threw him on the bed, leaned on her hands, and broke into such a loud, piercing, and terrible peal of laughter, that Mashka, who at first laughed too, stopped up her ears and ran crying out into the entry. The neighbours thronged into the ‘corner’ with weeping and wailing. They carried the baby out and began rubbing it, but it was all useless. Akulina rolled on the bed and laughed, laughed so that horror came upon all who heard that laugh. Only seeing this heterogeneous crowd of men and women, old people and children, thronging the hut, could one conceive of the mass of folk of all sorts living in the ‘serfs’ quarters. Every one fussed, every one talked, many cried, and no one did anything. The carpenter’s wife still found persons who had not heard her story, and described anew what a shock her sensitive feelings had received, and how providentially she had been preserved from falling down the ladder. A little old footman, wearing a woman’s jacket, described how, in the old master’s days, a woman had drowned herself in the pond. The bailiff sent messengers to the village constable and to the priest, and picked out men to keep a watch on the place. The errand-girl Aksyutka, her eyes starting out of her head, kept peering up the opening

into the loft; and though she saw nothing there, she could not tear herself away and go to her mistress. Agafea Mihalovna, a maid in the last mistress's time, wept and demanded tea to restore her shattered nerves. Old Granny Anna, with her practised fat hands, reeking with olive oil, laid the little corpse out on the table. The women stood round Akulina and stared mutely at her. The children huddled in corners, peeped at their mother and fell to roaring, then subsided, peeped again, and huddled further away than ever. Boys and men crowded about the steps, and with scared faces gazed at the door and at the windows, seeing and understanding nothing, and asked each other what was the matter. One said that the carpenter had chopped off one of his wife's legs with an axe; another declared that the washerwoman had been brought to bed of triplets; a third asserted that the cook's cat had gone mad and bitten folks; but the truth gradually spread, and at last reached the mistress' ears, and it appears they had not even the wit to break it to her. Yegor in his coarse way had told her bluntly straight out, and so upset the lady's nerves that it was a long while before she could recover from the shock. The crowd was beginning to subside; the carpenter's wife had set her samovar, and was wetting the tea, which made outsiders, not invited to partake of it, feel it unseemly to linger longer. Boys had begun scuffling at the steps. Every one knew by now what had happened; and crossing themselves, they began to separate, when suddenly the cry was heard, 'The mistress, the mistress!' and they all crowded together and squeezed close to make way for her, but every one wanted too to see what she was going to do. The mistress, pale and tearful, crossed the threshold into the entry and into Akulina's 'corner.' Dozens of heads squeezed in and gazed in the doorway. One woman, big with child, was so crushed that she shrieked, but promptly took advantage of the very circumstance to gain a place in front. And who would not want to stare at the mistress in Akulina's 'corner'? For the house-serfs it was precisely what the fireworks are at the end of an entertainment. It's sure to be worth seeing if they're letting off fireworks; and sure to be worth seeing if the mistress, in silk and in lace,

has gone into Akulina's 'corner.' The mistress went up to Akulina and took her by the hand; but Akulina pulled it away. The old house-serfs shook their heads disapprovingly.

'Akulina!' said the mistress, 'you have children, have pity on yourself.'

Akulina laughed and got up.

'My children are all silver, all silver.... I don't keep paper money,' she muttered, speaking rapidly. 'I said to Polikey, don't take the paper, and now they've smeared you, smeared you with pitch, pitch and soap, madam. Any scabbiness you've got, it will get rid of directly.' And again she chuckled more than ever.

The mistress turned away and asked for the apothecary to come with mustard. 'Bring some cold water!' and she began looking for water herself; but catching sight of the dead baby, before whom was standing old Granny Anna, the mistress turned away, and all saw how she hid her face in her handkerchief and burst into tears. Granny Anna (it was a pity the mistress didn't see, she would have appreciated it—it was all done for her benefit too) covered the baby with a piece of linen, straightened his little arm with her fat deft hand; and so shook her head, so pursed up her lips, so sympathetically dropped her eyelids and sighed, that no one could help seeing the goodness of her heart. But the mistress did not see this, and indeed she was incapable of seeing anything. She burst into sobs, was overcome by nervous hysterics, and was supported out into the entry and supported home. 'And that was all that came of her visit!' many people reflected, and they began to disperse. Akulina still laughed and talked nonsense. She was led away into another room; they bled her and put mustard plasters on her, applied ice to her head. Yet she remained still understanding nothing, not weeping, but laughing, talking, and doing such things that the good folks who were looking after her could not restrain themselves, and laughed too.

XII

The holiday was not a lively one in Pokrovskoe. In spite of the fine weather, people did not come out walking; the girls did not meet together to sing choruses; the factory lads, who came over from the town, did not play on the harmonica nor the balalaica, or flirt with the girls. They all sat in corners; and if they talked, they talked softly, as though some evil one was about and might hear them. In the daytime it was not so bad; but in the evening, when it got dark, the dogs began to howl, and then, as ill-luck would have it, a wind sprang up and howled in the chimneys, and such a panic came over all the inhabitants of the serfs' quarters that those who had candles lighted them before the holy pictures. Any who lived alone in a 'corner' went in to neighbours to ask them to let them stay the night where there were more people, while those who had to go out to the sheds to feed the cattle would not go, and did not scruple to leave the cattle unfed that night. And the holy water, of which every one kept a bottle, was all used up during that night. Many positively heard some one pacing heavily about the loft that night, and the blacksmith saw a snake fly straight to the loft. In Polikey's 'corner' none of the family were left; the children and the mad woman had been removed. There was only the dead baby lying there, and two old women watching over it, and a pilgrim woman, who, in the fervour of her piety, read the Psalter aloud, not over the baby, but simply as a tribute to the whole occasion. This was by the wish of the mistress. These old women and the pilgrim woman heard with their own ears a beam begin shaking and some one groaning overhead just as the verse was being read. When the words, 'And God is risen,' were read, all became still again. The carpenter's wife invited a crony of hers; and sitting up together, they drank, in the course of that night, all the tea she had laid in to last her a week. They, too, heard the beams creaking overhead, and a noise as though sacks were falling down. The peasant watchmen kept up the courage of the house-serfs, or they would have died of fright that night. The peasants lay in the entry on hay; and afterwards asserted that they too had heard wonderful things in the

loft, though on the night itself they conversed very calmly together about the recruiting, munched bread, scratched themselves, and, worst of all, made the entry so reek of the peculiar peasant smell, that the carpenter's wife when she passed spat in disgust and abused them for it. However that might be, the suicide was still hanging in the loft, and it seemed as though the evil one himself had spread huge wings over the serfs' quarters that night, making his power manifest, and coming closer than ever before to these people. So at least they all felt. I can't say whether this was true. I believe indeed that it was altogether untrue. I believe that if on that terrible night some brave soul had taken a candle or a lantern, and sanctifying himself, or even not sanctifying himself, with the sign of the cross, had gone up into the loft, and slowly putting to flight the terrors of the night with the candle, and lighting up the beams, the sand, the fluepipe covered with cobwebs, and the cape forgotten by the carpenter's wife, had made his way to Polikey; and if, mastering his terrors, he had raised the lantern to the level of the face, he would have seen the familiar, lean body, with the legs touching the ground (the cord had grown slack), bending lifeless on one side, the shirt collar unbuttoned and no cross to be seen under it, the head sunk on the breast, and the good-natured face with its open sightless eyes, and the meek, guilty smile and stern repose, and stillness over everything. In reality, the carpenter's wife, huddled up in the corner of her bed, with dishevelled locks and scared eyes, describing how she heard the sacks falling, was a great deal more awful and terrible than Polikey, though his cross had been taken off and was lying on the beam.

Up yonder, that is, at the mistress's house, the same terror reigned as in the serfs' quarters. The old lady's room reeked of eau-de-cologne and medicine. Dunyasha was melting yellow wax and making ointment. What the ointment was for precisely, I don't know; but I know it was always made when the mistress was unwell. And now she was so upset that she was quite ill. Dunyasha's aunt had come to stay the night with her to keep up her courage. There were four of them with the errand-girl

in the maid's room talking softly together.

'Who's to go for the oil?' said Dunyasha.

'Not, on any account, Avdotya Mihalovna—I'm not going!' the second maid answered resolutely.

'Nonsense! Aksyutka and you go together.'

'I'll run alone, I'm not afraid of anything,' said Aksyutka; but her heart failed her as she spoke.

'Well, run along, there's a good girl; ask Granny Anna for a glassful, and don't spill it as you bring it,' Dunyasha said to her.

Aksyutka picked up her skirt with one hand; and though she was consequently unable to swing both arms, she swung one with twice the energy in front of her line of advance, and flew off. She was frightened; and she felt that if she were to see or hear anything whatever, even her own living mother, she would drop with terror. Shutting her eyes, she flew along the familiar path.

XIII

'Is the mistress asleep, or not?' was suddenly asked close to Aksyutka in a peasant's deep voice. She opened her eyes, which had till then been closed, and saw a figure that seemed to her taller than the hut before her. She squealed, and whisked back so quickly, that her petticoat could not keep pace with her. In one bound she was on the steps, in another she was in the maid's room, and with a wild yell she flung herself on the bed. Dunyasha, her aunt, and the other maid were numb with terror; but before they had time to recover themselves, slow, heavy, and hesitating steps were heard in the passage and at the door. Dunyasha rushed in to her mistress, dropping the ointment; the second maid hid herself behind the skirts hanging on the wall; the aunt, a person of stronger will, would have held the door, but the door opened, and a peasant came into the room. It was Dutlov, in his boats of shoes. Taking no notice of

the girls' terror, he looked about for the holy picture; and not making out the little image in the left corner, crossed himself, bowing to the shelf with the teacups, laid his cap down in the window, and thrusting his hand far under his coat, as though he wanted to scratch under his armpit, he took out the letter with the five brown seals, stamped with the anchor. Dunyasha's aunt clutched at her chest; with effort she articulated—

'How you did terrify me, Semyon Naumitch! I can't utter a wo—ord. I fairly thought the end had come.'

'How could you?' protested the second girl, popping her head out from under the skirts.

'And you've upset the mistress too!' said Dunyasha, coming in at the door. 'Why do you come creeping up the maids' staircase without asking leave? A regular peasant!'

Dutlov, making no apology, repeated that he wanted to see the mistress.

'She's not well,' said Dunyasha.

At that moment Aksyutka went off into such an unseemly loud crowing laugh that she had to stuff her head again into the pillows of the bed, from which, in spite of the threats of Dunyasha and her aunt, she could not remove it for a whole hour without a loud crow, as though something had exploded in her rosy throat and red cheeks. It struck her as so funny that they had all been so scared, and she hid her head again, and flapped her slipper, and writhed all over, as though she were in convulsions.

Dutlov stopped, looked at her attentively, as though he wanted to ascertain what was happening to her; but unable to discover what was wrong, he turned away, and continued speaking.

'To be sure, then, it's a matter of great importance,' he said. 'Only tell her that a peasant has found the letter with the money.'

‘What money?’

Before taking this message, Dunyasha read the address and cross-examined Dutlov as to where and how he had found the money, which Polikey was to have brought from the town. After having learnt every detail, and thrust the errand-girl, still guffawing, out into the passage, Dunyasha went in to her mistress; but to her surprise, her mistress still would not see him, and said nothing coherent to Dunyasha.

‘I know nothing about it, and I don’t want to know,’ said the old lady. ‘What peasant or what money? I can see no one, and I want to see no one. Let him leave me in peace.’

‘What am I to do?’ said Dutlov, turning the envelope over; ‘it’s not a trifling sum. Is anything written on it?’ he asked Dunyasha, who once more read him the address.

Dutlov still seemed incredulous. He had hoped that may be the money did not belong to the mistress, and that the address had not been read him right, but Dunyasha confirmed the reading of it. He sighed, put the envelope in his bosom, and was about to leave.

‘I suppose I must give it to the police constable,’ he said.

‘Stay, I’ll try again; I’ll speak to her,’ Dunyasha stopped him, attentively watching the disappearance of the envelope into the peasant’s coat. ‘Give the letter here.’

Dutlov drew it out again, but did not at once put it into Dunyasha’s outstretched hand.

‘Say it was found on the road by Dutlov—Semyon.’

‘Oh, give it here!’

‘I did think it was just—a letter, but a soldier read that there was money in it.’

‘Oh, give it me!’

‘I didn’t even venture to go home, so as ...’ Dutlov began again, still not parting

from the precious envelope. ‘So you put it before her.’

Dunyasha took the envelope, and once more went in to her mistress.

‘Oh, mercy, Dunyasha!’ said her mistress in a reproachful voice; ‘don’t talk to me about that money. If I but think of that little babe....’

‘The peasant, madam, doesn’t know to whom it’s your pleasure for him to hand it,’ Dunyasha said again.

Her mistress broke open the envelope, shuddered as soon as she saw the money, and pondered.

‘Horrible money! what evil it does!’ she said.

‘It’s Dutlov, madam. Do you bid him go, or is it your pleasure to come out and speak to him? Is the money all safe?’ inquired Dunyasha.

‘I don’t want this money; it’s unlucky money. Think what it’s done! Tell him to take it himself if he likes,’ the lady said suddenly, feeling for Dunyasha’s hand. ‘Yes, yes, yes!’ she repeated to the amazed Dunyasha; ‘let him take it altogether, and do what he likes with it.’

‘Fifteen hundred roubles,’ observed Dunyasha, smiling as though at a child.

‘Let him take them, all of them!’ her mistress repeated impatiently. ‘How is it you don’t understand me? That money’s unlucky; never speak to me of it! Let that peasant take what he found. Go along! There, do go now!’

Dunyasha went into the maid’s room.

‘Was it all there?’ asked Dutlov.

‘You count them yourself,’ said Dunyasha, giving him the envelope. ‘My orders are to hand it to you.’

Dutlov put his cap under his arm, and bending forward, he began counting the money.

‘Has she no reckoning beads?’

Dutlov supposed that his mistress was so stupid that she could not reckon the money, and so had told him to do so.

‘You can count it at home! It’s for you—your money!’ said Dunyasha angrily. ‘“I don’t want,” says she, “to see it; give it to the man who brought it.”’

Dutlov, still in his stooping posture, fixed his eyes on Dunyasha.

Dunyasha’s aunt fairly flung up her hands.

‘My goodness gracious! What luck God’s given you! My gracious goodness!’

The second maid would not believe it.

‘Why, you’re joking, Avdotya Nikolaevna, surely?’

‘Joking, indeed! She told me to give it to the peasant. There, take your money, and get along, do,’ said Dunyasha, not disguising her annoyance. ‘One man’s sorrow is another’s luck!’

‘It’s no joking matter, fifteen hundred roubles!’ said the aunt.

‘More,’ put in Dunyasha. ‘Well, now you can put up a ten copeck candle to Saint Mikola,’ said Dunyasha sarcastically. ‘Why, are you struck silly? And a good thing if it had been a poor man, but he has a lot of his own.’

Dutlov at last grasped that it was not a joke, and began to put together and fold up in the envelope the notes he had unfolded to count; but his hands shook, and he kept glancing at the maids to assure himself it was not a joke.

‘Why, he hardly knows what he’s doing, he’s so pleased,’ said Dunyasha, affecting to feel none the less contemptuous both of the peasant and the money. ‘Let me put them up for you.’

And she would have taken the notes; but Dutlov would not give them her. He crumpled up the notes, stuffed them still further into his bosom, and took up his cap.

‘Are you glad?’

‘I don’t know what to say! Why really....’

He could not finish; he waved his hand, grinned, and, almost crying, went out.

The bell rang in the old lady's room.

'Well, have you given them to him?'

'Yes.'

'Well, was he very much pleased?'

'He's quite beside himself.'

'Oh, fetch him in. I'll ask him how he found them. Fetch him here; I can't come out.'

Dunyasha ran and found the peasant in the entry. Without waiting to put on his cap, he had pulled out his purse, and was bending down, untying it, while he held the notes in his teeth. He fancied, perhaps, that the money was not quite his own till he had it in his purse. When Dunyasha called him, he was panicstricken.

'What is it, Avdotya—Avdotya Mikolavna? Does she want to take them back? If only you'd stand up for me, for God's sake, and I'll bring you some honey.'

'I dare say!'

Again the door was opened, and the peasant was led in to see his mistress. He felt anything but cheerful. 'Oh, she's going to take it back!' something made him believe, as he walked through the room, lifting his whole leg high up as though getting through high grass, and trying not to let his plaited shoes creak. He did not take in, did not even see anything around him. He walked by a looking-glass, saw flowers of some sort, saw a peasant in bark shoes kicking up his feet, a gentleman with one eye painted on the wall, some sort of green tub, and something white.... And behold that something white began talking; it was his mistress. He could make out nothing of what she said; he simply stared with round eyes. He did not know where he was, and saw everything in a sort of fog.

'Is that you, Dutlov?'

‘Yes, madam. As it was, I never touched it,’ said he. ‘I’m not glad at having found it, so help me God! How I did drive the horse home!’

‘Well, you’re in luck!’ she said, with a smile of supercilious good-nature. ‘Take it, take it for yourself!’

He could only roll his eyes blankly.

‘I’m glad that you’ve got the money. God grant it has come when it was wanted! Well, are you glad?’

‘Glad! Oh, so glad, ma’am! I’ll always be praying to God for you! I’m so glad that, thank God, our lady’s alive. That’s all I had to do with it.’

‘How did you find it?’

‘To be sure, we could always try our best for our lady, not but....’

‘He’s in a regular muddle, madam,’ said Dunyasha.

‘I’d taken my nephew as a recruit, I was driving back, and on the road I found it. Polikey must have dropped it by accident.’

‘Well, you can go, you can go, my good man! I’m glad you found it.’

‘So glad, ma’am!’ said the peasant.

Afterwards he recollected that he had not thanked her, and did not know how to repair this omission properly. The old lady and Dunyasha smiled while he stepped back again as though over high grass, and with difficulty refrained from breaking into a trot. He still kept fancying they would stop him and take the notes back.

XIV

On getting into the fresh air, Dutlov moved off the road to the lime-trees, untied his sash so as to get at his purse more easily, and began putting away the notes. His lips twitched and worked, though he did not utter a sound. After putting away the money and fastening his sash, he crossed himself and walked away along the path,

staggering like a drunken man, so absorbed he was in the thought that surged in his brain. Suddenly he saw the figure of a peasant coming to meet him. He called; it was Efim, who was walking round the serfs' quarters with an oak cudgel, as a watchman.

'Ah, Uncle Semyon!' Efimka cried joyfully, coming closer. (Efimka had been feeling scared all alone.) 'Well, have you been seeing the recruits off, uncle?'

'Yes. And what are you doing?'

'Why, they've set me here to watch over Polikey, who's hanged himself.'

'Where is he?'

'Yonder, in the loft, they say he's hanging,' answered Efimka, pointing with his stick in the darkness towards the roof of the hut.

Dutlov looked in that direction; and though he saw nothing, he puckered his brows, screwed up his eyes, and shook his head.

'The police constable has come,' said Efimka; 'the coachman was saying so. They're going to take him away at once. It's a fearful thing at night, uncle! I won't go at night—not for anything—if they tell me to go up to the loft. Yegor Mihalovitch may be the death of me, but I won't go.'

'A sin it is, a sin indeed!' Dutlov repeated, evidently for the sake of doing the proper thing, without in the least thinking of what he was saying, and he would have gone on his way. But the voice of Yegor Mihalovitch stopped him.

'Hi, watchman, come here!' Yegor Mihalovitch shouted from the step.

Efimka called back in reply.

'But who is there with you?'

'Dutlov.'

'You come too, Semyon.'

As he came closer into the light of the lantern carried by the coachman, Dutlov made out Yegor Mihalovitch and an undersized functionary in a cap with a cockade and a

cloak; it was the district police constable.

‘Here’s the old man will come with us,’ said Yegor Mihalovitch, on seeing him.

The old man felt qualms; but there was no getting out of it.

‘And you, Efimka, you’re a bold young fellow, run up into the loft where he hanged himself, and set the ladder straight for his honour to get up.’

Efimka, who was most unwilling to go into the hut, ran towards it, his bark shoes stumping like logs of wood.

The police constable struck a light and lit a pipe. He lived two versts away, and had only lately been cruelly reprimanded by the police captain for drunkenness, and was therefore just now in a very fever of zeal. He arrived on the scene at ten o’clock in the evening, and insisted on viewing the body without delay. Yegor Mihalovitch asked Dutlov what brought them there. On the way Dutlov told the bailiff about finding the money and what the mistress had done. Dutlov said that he was coming to ask Yegor Mihalovitch’s sanction. The bailiff, to Dutlov’s horror, asked for the envelope and examined it. The police constable, too, took the envelope into his hands and shortly and drily inquired into details.

‘Come, the money’s lost!’ thought Dutlov, and he even began to apologise for his part in the affair. But the police constable gave him back the money.

‘Well, the peasant’s in luck!’ said he.

‘It’s come just right for him,’ said Yegor Mihalovitch; ‘he’s just taken his nephew for a recruit; now he’ll buy him out.’

‘Oh,’ said the police constable, and he went on in front.

‘You’ll buy him out, Ilyushka, won’t you?’ said Yegor Mihalovitch.

‘Buy him out? Will the money be enough? and may be it’s too late.’

‘That’s for you to decide,’ said the bailiff, and both of them followed the police constable.

They reached the serf's hut, in the porch of which the stinking watchmen were waiting with a lantern.

Dutlov walked behind them. The watchmen had a guilty air, possibly due only to a consciousness of the odour they had introduced into the place, for they had done no harm. Every one was silent.

'Where is he?' asked the police constable.

'Here,' whispered Yegor Mihalovitch. 'Efimka,' he added, 'you're a bold young chap, go on ahead with a lantern.'

Efimka had already put the board straight above, and seemed to have lost all fear. Taking two or three steps at a time, he clambered up in front with a cheerful face, looking round to light the way for the police constable, who was followed by Yegor Mihalovitch. When they were out of sight, Dutlov, who had put one foot on the first step, sighed and stopped short. Two minutes passed, their steps died away in the loft; they had, doubtless, reached the body.

'Uncle, he's calling you!' Efimka shouted through the hatch.

Dutlov went up. The police constable and Yegor Mihalovitch stood in the light of a lantern with their upper part only visible behind a beam; behind them stood some one else with his back turned. It was Polikey. Dutlov climbed over the beam and stood still, crossing himself.

'Turn him round, lad!' said the police constable. No one moved.

'Efimka, you're a bold young chap!' said Yegor Mihalovitch.

The bold young chap strode across the beam; and turning Polikey round, stood beside him, looking with the most cheerful expression from Polikey to the authorities, as a showman exhibiting an albino or Julia Pastrana looks from the public to the monster he is showing them, ready to execute all the wishes of the spectators.

‘Turn him again!’

Polikey was turned again, with a slight swing of the arms and a scrape of the foot on the sand.

‘Lift him; take him down!’

‘You bid them cut him down, Vassily Borisovitch?’ said Yegor Mihalovitch. ‘Give me an axe, mates!’

The watchmen and Dutlov had to be told twice before they came up. The bold young chap dealt with Polikey as though he were a sheep’s carcass. At last they cut the rope, took down the body, and covered it up. The police constable said that the doctor would come next day, and dismissed them all.

XV

Dutlov walked homewards, moving his lips. At first he felt uneasy; but, as he got nearer the village, this feeling passed away, and the feeling of gladness sank more and more deeply into his heart. In the village he heard sounds of singing and drunken voices. Dutlov never drank, and now he went straight home. It was late when he walked into the hut. His old wife was asleep. The elder son and the grandsons were asleep on the stove, the second son in the loft. Ilyusha’s wife was the only one not asleep. In her dirty working-day blouse, with nothing on her head, she was sitting on the bench wailing. She did not come out to open the door to her uncle, but only went on more vigorously with her dirge and her wailing as he entered the hut. In the opinion of the old mother, her dirge was an exceedingly fine and creditable performance, in spite of the fact that at her years she could not have had much practice.

The old woman got up and began getting supper for her husband. Dutlov drove Ilyushka’s wife away from the table. ‘Sh! sh!’ he said. Aksinia got up, and lying down on the bench, did not cease wailing. Without uttering a word, the old woman

laid the table and cleared it again. The old man too did not say a word. After praying to God, he washed his hands; and taking his reckoning frame from a nail, he went off to the loft. There he first whispered to the old woman, then the old woman went out, and he began rattling the reckoning beads. At last he closed the lid of a chest with a bang, and crept down into the storeroom under the floor. He was a long while busily engaged in the loft and the underground storeroom. When he came back to the living-room it was all dark—the splinter was not burning. The old woman, by day usually so quiet and unobtrusive, lay outstretched near the stove, and filled the whole hut with her snoring. The noisy young wife too was asleep, and her breathing could not be heard. She had fallen asleep on the bench, just as she was, without undressing or putting anything under her head. Dutlov said his prayers, then looked at Ilyushka's wife, shook his head, put out the splinter he had lighted, clambered on to the stove, and lay down beside his little grandson. In the darkness he dropped his bark shoes down from the stove and lay down on his back, looking at the crossbeam, over the stove, which was faintly visible above his head, and listening to the beetles rustling over the walls, to the sighs, to the snoring, to the scratching of one foot against another, and to the sounds of the cattle in the yard. For a long while he could not get to sleep; the moon rose, it grew lighter in the room, he could see Aksinia in the corner, and something which he could not clearly distinguish; he could not see whether it was a cloak his son had forgotten, or a tub the women had set there, or some one standing there. Whether he were dozing or not, he looked more intently again.... It seemed as though the spirit of darkness, who had driven Polikey to his fearful deed, and whose proximity the serfs had been aware of that night,—it seemed that that spirit had winged his way to the village, to Dutlov's hut, where lay the money he had used for Polikey's ruin. Anyway Dutlov felt him there, and Dutlov was ill at ease. He couldn't sleep nor move. Seeing something which he could not make out clearly, he thought of Ilyushka with his hands tied, thought of the face of Aksinia and her creditable dirge, thought of Polikey with his swaying wrists.

Suddenly it seemed to the old man that some one passed by the window. ‘What’s that, or is it the village elder coming to give notice of something?’ he thought. ‘How did he open the door?’ wondered the old man, hearing steps in the passage, ‘or didn’t the old woman put up the bar when she went out into the passage?’ The dog howled in the backyard, and he walked about the passage, as the old man used to tell afterwards, as though he were looking for the door, passed it by, began fumbling about the wall again, stumbled against a barrel, and it rumbled. And again he fumbled about as though feeling for the handle. Then he got hold of the handle. A shiver ran down the old man. Then he pulled at the handle and entered in the shape of a man. Dutlov knew that it was he. He tried to make the sign of the cross, but could not. He went up to the table on which there lay a cloth, pulled it off, flung it on the floor, and climbed on to the stove. The old man became aware that he had taken the shape of Polikey. He grinned, his arms dangled. He climbed on to the stove, lay down straight on the old man, and began strangling him.

‘My money!’ cried Polikey.

‘Let me go, I won’t do any harm,’ Semyon tried to say, and could not.

Polikey was crushing him with all the weight of a mountain of stone pressing on his chest. Dutlov knew that if he were to repeat a prayer, he would let him go, and he knew what prayer he ought to recite, but the prayer would not be uttered. His grandson was sleeping beside him. The boy screamed shrilly and began to cry—his grandfather was squeezing him against the wall. The child’s cry freed the old man’s lips. ‘May the Lord arise,’ articulated Dutlov. He fell back a little. ‘And scatter His enemies,’ mumbled Dutlov. He got off the stove. Dutlov heard his two feet thud on the floor. Dutlov went on repeating prayers he knew; he repeated them all in succession. He went towards the door, passed by the table, and slammed the door so that the hut shook. Yet every one slept on except the old man and his grandchild. The grandfather repeated his prayers, trembling all over, while the child cried as he

dropped asleep and clung to the old man. Everything was quiet again. The grandfather lay without stirring. The cock crowed on the other side of the wall just at Dutlov's ear. He heard the hens beginning to stir, heard the young cock trying to crow like the old one and failing. Something moved at the old man's feet. It was the cat; she leapt on her soft pads from the stove to the floor, and began mewing at the door. The grandfather got up, raised the window; it was dark and dirty in the street; he saw the shafts of the cart close to the window. Crossing himself, he went out barefoot to the horses; and here it was evident that it was the Evil One that had come to them. The mare, standing under cover in the lean-to shed, had caught her leg in the reins, and spilt over her chaff. Lifting her leg, she turned her head looking for her master. The colt was rolling in the dung-heap. The old man put him on his legs, freed the mare from the reins, put the food for her, and went back into the hut. The old woman had got up and lighted a splinter. 'Wake the lads, I'm going to the town,' and lighting a wax candle from the holy picture lamp, he crept with it into the storeroom under the floor. When he came back, there were fires alight, not at Dutlov's only, but at all the neighbours'. The lads had got up and were already making ready. The women were coming in and out with pails and tubs of milk. Ignat was getting one cart out, while the second son was greasing the other. The young wife was not wailing now, but was sitting in the hut on a bench, ready dressed, with a kerchief on her head, waiting till it should be time to start for the town to say good-bye to her husband.

The old man seemed particularly severe. To no one did he say a single word; he put on his new long coat, fastened his sash, and with all Polikey's money in his bosom he went to see Yegor Mihalovitch.

'Don't you linger!' he shouted to Ignat, who was turning the wheel round on the greased axle of the tilted cart. 'I'll come in a minute. Have everything ready!'

The bailiff was only just up and was drinking his tea; he was going himself to the

town to deliver the recruits.

‘What do you want?’ he asked.

‘I want, Yegor Mihalovitch, to buy off my lad. Graciously aid me! You said last night that you knew of a substitute in the town. Instruct me—we are all in the dark.’

‘Why, have you changed your mind?’

‘Yes, Yegor Mihalovitch; I feel for him; he’s my brother’s son. However he may behave, I feel for him. Great sin has it brought about, this money! So graciously aid me, instruct me!’ he said, bowing low.

As he always did on such occasions, Yegor Mihalovitch smacked his lips for a long while without speaking, with an air of profound thought. Then, having considered the matter, he wrote two notes and told him how and what to do in the town.

When Dutlov returned home, the young wife had already set off with Ignat, and the piebald pot-bellied mare stood at the gate all ready harnessed. Dutlov broke a switch out of the hedge, seated himself on the box, and set off. He drove the mare so violently that she was almost shaken to pieces and Dutlov did not look at her for fear of being moved by her plight. He was fretted by the fear of being somehow late, of Ilyushka’s being sent off as a soldier, and the devil’s money being left on his hands.

I will not attempt to describe all Dutlov’s proceedings that morning; I will only say that he was particularly successful. The man for whom Yegor Mihalovitch had given him a letter had in readiness a volunteer who had already spent twenty-three roubles of his purchase-money, and had been passed by the medical board. The man, who was disposing of him, wanted four hundred silver roubles for him, while the purchaser, a tradesman, persisted in begging him to come down to three hundred. Dutlov concluded the bargain in a couple of words. ‘Three hundred and twenty-five will you take?’ he said, holding out his hand with an expression by which it was obvious at once that he was ready to give more. The man drew back his hand and persisted in asking four hundred. ‘Won’t you take three hundred and twenty-five?’

repeated Dutlov, grasping the bargainer's right hand in his left, and threatening to clap his right hand down on it. 'Won't you?... Well, God be with you!' he added suddenly, bringing his hand down and turning away with a swing of his whole person. 'It seems it was to be so; take the fifty then. Get out the discharge. Bring in the young fellow. And now for the earnest-money. Two red notes it will be, eh?'

And Dutlov undid his sash and got out the money.

Though the man did not draw back his hands, he still seemed somehow not to agree; and, without accepting the earnest-money, began talking about standing treat and something for the goodwill of the volunteer.

'Beware of sin,' Dutlov repeated, thrusting the money upon him; 'we must all die!' he repeated, in a tone so mild, edifying, and convincing, that the man said—

'So be it, then!' clapped hands together once more, and began praying. 'God give luck!' he said.

They waked up the volunteer, who was still sleeping off his drinking-bout of the previous day. For some unknown reason they looked him carefully over, and all went off to the board. The volunteer was in good spirits; he asked for rum to clear his head after drinking, and Dutlov gave him some money to get some. His courage only failed him when they were entering the hall of the recruiting board. For a long while the elder man in his blue greatcoat, and the volunteer in his short, full-skirted coat, with lifted eyebrows and round eyes, were standing about in the entrance-hall; a long while they spent in whispering together here, asking for some direction, seeking some one, taking off their caps, and bowing to each copying-clerk in turn, and listening with an air of profundity to the decision delivered by the copying-clerk they knew personally. All hope of completing the business that day seemed abandoned; and the volunteer had begun to regain his cheerfulness and easy manners, when Dutlov caught sight of Yegor Mihalovitch, at once attached himself to him, and began imploring his aid, and bowing. Yegor Mihalovitch helped him to

such good purpose, that by three o'clock the volunteer, to his great discomfort and surprise, had been brought before the board; and to the general satisfaction, as it seemed, of every one, from the sentry to the president, he was undressed, accepted, dressed, and allowed to depart. And five minutes later Dutlov had counted out the money, received the discharge; and taking leave of the volunteer and his patron, set off on his way to the lodgings where the recruits from Pokrovskoe were staying. Ilyushka and his young wife were sitting in the corner of the tavern kitchen; and as soon as the old man entered, they ceased talking, and stared at him with a look at once submissive and hostile. The old man—as always—prayed to God, unfastened his sash, took out a paper, and called into the hut his elder son Ignat and Ilyushka's mother, who was in the yard.

'Beware of sin, Ilyushka,' said he, going up to his nephew. 'Last night you said something to me.... Do you think I don't feel for you? I remember how my brother bade me care for you. If I had had the power, would I have let you go? God has brought me luck, and I have not grudged it you. Here is the paper,' he said, laying the discharge on the table, and carefully spreading it out with his stiff, crooked fingers.

All the Pokrovskoe peasants, the innkeeper's workmen, and even a crowd of outsiders, came running into the hut from the yard. All guessed what was going on, but no one interrupted the old man's solemn discourse.

'Here it is, the paper! Four hundred roubles I have given for it. Don't reproach your uncle.'

Ilyushka got up, but he was silent, not knowing what to say. His lips quivered with excitement; his old mother went up to him sobbing, and would have flung herself on his neck, but deliberately and peremptorily the old man held her back by the arm and went on speaking.

'You said a word to me yesterday,' the old man repeated once more; 'with that word

you stabbed me to the heart. Your father, as he lay dying, gave you into my charge; you've been to me like my own son; and if I've wronged you in any way, well, we all live in sin. That's so, good Christian folk, eh?' He turned to the peasants standing round. 'Here's your own mother too here and your young wife, and here is the discharge for you. God be with it, the money! And forgive me, for Christ's sake.'

And turning up the skirt of his coat, he dropped deliberately on his knees, and bowed down at the feet of Ilyushka and his wife. In vain the young people tried to restrain him; not before he had touched the ground with his head did he get up; then, shaking himself, he sat down on the bench. Ilyushka's mother and wife howled with delight. Words of approval were heard in the crowd. 'In the truth, in God's way, indeed!' said one. 'What is money? You can't buy the lad for money!' said another. 'What happiness!' said a third, 'a righteous man, that's what he is!' Only the peasants who were to go as recruits said nothing, and slipped quietly out into the yard.

Two hours later the Dutlovs' two carts were driving out of the outskirts of the town. In the first cart, drawn by the piebald mare with the pinched-up stomach and sweating neck, sat the old man and Ignat. In the back of the cart rattled strings of pots and of fancy bread. In the second cart, which no one was driving, the young wife sat sedately and happily beside her mother-in-law, both with kerchiefs on their heads. The young wife was holding a flask under her apron. Ilyushka sat swaying to and fro on the front seat, with his back to the horse. With a flushed face he was bending forward nibbling at a roll, and talking incessantly. And the voices and the rumble of the cart on the pavement, and the snorting of the horses, all mingled into a general note of merriment. The horses, swishing their tails, moved at a more rapid trot as they recognised the way home. No one who walked or drove by them could help looking round at the merry family party.

Just as they drove out of the town the Dutlovs began to overtake a party of recruits.

A group of them were standing in a ring round a tavern. One recruit wore his grey forage-cap pulled back on the nape of his neck; and with the unnatural expression given a man by the fore part of his head being shaven close, was jauntily strumming on the balalaica. Another, without a cap on his head, held a flask of vodka in one hand, while he danced in the middle of the ring. Ignat stopped the horse and got down to tighten the traces. All the Dutlovs stared with curiosity, approval, and amusement at the man who was dancing. The recruit seemed to see no one, but he was aware that the public admiring him had grown larger, and this gave him fresh energy and skill. He danced briskly. His brows were knitted, his flushed face was rigid, his mouth wore a fixed smile, which had lost by now all meaning. It seemed as though all the energies of his soul were bent on moving one foot after the other with the utmost possible speed, now on the toe and now on the heel. Sometimes he would suddenly stop short, winking to the player of the balalaica, and the latter would begin striking all the strings more briskly than ever, and even tapping on the case with his knuckles. The recruit would keep standing still; but even when he stood still, he looked as if he were dancing all over. Suddenly he began moving slowly, shaking his shoulders, and all at once leaped into the air, threw up his heels as he went up, and with a wild shriek came down in a squatting position. The boys laughed, the women shook their heads, the men smiled approvingly. The old sergeant stood unmoved beside the dancer with an expression that seemed to say, ‘That seems a monstrous fine thing to you, but we know it all so well.’ The player on the balalaica was evidently tired; he looked round lazily, making a false chord. All of a sudden he tapped the case with his fingers, and the dance was over.

‘Hi, Alyoha!’ said the musician to the dancer, pointing to Dutlov; ‘yonder’s your sponsor!...’

‘Where? Ah, my dear good friend!’ cried Alyoha; he was the recruit Dutlov had purchased as a substitute. With weary legs, stumbling forwards, and lifting a flask of vodka over his head, he came up to the cart. ‘Mishka, a glass!’ he shouted. ‘Master!

my dear good friend! This is a pleasure, really!' he cried, lurching tipsily against the cart, and he began offering vodka to the peasants and the women. The men took some, the women refused. 'My dear soul, what present can I make you?' cried Alyoha, embracing the old woman.

A woman selling eatables was standing in the crowd. Alyoha caught sight of her, snatched her tray from her, and scattered its contents into the cart.

'Never fear; I'll pa-a-ay, damn you!' he wailed in a lachrymose voice, and at once pulled out of his trousers a pouch with money in it, and flung it to Mishka.

He stood with his elbows on the cart and looked with wet eyes at the party sitting in it.

'Which is the mother?' he asked. 'You, eh? I must make her an offering too.'

He pondered an instant and felt in his pocket; then pulled out a new handkerchief folded up, took off the strip of linen he wore as a sash under his soldier's cloak, hurriedly untied a red kerchief from his neck, crumpled them all up together, and thrust them into the old woman's lap.

'There's an offering for you!' he said, in a voice which grew more and more subdued.

'What for? Thanks, my dear! Why, what a good-natured lad 'tis!' said the old woman, addressing old Dutlov, who had come up to their cart.

Alyoha sank into complete silence and stupefaction, and his head sank lower and lower, as though he were falling asleep.

'It's for you I'm going, for you I'm ruined!' he said. 'That's why I give you presents too.'

'I dare say he's got a mother too,' said some one in the crowd. 'Such a good-natured lad!'

Alyoha raised his head.

‘I’ve a mother,’ he said, ‘and a father too. They’ve all cast me off. Listen, old mother,’ he added, taking Ilyushka’s mother by the hand. ‘I’ve made you a present. You listen to me, for Christ’s sake. Go to Vodnoe village, ask there for old Mother Nikonov—she’s my own mother, d’ye see?—and tell that same old woman, Mother Nikonov—the third hut from the end, the one with the new well—tell her that Alyoha, your son ... that is ... Musician, strike up!’ he shouted.

And he began dancing again, talking still, and flung the flask with the rest of the vodka on the ground.

Ignat got into the cart and was driving away.

‘Good-bye, God bless you!’ said the old woman, wrapping her cloak round her.

Alyoha stopped all at once.

‘You go to the devil!’ he shouted, shaking his clenched fist at them. ‘Your mother be...!’

‘O Lord,’ said Ilyushka’s mother, crossing herself.

Ignat urged on the mare, and the carts rattled on again. The recruit Alyoha remained standing in the middle of the road, and shaking his clenched fists, with a look of fury on his face, abused the peasants with all the violence he was capable of.

‘What did you stop for? Go on! Devils, cannibals!’ he shouted, ‘you won’t escape me!... Devils, low clodhoppers!’

At that word his voice broke, and as he stood, he fell flat on the ground.

Soon the Dutlovs got out into the open country, and looking back, saw no more of the crowd of recruits. After driving five versts further at a walking pace, Ignat got down from the cart, where his father had dropped asleep, and walked alongside Ilyushka’s cart.

The two of them together emptied the flask of vodka they had brought from the town. Soon after, Ilyushka began singing; the women joined in with him. Ignat

shouted gaily in tune with the song. A cheerful-looking posting-chaise came flying along to meet them. The driver shouted briskly to his horses as he passed the two festive carts; the postillion looked round with a wink at the flushed faces of the peasants and the women, swaying in time to their merry song in the cart.

TWO HUSSARS

TWO HUSSARS

IN the early years of the nineteenth century, in the days when there were as yet no railways nor macadamised roads, no gas nor stearine candles, no low sofas with springs nor unlacquered furniture, no disillusioned young men with eyeglasses nor liberal lady philosophers, no charming dames aux caméllias such as have become so numerous in our times: in those naïve days when people travelling from Moscow to Petersburg in their chariot or family coach took with them a complete commissariat of cooked provisions, drove for eight days and nights over the soft, dusty, or muddy road, and put their faith in Pozharsky cutlets, in Valdai bells, and dough rings; when in the long autumn evenings they burned guttering tallow candles to light up a family circle of twenty or thirty persons, and for balls stuck wax and spermaceti candles into candelabra; when furniture was arranged symmetrically; when our fathers were young not only from the absence of wrinkles and grey hair; when they fought duels over ladies, and, from the other end of the room, flew to pick up handkerchiefs dropped by accident or design; when our mothers wore short waists and huge sleeves, and settled family questions by the drawing of lots; when fascinating dames aux caméllias shunned the light of day—in those naïve days of masonic lodges, Martinistes, the Tugendbund, in the days of Miloradovitch, Davidov and Pushkin—in those days there was an assembly of the local gentry in the provincial town of K., and the elections of the representatives of the nobility

were just over.

I

‘Oh, very well, in the drawing-room then,’ said a young officer, in the greatcoat and forage-cap of a hussar. He had just got out of a travelling sledge, and was entering the best hotel in the town of K.

‘The assembly, your Excellency, has been such an immense one,’ said the waiter, who had already succeeded in learning from the officer’s servant that the hussar’s name was Count Turbin, and so styled him ‘Your Excellency.’ ‘The lady from Afremovo, with her daughters, promised to be leaving this evening; so if your honour will be pleased to take number eleven, when it is vacant,’ he said, stepping softly in front of the count along the corridor, and continually looking back.

In the public room, near the full-length portrait of the Emperor Alexander, which was black all over, several men were sitting at a little table over their champagne, in all probability representatives of the local gentry, and a little on one side were some travelling merchants in blue cloaks.

Entering the room and calling in Blücher, a huge grey dog he had brought with him, the count flung off his coat, which was still covered with frost about the collar, asked for vodka, and in his blue satin tunic sat down to the table and entered into conversation with the gentlemen. The latter, favourably disposed to the stranger at once by his fine and open demeanour, offered him a glass of champagne. The count tossed off at a draught a glass of vodka, and then he, too, ordered a bottle to regale his new acquaintances with. The sledge-driver came in to ask for something for vodka.

‘Sashka!’ shouted the count, ‘give him something.’

The driver went out with Sashka and came back again, with money in his hand.

‘Why, your Slency, didn’t I do my best for your honour? Half a rouble you promised

me, but he’s given me a quarter.’

‘Sashka! give him a rouble!’

Sashka stared with a downcast expression at the driver’s feet.

‘That’s enough for him,’ he said in a bass voice; ‘and besides, I’ve no more money left.’

The count took out of his note-book all that was left in it—two five rouble notes—and gave one to the driver, who kissed his hand and went out.

‘See what we’ve come to,’ said the count, ‘the last five roubles.’

‘In true hussar style, count,’ said one of the gentlemen, smiling. His moustaches, his voice, and a certain swagger in his gait unmistakably betokened the retired cavalryman. ‘Are you intending to stay here long, count?’

‘I must get some money, else I shouldn’t be staying long. And there are no rooms either, damn them, in this cursed inn....’

‘Permit me, count,’ replied the cavalryman, ‘won’t you join me? I’m putting up here—number seven. If you won’t object to sleeping there for a while. But you must stay three days with us. There’s a ball this evening at the marshal’s. How delighted he would be to see you!’

‘Yes, indeed, count, pay us a little visit,’ put in another of the group, a handsome young man. ‘Why hurry away? It only comes once in three years, you know—the provincial election. You should at least have a look at our young ladies, count.’

‘Sashka! get out my linen; I’m going to the baths,’ said the count, getting up. ‘And then we’ll see, may be, I might look in at the marshal’s.’

Then he called the waiter to speak to him about something, to which the waiter responded, grinning, ‘All that can be arranged,’ and went out.

‘Then, my good sir, I’ll order my trunk to be moved into your room,’ the count shouted from behind the door.

‘Do me the honour, most happy,’ answered the cavalry officer, running to the door. ‘Number seven—don’t forget.’

When his footsteps had passed out of hearing, the cavalry officer returned to his place, and sitting down closer to a government official, and looking him straight in the face with smiling eyes, he said—

‘Yes, it’s the very man.’

‘Oh?’

‘I tell you, that’s that very hussar, the duellist—Turbin, the notorious count. He recognised me, I bet you; he knew me. Why, we were drinking together for three weeks on end at Lebedyan when I was there getting remounts. A fine spree we got up there together. He’s a gallant young fellow, eh?’

‘He is. And so pleasant in his manners. You see nothing of all that—you know what I mean,’ answered the handsome young man. ‘How quickly we made friends.... He must be about five-and-twenty, not more, do you think?’

‘No, he does look that, but he’s older. One must know him. Who was it eloped with Madame Migunov? It was he. It was he killed Sablin. He dropped Matnyov out of window head first. He won three hundred thousand from Prince Nesterov. He’s a desperate rake, you must know. A gambler, a duellist, a regular lady-killer, but a true hussar at heart. They’ve got a name for it, but if any one could understand what a real hussar means! Ah, that was a time!’

And the cavalry officer told a yarn of his revels in Lebedyan with the count, which had never taken place, and indeed never could have taken place. They never could, in the first place, because he had never set eyes on the count before, and had left the army two years before the count had entered the service; and secondly because the cavalry officer had never even served in the cavalry, but had been for four years the humblest cadet in the Byelevsky regiment, and had retired from the service immediately on being promoted to be an ensign. But ten years ago he had come into

a legacy, and actually had visited Lebedyan, had squandered seven hundred roubles there in company with the remount officers, and had even ordered himself an Uhlan uniform with orange facings, with a view of entering an Uhlan regiment. This desire to enter the cavalry, and the three weeks spent with the officers at Lebedyan, had remained the brightest, happiest episode in his life, so that he had first translated the desire into an accomplished fact, then into a memory, and by now had himself a firm belief in his past career in the cavalry, though this did not prevent him from being a truly worthy man, full of kindliness and honesty.

‘Yes, no one who hasn’t been in the cavalry could ever understand fellows like us.’ He seated himself astride on a chair, and thrusting out his lower jaw talked away in a bass voice. ‘You ride at times at the head of your squadron; and under you a regular devil of a horse, prancing and rearing; you sit like the devil himself. The squadron commander rides up to inspect the troops. “Lieutenant,” says he, “if you please—it will be nothing without you—lead the squadron in parade order.” “All right,” one says, and the thing is done. You look round you, shout to the whiskered fellows, your men. ‘Ah, damn it, those were days!’

The count came back, his face red and his hair wet from the bath and went straight to number seven, where the cavalry officer was already seated, in a dressing-gown, with a pipe, pondering with enjoyment and some trepidation over the good fortune that had fallen to his lot—of sharing a room with the notorious Turbin. ‘Why, if the fancy takes him, he’ll seize me and strip me naked, drag me out beyond the town gates and sit me in the snow, or ... smear me over with tar, or simply ... no, he wouldn’t treat a comrade like that ...’ he consoled himself by reflecting.

‘Feed Blücher, Sashka!’ shouted the count.

Sashka made his appearance. He had drunk a glass of vodka since his arrival and was rather drunk.

‘You’ve given way to it already; been drinking, rascal!... Feed Blücher.’

‘He’s not dying of hunger as ’tis; see how sleek he is!’ answered Sashka, stroking the dog.

‘Come, no talking! go along and feed him.’

‘All you care about is the dog’s having enough, but if a man has a glass, you find fault.’

‘Ay, I’ll beat you!’ shouted the count in a voice that set the window panes shaking, and positively frightened the cavalry officer a little.

‘You might inquire whether Sashka has had anything to eat to-day. Well, beat me, if your dog’s dearer to you than your man,’ said Sashka. But at that moment he received such a terrible blow from the count’s fist in his face that he fell down. Knocking his head against the wall and clutching his nose in his hand, he darted towards the door and staggered out on to a chest in the corridor.

‘He has knocked my teeth out,’ growled Sashka, wiping his bloody nose with one hand, while with the other he scratched the back of Blücher, who was licking himself. ‘He’s knocked out my teeth, Blushka, but still he’s my count, and I could go through fire and water for him—that I could! For why? He’s my count, do you see, Blushka? Do you want your dinner?’

After lying there a while, he got up, fed the dog, and, almost sober, went to wait on his count and offer him tea.

‘You will really hurt my feelings,’ the cavalry officer began timidly, standing before the count, who was lying on his bed, scraping his feet against the wall. ‘I’m an old army man too, and a comrade, I may say; rather than you should borrow from any one else, I shall be most happy to put at your service two hundred roubles. I haven’t that sum at this moment, only a hundred; but I will get it to-day. You really hurt my feelings, count!’

‘Thanks, my dear fellow,’ said the count, slapping the cavalry officer on the shoulder and at once divining the nature of the relations that were bound to arise

between them: ‘thanks! Well, we’ll go to the ball then, if that’s so. But what are we going to do now? Tell me what there is to be seen in your town. Who are the pretty women, who are fond of a spree, and who are your card-players?’

The cavalry officer explained that there would be numbers of pretty women at the ball; that the newly-elected police captain, Kolkov, was more given to dissipation than any one, though he had none of the real dash of a hussar about him, but was simply a good-natured fellow; that Ilyushka’s band of gypsies had been singing in the town since the opening of the elections, Styoshka leading them, and that to-day everybody from the marshal’s would go there to hear them. And the play was pretty good, he added. Luhnov, a wealthy visitor in the town, played cards, and Ilyin, a cornet of the Uhlans, staying in number eight, was losing heavily too. They were just beginning to play in his room. They played every evening. ‘And such a delightful young fellow, I must tell you, count, is that Ilyin; nothing stingy about him—he’ll part with his last shirt.’

‘Then let’s go and see him. Let’s see what sort of people they are,’ said the count.

‘By all means, by all means. They’ll be awfully glad to see you.’

II

The cornet of Uhlans, Ilyin, had not long been awake. On the previous evening he had sat down to play at eight o’clock, and had played for fifteen hours on end, till eleven o’clock in the morning. He had lost a great deal, but exactly how much he did not know, because he had had three thousand of his own money and fifteen thousand of government money which he had long ago mixed up with his own. And he was afraid to reckon up for fear of convincing himself of what he foresaw, that a good deal of the government money intrusted to him was missing. It was almost midday when he fell asleep, and he had slept that heavy, dreamless sleep that only a very young man ever sleeps, and only after very heavy losses at cards. On waking up, at six o’clock in the evening, at the very time when Count Turbin was entering the

hotel, he saw cards all round him on the floor, chalk and smudged tables in the middle of the room, and recollected with horror the play of the preceding evening, and his last card, the knave, which had lost him five hundred roubles. But not yet quite believing in the actual state of things, he took his money from under the pillow and began counting it. He recognised several notes which had passed from hand to hand in ‘corners’ and ‘transports’ and recalled the whole course of his play. His own three thousand had all gone, and the government money was two and a half thousand short.

The Uhlan had been playing for four nights in succession.

He had come from Moscow where the sums of government money had been put into his charge. In K. he had been detained by the overseer of the posting-station on the plea of the lack of horses, but in reality, in accordance with an understanding, he had long had with the proprietor of the hotel—to keep all visitors for a day for him. The Uhlan, a lively young fellow, who had only just received three thousand roubles from his parents in Moscow for his outfit for the regiment, was glad to spend a few days in the town of K. at the time of the provincial elections, and looked forward to enjoying himself thoroughly here. He was acquainted with a country gentleman of the neighbourhood with a family, and he had been meaning to go and see him, to flirt with his daughters, when the cavalry officer turned up and made the Uhlan’s acquaintance. And the same evening, with no evil intent, he had introduced him to his acquaintances, Luhnov and the other card-players in the public room. From that evening the Uhlan had been playing cards. He had not driven over to see his country friend, he had not even inquired about horses, he had not, in fact, left his room for four days.

After dressing and drinking tea, he went to the window. He longed to go out so as to shake off the haunting memories of the card-playing. He put on his greatcoat and went out into the street. The sun was already hidden behind the white houses with

red roofs; twilight was coming on already. It was warm. Flakes of damp snow were falling softly into the dirty street. He suddenly felt it intolerably sad that he should have slept all through this day, which was just over.

‘This day that has past one can never recall,’ he thought.

‘I have ruined my young life,’ he said to himself; not because he really thought he had ruined his young life—he was not indeed thinking about it at all—but the phrase happened to occur to his mind.

‘What am I to do now?’ he meditated. ‘Borrow from some one and go away.’ A lady walked along the pavement. ‘What a foolish-looking lady!’ he thought inconsequently. ‘There’s no one to borrow from. I’ve ruined my young life.’ He reached the shops. A merchant in a fox-lined cloak was standing at the door of his shop touting for customers. ‘If I hadn’t taken up the eight, I should have made up what I’d lost.’ An old beggar-woman followed him whimpering. ‘There’s no one to borrow from.’ A gentleman in a bearskin cloak drove by; a watchman stood still. ‘What could one do out of the ordinary? Take a shot at these people. No, it’s a bore! I’ve ruined my young life. Ah, those are nice bridles hanging there with ornaments on them. I should like a drive in a sledge now with three horses—ah the darlings! I’m going home. Luhnov will soon be coming, we shall begin playing.’ He went back and again counted over his money. No, he had not been mistaken the first time; again the government money was two and a half thousand roubles short. ‘I’ll stake twenty-five on the first card, then a “corner” on the second, then seven times the stake, then fifteen, thirty, sixty times—up to three thousand roubles. I’ll buy the bridles and go away. He won’t let me win, the scoundrel! I’ve ruined my young life.’ This was what was passing in the Uhlan’s mind at the moment when Luhnov actually did come into his room.

‘Well, have you been up long, Mihailo Vassilitch?’ inquired Luhnov, deliberately taking his gold spectacles off his lean nose, and carefully wiping them on his red silk

handkerchief.

‘No; I’m only just up. I slept so well.’

‘There’s some hussar come; he’s staying with Zavalshevsky ... have you heard about him?’

‘No, I hadn’t heard anything. How is it no one’s here yet?’

‘I believe they’ve gone to Pryahins’s. They’ll be here directly.’

There did in fact come into the room shortly afterwards the garrison officer, who always accompanied Luhnov, a Greek merchant with a huge hooked nose of a cinnamon tint, and sunken, black eyes, a stout, puffy-looking landowner and brandy-distiller, who gambled for whole nights at a stretch, always for half-rouble points. All were eager to begin playing; but the chief players made no reference to the subject; Luhnov, in particular, talked with extreme composure about a burglary in Moscow.

‘Just imagine,’ he was saying, ‘Moscow a city of the foremost rank, the capital ... and men go about at night with hooks, masquerading as devils, frighten silly people, rob travellers—and that’s the end of it. What are the police thinking about? That’s the puzzle.’

The Uhlan listened attentively to the story of the robbery; but towards the end of it he got up and quietly ordered cards to be brought in. The stout landowner was the first to express his feelings.

‘Well, gentlemen, why waste the golden hours? If we mean business, let’s get to business.’

‘Yes; you hauled in a good many half-roubles yesterday, so you like it!’ said the Greek.

‘Yes, it’s time,’ said the garrison officer.

Ilyin looked towards Luhnov. Luhnov, looking him straight in the face, went on

calmly with his account of the robbers with hooks.

‘Shall we deal?’ asked the Uhlan.

‘Isn’t it early?’

‘Byelov!’ called the Uhlan, blushing for some unknown reason, ‘bring me some dinner.... I’ve had nothing to eat yet, gentlemen. Bring champagne and bring us some cards.’

At that moment the count and Zavalshevsky came into the room. It appeared that Turbin and Ilyin belonged to the same division. They made friends at once, drank champagne together, clinking their glasses, and in five minutes they were quite on intimate terms. The count seemed to take a great fancy to Ilyin. He smiled, continually looking at him, and rallied him on his youth.

‘Ah, what a youngster for an Uhlan!’ said he; ‘fine moustaches, fine moustaches, eh?’

The down on Ilyin’s lip was perfectly white.

‘Why, you were just going to play cards, I think?’ said the count. ‘Well, I wish you good luck, Ilyin! You’re a first-rate player, I expect!’ he added, smiling.

‘Yes, they’re just going to begin,’ said Luhnov, tearing open a pack of cards, and you, count, will you take a hand?’

‘No; to-day I won’t, or I should beat you all. When once I get started, I break any bank I have to do with. I’ve nothing to play with. I lost everything at the posting-station near Volotchok. I came across a fellow there, an infantry officer, with a lot of rings on his fingers, a cardsharper he must have been, and he completely cleaned me out.’

‘Did you stay long at the station then?’ asked Ilyin.

‘I spent twenty-two hours there. I shall remember that damned station! and, I dare say, the overseer won’t forget my visit.’

‘Oh, why?’

‘When I arrived, you know, out ran the overseer, a regular thievish, ruffianly-looking fellow. “No horses,” said he; and my rule, I must tell you, is this: when there are no horses, I go straight into the overseer’s room, not the public room, you know, but his private room, without taking off my cloak, and I order all the doors and windows to be thrown wide-open, as though it were close with charcoal fumes. Well, and so I did there. And, you remember what the frost was like last month—twenty degrees of frost it was. The overseer began talking away. I gave him one in the face. Then an old woman, and a lot of wenches and females set up a squealing, snatched up their pots, and were for running out into the village. I stepped to the door. “Fetch out the horses,” said I, “and I’ll go; I won’t let you out else, I’ll freeze you all out!”’

‘That’s a fine way of doing things!’ said the puffy landowner, going off into a guffaw; ‘that’s how one freezes out beetles!’

‘Only I didn’t keep guard over them. I went out, and the overseer, with all the womenfolk bolted. I had one old woman only left as a hostage on the stove; she kept sneezing and praying to God. Then we opened negotiations: the overseer came forth, and from a distance tried to persuade me to let the old woman go, but I set Blücher on him—Blücher’s a first-rate fellow with overseers. And so the blackguard didn’t give me horses till next morning. Then this infantryman arrived. I went to the other room and began playing with him. You’ve seen Blücher?... Blücher! Fugh!...’

Blücher ran in. The card-players gave him an affable reception, though they were obviously eager to get to quite other matters.

‘But why aren’t you playing, gentlemen? Please don’t let me hinder you. I’m a chatterbox, I know,’ said Turbin, ‘and a good thing too, whether you like it or no.’

III

Luhnov moved two candles nearer him, pulled out a huge brown pocket-book full of notes, and slowly, as though performing some mysterious rite, opened it on the table, took two hundred-rouble notes out of it, and laid them under the cards.

‘The same as yesterday then—two hundred for the bank,’ he said, settling his spectacles straight, and tearing open a pack of cards.

‘Very well,’ Ilyin said, not looking at him, but going on with his conversation with Turbin.

The game began. Luhnov dealt as precisely as a machine. At intervals he stopped in his play to mark the points with deliberate care, or glancing sternly over his spectacles, said in a weak voice, ‘Your lead.’ The fat landowner talked louder than any one, making various remarks to himself aloud, bending the cards, and smudging them with his fat fingers. The garrison officer without a word wrote down his stake on a card in a fine hand, and bent down the corners under the table. The Greek sat beside the one who kept the bank, and his sunken black eyes kept careful watch on the game, as though in expectation of something. Zavalshevsky, standing at the table, was suddenly all excitement. He pulled out of his trouser-pocket a red note or a blue note, laid a card on it, clapped his open hand on it, called out, ‘The seven for luck!’ bit his moustaches, shifted from one leg to the other, flushed, and was all over in a fidget, that lasted till the card was played. Ilyin was eating a plate of veal and cucumber, set on the horsehair sofa beside him, and quickly rubbing his hands on his coat, he put down one card after another. Turbin, who sat from the first on the sofa, soon caught the position of affairs. Luhnov did not look at the Uhlan at all, and did not once address him; only from time to time his spectacles were turned for an instant towards the Uhlan’s hands, but the greater number of the latter’s cards were losing ones.

‘Ah, I should like to beat that card,’ said Luhnov, of a card laid down by the fat landowner, who was playing for half-rouble stakes.

‘You beat Ilyin’s cards, but why beat mine?’ observed the landowner.

And certainly Ilyin’s cards were beaten oftener than the others. He nervously tore up the losing card under the table and with trembling hands chose another. Turbin got up from the sofa, and asked the Greek to let him sit beside the one who kept the bank. The Greek moved to another seat, and the count, sitting in his chair, began keeping an intent watch on Luhnov’s hands, never taking his eyes off them.

‘Ilyin!’ he said suddenly, in his ordinary tone of voice, which, quite apart from any intention, drowned all other sounds, ‘why do you stick to the diamond? You don’t know how to play.’

‘However one plays, it makes no difference!’

‘Yes—you’re bound to lose. Let me take a hand for you.’

‘No, excuse me, please; I’ll play for myself. Play on your own account, if you want to.’

‘On my own account, I’ve said that I’m not going to; I should like to, for you. I don’t like you to be losing.’

‘Well, it seems it’s my fate!’

The count did not persist, and leaning on his elbows, he fell to watching Luhnov’s hands intently again.

‘A dirty business!’ he said, all at once, loudly and deliberately.

Luhnov glanced round at him.

‘Dirty! dirty!’ he exclaimed suddenly, speaking still more loudly, and looking Luhnov straight in the face.

The game went on.

‘Not the right thing!’ Turbin said again deliberately, just after Luhnov had beaten a high card of Ilyin’s.

‘What is it you don’t like, count?’ Luhnov inquired, with polite nonchalance.

‘Why, that you give Ilyin his “simples” and beat his “corners.” That’s what’s wrong.’

Luhnov faintly shrugged his shoulders, and lifted his eyebrows, as though to suggest that he should put it all down to luck, and went on playing.

‘Blücher! fugh!’ shouted the count, getting up—‘at him,’ he added rapidly.

Blücher, brushing against the sofa and almost upsetting the garrison officer, jumped up, ran to his master and growled, looking round at every one, and wagging his tail, as though to ask, ‘Who’s the offender? eh?’

Luhnov laid down his cards and pushed his chair back.

‘One can’t play like this,’ said he; ‘I particularly dislike dogs. How can one play when a whole pack of curs is brought into the room?’

‘Especially those dogs; they’re called leeches, I believe,’ agreed the garrison officer.

‘Well, are we going to play, Mihailo Vassilitch, or not?’ said Luhnov to Ilyin.

‘Don’t hinder us, please, count!’ Ilyin said to Turbin.

‘Come here a minute,’ said Turbin, taking Ilyin by the arm, and he walked with him behind the screen.

From there the count’s words were perfectly audible, for he spoke in his ordinary voice. And his voice could always be heard three rooms off.

‘Why, are you mad? Don’t you see that that gentleman in spectacles is a cardsharper of the first rank?’

‘Oh, stop it, do! what nonsense!’

‘Not stop it, but drop it, I tell you. Another time I might have cleaned you out myself; but somehow I feel sorry at seeing you done. And haven’t you government money with you too?’

‘No; and what makes you suppose so?’

‘Oh, my boy, I’ve been along that road myself, so I know all the cardsharper’s tricks. I tell you the fellow in spectacles is a swindler. Drop it, please. I beg you to, as a comrade.’

‘Well, I’ll only play one round and leave off.’

‘I know what one round means; well, we shall see then.’

They went back. In one round, Ilyin played so many cards, and so many were beaten, that he lost heavily.

Turbin laid his hands in the middle of the table.

‘Come, that’s enough! Let’s go.’

‘No, I can’t; let me be, please,’ Ilyin said in a tone of annoyance, shuffling the bent cards and not looking at Turbin.

‘Well, damn you! Lose away to a dead certainty if you want to, but I must go. Zavalshevsky! let’s be off to the marshal’s.’

And they went away. No one spoke, and Luhnov did not deal till the sound of their steps and Blücher’s paws had died away along the corridor.

‘What a fellow!’ said the landowner, laughing.

‘Well, he won’t hinder us now,’ added the garrison officer quickly, still speaking in a whisper.

And the game went on.

IV

The musicians, serfs of the marshal’s, standing at the buffet end of the room, which had been cleared expressly for the ball, had turned up the cuffs of their coats, and at the given signal were striking up with the old-fashioned polonaise ‘Alexander-Elisabeth.’ In the soft, brilliant light of the wax candles, couples began moving smoothly over the big parqueted hall: the governor, a general of Catherine’s

court, with a star, arm-in-arm with the thin wife of the marshal, the marshal arm-in-arm with the governor's wife, all the local grandees, in fact, in various combinations and permutations. At that moment, Zavalshevsky walked into the hall in a blue frockcoat with a huge collar and puffs on the shoulders, in stockings and dancing-shoes, diffusing a strong odour of the jasmine scent, with which his moustaches and handkerchief and the lapels of his coat were plentifully sprinkled. Beside him was the handsome hussar, in tight, blue riding-breeches and gold-embroidered, red tunic, on which hung the Vladimir cross and a medal of the year 1812. The count was not tall, but he had a very fine elegant figure. His extremely bright, clear-blue eyes and rather long, dark-brown hair, curling in thick ringlets, gave a striking character to his handsome face. The count's presence at the ball was expected; the handsome young man who had seen him at the hotel had already brought the news of him to the marshal. The impression produced by his report was mixed, but on the whole not altogether agreeable.

'He might turn us into ridicule, the young whipper-snapper!' was the opinion of the elder ladies and the men. 'What if he carries me off?' was more or less the reflection that occurred to the girls and young women.

As soon as the polonaise was over, and the couples parted with mutual bows, the ladies again joining the ladies, and the men returning to the men, Zavalshevsky, proud and happy, led the count up to their hostess. The marshal's wife, with some inward trepidation lest this hussar should be guilty of some scandalous breach of the proprieties with her before every one, turned proudly and scornfully away, and said: 'Delighted, I hope you will dance,' and glanced distrustfully at him with an expression that said: 'If you annoy a lady after this, you're a perfect scoundrel.' The count, however, soon overcame this prejudice against him by his courtesy, his assiduity, and his handsome, good-humoured appearance, so that five minutes later the expression of the lady's countenance signified plainly to all around them: 'I know how to manage this sort of gentleman; he saw at once to whom he was

speaking. Now he'll be all attention to me the whole evening.' At that point, however, the governor, who knew the count's father, approached him and very affably drew him aside and entered into conversation with him, which still further reassured the provincial public and raised its opinion of the count. Then Zavalshevsky took him to be introduced to his sister—a plump, youthful little widow, whose large black eyes had been pinned on the count ever since he entered the room. The count invited the little widow to dance a waltz, which as it happened was being played at that moment. His skill in dancing completely won the favour of the assembly.

'Well he's a first-rate dancer!' said a stout country lady, watching the legs in the blue riding-trousers as they darted about the ball-room, and mentally beating time to them: 'one, two, three; one, two, three ... first-rate!'

'He does cut about, he does cut about!' said another lady, a visitor to the town, who was considered not of the best breeding in local society; 'how does he manage not to catch his spurs in anything! Wonderful, very clever!'

The count's dancing eclipsed the three best dancers in the province: a tall adjutant of the governor's, with white eyelashes, who was noted for the rapidity of his dancing and the close embrace in which he held his partner; a cavalry officer, distinguished for the graceful way in which he swung round in the waltz, and tapped lightly with his heels; and another gentleman, a civilian, of whom every one said, that though he had not much to boast of in the way of brains, he was a superb dancer, and the life of all the balls. The latter gentleman did in fact ask every lady to dance, taking them in order as they sat; he never ceased dancing for a minute from the beginning of the ball till the end, and only halted from time to time to wipe with his sopping cambric handkerchief, his exhausted, but beaming countenance. The count eclipsed them all, and danced with the three ladies of greatest consequence at the ball: a big lady, wealthy, handsome and stupid; a medium-sized lady, thin, and not over

good-looking, but beautifully dressed; and a little lady, who was not pretty, but very intelligent. He danced with other ladies too, with all the pretty ones, and they were numerous. But the little widow, Zavalshevsky's sister, the count liked best of them all; with her he danced a quadrille, an écossaise, and a mazurka. When they were sitting down in the quadrille he began paying her a great many compliments, comparing her with Venus, with Diana, with a rose and with some other kind of flower. To all these civilities the little widow only responded by bending her white neck, dropping her eyes, gazing at her white muslin gown, or shifting her fan from one hand to the other. When she murmured: 'Enough, count, you jest,' and similar phrases, her rather deep voice had a ring of such naïve simplicity and comical silliness, that looking at her the idea really might well occur to any one that she was more a flower than a woman; and not a rose, but some rich, wild, rosy-white, scentless flower, growing alone in some distant land out of the virgin snows. This absence of all complexity, this naïveté in combination with her fresh beauty, made such a strange impression on the count that several times in the pauses in their conversation, when he gazed mutely into her eyes, or at the fine lines of her arms and neck, he felt such a strong desire to snatch her in his arms and kiss her vigorously, that he had to exercise serious self-control to keep himself in check. The little widow observed with gratification the impression she was making; but something in the count's behaviour began to agitate and alarm her, although with all his ingratiating attentiveness, the young hussar was, according to the standards of to-day, respectful almost to mawkishness. He flew to get her refreshment, picked up her handkerchief, pulled a chair out of the hands of a scrofulous-looking young landowner, who was also eager to be of service to her, in order to put it for her more quickly.

Noticing that the gallantry fashionable in those days had little effect on his partner, he tried to entertain her by telling her amusing anecdotes, and declared that at her bidding he would be ready to stand on his head on the spot, to crow like a cock, to

jump out of window, or to throw himself into an ice-hole. This line was completely successful; the widow became more lively, went off into gushes of laughter, showing exquisite white teeth, and was perfectly satisfied with her cavalier. The count was more attracted by her every minute; so much so that by the end of the quadrille, he was genuinely in love with her.

After the quadrille, they were joined by a wealthy landowner's son, a young man of eighteen, not as yet in any branch of the service, who had long adored the widow; he was the same scrofulous youth from whom Turbin had carried off the chair. When he approached the widow, she gave him an exceedingly cold reception, and showed not a tenth part of the confusion of which she was sensible with the count.

'You're a pretty person!' she said to him, while she gazed at Turbin's back, and unconsciously considered how many yards of gold lace went to his coat; 'you promised to fetch me to skate and to bring me some bonbons.'

'But I did go, Anna Fyodorovna, and you were gone out; and I left the very best bonbons,' said the young man, who, in spite of his tall figure, spoke in a shrill little voice.

'You always find excuses! I don't want your bonbons. Pray, don't imagine....'

'I see already, Anna Fyodorovna, how changed you are to me, and I know why. Only it's not right ...' he added, but evidently could not conclude his speech from some violent emotion, which made his lips twitch very rapidly and queerly.

Anna Fyodorovna did not listen to him, but went on watching Turbin.

The marshal, the master of the house, a majestically portly, toothless old gentleman, went up to the count, and taking his arm, invited him to his study to smoke and have a drink, if he cared to. As soon as Turbin had gone, Anna Fyodorovna felt that there was positively nothing of interest in the ball-room, and taking her friend, a withered and elderly spinster lady, by the arm, she went with her into the dressing-room.

'Well, was he agreeable?' inquired the spinster.

‘Only it’s awful the way he pursues me,’ answered Anna Fyodorovna, going up to the looking-glass and looking at herself.

Her face was radiant; her eyes were laughing. She positively blushed at the sight of herself; and suddenly, mimicking the ballet-dancers she had seen during the present elections, she pirouetted round on one foot; then laughed her deep but charming laugh, and positively executed a little skip in the air, kicking up her heels.

‘Fancy, only! he asked me for a keepsake,’ she told her friend; ‘but he will not get anythi-i-ing.’ She chanted the last word, and held up one finger, tightly covered with the kid glove that reached to her elbow.

In the study where the marshal had conducted Turbin there were various sorts of vodka, liqueurs, light refreshments, and champagne. Gentlemen sat or walked about in the tobacco smoke, discussing the elections.

‘When all the noble gentry of our district have honoured him by election,’ said the newly-elected police captain, who had drunk heavily already, ‘he ought not to have disappointed local society; he never ought to have....’

The entrance of the count interrupted the conversation. Every one was introduced to him, and the police captain, in particular, clasped his hand a long while in both of his, and several times over begged him not to refuse to join their party after the ball at a new restaurant, where he was entertaining several gentlemen, and some gypsies were to sing. The count promised to be sure to come, and drank several glasses of champagne with him.

‘Why don’t you dance, gentlemen?’ he asked, as a prelude to getting out of the room.

‘We are not dancing men,’ answered the police captain, laughing; ‘we are more interested in the wine, count. And besides, they’ve all grown up under my eyes—the young ladies here, count. Though I do sometimes get through an écossaise, too, count. I can, count....’

‘Well, come along, and get through it now, then,’ said Turbin; ‘let’s enjoy ourselves before going to the gypsies.’

‘Yes; come along, gentlemen. Let us please our host.’ And three noblemen, who had been drinking in the study from the beginning of the ball, with flushed faces, put on their gloves—one a black pair, another silk knitted ones. They were just about to enter the ball-room with the count, when they were detained by the scrofulous youth, who, with a pale face, and hardly able to restrain his tears, went up to Turbin.

‘You think, because you are a count, you are at liberty to push people as if you were at a bazaar,’ he said, breathing with difficulty. ‘Since that’s ill-bred....’ Involuntarily again his twitching lips arrested the flow of his words.

‘What?’ shouted Turbin, suddenly scowling. ‘What!... Boy!’ he shouted, clutching him by the arms and squeezing them, so that the youth felt the blood rush to his head, not so much from anger as from terror. ‘Why, do you want to fight, eh? I’m at your service then.’

Turbin had hardly let go the arm he was grasping so tightly, when a couple of noblemen seized the young man by his arms and dragged him away to a door in the rear.

‘Why, have you lost your senses? You must have been drinking; wait till we tell your papa. What is the matter with you?’ they said to him.

‘No, I’m not drunk; but he pushes one, and doesn’t apologise. He’s a pig! that’s what he is,’ wailed the youth, by now weeping outright.

Without heeding him, they got him away home.

‘Let it be, count.’ The police captain and Zavalshevsky did their part meanwhile in soothing Turbin. ‘He’s a mere babe; he’s whipped still. Why, he’s only sixteen; and what’s come over him there’s no making out. What madness possesses him? And his father’s such a highly respected man—our candidate.’

‘Well, deuce take him, if he doesn’t want to....’

And the count returned to the ball-room, and just as before gaily danced the écossaise with the little widow, and laughed heartily as he looked at the capers cut by the gentlemen who had come with him from the study, and broke into a roar that filled the ball-room when the police captain slipped and plumped down full length in the middle of the dancers.

V

While the count was away in the study, Anna Fyodorovna went up to her brother, and for some reason feeling it necessary to affect to be very little interested in the count, began questioning him. ‘What sort of an hussar was it that danced with me? Tell me, brother.’ The cavalry officer explained to his sister to the best of his powers what a grand person the hussar in question was. He told her, too, that the count was only stopping here because he had had his money stolen on the journey, and that he had himself lent him a hundred roubles; but that, he said, was too small a sum, and so, could not his sister let him have two hundred more. Zavalshevsky begged her, however, to say nothing of this to any one, especially not to the count. Anna Fyodorovna promised to send her brother the money the same day, and to keep the matter a secret; but during the écossaise she was overcome by a fearful longing to offer the count herself as much money as he wanted. She was a long while trying to speak; she blushed, and at last, with an effort, came to the point in this manner—

‘My brother told me that you had a misfortune, count, on your journey, and have no money left. If you want any, won’t you borrow it from me? I should be most delighted.’

But as she uttered these words, Anna Fyodorovna suddenly took fright, and crimsoned. Every trace of good-humour instantaneously vanished from the count’s face.

‘Your brother’s a fool!’ he said sharply. ‘You know that when a man insults a man, they fight; but when a woman insults a man, do you know what’s done then?’

Poor Anna Fyodorovna’s neck and ears were crimson with confusion. She looked down and made no reply.

‘A woman is kissed before every one,’ the count said softly, bending down to her ear. ‘You must let me at least kiss your hand,’ he added slily, after a long pause, touched by his partner’s confusion.

‘Ah, only not just now,’ Anna Fyodorovna articulated, with a deep sigh.

‘When, then? I’m going early to-morrow; and you owe me that.’

‘Well, but if so, it’s impossible,’ said Anna Fyodorovna, smiling.

‘You only give me leave to find an opportunity of seeing you to-night, so as to kiss your hand. I will find it.’

‘But how can you find it?’

‘That’s not your affair. To see you, anything’s possible for me; so that’s settled.’

‘Very well.’

The écossaise was over. They danced another mazurka, in which the count performed wonders—catching handkerchiefs, dropping on one knee, and clanking with his spurs in a peculiar way, after the Warsaw fashion—so that all the old gentlemen left their game of boston to come and look on in the ball-room; and the cavalry officer, reputed the best dancer, acknowledged himself surpassed. Then came supper; after it they danced ‘grandfather,’ and people began going home. During the whole time, the count had never taken his eyes off the little widow. He had spoken sincerely when he said he was ready to fling himself into an ice-hole for her sake. Whether it were caprice, or love, or obstinacy, that evening all his energies were concentrated on a single desire—to see her and to love her. As soon as he observed that Anna Fyodorovna was beginning to take leave of the hostess, he ran

out to the footmen's waiting-room, and from there, without a cloak, he ran out of doors to where the carriages were standing.

'Anna Fyodorovna Zaytsov's carriage!' he shouted.

A high carriage, with seats for four and lanterns, moved out from the rest, and drove up to the steps.

'Stop!' he shouted to the coachman, running knee-deep in the snow up to the carriage.

'What do you want?' called back the coachman.

'I want to get into the carriage,' answered the count, opening the door and trying to get in while the carriage was moving. 'Stop, you devil! Fool!'

'Vaska, stop!' the coachman called to the postillion, and he pulled up the horses. 'What are you getting into the wrong carriage for? This is a lady's carriage—Anna Fyodorovna's—and not your honour's.'

'Hold your tongue, do, blockhead! Here's a rouble for you, and get down and shut the door,' said the count. But as the coachman did not budge, he pulled up the carriage-steps himself, opened the window, and somehow managed to slam the door to. In the carriage, as in all old carriages, especially those upholstered with yellow galloon, there was a smell of mildew and burnt bristles. The count's legs had been knee-deep in the thawing snow, and were terribly cold in his thin boots and riding-breeches; his whole body indeed was chilled by the winter frost. The coachman grumbled on the box, and seemed to be about to get down. But the count heard nothing and felt nothing. His face glowed, his heart beat violently. He gripped convulsively at the yellow strap, peeped out of the side window, and his whole being was concentrated on the single emotion of anticipation. This anticipation did not last long. There was a shout from the steps—'Madame Zaytsov's carriage!' The coachman shook the reins, the carriage quivered on its high springs, the lighted windows of the house, one after the other, flew by the carriage window.

‘Mind, if you tell the footman I’m here, fellow,’ said the count, poking his head out of the window in front to speak to the coachman, ‘I’ll thrash you; but if you say nothing, another ten roubles.’

He had hardly let go of the window, when the carriage jolted more violently again, and stopped. He huddled up in a corner, held his breath, even shut his eyes: he felt such dread that his passionate hopes would not be fulfilled. The door opened, one after another the steps were noisily let down; there was the rustle of a woman’s dress, a scent of jasmine perfume was wafted into the stuffy carriage, rapid feet ran up the steps, and Anna Fyodorovna, covering the count’s leg with the skirt of her open pelisse, sank on to the seat beside him, breathing hard but not uttering a word.

Whether she had seen him or not, no one could have said, not even Anna Fyodorovna herself. But when he took her by the arm and said, ‘Well, now I shall kiss your little hand,’ she showed very little alarm, made no reply, but let him have the arm, which he covered with kisses much higher up than the glove reached. The carriage drove off.

‘Say something. You are not angry?’ he said to her.

She shrank into her corner without a word; but all of a sudden she burst into tears, and of her own accord fell forward with her head on his breast.

VI

The newly-elected police captain with his party, the cavalry officer, and other noblemen had been a long while drinking and listening to the gypsies in the new restaurant, when the count joined them, wearing a blue cloth cloak lined with bearskin that had belonged to Anna Fyodorovna’s late husband.

‘Your excellency! we’ve been eagerly expecting you this long while,’ said a cross-eyed, dark gypsy, showing his gleaming teeth, as he met him in the entry and darted to take off his cloak. ‘We’ve not seen you since Lebedyan ... Styoshka has

been quite pining for you....'

Styoshka, a graceful gypsy girl, with a brown face, brick-red cheeks, and deep, shining black eyes, shaded by long eyelashes, ran out too to meet him.

'Ah! little count! darling! heart of gold! this is a pleasure!' she murmured with a beaming smile.

Ilyushka himself ran out to meet him, affecting to be greatly delighted. The women, old and young, jumped up from their places, and surrounded their visitor. One claimed kinship with him as godfather to a child; another brotherhood through exchange of crosses. Turbin kissed all the gypsy girls on the lips; the older women and the men kissed him on the shoulder or the hand. The gentlemen of the party too were very much pleased at the count's arrival, the more so that the revelry having reached its zenith was by now getting a little flat. Every one was beginning to feel sated; the wine had lost its stimulating effect on the nerves, and was only cloying the stomach. Every one had performed by now all his stock of smart tricks, and every one was weary of gazing at the performances of the rest. All their songs had been sung, and were mixed up together in every one's head, leaving an impression of noise and dissipation. However queer or reckless a feat were performed, the idea had begun to occur to every one that there was nothing agreeable or amusing in it. The police captain, sprawling in an unseemly way on the floor at the feet of an old gypsy woman, kicked and shouted—

'Champagne! ... the count has come! ... champagne! ... he has come! ... here, champagne! ... I'll make a bath of champagne, and I'm going to bathe in it.... Gentlemen of the nobility! I love the company of noble gentlemen.... Styoshka! sing "The Path."'

The cavalryman too was in an hilarious condition; but with him it took another form. He was sitting in a corner, on a sofa, very close to a tall, handsome gypsy woman, Lyubasha, and feeling that drunkenness had begun to dim his eyes, he kept blinking,

shaking his head, and repeating the same words over and over again, as he tried in a whisper to persuade the gypsy to run away with him. Lyubasha, smiling, listened to him as though what he were saying were highly entertaining, though now and then she cast rather dejected glances at her husband, cross-eyed Sashka, who was standing behind a chair facing her. In response to the cavalry officer's declarations of love, she bent down to his ear, and asked him to buy her perfumes and ribbons, on the sly, so that the others should not see it.

'Hurrah!' shouted the cavalry officer when the count came in.

The handsome young man with an anxious countenance walked up and down the room, carefully steadying his steps, and humming airs out of the Revolt in the Seraglio.

An aged paterfamilias had been borne off to the gypsies by the urgent entreaties of the noble gentlemen, who had declared that everything would go amiss without him, and that they had better not go at all if he would not come. He was on a sofa, where he had lain down at once on arriving, and no one had taken any further notice of him. A government official of some sort, who was of the party, had taken off his coat, and was sitting on the table with his legs up; he ruffled up his hair, intending thereby to signify that he was having a roaring time. As soon as the count came in, he unbuttoned the collar of his shirt, and squatted still higher on the table. The general gaiety in fact revived on the appearance of the count. The gypsies who had been wandering about the room sat down again in a ring.

The count seated Styoshka, the leading singer, on his knee, and ordered some more champagne.

Ilyushka stood with his guitar before the leading singer, and began to play the dance tunes, that is, a series of gypsy songs: 'As I go along the street,' 'Ah, you hussar,' 'Dost thou hear and understand?' and so on in a certain order. Styoshka sang capitally. Her rich, supple contralto that came straight from her chest, her smiles as

she sang, her laughing, passionate eyes, and her little feet, that unconsciously beat time to the song, her wild shriek at the beginning of the chorus, all set vibrating a responsive chord rarely stirred in the soul. It was evident that she was living wholly in the song as she sang it.

Ilyushka, smiling, accompanied her on the guitar, his back, his legs, his whole body working in harmony with the song, and intently, anxiously he nodded and lifted his head in time to it, with his eyes fastened on the singer, as though he were hearing her for the first time. Then at the last note of the singer he suddenly drew himself up, and proudly, resolutely, as though feeling superior to every one in the world, he kicked his guitar, turned it over, stamped, tossed his hair, and looked round at the chorus with knitted brows. His whole body began to dance in every fibre from his neck to his heels.... And twenty vigorous, powerful voices filled the air with sound, each trying to chime in more strangely and strikingly than the rest. The old women pranced up and down in their seats, grinning and waving their kerchiefs, and shrieked in time and in unison, one louder than another. The men singing bass stood behind their chairs, with their heads on one side and their necks strained.

When Styoshka took her high notes, Ilyushka brought the guitar nearer her, as though to support her, and the handsome young man screamed in an ecstasy that now ‘the A flat was coming.’

When they played a dance tune, and Dunyasha tripped out, her shoulders and bosom quivering, and after turning round before the count, was floating away, Turbin leapt up, flung off his tunic, and in his red shirt gallantly stepped out, keeping time and step with her, and performing such feats with his legs that the gypsies looked at one another with smiles of approval.

The police captain sat cross-legged like a Turk, thumped himself in the chest with his fists, and shouted, ‘Viva!’ Then seizing the count by the legs, he began telling him that he had had two thousand roubles, but had only five hundred left, and that he

could do anything he liked, if only the count would permit it. The old paterfamilias waked up and tried to get away, but they would not let him go. The handsome young man kept begging a gypsy girl to dance a waltz. The cavalry officer, pluming himself on his friendship with the count, got up from his corner, and embraced Turbin.

‘Ah, my dear boy!’ he said, ‘what did you run away from us for? Eh?’ The count did not reply, evidently thinking of something else. ‘Where were you off to? Ah, you sly dog, I know where you were!’

This familiarity was, for some reason, not to Turbin’s liking. Without a word or a smile, he stared the cavalry officer in the face, and all at once levelled upon him such a volley of coarse and terrible abuse that the cavalry officer, deeply mortified could not make up his mind for a long while how to take this affront, as a joke or not. Finally he decided to take it as a joke, smiled, and went back to his gypsy, assuring her that he would certainly marry her after Easter. A second song was sung and a third, the gypsies danced once more, sang a special song in honour of their guests, and every one still seemed festive. Champagne flowed without stint, and the count drank a great deal. His eyes were veiled by a sort of dewy moisture, but he did not stagger; he danced better than ever, talked without faltering, and even sang capitally in the chorus, and took a second with Styoshka when she sang ‘Love’s soft alarms.’ In the middle of a dance, the proprietor of the restaurant came in to beg the company to go home, as it was three o’clock in the morning.

The count seized the proprietor by the collar, and told him to dance the ‘squatting dance.’ The man refused. The count snatched up a bottle of champagne, and turning him wrong side up, with his legs in the air, told him to keep so, while amidst the laughter of the company he deliberately poured the whole bottle over him.

It was beginning to get light. Every one was pale and exhausted except the count.

‘It’s time I was starting for Moscow, though,’ he said all at once, getting up. ‘All

come along to my hotel, lads. See me off ... and we'll have some tea.'

Every one consented, except the slumbering paterfamilias, who remained where he was. The rest crammed themselves into three sledges, that were standing at the entrance, and drove to the count's hotel.

VII

'Put the horses in!' shouted the count, as he walked into the public room of the hotel with all his guests and the gypsies. 'Sashka!—not Gypsy Sashka, but my man—tell the overseer that I'll beat him if the horses aren't good ones. And bring us some tea! Zavalshevsky, you look after the tea. I'm going to see Ilyin—I want to see what he's about,' added Turbin, and he went along the passage to the Uhlan's room.

Ilyin had just finished playing, and had lost every copeck he had. He was lying face downwards on a sofa with a torn horsehair covering, from which he pulled out the hairs one after another, put them in his mouth, bit at them, and spat them out. On the card-table, strewn with cards, stood two tallow candles, one of them burned down to the paper that had been twisted round it. Their dim light struggled feebly against the daylight that peeped in at the windows. There was not an idea in the Uhlan's head; a sort of thick mist of gambling fever clouded all his mental faculties; he felt no remorse even. He tried once to think what he was to do now, how he could get away without a copeck, how he was to pay back the fifteen thousand roubles of government money he had lost, what the commander of his regiment would say, what his mother would say, what his comrades would say—and such terror had come over him, and such disgust with himself, that he jumped up, anxious to find forgetfulness in something. He walked up and down his room, trying not to step except on the chinks between the boards of the flooring, and he began again going over the minutest details of the games he had played. He vividly recalled how he had imagined himself to be winning back his losses, had taken away the nine, had laid the king of spades on two thousand roubles, on the right had been dealt the queen,

on the left the ace, on the right the king of diamonds—and everything had been lost; but if it had been the six on the right, and the king of diamonds on the left, then he would have won it all back, then he would have staked it all—doubles or quits—and have been fifteen thousand roubles to the good. Then he'd have bought himself a saddle horse from his regimental commander, and a pair of carriage horses too, and a phaeton. And what else? Well, it would have been a splendid, splendid stroke of luck.

He lay down again on the sofa, and began gnawing the horsehair.

'Why are they singing songs in number seven?' he wondered; 'no doubt some merry-making at Turbin's. Shouldn't I go in and get thoroughly drunk?'

At that instant the count came in.

'Well, my boy, cleaned out? eh?' he roared.

'I'll pretend to be asleep,' thought Ilyin, 'or else I shall have to talk to him, and I really am sleepy.'

But Turbin went up to him and stroked his head.

'Come, my dear fellow; cleaned out? lost everything? tell me.'

Ilyin did not answer.

Turbin pulled him by the hand.

'Yes, I've lost. What is it to you?' muttered Ilyin in a voice of sleepy, careless annoyance, not changing his position.

'Everything?'

'Well, yes. What does it matter? Everything. What is it to you?'

'Listen, tell me the truth, as a comrade,' said the count, sympathetically disposed by the wine he had drunk, and still stroking his hair. 'I like you, really. Tell me the truth; if you've lost government money, I'll make it all right, or else it will be too late.... Was it government money?'

Ilyin jumped up from the sofa.

‘If you will have me tell you ... don’t speak to me, because ... please don’t speak to me ... a bullet in my brains—that’s all I’ve left to do!’ he cried in genuine despair, and his head falling into his hand he burst into tears, although a minute before he had been quite serenely dreaming of the saddle horse.

‘Come, come, why, what a girl you are! Who hasn’t been through the same thing? There’s no harm done; may be we can set it right yet. Wait here for me.’

The count went out of the room.

‘Where is that gentleman, Luhnov, staying?’ he asked the corridor waiter.

The man offered to show the count his room. In spite of the footman’s protesting that his master had only just come in and was undressing, the count went into the room. Luhnov was sitting in his dressing-gown, counting several bundles of notes that lay on the table before him. On the table stood a bottle of his favourite Rhine wine. In honour of his winnings, he was indulging himself with this treat. Luhnov gazed coldly and severely through his spectacles at the count, as though he did not recognise him.

‘You seem not to know me,’ said the count, advancing with resolute steps to the table.

Luhnov recognised the count, and asked—

‘What do you want?’

‘I want a game of cards with you,’ said Turbin, seating himself on the sofa.

‘Now?’

‘Yes.’

‘Another time I shall be delighted, count, but just now I’m tired, and am just getting ready for bed. Will you take some wine? it’s good wine.’

‘But I want to play now.’

‘I’m not inclined to play any more. Perhaps one of the other gentlemen will care to; but I will not, count! You must, please, excuse me.’

‘Then you won’t?’

Luhnov gave a shrug of the shoulders expressive of his regret at the impossibility of complying with the count’s wishes.

‘You will not on any consideration?’

Again the same shrug.

‘But I most particularly beg you to ... come, will you play?’

Silence.

‘Will you play?’ the count asked a second time; ‘mind now!’

The same silence and a rapid glance over the spectacles at the count’s face, which had begun to look scowling.

‘Will you play?’ the count roared, bringing his hand down on the table, so that the bottle of Rhine wine toppled over and was spilt. ‘You won that unfairly, you know. Will you play? For the third time I ask you.’

‘I have told you I will not. This is really strange conduct, count! And quite improper to come and hold a knife to a man’s throat,’ observed Luhnov, not raising his eyes.

There followed a silence of no long duration, in the course of which the count’s face became paler and paler. Suddenly a terrible blow on the head stupefied Luhnov. He fell on the sofa, tried to get hold of the notes, and shrieked in a voice of shrill despair, which could never have been anticipated from his always composed and dignified appearance. Turbin gathered up the notes left lying on the table, pushed away the servant who came running in to his master’s assistance, and walked with rapid steps out of the room.

‘If you wish for satisfaction, I’m at your service. I shall be another half-hour in my room,’ added the count, turning at Luhnov’s door.

‘Robber! burglar!’ came from within. ‘I’ll bring him before a police-court!’

Ilyin, who had attached no significance whatever to the count’s promise to make it all right, was still lying on the sofa in his room, and tears of despair were choking him. The count’s friendliness and sympathy had broken through the strange medley of feelings, ideas, and memories that filled his soul, and had roused him to a sense of the reality, and that sense had not left him. His youth, so rich in hopes, honour, social esteem, dreams of love and friendship—all was lost for ever. The fount of tears was beginning to run dry, too calm a feeling of hopelessness took more and more possession of him, and the idea of suicide excited now no aversion or horror, and arrested his thoughts more and more frequently. At that point he heard the count’s firm tread. Turbin’s face still wore traces of wrath; his hands trembled slightly, but there was a gleam of kindly good-humour and self-satisfaction in his eyes.

‘Here! I’ve won it back!’ he said, flinging several bundles of notes on the table. ‘Count them. Are these all? And make haste and come into the public room. I’m just starting,’ he added, apparently not observing the intense emotion of joy and gratitude on the Uhlan’s face; and, whistling a gypsy song, he walked out of the room.

VIII

Sashka, tightly girt with a sash, announced that the horses were ready, but urged that they should go first to get the count’s greatcoat, which was worth some three hundred roubles with its fur collar, and give back the filthy blue cloak to the scoundrel who had left it in exchange for the greatcoat at the marshal’s. But Turbin said there was no need to look for the greatcoat, and went to his room to change his dress.

The cavalry officer sat speechless by his gypsy girl, and hiccupped incessantly. The police captain asked for vodka and invited the whole party to come at once to

breakfast with him, promising that his wife would join them and dance with the gypsies herself. The handsome young man was arguing profoundly with Ilyushka that there was more soul in the pianoforte, and that one could not take A flat on the guitar. The government official was dejectedly drinking tea in a corner, and seemed in the light of day ashamed of his debauch. The gypsies were squabbling among themselves in their own tongue, and insisting on doing something more in honour of the gentlemen, which Styoshka opposed, saying that the baroray (in Romany, count or prince, or more exactly, the great barin) would be angry. Altogether the revels had burnt down to their last embers.

‘Come, one more song at parting, and march home,’ said the count, more fresh and gay and handsome than ever, as he came into the hall in his travelling dress.

The gypsies ranged themselves in a ring again, and were just beginning to sing, when Ilyin came in with a packet of notes, and called the count aside.

‘I only had fifteen thousand roubles of government money, and you have given me sixteen thousand three hundred,’ he said; ‘these must be yours.’

‘Capital! give them here!’

Ilyin gave the count the notes, glancing timidly at him, opened his mouth, meaning to say something, but only blushed so that the tears came into his eyes, then snatched the count’s hand and began to squeeze it.

‘Get along! Ilyushka!—listen—here’s some money for you; only see me off with songs as far as the town gates.’ And he threw on to his guitar the thirteen hundred roubles Ilyin had brought him. But the hundred roubles the cavalry officer had lent the count on the previous day, he simply forgot about.

By now it was ten o’clock in the morning. The sun was above the house roofs, people were thronging the streets, tradesmen had long before opened their shops, noblemen and government clerks were driving about the streets, ladies were walking up and down the arcade of shops, when the whole procession of the gypsies, the

police captain, the cavalry officer, the handsome young man, Ilyin, and the count in his blue bear-lined cloak came out on the hotel steps. It was a sunny day and thawing. Three sledges, each driving three horses abreast, with their tails tied up short, splashed through the sticky mud up to the steps, and all the festive company began to stow themselves away in them. The count, Ilyin, Styoshka, Ilyushka, and Sashka, the count's servant, were in the first sledge. Blücher was frantic, and wagging his tail barked at the shaft-horse. The other gentlemen, together with the rest of the gypsies, got into the other sledges. As soon as they got out of the hotel yard, the sledges kept abreast and the gypsies struck up a song in chorus.

The three sledges drove through the whole town as far as the gates to the accompaniment of songs and bells, forcing all the vehicles that met them right on to the pavement.

Great was the astonishment of the tradespeople and passers-by who did not know them—still greater that of those who did know them—when they saw the noble gentlemen driving in broad daylight along the streets accompanied by singing, by gypsy girls, and drunken gypsies.

When they had driven out of the town gates, the three sledges stopped, and all began to take leave of the count.

Ilyin, who had drunk a good deal in honour of the occasion, and had been driving the horses all the time, suddenly became depressed, and began trying to persuade the count to remain another day. When he was convinced that this was impossible, he quite unexpectedly fell to kissing his new friend, and promised that when he got back he would ask to be exchanged into Turbin's regiment. The count was in particularly good spirits; the cavalry officer, who had towards morning dropped finally into addressing him as 'thou,' he shoved into a snowdrift; he set Blücher on the police captain, clasped Styoshka in his arms, and wanted to carry her off with him to Moscow. At last he jumped into the sledge, making Blücher sit beside him in

spite of the dog's attempts to stand up in the middle. Sashka, too, mounted the box, after once more begging the cavalry officer to get the count's greatcoat back somehow and to send it after them. The count shouted 'Off!' waved his forage-cap over his head, and whistled like a sledge-driver to his horses. The sledges drove away in different directions.

Far ahead nothing was to be seen but the plain of monotonous snow, with the road, a dirty, yellowish streak, winding across it. The sun shone brightly, sparkling on the thawing snow and the thin crust of ice coating it, and pleasantly warmed the face and back. Steam rose in clouds from the sweating horses. The sledge bell tinkled. A peasant ran splashing with his soaked, plaited shoes across the sloppy road, and, tugging at his cord reins, hurriedly moved on one side with a loaded sledge that slipped quickly downhill. A stout, red peasant-woman, with a baby at her bosom inside her sheepskin, was sitting on another cart-load, slashing at her white nag with the ends of her reins. The count suddenly thought of Anna Fyodorovna.

'Back!' he shouted.

The driver did not at once understand.

'Turn back! drive to the town quickly!'

The sledge drove again past the town gates, and dashed smartly up to the wooden steps of Madame Zaytsov's house. The count ran rapidly up the steps, walked through the hall and the drawing-room; and finding the widow still asleep, took her in his arms, lifted her out of the bed, kissed her sleepy eyes and quickly ran away again. Anna Fyodorovna, half asleep, simply licked her lips, and wondered what had happened. The count jumped into the sledge, shouted to the driver, and without stopping again, without even thinking of Luhnov, of the little widow, or of Styoshka, musing only on what was awaiting him in Moscow, he left the town of K. for ever.

IX

Twenty years had passed. Much water, as they say, had flowed by since then; many people were dead, many had been born, many had grown up and reached maturity. Even more were the ideas that had been born and died; much that was good and much that was evil in the old time had passed away; much that was good in the young had grown up; and still more that was crude, grotesque, and new had come into God’s world.

Count Fyodor Turbin had long since been killed in a duel with a foreigner, whom he had flogged with a dog-whip in the street. His son—as like him as one drop of water is like another—was a charming young man of three-and-twenty, an officer in the Guards. In his moral nature, young Count Turbin was not at all like his father. He had not the faintest shadow of the stormy, passionate, and, to speak frankly, dissolute propensities of the last generation. Together with intelligence, culture, and the gifted nature he inherited from his father, a love of decorum and comfort, a practical way of looking at men and circumstances, good sense and prudence, were his most marked characteristics. The young count had risen rapidly in the army; by the age of three-and-twenty he had been a lieutenant.... At the commencement of military operations he had decided that it would be advantageous, with a view to promotion, to exchange for active service, and had been transferred to a regiment of hussars as cavalry captain, and had very soon after received a squadron.

In May 1848 the S. regiment of hussars chanced to be passing through the K. province and the very squadron that was commanded by young Count Turbin had to halt for the night at Morozovka, Anna Fyodorovna’s estate. Anna Fyodorovna was living, but was by now so elderly that she no longer even regarded herself as young, which means a great deal for a woman. She had grown very fat, and that is said to make a woman look younger; but even in her white, plump contours thick, soft wrinkles were to be seen. She never visited the town now, and it was with difficulty

that she clambered into her carriage. But she was just as good-natured, and there was no concealing the fact, now that there was no beauty to carry it off, that she was as silly as ever. With her lived her daughter Liza, a Russian country beauty of three-and-twenty, and her brother, our old friend the cavalry officer, who with his easy good-nature had wasted all his little property and had found a refuge in his old age with Anna Fyodorovna. His hair was completely grey; his upper lip had sunk, but the moustache over it was carefully dyed black. Wrinkles covered not only his forehead and cheeks, but even his nose and neck, and his back was bent; but yet in his weak, crooked legs one could still see something of the bearing of the old cavalry officer.

In the small drawing-room of the old house, with its verandah door and windows opening on to an old-fashioned, star-shaped garden full of lime-trees, were sitting all the family and domestic circle of Anna Fyodorovna. She herself, a grey-headed woman, wearing a lilac, wadded jacket, sat on the sofa at a round table playing patience. Her old brother, in clean, white trousers and a blue coat, was settled near the window engaged in crocheting a strip of white braiding, an art which his niece had taught him, and he was very fond of practising as he was incapable of doing anything active now, and his eyesight was beginning to fail for reading the newspapers—his favourite occupation. Pimotchka, a girl Anna Fyodorovna had adopted and was bringing up, was learning a lesson near him under the guidance of Liza, who was at the same time busy knitting on wooden pins a stocking of goat's wool for her uncle. The last rays of the setting sun threw always at that hour their slanting, broken patches of light through the lime-tree avenue on to the furthest window and the whatnot near it. It was so still in the room and the garden that they could hear the quick whir of a swallow's wings outside the window and Anna Fyodorovna's subdued sigh indoors, and the old man clearing his throat and crossing his legs.

'How is this played? Lizanka, do show me. I always forget,' said Anna Fyodorovna,

coming to a standstill in her game of patience.

Liza went up to her mother without stopping in her work and glanced at the cards.

‘Ah, you have made a muddle of it, mamma, darling!’ she said, changing the position of the cards; ‘that’s how it ought to have been. Still it will do very well in the way you have hit on,’ she added, slipping a card off unseen by her mother.

‘Oh, that’s how you always deceive me! you say it is all right.’

‘No; really, it will succeed. It is all right.’

‘Well, well, you always spoil me! But isn’t it tea-time?’

‘I have told them to heat the samovar. I’ll go and see after it in a minute. Will you have it brought in here?... Come, Pimotchka, make haste and finish your lesson, and let us have a run.’

And Liza went out at the door.

‘Lizotchka! Lizanka!’ said her uncle, looking intently at his crochet-hook; ‘I believe I’ve dropped a stitch again. Pick it up for me, darling!’

‘In a minute, in a minute! I am only going to give out the sugar to be broken.’

And three minutes later she ran back into the room, went up to her uncle, and pinched his ear.

‘There, that’s to teach you not to drop stitches,’ she said, laughing; ‘you haven’t even crocheted to the end of your task.’

‘Come, that’s enough; set it right, there seems to be a sort of little knot.’

Liza took the crochet-hook, took a pin out of her kerchief, which blew open a little in the draught from the window, and picked up the stitch with the pin, pulled it through twice and gave the hook back to her uncle.

‘Now kiss me for that,’ she said, offering him her rosy cheek as she pinned her kerchief again, ‘you are going to have rum to-day with your tea. It’s Friday, you know.’ And she went back to the tea-room.

‘Uncle, come and look; the hussars are coming!’ her rich voice called from there.

Anna Fyodorovna went with her brother into the tea-room, from which the windows looked out on the village, to see the hussars passing. There was very little to be seen from the window; all that could be made out was a crowd of some sort moving through the dust.

‘I’m sorry, though, sister,’ the uncle observed to Anna Fyodorovna, ‘that we’re so cramped for room and the lodge isn’t finished yet; we might have asked the officers to stay here. Officers of the hussars are always such gay, nice young fellows, you know; we might have seen a little of them any way.’

‘Well, I’d have been heartily pleased to do so, but you know yourself, brother, that we’ve no spare room. My bedroom, Liza’s little room, the drawing-room, and this room of yours—that’s all there is. Where could we put them, only think? Mihailo Matveyev has cleaned the village elder’s cottage for them; he says it’s clean, too.’

‘And we’d have picked out a young man for you among them, too, Lizotchka, a gallant hussar!’ said her uncle.

‘No, I don’t want a hussar, I want an Uhlan; you were in the Uhlans, weren’t you, uncle? I don’t want to know those hussars; they’re all such desperate fellows, they say.’

And Liza blushed a little; but she laughed her mellow laugh again.

‘Here comes Ustyushka running; we must ask her what she’s seen,’ she said.

Anna Fyodorovna had Ustyushka sent for.

‘You never can sit quietly at your work; what need had you to be running to stare at the soldiers?’ said Anna Fyodorovna. ‘Come, tell us where the officers are being put up?’

‘At Eremkin’s cottage, madam. Two of them there are such handsome gentlemen; one’s a count they do say.’

‘And what’s his name?’

‘Kazarov or Turbinov, I don’t remember, I’m sorry.’

‘What a silly creature, can’t even tell me anything. You might have found out the name.’

‘Well, shall I run now?’

‘Oh yes, I know you’re always ready to do that! No, let Danilo go; tell him, brother, to go and inquire whether the officers are in want of anything; we must show them every civility; he’s to say that his mistress sent him to inquire.’

The old people settled down again in the tea-room, while Liza went to the maids’ room to put the broken sugar back in the drawer. Ustyushka was talking there about the hussars.

‘Mistress, darling, what a handsome fellow he was, that count!’ she said; ‘simply a dark-browed cherub. There, if you’d a betrothed like that, it would make a fine couple!’

The other maids smiled approvingly; the old nurse sitting at the window with a stocking sighed and repeated some prayer, drawing deep, inward breaths.

‘So I see you liked the hussars,’ said Liza; ‘but, I know you’re always good at describing what you’ve seen. Take in some syrup, please, Ustyushka, to treat the hussars with.’

And Liza laughing went out of the room with the sugar-basin.

‘I should like to see what that hussar’s like,’ she thought, ‘dark or fair. And, of course, he’d be glad, I dare say, to make our acquaintance. But he’ll go away and never know that I was here and thought about him. And how many have passed by me like that! No one ever sees me but uncle and Ustyushka. However I do my hair, whatever sleeves I put on—there’s no one to admire me,’ she thought, sighing as she looked at her plump, white hand. ‘He is sure to be tall, with large eyes and little,

dark moustaches, most likely. No, twenty-two years have gone and no one has fallen in love with me, except Ivan Ignatitch, who's pock-marked. And four years ago I was better-looking than now, and so my girlhood has passed away giving no joy to any one. Ah, I'm an unlucky, unlucky country girl!'

Her mother's voice calling her to pour out the tea roused this country girl from her momentary melancholy. She gave her head a shake and went into the tea-room.

The best things always come by chance; and the more one tries to get them, the worse is the result. In the country people do not often try to give their children a good education, and so by chance they often give them an excellent one. It had been especially so with Liza. Anna Fyodorovna, with her limited intellect and her easy character, had not troubled herself about Liza's education. She had not had her taught music, nor that exceedingly useful language, French. But she had happened to bear her deceased husband a healthy, pretty child—a daughter. She had handed her over to nurses; had fed her, dressed her in cotton frocks and goatskin slippers, sent her out for walks, and to pick mushrooms and berries; had her taught reading, writing, and arithmetic by a seminarist engaged for the purpose; and in Liza at sixteen she found, through no design of hers, a companion always gay and goodhearted, and a capable housekeeper to manage her house for her. Anna Fyodorovna's kindness of heart led her to adopt and bring up various girls, children of her serfs, and foundlings. Since she was ten years old Liza had begun looking after those protégées, teaching them, dressing them, taking them to church, and checking them when they were too mischievous. Then came her decrepit, good-natured uncle, who had to be waited on like a child. Then the servants and the peasants, who all came to their young mistress with their wants and their ailments. The latter she treated with elderflower water, mint, and camphorated spirit. Then there was the management of the house, which insensibly had passed entirely into her hands. Then came the unsatisfied craving for love, which found an outlet only in nature and in religion. And Liza had happened to turn into a capable,

good-humoured, cheerful, independent, pure, and deeply-religious woman. She had, it is true, her little pangs of vanity at the sight of neighbouring young ladies in fashionable hats from the town standing beside her in church. She was sometimes vexed to tears by her querulous old mother's whims. She had too her dreams of love in the most absurd and sometimes coarse forms. But the useful and necessary activity of her life dispelled them, and at twenty-two not a blemish, not a remorse, had marred the clear, serene soul of the developing girl, who was full of physical and moral beauty. Liza was of medium height, rather plump than thin; her eyes were brown and not large, with a very slight, dark shadow on the lower lid; she had long, fair hair. She had rather a loose, swaying gait—a duck's walk, as it is called. The expression of her face, when she was absorbed in what she was doing, and there was nothing special exciting her, told every one who watched it, as plainly as words: life is a sweet and joyful thing for one who has some one to love and a pure conscience. Even in moments of anger, embarrassment, agitation or distress, in tears, when her left brow scowled and her lips were set, in despite, it seemed, of her own wish, the dimples on her cheeks, the corners of her lips, the shining eyes, so used to smile and rejoice in life, fairly beamed with the light of an unsophisticated, kindly, upright heart.

X

It was still hot, though the sun had set, when the squadron entered Morozovka. In front of them a brindled cow, that had strayed away from the herd, ran along the village street at a trot, looking back, lowing, stopping now and then, and never grasping that all she had to do was to move aside. The old peasants, the women and children, and the house-serfs flocked together on both sides of the street, eagerly staring at the hussars. In a thick cloud of dust the hussars rode in on their raven horses, snorting and clattering their hoofs. On the right of the squadron rode the two officers, sitting carelessly on their beautiful black horses. One was the commander,

Count Turbin; the other, a very young man, only recently promoted from an ensign, Polozov.

A hussar in a white tunic came out of the best hut in the village, and taking off his forage-cap, went up to the officers.

‘Where are the quarters set apart for us?’ the count asked him.

‘For your excellency,’ answered the quartermaster, with an alert movement of his whole figure, ‘here, at the elder’s. I have had the hut cleaned. I inquired at the manor-house. They say they can’t. The lady is so nasty.’

‘Oh, very well,’ said the count, dismounting at the elder’s hut and straightening his legs. ‘Has my carriage come?’

‘It has been pleased to arrive, your excellency!’ replied the quartermaster, pointing with his cap to a leather-covered carriage that could be seen at the gates, and he ran ahead into the entry of the hut, which was crowded with the peasant’s family, come to stare at the officer. He upset one old woman, indeed, as he smartly opened the door into the freshly scrubbed hut, and stood aside to admit the count.

The hut was fairly large and roomy, but not perfectly clean. A German valet, dressed like a gentleman, stood in the hut. He had put up an iron bedstead, and was making it and unpacking the linen from a trunk.

‘Foo! what disgusting quarters!’ said the count crossly. ‘Dyadenko! couldn’t you move us somewhere to some gentleman’s house?’

‘If your excellency bids me, I’ll go to the manor-house,’ answered Dyadenko, ‘but the little house isn’t good for much; it seems to be no better than a cottage.’

‘Then there’s no use in your going. You can go.’ And the count, clasping his hands behind his head, lay down on the bed.

‘Johann!’ he shouted to his valet, ‘you’ve made a lump in the middle of the bed again! How is it you can’t make a bed properly?’

Johann would have smoothed it out.

‘No, you needn’t do it now.... Where’s my dressing-gown?’ he went on in a dissatisfied voice.

The servant gave him his dressing-gown.

Before putting it on, the count looked at the skirt of the dressing-gown.

‘There it is; you’ve not taken out those marks. Could any one do his work worse than you do?’ he added, pulling the dressing-gown out of his hands and putting it on. ‘Tell me, do you do it on purpose?... Is tea ready?’

‘I hadn’t time to see to it,’ answered Johann.

‘Fool!’

After that the count took the French novel that had been put ready for him, and for a good time he read it in silence, while Johann went into the outer room to blow up the samovar. The count was unmistakably in a bad temper—no doubt under the combined influences of fatigue, a dusty face, a tight uniform and an empty stomach.

‘Johann!’ he shouted again, ‘give me an account of those ten roubles. What did you buy in the town?’

The count looked at the account the valet handed him and expressed dissatisfaction at the high price of the purchases.

‘Give me some rum with the tea.’

‘I didn’t buy any rum,’ said Johann.

‘Oh, indeed! how often have I told you there must be rum!’

‘I hadn’t money enough.’

‘Why didn’t Polozov buy some? You should have got some from his man.’

‘Cornet Polozov? I don’t know. His honour bought tea and sugar.’

‘Beast!... Go away!... No one can put me out of patience like you do ... you know I

always take rum with my tea on the march.'

'Here are two letters for you from the staff,' said the valet.

The count, lying on his bed, tore open the letters and began reading them. The cornet, who had been seeing the squadron to their quarters, came in with a beaming face.

'Well, Turbin? It seems very nice here. But I am tired, I must confess. It has been hot.'

'Oh, very nice! A nasty, stinking hut and no rum, thanks to you; your blockhead didn't buy any, nor that fellow either. You might have told them!'

And he went on reading. When he had read to the end, he crumpled up the letter and threw it on the floor.

'Why didn't you buy any rum?' the cornet meanwhile was asking his servant in a whisper in the outer room. 'You had the money, hadn't you?'

'But why should we always buy everything? As it is, I stand all the expenses; while his German does nothing but smoke his pipe.'

The second letter was apparently not unpleasant, for the count smiled as he read it.

'From whom?' asked Polozov, running back into the room, and arranging a bed for himself on some boards near the stove.

'From Mina,' the count answered good-humouredly, giving him the letter. 'Would you like to read it? What a charming woman! ... yes, really she's better than any of our young ladies.... See, what feeling and sense there is in that letter! One thing's bad—she asks for money.'

'Yes, that's bad,' answered the cornet.

'I promised her some, it's true; but what with the march here and everything ... but if I'm in command of the squadron another three months, I'll send her some. I don't grudge it, really; charming creature! ... eh?' he said smiling, and watching the

expression of Polozov's face as he read the letter.

'It's awfully illiterate, but sweet, and she seems really fond of you,' answered the cornet.

'H'm! I should think so! It's only women like that who love truly when they do love.'

'And from whom is the other letter?' inquired the cornet, handing back the letter he had read.

'Oh ... that's a person, a miserable creature, to whom I lost money at cards, and this is the third time he's reminded me.... I can't pay it now ... a stupid letter!' answered the count, evidently mortified by the recollection of the letter.

Both officers were silent for some time after this conversation. The cornet, who was unmistakably under the influence of the count, did not speak as he drank his tea, unable to make up his mind to start a topic. He glanced from time to time at the handsome, downcast face of Turbin, who was looking intently out of window.

'Oh well, things may turn out capitally,' the count said suddenly, looking with a cheerful shake of his head at Polozov. 'If there's promotion this year in our regiment, in the line, and we get into action too, I might get ahead of my old comrades in the Guards.'

Their talk was still on the same subject over the second glass of tea, when old Danilo came in and gave Anna Fyodorovna's message. 'And her honour bade me inquire too, isn't your honour son of Count Fyodor Ivanovitch Turbin?' Danilo added on his own account, having found out the officer's surname, and still remembering the late count's visit to the town of K.: 'Our lady, Anna Fyodorovna, was very well acquainted with him.'

'He was my father; and tell your mistress that I am very grateful to her, that we need nothing; only say, we told you to ask if we couldn't get a room cleaner than this somewhere, in their house, or somewhere.'

‘Oh, why did you say that?’ said Polozov, when Danilo had gone. ‘What does it matter? It’s only one night, isn’t it quite all right here?—and they will put themselves out.’

‘What next! we’ve had quite enough knocking about in smoky hovels, for my taste!... You’re not a practical person, one can see that at once; why not profit by the chance, if, for one night at least, we can be lodged like human beings? It’s quite the other way—they’ll be awfully glad to have us. There’s only one thing I dislike. If this lady really did know my father,’ the count said, showing his gleaming, white teeth in a smile—‘I’m always ashamed in a way of my late papa; there’s always some scandalous story or old debt cropping up. That’s why I can’t bear to meet these friends of my father’s. Though, of course, the times were like that then,’ he added seriously.

‘I never told you,’ said Polozov, ‘how I met a commander of an Uhlan brigade, Ilyin. He wanted very much to see you, and was extremely fond of your father.’

‘He’s a wretched creature, I fancy, that Ilyin. And the point is that all these worthies, who declare they knew my father so as to make up to me, tell me—as though they were delightful facts—stories about my father that I’m ashamed to listen to. It’s a fact—I’m not led away by my feeling, but look at things dispassionately—that he was much too impulsive, and sometimes did things he shouldn’t have done. It’s all a question of time, though. In these days he would, very likely, have made a very successful man for he had immense capacities, one must do him that justice.’

A quarter of an hour later the servant returned with an invitation from his mistress for them to stay the night in her house.

XI

On learning that the officer of the hussars was the son of Count Fyodor Turbin, Anna Fyodorovna was thrown into a great flutter.

‘Good gracious me! I shall be glad to see him!... Danilo, make haste and say your mistress invites them,’ she said, jumping up, and with rapid steps going to the maids’ room. ‘Lizanka! Ustyusha! they must get ready your room, Liza. You must move into your uncle’s; and you, brother ... brother! you must sleep in the drawing-room. For one night, it won’t matter.’

‘Not a bit, sister! I can sleep on the floor.’

‘A handsome fellow, I bet, if he’s like his father. I must have a look at him, the dear fellow.... You must see him, Liza! Ah, his father was handsome.... Where are you taking the table? leave it here!’ cried Anna Fyodorovna, bustling about, ‘and bring in two bedsteads—you must get one from the bailiff’s—and take the glass candlestick on the whatnot that brother made me a present of on my nameday, and put a stearine candle in it.’

At last everything was ready. Regardless of her mother’s interference, Liza arranged her room for the two officers in her own way. She got out the clean bedlinen, fragrant with mignonette, and made the beds, told the maids to put a decanter of water and candles on a little table by the bedside; she lighted a perfumed paper in the maids’ room, and moved her own belongings and her little bed into her uncle’s room.

Anna Fyodorovna calmed down a little, settled herself again in her place, and even took up the cards again, but without dealing them she leaned on her fat elbow and fell to musing. ‘Time, ah, how time flies!’ she repeated to herself in a whisper. ‘It doesn’t seem long! I can see him now. Ah, he was a naughty man!’ And tears came into her eyes. ‘Lizanka now ... but still she’s not what I was at her age ... a good girl, but no, not the same!...’

‘Lizanka, you’d better put on your mousseline de laine for the evening.’

‘But shall you really ask them in, mamma? Better not, really,’ answered Liza, who could not suppress her emotion at the idea of seeing the officers—‘better not,

mamma!’

She was really not so much eager to see them as frightened at some agitating happiness which seemed to be in store for her.

‘Perhaps they want to make our acquaintance themselves, Lizotchka!’ said Anna Fyodorovna, stroking her hair, and thinking, as she did so, ‘No, it’s not hair such as I had at her age.... No, Lizotchka, how I could wish for you....’ And she certainly did wish for something very much for her daughter; but marriage with the count she could hardly expect—such relations as she had had with his father, she could not desire for her—but for something of that sort she did very, very much wish for her daughter. She longed, perhaps, to live over again in her daughter the emotions she had passed through with the count.

The old cavalry officer, too, was rather excited at the count’s arrival. He went into his room and shut himself up there. A quarter of an hour later, he came out in a military coat and blue trousers, and with the expression of embarrassed satisfaction with which a girl puts on a ball-dress for the first time, he went into the room that had been assigned to the guests.

‘I’ll have a look at the hussars of these days, sister! The late count was a real hussar, truly. I’ll have a look at them, I’ll have a look at them.’

The officers had by now arrived by the back stairs and reached the room allotted to them.

‘Come, do you see,’ said the count, lying down just as he was in his dusty boots on the bed prepared for him, ‘isn’t this better than a hut full of black beetles?’

‘Better, of course it is, but it’s putting oneself under obligations to one’s hosts....’

‘What nonsense! One must be practical in everything. They’re awfully pleased, not a doubt of it.... Boy,’ he shouted, ‘ask for something to hang over this window, or there will be a draught at night.’

At that moment the old gentleman came in to make acquaintance with the officers. Though blushing a little, he did not of course omit to mention that he had been a comrade of the late count; that he had been so happy as to be on friendly terms with him, and even added that he had more than once been indebted to the count for his kindly offices in his favour. Whether he meant by the kindly offices of the count that he had not repaid him the hundred roubles he had borrowed, or that he had thrown him into a snowdrift, or that he had sworn at him, the old gentleman did not explain. The count was very civil to the old cavalry officer, and thanked him for putting them up.

‘You must excuse its not being very luxurious, count’—he had almost slipped out with ‘your excellency,’ he had got so out of the way of having to do with people of rank—‘my sister’s house is a small one. But we’ll hang something up there immediately, and it will be all right!’ added the old man, and on the pretext of seeing about a curtain, but principally to report as soon as possible on the officers, he withdrew scraping from the room.

The pretty maid, Ustyusha, came in to hang her mistress’s shawl over the window. Her mistress had told her to ask also if the gentlemen would like some tea.

Their comfortable quarters evidently had a cheering effect on the count’s spirits. He smiled and joked so good-humouredly with Ustyusha that the latter went the length of calling him a naughty man. He questioned her as to whether her young lady was pretty, and in answer to her inquiry about tea, said that they might certainly bring some tea, but that as their supper was not ready yet, what would be more to the point would be some vodka now, a snack of something to eat, and some sherry, if they had any.

The uncle was enthusiastic over the young count’s courtesy and extolled the young generation of officers to the skies, saying that young men nowadays were incomparably superior to what young men used to be.

Anna Fyodorovna could not agree with this—better than Count Fyodor Ivanovitch no one had ever been—and at last, she was seriously vexed with him, remarking drily, ‘As for you, brother, whoever’s civil to you last, you think he’s the best.... We all know, of course, that people are cleverer nowadays, but still Count Fyodor Ivanovitch danced the écossaise in such style and was such a pattern of courtesy that every one, one may say, was crazy about him; though he paid no attention to any one but me. So there were good people even in those old days too.’

At that moment, word was brought her of the request for vodka, light refreshments, and sherry.

‘There, now, brother, how you do things! You always do everything wrong. We ought to have ordered supper for them,’ said Anna Fyodorovna. ‘Liza! look after it, darling.’

Liza ran to the storeroom for mushrooms, and freshly churned butter, and ordered the cook to get beef collops.

‘But what about the sherry? Have you any left, brother?’

‘No sister! I never had any.’

‘Never had any! why, what is it you drink with your tea?’

‘That’s rum, Anna Fyodorovna.’

‘Isn’t it all the same? You give him that—it’s just the same thing—rum. But wouldn’t it be better to ask them in here, brother? You know all about them. They wouldn’t take it amiss, surely?’

The cavalry officer declared that he would answer for it that the count would be too good-natured to refuse, and that he would bring him without fail. Anna Fyodorovna went for some unknown reason to put on her gros grain dress and a new cap, while Liza was so busy that she had not time to change the pink linen dress with full sleeves that she had on. She was, besides, extremely excited; it seemed to her that

something stupendous was awaiting her, as though a lowering, black cloud were hanging over her soul. This count and hussar, who was so handsome, seemed to her some quite new kind of creature, beyond her comprehension, but magnificent. His character, his habits, his words,—all must be something extraordinary, such as she had never met. Everything he thought and said would be sure to be true and clever; everything he did must be honourable; his whole appearance would be splendid. She had no doubt about this. If instead of sherry and refreshments, he had asked for a bath of scented herbs and perfumes, she would not have been surprised, she would not have criticised him, and would have been firmly convinced that this must and should be so.

The count agreed at once when the cavalry officer communicated his sister's desire; he combed his hair, put on his coat and took his cigar-case.

'Come along' he said to Polozov.

'Really, we'd better not have come,' answered the cornet; 'ils feront des frais pour nous recevoir.'

'Nonsense! it's a treat to them. Besides I've made investigations already; there's a pretty daughter.... Come along,' said the count in French.

'Je vous en prie, messieurs!' said the cavalry officer; simply to give them to understand that he too knew French and was aware of what the officers were saying.

XII

Liza flushed, and with downcast eyes affected to be absorbed in pouring out the tea, for she was afraid to look at the officers, when they came into the room. Anna Fyodorovna on the contrary jumped up hurriedly, bowed, and never taking her eyes off the count began to talk to him, at one moment expatiating on his extraordinary resemblance to his father, then introducing her daughter, then offering him tea, jams, or home-pressed fruits. The cornet was so retiring that no one paid him any

attention, and he was very glad of it as, so far as good manners would permit, he was absorbed in scrutinising and minutely examining the beauty of Liza, who had evidently made a great impression on him. The old gentleman listened to his sister's conversation with the count, with the words ready on his tongue, waiting for a chance to begin upon his cavalry reminiscences. After tea, the count lighted his thick cigar, the smoke of which made Liza scarcely able to keep from coughing. He was very conversational and polite. At first he put in a few words in the intervals between Anna Fyodorovna's disconnected speeches, and finally obtained exclusive control of the conversation. One thing struck his listeners as rather strange. In his anecdotes he often made use of words which, though not regarded as reprehensible in the society he moved in, were here rather risky, and Anna Fyodorovna was a little alarmed, while Liza blushed up to her ears. But the count did not observe this, and was just as serenely polite and direct. Liza poured out the tea in silence, and instead of putting the glasses in the guests' hands, set them close beside them. She had not yet recovered from her agitation, and listened eagerly to the count's words. The absence of any special wittiness in his stories, the frequent hesitations in his speech, restored her composure a little. She did not hear from him any of the very clever things she had expected; she did not see that elegance in everything she had vaguely expected to find in him. By the time the third cup of tea was reached, after her timid eyes had met his eyes once, and he had not dropped them, but had with rather too much composure continued gazing at her and smiling, she felt even a little antagonistic to him, and quickly discovered that there was nothing striking about him, that he was not in fact distinguished in any way from all the men she had seen, that he was not worth being afraid of. His nails were long and clean, that was all, and he was not even particularly handsome. Liza promptly regained her serenity, not without an inward pang at parting from her daydream. Now only the eyes of the silent cornet, which she felt were fixed on her, disturbed her equanimity. 'Perhaps it's not he, but he!' she thought.

XIII

After tea, the old lady invited the guests into the other room, and settled herself in her own place.

‘But wouldn’t you like to rest, count?’ she asked. ‘Then how shall we entertain our guests?’ she continued on receiving a reply in the negative. ‘Do you play cards, count? Come, brother, you should make up a game of something to entertain them....’

‘But you play preference yourself, you know,’ answered the cavalry officer, ‘so let us have a game together. Will you play, count? and will you?’

The officers signified their readiness to do anything that seemed good to their obliging hosts.

Liza brought from her room her pack of cards, with which she used to try fortunes, to divine whether Anna Fyodorovna’s cold would soon be over, whether her uncle would come back from town that day, when he was away, whether a neighbour would call, and so on. Those cards, though they had been in use for two months, were rather cleaner than the pack Anna Fyodorovna used for fortune-telling.

‘Only you don’t care to play for a small stake, perhaps?’ inquired the uncle. ‘Anna Fyodorovna and I play for half copeck stakes.... Even so she ruins us all.’

‘Oh, for what you fix, I shall be delighted,’ said the count.

‘Well, for copeck stakes—paper money! In honour of our dear guests let it be so; let them plunder me in my old age,’ said Anna Fyodorovna, seating herself at her ease in her armchair and smoothing out her cape.

‘May be I shall win a whole silver rouble from them,’ thought Anna Fyodorovna, who had acquired a slight weakness for gambling in her old age.

‘If you like I will teach you to play with “honours,”’ said the count, ‘and with “misery.” That’s very amusing.’

They were all much pleased with the new Petersburg way of playing the game. The uncle declared, indeed, that he knew it, and that it was just the same thing as in boston, only he had forgotten it a little. Anna Fyodorovna could make nothing of it, and she was so long unable to understand it, that she felt obliged at last to smile and nod her head approvingly, declaring that now she understood it, and it was all perfectly clear to her. There was a good deal of laughter in the middle of the game when Anna Fyodorovna called ‘misery’ with the ace and king in her hand, and made six. She began, indeed, to lose her head, smiled timidly, and hurriedly admitted that she was not yet quite accustomed to the new way of playing. The points she lost were reckoned against her, however, and numerous they were, too, especially as the count, being used to play for high stakes, played carefully, kept an exact count, and would not grasp the significance of the kicks the cornet gave him under the table, and the glaring blunders he made in his play.

Liza brought in some more pressed fruit, three sorts of preserves, and apples kept in a special sort of syrup. She stood behind her mother, watching the game and occasionally looking at the officers, and particularly at the delicate, pink, carefully-trimmed nails and white hands of the count, as they deftly, confidently, and gracefully flung down cards and picked up tricks.

Again Anna Fyodorovna, in a kind of frenzy, trying to outdo the others, called as high as seven, failed to make even three, and on her brother’s demanding her score, she made a grotesque blunder in her reckoning of it, was in a great flutter, and quite lost her head.

‘Never mind, mamma, you’ll win it back again!’ said Liza with a smile, trying to get her mother out of a ridiculous position. ‘You’ll score off uncle; then it’ll be his turn.’

‘If only you would help me, Lizotchka!’ said Anna Fyodorovna, looking in a scared way at her daughter. ‘I don’t know how it is....’

‘But I don’t know how to play that way either,’ answered Liza, mentally reckoning up her mother’s losses. ‘And you’re losing so much, mamma! you won’t have anything left for Pimotchka’s new frock,’ she added as a joke.

‘Yes, playing in this way one may easily lose as much as ten silver roubles,’ said the cornet, looking at Liza, and eager to enter into conversation with her.

‘Why, aren’t we playing for paper money?’ inquired Anna Fyodorovna, looking round at the whole party.

‘I don’t know how it is, but I don’t understand reckoning by paper money,’ said the count. ‘How do you do it? What does it mean, really, a paper rouble?’

‘Oh, but nowadays no one reckons by paper roubles,’ chimed in the uncle, who was winning.

The old lady ordered some effervescing drink, drank two glasses herself, and flushing very red, seemed to become quite reckless. One lock of her grey hair, indeed, strayed from under her cap, and she did not put it back. She probably felt that she was losing millions, and was completely ruined. More and more frequently the cornet kicked the count under the table. The count noted down the old lady’s losses. At last the game was over. In vain Anna Fyodorovna tried to cheat in adding up her losses, and to pretend she had made a mistake in the reckoning; in vain she protested her horror at the magnitude of her loss; at the end of the reckoning it was unmistakably clear that she had lost nine hundred and twenty points. ‘Does that make nine roubles in paper money?’ Anna Fyodorovna asked several times; and she did not grasp all the enormity of her loss till her brother, to her horror, explained that she had lost thirty-two roubles and a half in paper, and that she really must pay it all. The count did not even count his winnings, but as soon as the game was over got up and went to the window, where Liza was setting various dishes and putting some mushrooms out of ajar on to a plate for supper. Quite calmly and directly he did what the cornet had been longing to do all the evening and had not been able to

do—he began to talk to Liza about the weather.

The cornet, meanwhile, was placed in a very unpleasant position. When the count, and still more Liza, who had been keeping her mother in good-humour, had left Anna Fyodorovna's side, she became openly furious.

'How annoying it is, though, that we should have plundered you like this!' said Polozov, in order to say something. 'It's simply shameful!'

'And bringing in misery and honours, or whatever they are, too! I can't make head or tail of them. Well, in paper roubles, then, how much does it all come to?' she asked.

'Thirty-two roubles, thirty-two and a half,' repeated the cavalry officer, who, having won something, was in a jocose humour. 'Pay up the money, sister ... pay it up.'

'Yes, I will pay all; only you won't catch me again, no! In all my life I shall never win all that back.'

And Anna Fyodorovna trundled hurriedly to her room, and came back bringing nine roubles notes. It was only upon the old gentleman insisting on it that she paid up all her debts.

Polozov was in some trepidation lest Anna Fyodorovna might fly out at him if he addressed her. In silence he moved quietly away from her and joined the count and Liza, who were talking at the open window.

In the room, on the table laid for supper, stood two tallow candles. Their light flickered now and then in the fresh warm air of the May night. In the window, open on the garden, it was light too, but the light there was quite different from the light within the room. An almost full moon, with no shade of gold left in it, was sailing above the tree-tops, throwing brighter and brighter light on the delicate, white clouds that at times obscured it. Frogs croaked in chorus about the pond, part of which could be seen through the avenue, all silvery in the moonlight. In the fragrant lilac bush just under the window the wet flowers swung slowly to and fro, and birds

faintly stirred and twittered.

‘What exquisite weather!’ said the count, going up to Liza and sitting down in the low window. ‘I suppose you do a great deal of walking?’

‘Yes,’ answered Liza, feeling somehow not the slightest embarrassment now in conversation with the count; ‘every morning at seven o’clock I go out to see after things on the estate, and then I walk a little with Pimotchka—mamma’s ward.’

‘How pleasant a country life is!’ said the count, sticking an eyeglass in his eye, and looking now at the garden and now at Liza. ‘And on moonlight nights don’t you sometimes take walks?’

‘No. Two years ago, though, uncle and I used to go a walk every night when there was a moon. He had a strange sort of complaint—he suffered from sleeplessness. Whenever there was a full moon, he could not sleep. His room—you see, that one—looks straight into the garden, and the window is a low one; so the moonlight falls straight on it.’

‘How strange!’ observed the count; ‘but that’s your room, surely, isn’t it?’

‘No, I’m only sleeping there for to-night. You have my room.’

‘Is it possible?... O heavens! I shall never forgive myself for deranging you!’ said the count, letting his eyeglass drop out in token of the sincerity of his feeling; ‘if I had only known I was disturbing you.’

‘Disturbing me! On the contrary, I’m very glad; uncle’s room is so charming and bright, with a little low window. I shall sit there comfortably till I go to sleep, or creep out into the garden for a walk in the night.’

‘What a delightful girl!’ thought the count, sticking the eyeglass in again, staring at her, and moving as though to settle himself in the window, he tried to touch her foot with his. ‘And how cunningly she let me know I could see her in the garden at the window, if I care to!’ Liza, indeed, lost a large part of her charm in his eyes, so easy

seemed her conquest.

‘And what happiness it must be,’ he said, gazing pensively into the dark avenue, ‘to spend such a night in a garden with some one one loves.’

Liza was somewhat disconcerted by these words, and by the repetition of the apparently accidental contact of his foot. Without thinking, she said something simply to cover her embarrassment. She said, ‘Yes, it is delightful walking by moonlight.’ She felt vaguely annoyed. She tied up the jar from which she had taken the mushrooms, and was about to retreat from the window, when the cornet came up to them, and she felt a desire to find out what sort of a man he was.

‘What a delightful night!’ he said.

‘They talk about nothing but the weather,’ thought Liza.

‘What a marvellous view!’ the cornet went on; ‘but I dare say you are tired of it,’ he added, with a strange propensity he had for saying disagreeable things to people who attracted him.

‘Why should you think so? The same thing to eat always, or the same dress one may get tired of, but one never tires of a beautiful garden when one is fond of walking, especially when the moon rises a little higher. From uncle’s room one can see the whole pond. I shall look at it to-night.’

‘But you have no nightingales, I think?’ queried the count, highly displeased at Polozov’s coming and hindering him from arriving at a more definite understanding about meeting her.

‘No; we always used to have them; but last year the bird-catchers caught one. This year—last week, in fact—one was singing beautifully, but the constable came with a bell and frightened it away. The year before last, uncle and I used to sit in the thick avenue, and listen to them for two hours at a time.’

‘What is this chatterbox telling you?’ said her uncle, approaching the group. ‘Will

you please to take some supper?'

After supper, in the course of which the count succeeded in somewhat softening the ill-humour of his hostess, the officers took leave of their host, and went off to their room. The count shook hands with the uncle, and to Anna Fyodorovna's astonishment merely shook her hand too, without kissing it. He even shook hands with Liza, looking straight into her face as he did so, and faintly smiling with his agreeable smile. His expression embarrassed the girl again.

'He's very handsome,' she thought, 'only too much taken up with himself.'

XIV

'Come, aren't you ashamed?' said Polozov when the officers had returned to their room: 'I tried to lose on purpose, and nudged you under the table. I wonder you're not ashamed of yourself; why, the old lady was quite distressed.'

The count burst into a tremendous roar of laughter.

'She's a killing old lady! how offended she was!'

And he laughed again with such enjoyment that even Johann, who was standing before him, looked down and faintly smiled aside.

'And the son of the old friend of the family too! ... ha, ha, ha!' the count went on laughing.

'No, really, it was too bad. I felt positively sorry for her,' said the cornet.

'What nonsense! How young you are! What, would you have me lose? Why should I lose? I used to lose too when I couldn't play properly. Ten roubles will come in useful, my boy. One must look at life from a practical point of view or you'll always be one of the fools.'

Polozov did not reply; he wanted indeed to be alone to think of Liza, who seemed to him a wonderfully pure and noble creature. He undressed and lay down in the soft, clean bed that had been prepared for him.

‘What nonsense all the honours and glories of war are!’ he thought, looking at the window curtained with the shawl, through which stole the pale beams of the moon. ‘This is happiness—to live in some quiet retreat with a sweet, clever, simple wife, that is true, enduring happiness!’

But for some reason he did not communicate these dreams to his friend, and did not even mention the country girl, though he felt sure that the count too was thinking about her.

‘What! aren’t you undressing?’ he asked the count, who was walking up and down the room.

‘I don’t feel sleepy yet. Put out the candle if you like; I’ll go to bed without it.’

And he went on pacing up and down.

‘Doesn’t feel sleepy yet,’ repeated Polozov, who after that evening felt more than ever dissatisfied with the count’s sway over him, and disposed to revolt against it. ‘I can fancy,’ he reflected, mentally addressing Turbin, ‘the ideas that are passing through your well-brushed head at this moment! I saw how much you liked her. But you’re not capable of understanding that simple, truthful nature; you need a Mina, you want a colonel’s epaulettes. I’ll ask him, though, what he thought of her.’

And Polozov turned towards him, but changed his mind; he felt that he would not be able to contend against the count, if his view of Liza were not what he supposed; that he would not be strong enough to hold out against agreeing with him even, so accustomed had he become to submitting to his influence, though it was growing every day more irksome and unjustifiable to him.

‘Where are you going?’ he asked, when the count put on his forage-cap, and went towards the door.

‘I’m going to the stable to have a look whether everything’s as it should be.’

‘Queer!’ thought the cornet; but he put out the candle, and, trying to shake off the

absurdly jealous and hostile feeling towards his former friend that would obtrude itself upon his mind, he turned over on the other side.

Meanwhile Anna Fyodorovna had also retired to her room, after saying good night as usual and affectionately kissing and signing with the cross her brother, her daughter, and her ward. It was long since the old lady had experienced in one day such violent emotions that she could not say her prayers calmly. She could not get out of her head the melancholy and vivid picture of the dead count and of the young dandy who had so ruthlessly despoiled her. After undressing, however, and drinking half a glass of rye-beer, which had been put ready for her on a table by her bedside, she got into bed as usual. Her favourite cat crept softly into the room. Anna Fyodorovna called to her, and began stroking her, listening to her purring, and still she could not go to sleep.

'It's the cat that prevents me,' she thought, and she drove her away. The cat dropped softly to the floor, slowly shaking its fluffy tail, and jumped on the low stove; but the maid who slept on the floor in the room brought her felt mat in to lay it there, and proceeded to light the lamp before the holy picture and to put out the candles. At last the girl was snoring; but still Anna Fyodorovna could not get to sleep, and could not calm her heated imagination. The face of the hussar simply stood before her when she closed her eyes, and seemed to appear in various strange shapes in the room when with open eyes she looked in the dim light of the lamp at the chest of drawers, at the table, at a white dress hanging up. First she felt too hot on the feather bed, then the clock ticking on the table was intolerable, and she could not stand the maid's snoring. She waked her up, and told her to give over snoring. Again, thoughts of her daughter, of the old, and of the young count, and of preference were strangely mingled in her brain. At one moment she saw herself waltzing with the old count, saw her plump, white shoulders, felt kisses on them, and she saw her daughter in the young count's arms. Again Ustyusha began to snore....

‘No, there’s something amiss nowadays; people aren’t the same. He was ready to go through fire for my sake. Yes, and he had good reason too; while this fellow, I’ll warrant, has gone to sleep like a simpleton, pleased at what he has won, and no thought of making love. Now he said on his knees, “What will you have me do? I’d kill myself on the spot if you will.” And he would have killed himself if I’d said so.’

All of a sudden there was the sound of bare feet in the corridor, and Liza, with only a kerchief thrown over her, ran into the room all pale and trembling, and almost fell on her mother’s bed....

After saying good night to her mother, Liza had gone alone to her uncle’s former room. Putting on a white dressing-jacket, and wrapping a kerchief about her thick, long hair, she put out the candle, raised the window, and sat down with her feet upon a chair, fixing her dreamy eyes on the pond, which was now all a-glitter with silver brilliance.

All her habitual pursuits and interests suddenly appeared to her in quite a new light. Her capricious old mother, whom she had loved without criticising, her love for whom was part of her very soul; her feeble but genial uncle, the servants, the peasants, who adored their young mistress, the milch cows and the calves, and all nature about her—that had so many times died away and quickened again to life—in the midst of which she had grown up with love for others and from others; all that had given her such quiet, sweet peace at heart; it all seemed suddenly not the real thing; it all seemed dreary, useless. It seemed as though some one were saying to her, ‘Little fool! little fool! for twenty years you have been wasting time, doing this and that for people, and never knowing the meaning of life and happiness!’ Gazing into the depths of the still, moonlit garden, she thought this more intensely, far more intensely, than she had ever thought it before. And what had led her to such reflections? Certainly not that she had suddenly fallen in love with the count, as might have been imagined. On the contrary she did not like him. The cornet would

sooner have made an impression on her; but he was plain, poor man, and silent. She had unconsciously forgotten him, and with anger and annoyance recalled the image of the count. ‘No, not the real thing,’ she said to herself. Her ideal was so exquisite! It was the ideal figure that, on a night like this, amid nature like this, might be loved without jarring on its beauty, the ideal that had never been cut down to fit in with the coarseness of fact.

At first her solitary life and the absence of people who might have engaged her attention had kept whole and untroubled in her heart all that force of love which Providence has implanted in the soul of every one of us alike; and now she had too long lived in the mournful happiness of feeling in herself that vague force, unveiling at times the mysterious treasure store of her heart, and gloating over the contemplation of its riches—too long to lavish heedlessly all its wealth on a chance comer. God grant she might find joy in that meagre happiness to the grave. Who knows whether it be not a better and a keener joy, whether, indeed, it be not the only real and possible joy?

‘Merciful God!’ she thought, ‘can I have missed youth and happiness altogether, and will it not come now? Will it never come? Can it be true?’ And she gazed up into the vast, clear sky near the moon, covered with billowy clouds, which floated towards the moon, hiding the stars. ‘If that topmost white cloud reaches the moon, it means that it is true,’ she thought. A misty, smoky streak flitted over the lower half of the bright disc, and gradually the light grew dimmer on the grass, on the tops of the lime-trees, on the pond; the black shadows of the trees were less marked; and like a repetition of the dark shadow cast over nature, a faint breeze fluttered over the leaves, and wafted to the window the dewy fragrance of leaves, of wet earth, and flowering lilac. ‘No, it’s not true,’ she comforted herself; ‘if the nightingale sings to-night, it means that what I am thinking is all nonsense, and I must not despair,’ she thought. And for a long while she sat on in silence, as it were expecting some one, though it all grew light and living again, and again, several times, clouds

floated across the moon and all was darkened. She had begun to doze, sitting in the window, when a nightingale waked her with its repeated trill, that rang out clear from below, near the pond. The country girl opened her eyes. Again, with fresh joy, all her soul was renewed by that mysterious union with nature, which lay, so serene and bright, unfolded before her. She leaned on her elbows. A sort of aching, sweet melancholy weighed on her bosom, and tears of pure, large love, craving satisfaction—good, comforting tears—came into her eyes. She folded her arms on the window-sill, and laid her head on them. Her favourite prayer came spontaneously into her soul, and she sank into a doze with wet eyes.

The touch of a hand roused her; she waked up. But the touch was gentle and pleasant; the hand pressed her hand more tightly. Suddenly she came to a sense of reality, cried out, jumped up, and telling herself that it could not be the count she recognised standing under the window, in the full moonlight, she ran out of the room.

XV

It really was the count. When he heard the girl's cry and the grumbling utterance of the watchman behind the fence, roused by her cry, he rushed headlong, with the sensation of a caught thief, and ran through the wet, dewy grass into the thickest part of the garden. 'Ah, I'm a fool!' he repeated unconsciously; 'I frightened her. I ought to have been gentler, to have waked her with words. Ah, I'm an awkward ass!' He stood still, and listened; the watchman went through the little gate into the garden, trailing his stick along the sandy path; he had to hide. He went down towards the pond; frogs plopped hurriedly from under his feet into the water, making him start. Here he squatted down on his heels, and in spite of his soaking feet, began going over all he had done: how he had crept over the fence, looked for her window, and at last seen a white shadow; how, listening to the slightest rustle, he had several times approached and retreated from the window; how it had seemed to him at one

moment certain that she was expecting him, and vexed at his tardiness; at the next, that it was impossible she could have brought herself so readily to arrange such an interview; how at last, assuming that she was only pretending to be asleep, from the bashfulness of a provincial young lady, he had gone resolutely up to her and saw her attitude distinctly; but then he had for some reason suddenly darted headlong back, and it was only through shame at his own cowardice that he went boldly up to her and touched her hand. The watchman again cleared his throat, and came out of the garden, making the gate creak. The window of the young lady's room shut with a slam, and was fastened with a shutter from within. It was horribly irritating to the count to see this. He would have given a great deal simply to be able to begin the whole affair over again from the beginning; that time he would not have acted so stupidly. 'An exquisite girl! so fresh! simply charming! and to make such a mess of it! Silly ass I am!' He was not sleepy, moreover, and with the determined steps of a thoroughly irritated man, he walked at random along the paths of the close lime-tree avenue.

And then to him, too, the night brought its peace-giving offerings of soothing melancholy and yearning for love. The clayey path, with here and there a tuft of grass or a dry twig, was lighted in circular patches by the straight, pale moon-beams shining through the thick foliage of the lime-trees. A crooked branch was lit up on one side, looking as though overgrown with white lichen. The silvery leaves whispered at intervals. In the house all lights were out, all sounds were hushed. Only the nightingale seemed to fill all the fathomless, silent stretches of light. 'Heavens! what a night! what a marvellous night!' thought the count, drinking in the fragrant freshness of the garden. 'I feel, somehow, sad; as it were dissatisfied with myself and others, and dissatisfied with the whole of life. A delightful, sweet girl! Perhaps she was really offended.' There his musing changed; he pictured himself in that garden with the provincial young lady in the most various and strange circumstances; then the part of the young lady was filled by his complaisant Mina.

‘What a fool I was! I ought simply to have put my arms round her waist and kissed her’; and with this regretful reflection the count went back to his room.

The cornet was not yet asleep. He turned over in bed at once, and faced the count.

‘You’re not asleep?’ inquired the count.

‘No.’

‘Shall I tell you what’s happened?’

‘Well?’

‘No, better not tell you—yes, I will though. Move your legs.’

And recovering from his annoyance at the intrigue he had so mismanaged, the count sat down on the edge of his friend’s bed, smiling eagerly.

‘Only fancy! that young lady, do you know, arranged a rendezvous with me?’

‘What do you say?’ cried Polozov, jumping out of bed.

‘Come, listen.’

‘But how? when? Impossible?’

‘Why, while you were reckoning the points of the preference, she told me she should be sitting to-night at her window, and that one could get in at her window. You see what it is to be a practical man. While you were reckoning up with the old lady, I had put up this little job. Why, you heard it, in fact; she said in your presence she should sit at her window and look at the pond.’

‘But she said that by chance.’

‘That’s just what I don’t know; whether it was on purpose or not that she said that. Perhaps she really did not mean it straight off; only it looked like it. A wretched mess it’s turned out! I acted like a perfect fool!’ he added, smiling contemptuously at himself.

‘But how? Where have you been?’

The count described everything just as it had happened, only omitting his hesitations and reiterated retreats.

‘I spoilt it all myself; I ought to have been bolder. She screamed, and ran away from the window.’

‘So she screamed and ran away?’ said the cornet, with an awkward smile, responding to the smile of the count, which had so long had such a powerful influence over him.

‘Yes. Well, now it’s time to go to sleep.’

The cornet turned over again, with his back towards the door, and lay in silence for ten minutes. God knows what was passing in his soul; but when he turned over again, his face expressed suffering and determination.

‘Count Turbin!’ he said, in a jerky voice.

‘What is it? Are you talking in your sleep?’ the count responded tranquilly. ‘What is it, Cornet Polozov?’

‘Count Turbin, you’re a blackguard!’ cried Polozov, and he jumped out of bed.

XVI

Next morning the squadron moved on. The officers did not see their hosts again, and did not take leave of them. They did not speak to one another either. On reaching their first halt, a duel was proposed; but Captain Schultz, a very good fellow, with a capital seat on horseback, liked by every one in the regiment, and chosen by the count as his second, succeeded in so far smoothing over the affair that no duel took place, and no one in the regiment ever heard of the matter. Turbin and Polozov, indeed, though never on their old friendly footing again, still addressed each other informally, and met sometimes at dinners and parties.

THE SNOW-STORM

THE SNOW-STORM

I

IT was past six o'clock in the evening, after drinking tea, that I set out from a posting-station, the name of which I have forgotten, though I remember that it was somewhere in the Don Cossack district, near Novotcherkask. It was quite dark as I wrapped myself in my fur cloak and fur rug and settled myself beside Alyoshka in the sledge. Under the lee of the station-house it seemed warm and still. Though there was no snow falling, there was not a star to be seen overhead, and the sky seemed extraordinarily low and black in contrast with the pure, snowy plain stretched out before us.

As soon as we had driven out of the village, passing the dark figures of some windmills, one of which was clumsily waving its great sails, I noticed that the road was heavier and thicker with snow, and the wind began to blow more keenly on my left, tossed the horses' tails and manes on one side, and persistently lifted and blew away the snow as it was stirred up by the sledge-runners and the horses' hoofs. The tinkle of the bell died away, a draught of cold air made its way through some aperture in my sleeve and blew down my back, and I recalled the advice of the overseer of the station that I should do better not to start that night, or I might be out all night and get frozen on the way.

'Don't you think we might get lost?' I said to the driver. But receiving no reply, I put the question more definitely, 'What do you say, shall we reach the next station? Shan't we lose the way?'

'God knows,' he answered, without turning his head. 'How it drives along the ground! Can't see the road a bit. Lord, 'a' mercy!'

'Well, but you tell me, do you expect to get to the next station or not?' I persisted in inquiring. 'Shall we manage to get there?'

‘We’ve got to get there,’ said the driver, and he said something more which I could not catch in the wind.

I did not want to turn back; but to spend the night driving in the frost and the snow-storm about the absolutely desolate steppe of that part of the Don Cossack district was a very cheerless prospect. And although in the dark I could not see my driver distinctly, I somehow did not take to him, and felt no confidence in him. He was sitting with his legs hanging down before him exactly in the middle of his seat instead of on one side. His voice sounded listless; he wore a big hat with a wavering brim, not a coachman’s cap, and besides he did not drive in correct style, but held the reins in both hands, like a footman who has taken the coachman’s place on the box. And what prejudiced me most of all was that he had tied a kerchief over his ears. In short, the serious, bent back before my eyes impressed me unfavourably and seemed to promise no good.

‘Well, I think it would be better to turn back,’ said Alyoshka; ‘it’s poor fun being lost.’

‘Lord, ‘a’ mercy! how the snow is flying; no chance of seeing the road; one’s eyes choked up entirely.... Lord, ‘a’ mercy!’ grumbled the driver.

We had not driven on another quarter of an hour, when the driver, pulling up the horses, handed the reins to Alyoshka, clumsily extricated his legs from the box, and walked off to look for the road, his big boots crunching in the snow.

‘Where are you going? Are we off the road, eh?’ I inquired, but the driver did not answer. Turning his head to avoid the wind, which was cutting straight in his face, he walked away from the sledge.

‘Well, found it?’ I questioned him again, when he had come back.

‘No, nothing,’ he said with sudden impatience and annoyance, as though I were to blame for his having got off the road, and deliberately tucking his big feet back again under the box, he picked up the reins with his frozen gloves.

‘What are we going to do?’ I asked, as we started again.

‘What are we to do? Go whither God leads us.’

And we drove on at the same slow trot, unmistakably on no sort of road; at one moment in snow that was soft and deep, and the next over brittle, bare ice.

Although it was so cold, the snow on my fur collar melted very quickly; the drifting snow blew more and more thickly near the ground, and a few flakes of frozen snow began falling overhead.

It was evident that we were going astray, because after driving another quarter of an hour, we had not seen a single verst post.

‘Come, what do you think,’ I asked the driver again, ‘can we manage to get to the station?’

‘To which station?... We shall get back all right if we let the horses go as they please, they’ll take us there; but I doubt our getting to the other station; only lose our lives, may be.’

‘Well, then let us go back,’ said I. ‘And really....’

‘Turn back then?’ repeated the driver.

‘Yes, yes, turn back!’

The driver let the reins go. The horses went at a better pace, and though I did not notice that we turned round, the wind changed and soon the mills could be seen through the snow. The driver plucked up his spirits and began talking. ‘The other day they were driving back from the next station like this in a snow-storm,’ said he, ‘and they spent the night in some stacks and only arrived next morning. And a good job they did get into the stacks, or they’d have all been clean frozen to death—it was a frost. As it was, one had his feet frost-bitten; and he died of it three weeks after.’

‘But now it’s not so cold and the wind seems dropping,’ said I; ‘couldn’t we manage it?’

‘Warmer it may be, but the snow’s drifting just the same. Now it’s behind us, so it seems a bit quieter, but it’s blowing hard. We might have to go if we’d the mail or anything; but it’s a different matter going of our own accord; it’s no joke to let one’s fare freeze. What if I’ve to answer for your honour afterwards?’

II

At that moment we heard the bells of several sledges behind us, overtaking us at a smart pace.

‘It’s the mail express bell,’ said my driver; ‘there’s only one like that at the station.’

And certainly the bells of the foremost sledge were particularly fine; their clear, rich, mellow and somewhat jangled notes reached us distinctly on the wind. As I learned afterwards, it was a set of bells such as sportsmen have on their sledges—three bells, a big one in the middle, with a ‘raspberry note,’ as it is called, and two little bells pitched at the interval of a third up and down the scale. The cadence of these thirds and the jangling fifth ringing in the air was uncommonly striking and strangely sweet in the desolate dumb steppe.

‘It’s the post,’ said my driver, when the foremost of the three sledges was level with us. ‘How’s the road, can one get along?’ he shouted to the hindmost of the drivers; but the latter only shouted to his horses without answering him.

The music of the bells quickly died away in the wind as soon as the post had passed us. I suppose my driver felt ashamed.

‘Suppose we go on, sir!’ he said to me; ‘folks have driven along the road, and now their tracks will be fresh.’

I assented and we turned, facing the wind again, and pushing on through the deep snow. I watched the road at the side, that we might not go off the tracks made by the sledges. For two versts their track was distinctly visible; then only a slight unevenness could be detected below the runners, and soon I was utterly unable to

say whether there was a track or simply a crease blown by the wind in the snow. My eyes were dazed by watching the snow flying monotonously by under our runners, and I began looking straight before me. The third verst post we saw, but the fourth we could not find; just as before we drove against the wind and with the wind, to the right and to the left, and at last things came to such a pass that the driver said we were too much to the right; I said too much to the left; and Alyoshka maintained that we were going straight back. Again we pulled up several times, and the driver extricated his long legs and clambered out to seek the road, but always in vain. I, too, got out once to see whether something I fancied I descried might not be the road. But scarcely had I struggled six steps against the wind and satisfied myself that there was nothing but regular, uniform white drifts of snow everywhere, and that I had seen the road only in imagination, when I lost sight of the sledge. I shouted 'Driver! Alyoshka!' but my voice I felt was caught up by the wind out of my very mouth and in one second carried far away from me. I went in the direction where the sledge had been—there was no sledge there. I went to the right, it was not there. I am ashamed when I remember the loud, shrill, almost despairing, voice in which I shouted once more, 'Driver!' when he was only a couple of paces from me. His black figure, with his whip and his huge hat flapping down on one side, suddenly started up before me. He led me to the sledge.

'We must be thankful, too, that it's warm,' said he; 'if the frost gets sharp, it's a bad look-out.... Lord, 'a' mercy!'

'Let the horses go, let them take us back,' I said, settling myself in the sledge. 'They'll take us back, driver, eh?'

'They ought to.'

He put down the reins, gave the shaft-horse three strokes about the pad with his whip, and we started off again. We drove for another half-hour. All at once we heard ahead of us bells, which I recognised as the sportsman's set of bells and two others.

But this time the bells were coming to meet us. The same three sledges, having delivered the post, were returning to their station with their change of horses tied on behind. The three stalwart horses of the express sledge with the sporting bells galloped swiftly in front. There was only one driver in it. He was sitting on the box-seat, shouting briskly and frequently to his horses. Behind, in the inside of the emptied sledge, there were a couple of drivers; we could hear their loud, cheerful talk. One of them was smoking a pipe, and its spark, glowing in the wind, lighted up part of his face. Looking at them I felt ashamed of having been afraid to go on, and my driver must have had the same feeling, for with one voice we said, ‘Let us follow them.’

III

Without waiting for the hindmost sledge to get by, my driver began turning awkwardly and ran his shafts into the horses tied on at the back of it. One team of three started aside, broke their rein, and galloped away.

‘Ah, the cross-eyed devil doesn’t see where he’s turning to—right into people!... The devil!’ scolded a short driver in a husky, cracked voice—an old man, as I inferred from his voice and figure. He jumped nimbly out of the hindmost sledge and ran after the horses, still keeping up his coarse and cruel abuse of my driver.

But the horses would not let themselves be caught. The old man ran after them, and in one moment horses and man vanished in the white darkness of the snow-storm.

‘Vassily—y! give us the bay here; there’s no catching them like this,’ we heard his voice again.

One of the drivers, a very tall man, got out of the sledge, unyoked his three horses, pulled himself up by the head on to one of them, and crunching over the snow at a shuffling gallop vanished in the same direction.

In company with the two other sledges we pushed on without a road, following the

express sledge which ran ahead at full gallop with its ringing bells.

‘What! he catch them!’ said my driver, referring to the man who had run to catch the horses. ‘If it won’t join the other horses of itself—it’s a vicious beast—it’ll lead him a fine dance, and he won’t catch it.’

From the time that he turned back, my driver seemed in better spirits and was more conversational, and as I was not sleepy I did not fail of course to take advantage of it. I began asking him where he came from, how he came here, and what he was; and soon learned that he was from my province, a Tula man, a serf from the village of Kirpitchny, that they had too little land, and that the corn had given up yielding any crop at all ever since the cholera year. There were two brothers at home, a third had gone for a soldier; they hadn’t bread enough to last till Christmas, and lived on what they could earn. His younger brother, he told me, was the head of the house because he was married, while he himself was a widower. Every year gangs of men from his village came here as drivers, though he hadn’t himself ever been a driver before; but now he had gone into the posting service so as to be a help to his brother. That he earned, thank God, one hundred and twenty roubles a year here, and sent a hundred of them home, and that it would be a pleasant life, too, ‘but the mail men were a brutal lot, very, and, indeed, all the people in these parts were a rough lot.’

‘Now, why did that driver abuse me? Lord, ‘a’ mercy on us! Did I set the horses loose on purpose? Am I a man to do any one a mischief? And what did he gallop after them for? They’d have got home by themselves. He’s only wearing out his horses, and he’ll be lost himself too,’ repeated the God-fearing peasant.

‘And what’s that blackness?’ I asked, noticing several black objects ahead of us.

‘Why, a train of waggons. That’s a pleasant way of travelling!’ he went on, as we overtook the huge waggons on wheels, covered with hemp sacking, following one another. ‘Look, not a man to be seen—they’re all asleep. The clever mare knows the way of herself, there’s no making her stray off the road.... I’ve driven with a train of

waggons too,' he added, 'so I know.'

Truly it was strange to look at those huge waggons, covered with snow from their sacking top down to the wheels, moving along quite alone. But in the corner of the foremost the snow-covered sacking was lifted a little on two fingers, and a cap emerged from it for an instant when our bells were ringing close to the waggons. The big, piebald horse, stretching its neck and dragging with its back, stepped evenly along the completely buried road, and rhythmically shook its shaggy head under the whitened yoke. It pricked up one snowy ear as we came up to it.

After we had driven on another half-hour, my driver addressed me again.

'Well, what do you think, sir, are we going right?'

'I don't know,' I answered.

'The wind was this way, sir, before, but now we're going with our backs to the weather. No, we're not going the right way, we're astray again,' he concluded with complete serenity.

It was clear that though he was very timorous, even death, as they say, is pleasant in company; he had become perfectly composed since we were a large party, and he had not to be the guide and responsible person. With great coolness he made observations on the mistakes of the driver of the foremost sledge, as though he had not the slightest interest in the matter. I did notice, indeed, that the foremost sledge was sometimes visible in profile on my left, sometimes on the right; it positively seemed to me as though we were going round in a very small space. This might, however, have been an illusion of the senses, just as sometimes it looked to me as though the first sledge were driving uphill, or along a slope, or downhill, though the steppe was everywhere level.

We had driven on a good while longer, when I discerned—far away, it seemed to me, on the very horizon—a long black moving streak. But a minute later it was evident to me that this was the same train of waggons we had overtaken before. Just

as before, the snow lay on the creaking wheels, some of which did not turn at all, indeed. As before, all the men were asleep under the sacking covers, and as before, the piebald horse in front, with inflated nostrils, sniffed out the road and pricked up its ears.

‘There, we’ve gone round and round, and we’ve come back to the same waggons again!’ said my driver in a tone of dissatisfaction. ‘The mail horses are good ones, and so he can drive them in this mad way; but ours will come to a dead stop if we go on like this all night.’

He cleared his throat.

‘Let us turn back, sir, before we come to harm.’

‘What for? Why, we shall get somewhere.’

‘Get somewhere! Why, we shall spend the night on the steppe. How the snow does blow!... Lord, ‘a’ mercy on us!’

Though I was surprised that the foremost driver, who had obviously lost both the road and the direction, did not attempt to look for the road, but calling merrily to his horses drove on still at full trot, I did not feel inclined now to drop behind the other sledges.

‘Follow them!’ I said.

My driver went on, but he drove the horses now with less eagerness than before, and he did not address another syllable to me.

IV

The storm became more and more violent, and fine frozen snow was falling from the sky. It seemed as though it were beginning to freeze; my nose and cheeks felt the cold more keenly; more often a draught of cold air crept in under my fur cloak, and I had to wrap myself up more closely. From time to time the sledge jolted over a bare, broken crust of ice where the snow had blown away. Though I was much interested

in seeing how our wanderings would end, yet, as I had been travelling six hundred versts without stopping for a night, I could not help shutting my eyes and I dropped into a doze. Once when I opened my eyes, I was struck by what seemed to me for the first minute the bright light shed over the white plain. The horizon had grown noticeably wider; the black, lowering sky had suddenly vanished; on all sides one could see the white, slanting lines of falling snow; the outlines of the horses of the front sledge were more distinctly visible, and when I looked upwards it seemed to me for the first minute that the storm-clouds had parted and that only the falling snow hid the sky. While I had been dozing, the moon had risen and cast its cold, bright light through the thin clouds and falling snow. All that I could see distinctly was my own sledge with the horse and driver and the three sledges with their horses ahead of us. In the first, the mail sledge, the one driver still sat on the box driving his horses at a smart trot. In the second there were two men, who, letting go their reins and making themselves a shelter out of a cloak, were all the time smoking a pipe, as we could see from the gleaming sparks. In the third sledge no one was to be seen; the driver was presumably asleep in the middle of it. The driver in front had, when I waked, begun stopping his horses and looking for the road. Then, as soon as we stopped, the howling of the wind became more audible, and the astoundingly immense mass of snow driving in the air was more evident to me. I could see in the moonlight, veiled by the drifting snow, the short figure of the driver holding a big whip with which he was trying the snow in front of him. He moved backwards and forwards in the white darkness, came back to the sledge again, jumped sideways on the front seat, and again through the monotonous whistling of the wind we could hear his jaunty, musical calling to his horses and the ringing of the bells. Every time that the front driver got out to search for signs of the road or of stacks, a brisk self-confident voice from the second sledge shouted to him—

‘I say, Ignashka, we’ve gone right off to the left! Keep more to the right, away from the storm.’ Or, ‘Why do you go round and round like a fool? Go the way of the

snow, you'll get there all right.' Or, 'To the right, go on to the right, my lad! See, there's something black—a verst post may be.' Or, 'What are you pottering about for? Unyoke the piebald and let him go first; he'll bring you on the road in a trice. That'll be the best plan.'

The man who gave this advice did not himself unyoke the trace-horse, nor get out into the snow to look for the road; he did not so much as poke his nose out beyond the shelter of the cloak, and when Ignashka in reply to one of his counsels, shouted to him that he'd better ride on in front himself as he knew which way to go, the giver of good advice answered that, if he were driving the mail horses, he would ride on and would soon bring them on to the road. 'But our horses won't lead the way in a storm!' he shouted; 'they're not that sort!'

'Don't meddle then!' answered Ignashka, whistling merrily to his horses.

The other driver, sitting in the same sledge as the counsellor, said nothing to Ignashka, and refrained altogether from taking part in the proceedings, though he was not yet asleep, as I concluded from his still glowing pipe, and from the fact that when we stopped I heard his regular, continuous talk. He was telling a tale. Only once, when Ignashka stopped for the sixth or seventh time, apparently vexed at the interruption in his enjoyment of the drive, he shouted to him—

'Why, what are you stopping again for?... Trying to find the road, indeed! Don't you see, there's a snow-storm! The land-surveyor himself couldn't find the road now; you should drive on as long as the horses will go. We shan't freeze to death, I don't suppose.... Do go on!'

'I dare say! A postillion was frozen to death last year, sure enough!' my driver retorted.

The man in the third sledge did not wake up all the time. Only once, while we were halting, the counsellor shouted—

'Filip, aye ... Filip!' And receiving no reply, he remarked, 'I say, he's not frozen, is

he?... You'd better look, Ignashka.'

Ignashka, who did everything, went up to the sledge and began to poke the sleeper.

'I say, one drink has done for him. If you're frozen, just say so!' he said, shaking him.

The sleeping man muttered some words of abuse.

'Alive, lads!' said Ignashka, and he ran ahead again, and again we drove on, and so fast indeed that the little sorrel trace-horse of my sledge, who was constantly being lashed about its tail, more than once broke into a clumsy gallop.

V

It was, I think, about midnight when the old man and Vassily, who had gone in pursuit of the strayed horses, rode up to us. They had caught the horses, and found and overtook us. But how they managed to do this in the dark, blinding blizzard, across the bare steppe, has always remained a mystery to me. The old man with his elbows and legs jogging, trotted up on the shaft-horse (the other two horses were fastened to the yoke; horses cannot be left loose in a blizzard). On overtaking us, he began railing at my driver again.

'You see, you cross-eyed devil, what a....'

'Hey, Uncle Mitritch,' shouted the story-teller from the second sledge, 'alive are you?... Come in to us.'

But the old man, making no answer, went on scolding. When he judged he had said enough, he rode up to the second sledge.

'Caught them all?' was asked him from the sledge.

'I should think so!'

And his little figure bent forward with his breast on the horse's back while it was at full trot; then he slipped off into the snow, and without stopping an instant ran after

the sledge, and tumbled into it, pulling his legs up over the side. The tall Vassily seated himself as before, in silence, in the front sledge with Ignashka, and began looking for the road with him.

‘You see what an abusive fellow.... Lord ‘a’ mercy on us!’ muttered my driver.

For a long while after this we drove on without a halt over the white wilderness, in the cold, luminous, and flickering twilight of the snow-storm.

I open my eyes. The same clumsy cap and back, covered with snow, are standing up in front of me; the same low-arched yoke, under which, between the tight, leather reins, the head of the shaft-horse shakes up and down always at the same distance away, with its black mane blown rhythmically by the wind in one direction. Over its back on the right there is a glimpse of the bay trace-horse with its tail tied up short and the swinging bar behind it knocking now and then against the framework of the sledge. If I look down—the same crunching snow torn up by the sledge runners, and the wind persistently lifting it and carrying it off, always in the same direction. In front the foremost sledge is running on, always at the same distance; on the right and left everything is white and wavering. In vain the eye seeks some new object; not a post, not a stack, not a hedge—nothing to be seen. Everywhere all is white, white and moving. At one moment the horizon seems inconceivably remote, at the next closed in, two paces away on all sides. Suddenly a high, white wall shoots up on the right, and runs alongside the sledge, then all at once it vanishes and springs up ahead, to flee further and further away, and vanish again. One looks upwards; it seems light for the first minute—one seems to see stars shining through a mist; but the stars fly further and further away from the sight, and one can see nothing but the snow, which falls past the eyes into the face and the collar of one’s cloak. Everywhere the sky is equally light, equally white, colourless, alike and ever moving. The wind seems to shift; at one time it blows in our faces and glues our eyes up with snow, then teazingly it flings one’s fur collar on one’s head and flaps it

mockingly in one's face, then it drones behind in some chink of the sledge. One hears the faint, never-ceasing crunch of hoofs and runners over the snow, and the jingle of the bells, dying down as we drive over deep snow. Only at times when we are going against the wind and over some bare, frozen headland, Ignashka's vigorous whistling and the melodious tinkle of the bells with the jangling fifth float clearly to one's hearing, and these sounds make a comforting break in the desolateness of the snowy waste, and then again the bells fall back into the same monotonous jingle, with intolerable correctness ringing ever the same phrase, which I cannot help picturing to myself in musical notes.

One of my legs began to get chilled, and when I turned over to wrap myself up closer, the snow on my collar and cap slipped down my neck and made me shiver; but on the whole, in my fur cloak, warmed through by the heat of my body, I still kept warm and was beginning to feel drowsy.

VI

Memories and fancies followed one another with increased rapidity in my imagination.

'The counsellor, that keeps on calling out advice from the second sledge, what sort of peasant is he likely to be? Sure to be a red-haired, thick-set fellow with short legs,' I thought, 'somewhat like Fyodor Filippitch, our old butler.' And then I see the staircase of our great house and five house-serfs, who are stepping heavily, dragging along on strips of coarse linen a piano from the lodge. I see Fyodor Filippitch, with the sleeves of his nankin coat turned up, carrying nothing but one pedal, running on ahead, pulling open bolts, tugging at a strip of linen here, shoving there, creeping between people's legs, getting in every one's way, and in a voice of anxiety shouting assiduously.

'You now, in front, in front! That's it, the tail end upwards, upwards, upwards, through the doorway! That's it.'

‘You only let us be, Fyodor Filippitch, we’ll do it by ourselves,’ timidly ventured the gardener, squeezed against the banisters, and red with exertion, as, putting out all his strength, he held up one corner of the piano.

But Fyodor Filippitch would not desist.

‘And what is it?’ I reflected. ‘Does he suppose he’s necessary to the business in hand, or is he simply pleased God has given him that conceited, convincing flow of words and enjoys the exercise of it? That’s what it must be.’

And for some reason I recall the pond, and the tired house-serfs, knee-deep in the water, dragging the draw-net, and again Fyodor Filippitch running along the bank with the watering-pot, shouting to all of them, and only approaching the water at intervals to take hold of the golden carp, to let out the muddy water, and to pour over them fresh.

And again it is midday in July. I am wandering over the freshly-mown grass of the garden, under the burning sun straight above my head. I am still very young; there is an emptiness, a yearning for something in my heart. I walk to my favourite spot near the pond, between a thicket of wild rose and the birch-tree avenue, and lie down to go to sleep. I remember the sensation with which, as I lay there, I looked through the red, thorny stems of the rose at the black earth, dried into little clods, and at the shining, bright blue mirror of the pond. It was with a feeling of naïve self-satisfaction and melancholy. Everything around me was so beautiful; its beauty had such an intense effect on me that it seemed to me I was beautiful myself, and my only vexation was that there was no one to admire me.

It is hot. I try to console myself by going to sleep. But the flies, the intolerable flies, will not even here give me any peace; they begin to gather together about me and persistently, stolidly, as it were like pellets, they shoot from forehead to hand. A bee buzzes not far from me, right in the hottest spot; yellow butterflies flutter languidly, it seems, from stalk to stalk. I look upwards, it makes my eyes ache; the sun is too

dazzling through the bright foliage of the leafy birch-tree, that gently swings its branches high above me, and I feel hotter than ever. I cover my face with my handkerchief; it becomes stifling, and the flies simply stick to my moist hands. Sparrows are twittering in the thickest of the clump of roses. One of them hops on the ground a yard from me; twice he makes a feint of pecking vigorously at the earth, and with a snapping of twigs and a merry chirrup flies out of the bush. Another, too, hops on the ground, perks up his tail, looks round, and with a chirrup he too flies out like an arrow after the first. From the pond come the sounds of wet linen being beaten with washing-bats in the water, and the blows seem to echo and be carried over the surface of the pond. There is the sound of laughter, chatter, and the splashing of bathers. A gust of wind rustles in the tree-tops at a distance; it comes closer, and I hear it ruffling up the grass, and now the leaves of the wild roses tremble and beat upon the stems; and now it lifts the corner of the handkerchief and a fresh breath of air passes over me, tickling my moist face. A fly flies in under the lifted kerchief and buzzes in a frightened way about my damp mouth. A dead twig sticks into me under my spine. No, it’s no good lying down; I’ll go and have a bathe. But suddenly close to my nook, I hear hurried footsteps and the frightened voices of women.

‘Oh, mercy on us! What can we do! and not a man here!’

‘What is it, what is it?’ I ask, running out into the sunshine and addressing a serf-woman, who runs past me, groaning. She simply looks round, wrings her hands and runs on. But here comes Matrona, an old woman of seventy, holding on her kerchief as it falls back off her head, limping and dragging one leg in a worsted stocking, as she runs towards the pond. Two little girls run along, hand in hand, and a boy of ten, wearing his father’s coat, hurries behind, clinging to the hempen skirt of one of them.

‘What has happened?’ I inquire of them.

‘A peasant is drowning.’

‘Where?’

‘In our pond.’

‘Who? one of ours?’

‘No; a stranger?’

The coachman Ivan, struggling over the newly-mown grass in his big boots, and the stout bailiff, Yakov, breathing hard, run towards the pond, and I run after them.

I recall the feeling that said to me, ‘Come, jump in, and pull out the man, save him, and they will all admire you,’ which was just what I was desiring.

‘Where? where is he?’ I ask of the crowd of house-serfs gathered together on the bank.

‘Over yonder, near the deepest pool, towards that bank, almost at the bath-house,’ says a washerwoman, getting in her wet linen on a yoke. ‘I saw him plunge in; and he comes up so and goes down again, and comes up again and screams, “I’m drowning, mercy!” and again he went down to the bottom, and only bubbles came up. Then I saw the man was drowning. And I yelled, “Mercy on us, the peasant’s drowning!”’

And the washerwoman hoists the yoke on to her shoulder, and bending on one side, walks along the path away from the pond.

‘My word, what a shame!’ says Yakov Ivanov, the bailiff, in a voice of despair: ‘what a to-do we shall have now with the district court—we shall never hear the last of it!’

A peasant with a scythe makes his way through the throng of women, children, and old people crowding about the bank, and hanging his scythe in the branches of a willow, begins deliberately pulling off his boots.

‘Where, where did he sink?’ I keep on asking, longing to throw myself in, and do

something extraordinary.

But they point to the smooth surface of the pond, broken into ripples here and there by the rushing wind. It is inconceivable to me that he is drowned while the water stands just as smooth and beautiful and untroubled over him, shining with glints of gold in the midday sun, and it seems to me that I can do nothing, can astonish no one, especially as I am a very poor swimmer. And the peasant is already pulling his shirt over his head, and in an instant will plunge in. Every one watches him with hope and a sinking heart; but when he has waded in up to his shoulders, the peasant slowly turns back and puts on his shirt again—he cannot swim.

People still run up; the crowd gets bigger and bigger; the women cling to each other; but no one does anything to help. Those who have only just reached the pond give advice, and groan, and their faces express horror and despair. Of those who had arrived on the scene earlier some, tired of standing, sit down on the grass; others go back. Old Matrona asks her daughter whether she has shut the door of the oven; the boy in his father's coat flings stones with careful aim into the pond.

But now Trezorka, Fyodor Filippitch's dog, comes running downhill from the house, barking and looking round in perplexity; and the figure of Fyodor himself, running down the hill and shouting something, comes into sight behind the thicket of wild rose.

'Why are you standing still?' he shouts, taking off his coat as he runs. 'A man's drowning, and they do nothing.... Give us a cord!'

All gaze in hope and dread at Fyodor Filippitch, while leaning on the shoulder of an obliging house-serf he kicks off his right boot with the tip of his left one.

'Over there, where the crowd is; over there, a little to the right of the willow, Fyodor Filippitch, over there,' says some one.

'I know,' he answers, and knitting his brows, probably in acknowledgment of symptoms of outraged delicacy in the crowd of women, he takes off his shirt and his

cross, handing the latter to the gardener's boy, who stands obsequiously before him. Then stepping vigorously over the mown grass, he goes to the pond.

Trezorka, who had stood still near the crowd, eating some blades of grass from the water's edge, and smacking his lips, looks inquiringly at his master, wondering at the rapidity of his movements. All at once, with a whine of delight, he plunges with his master into the water. For the first minute there is nothing to be seen but frothing bubbles, which float right up to us. But soon Fyodor Filippitch is seen swimming smartly towards the further bank, his arms making a graceful sweep, and his back rising and sinking regularly at every fathom's length. Trezorka, after swallowing a mouthful of water, hurriedly turns back, shakes himself in the crowd, and rolls on his back on the bank. While Fyodor Filippitch is swimming towards the further bank, the two coachmen run round to the willow with a net rolled round a pole. Fyodor Filippitch, for some reason or other, raises his hands above his head, and dives, once, twice, thrice; every time a stream of water runs out of his mouth, he tosses his hair with a fine gesture, and makes no reply to the questions which are showered upon him from all sides. At last he comes out on the bank, and, as far as I can see, simply gives orders for the casting of the net. The net is drawn up, but in it there is nothing except weed and a few carp struggling in it. While the net is being cast a second time, I walk round to that side.

Nothing is to be heard but the voice of Fyodor Filippitch giving directions, the splashing of the water through the wet cords, and sighs of horror. The wet cordage fastened to the right beam is more and more thickly covered with weed, as it comes further and further out of the water.

'Now pull together, all at once!' shouts the voice of Fyodor Filippitch. The butt-ends of the beams come into view covered with water.

'There is something; it pulls heavy, lads,' says some one.

And now the beams of the net in which two or three carp struggle, splashing and

crushing the weed, are dragged on to the bank. And through the shallow, shifting layer of muddy water something white comes into sight in the tightly-strained net. A sigh of horror passes over the crowd, subdued but distinctly audible in the deathlike stillness.

‘Pull all together, pull it on to dry land!’ cries Fyodor Filippitch’s resolute voice. And with the iron hook they drag the drowned man over the cropped stalks of dock and agrimony towards the willow.

And here I see my kind old aunt in her silk gown; I see her fringed, lilac parasol, which seems somehow oddly incongruous with this scene of death, so awful in its simplicity. I see her face on the point of shedding tears. I recall her look of disappointment that in this case arnica could be of no use, and I recall the painful sense of mortification I had when she said to me with the naïve egoism of love, ‘Let us go, my dear. Ah, how awful it is! And you will always go bathing and swimming alone!’

I remember how glaring and hot the sun was, baking the dry earth that crumbled under our feet; how it sparkled on the mirror of the pond; how the big carp struggled on the bank; how a shoal of fish dimpled the pond’s surface in the middle; how a hawk floated high up in the sky, hovering over the ducks, who swam quacking and splashing among the reeds in the centre of the water; how the white, curly storm-clouds gathered on the horizon; how the mud brought on to the bank by the net gradually slipped away; and how, as I crossed the dike, I heard the sounds of the washing-bat floating across the pond.

But the blows of the bat ring out as though there were two bats and another chiming in, a third lower in the scale; and that sound frets me, worries me, especially as I know the bat is a bell, and Fyodor Filippitch can’t make it stop. And the bat, like an instrument of torture, is crushing my leg, which is chilled. I wake up.

I was waked up, it seemed to me, by our galloping very swiftly, and two voices

talking quite close beside me.

‘I say, Ignat, eh ... Ignat!’ said the voice of my driver; ‘take my fare; you’ve got to go anyway, and why should I go on for nothing—take him!’

The voice of Ignat close beside me answered—

‘It’s no treat for me to have to answer for a passenger.... Will you stand me a pint bottle of vodka?’

‘Go on with your pint bottle!... A dram, and I’ll say done.’

‘A dram!’ shouted another voice: ‘a likely idea! tire your horses for a dram!’

I opened my eyes. Still the same insufferable wavering snow floating before one’s eyes, the same drivers and horses, but beside me I saw a sledge. My driver had overtaken Ignat, and we had been for some time moving alongside. Although the voice from the other sledge advised him not to accept less than a pint, Ignat all at once pulled up his horses.

‘Move the baggage in! Done! it’s your luck. Stand me a dram when we come to-morrow. Have you much baggage, eh?’

My driver jumped out into the snow with an alacrity quite unlike him, bowed to me, and begged me to get into Ignat’s sledge. I was perfectly ready to do so; but evidently the God-fearing peasant was so pleased that he wanted to lavish his gratitude and joy on some one. He bowed and thanked me, Alyoshka, and Ignashka.

‘There, thank God too! Why, Lord ‘a’ mercy, here we’ve been driving half the night, and don’t know ourselves where we’re going! He’ll take you all right, sir, but my horses are quite done up.’

And he moved my things with increased energy. While they were shifting my things, with the wind at my back almost carrying me off my legs, I went towards the second sledge. The sledge was more than a quarter buried in the snow, especially on the side where a cloak had been hung over the two drivers’ heads to keep off the

wind; under the cloak it was sheltered and snug. The old man was lying just as before with his legs out, while the story-teller was still telling his story: ‘So at the very time when the general arrived in the king’s name, that is, to Mariya in the prison, Mariya says to him, “General! I don’t want you, and I cannot love you, and you are not my lover; my lover is that same prince....” So then’—he was going on, but, seeing me, he paused a moment, and began pulling at his pipe.

‘Well, sir, are you come to listen to the tale?’ said the other man, whom I have called the counsellor.

‘Why, you are nice and cheerful in here!’ I said.

‘To be sure, it passes the time—anyway, it keeps one from thinking.’

‘Don’t you know, really, where we are now?’ This question, it struck me, was not liked by the drivers.

‘Why, who’s to make out where we are? May be we’ve got to the Kalmucks altogether,’ answered the counsellor.

‘What are we going to do?’ I asked.

‘What are we to do? Why, we’ll go on, and may be we’ll get somewhere,’ he said in a tone of displeasure.

‘Well, but if we don’t get there, and the horses can go no further in the snow, what then?’

‘What then? Nothing.’

‘But we may freeze.’

‘To be sure, we may, for there are no stacks to be seen now; we must have driven right out to the Kalmucks. The chief thing is, we must look about in the snow.’

‘And aren’t you at all afraid of being frozen, sir?’ said the old man, in a trembling voice.

Although he seemed to be jeering at me, I could see that he was shivering in every

bone.

‘Yes, it’s getting very cold,’ I said.

‘Ah, sir! You should do as I do; every now and then take a run; that would warm you.’

‘It’s first-rate, the way you run after the sledge,’ said the counsellor.

VII

‘Please get in: it’s all ready!’ Alyoshka called to me from the front sledge.

The blizzard was so terrific that it was only by my utmost efforts, bending double and clutching the skirts of my coat in both hands, that I managed to struggle through the whirling snow, which was blown up by the wind under my feet, and to make the few steps that separated me from the sledge. My former driver was kneeling in the middle of the empty sledge, but on seeing me he took off his big cap; whereupon the wind snatched at his hair furiously. He asked me for something for drink, but most likely had not expected me to give him anything extra, for my refusal did not in the least disappoint him. He thanked me for that too, put on his cap, and said to me, ‘Well, good luck to you, sir!’ and tugging at his reins, and clucking to his horses, he drove away from us. After that, Ignashka too, with a swing of his whole body forward, shouted to his horses. Again the sound of the crunching of the hoofs, shouting, and bells replaced the sound of the howling of the wind, which was more audible when we were standing still.

For a quarter of an hour after moving I did not go to sleep, but amused myself by watching the figures of my new driver and horses. Ignashka sat up smartly, incessantly jumping up and down, swinging his arm with the whip over the horses, shouting, knocking one leg against the other, and bending forward to set straight the shaft-horse’s breech, which kept slipping to the right side. He was not tall, but seemed to be well built. Over his full coat he had on a cloak not tied in at the waist;

the collar of it was open, and his neck was quite bare; his boots were not of felt, but of leather, and his cap was a small one, which he was continually taking off and shifting. His ears had no covering but his hair.

In all his actions could be detected not merely energy, but even more, it struck me, the desire to keep up his own energies. The further we went, the more and more frequently he jumped up and down on the box, shifted his position, slapped one leg against the other, and addressed remarks to me and Alyoshka. It seemed to me he was afraid of losing heart. And there was good reason; though we had good horses, the road became heavier and heavier at every step, and the horses unmistakably moved more unwillingly; he had to use the whip now, and the shaft-horse, a spirited, big, shaggy horse, stumbled twice, though at once taking fright, he darted forward and flung up his shaggy head almost to the very bells. The right trace-horse, whom I could not help watching, noticeably kept the traces slack, together with the long leather tassel of the breech, that shifted and shook up and down on the off-side. He needed the whip, but, like a good, spirited horse, he seemed vexed at his own feebleness, and angrily dropped and flung up his head, as though asking for the rein. It certainly was terrible to see the blizzard getting more and more violent, the horses growing weaker, and the road getting worse, while we hadn't a notion where we were and whether we should reach the station, or even a shelter of any sort. And ludicrous and strange it was to hear the bells ringing so gaily and unconcernedly, and Ignashka calling so briskly and jauntily, as though we were driving at midday in sunny, frosty Christmas weather, along some village street on a holiday; and strangest of all it was to think that we were going on all the while and going quickly, anywhere to get away from where we were. Ignashka sang a song, in the vilest falsetto, but so loudly and with breaks in it, filled in by such whistling, that it was odd to feel frightened as one listened to him.

'Hey, hey, what are you splitting your throat for, Ignashka?' I heard the voice of the counsellor. 'Do stop it for an hour.'

‘What?’

‘Shut up!’

Ignat ceased. Again all was quiet, and the wind howled and whined, and the whirling snow began to lie thicker on our sledge. The counsellor came up to us.

‘Well, what is it?’

‘What, indeed; which way are we to go?’

‘Who knows?’

‘Why, are your feet frozen, that you keep beating them together?’

‘They’re quite numb.’

‘You should take a run. There’s something over yonder; isn’t it a Kalmuck encampment? It would warm your feet, anyway.’

‘All right. Hold the horses ... there.’

And Ignat ran in the direction indicated.

‘One must keep looking and walking round, and one will find something; what’s the sense of driving on like a fool?’ the counsellor said to me. ‘See, what a steam the horses are in!’

All the time Ignat was gone—and that lasted so long that I began to be afraid he was lost—the counsellor told me in a calm, self-confident tone, how one must act during a blizzard, how the best thing of all was to unyoke a horse and let it go its own way; that as God is holy, it would lead one right; how one could sometimes see by the stars, and how if he had been driving the leading sledge, we should have been at the station long ago.

‘Well, is it?’ he asked Ignat, who was coming back, stepping with difficulty almost knee-deep in the snow.

‘Yes, it’s an encampment,’ Ignat answered, panting, ‘but I don’t know what sort of a one. We must have come right out to Prolgovsky homestead, mate. We must bear

more to the left.’

‘What nonsense!... That’s our encampment, behind the village!’ retorted the counsellor.

‘But I tell you it’s not!’

‘Why, I’ve looked, so I know. That’s what it will be; or if not that, then it’s Tamishevsko. We must keep more to the right, and we shall get out on the big bridge, at the eighth verst, directly.’

‘I tell you it’s not so! Why, I’ve seen it!’ Ignat answered with irritation.

‘Hey, mate, and you call yourself a driver!’

‘Yes, I do.... You go yourself!’

‘What should I go for? I know as it is.’

Ignat unmistakably lost his temper; without replying, he jumped on the box and drove on.

‘I say, my legs are numb; there’s no warming them,’ he said to Alyoshka, clapping his legs together more and more frequently, and knocking off and scraping at the snow, that had got in above his boot-tops.

I felt awfully sleepy.

VIII

‘Can I really be beginning to freeze?’ I wondered sleepily. ‘Being frozen always begins by sleepiness, they say. Better be drowned than frozen—let them drag me out in the net; but never mind, I don’t care whether it’s drowning or freezing, if only that stick, or whatever it is, wouldn’t poke me in the back, and I could forget everything.’

I lost consciousness for a second.

‘How will it all end, though?’ I suddenly wondered, opening my eyes for a minute

and staring at the white expanse of snow; ‘how will it end, if we don’t come across any stacks, and the horses come to a standstill, which I fancy will happen soon? We shall all be frozen.’ I must own that, though I was a little frightened, the desire that something extraordinary and rather tragic should happen to us was stronger than a little fear. It struck me that it would not be bad if, towards morning, the horses should reach some remote, unknown village with us half-frozen, some of us indeed completely frozen. And dreams of something like that floated with extraordinary swiftness and clearness before my imagination. The horses stop, the snow drifts higher and higher, and now nothing can be seen of the horses but their ears and the yoke; but suddenly Ignashka appears on the top of the snow with his three horses and drives past us. We entreat him, we scream to him to take us with him; but the wind blows away our voice, there is no voice heard. Ignashka laughs, shouts to his horses, whistles, and vanishes from our sight in a deep ravine filled with snow. The old man is on horseback, his elbows jogging up and down, and he tries to gallop away, but cannot move from the spot. My old driver with his big cap rushes at him, drags him to the ground and tramples him in the snow. ‘You’re a sorcerer,’ he shouts, ‘you’re abusive, we will be lost together.’ But the old man pops his head out of a snowdrift; he is not so much an old man now as a hare, and he hops away from us. All the dogs are running after him. The counsellor, who is Fyodor Filippitch, says we must all sit round in a ring, that it doesn’t matter if the snow does bury us; we shall be warm. And we really are warm and snug; only we are thirsty. I get out a case of wine; I treat all of them to rum with sugar in it, and I drink it myself with great enjoyment. The story-teller tells us some tale about a rainbow—and over our heads there is a ceiling made of snow and a rainbow. ‘Now let us make ourselves each a room in the snow and go to sleep!’ I say. The snow is soft and warm like fur; I make myself a room and try to get into it, but Fyodor Filippitch, who has seen my money in the wine-case, says, ‘Stop, give me the money—you have to die any way!’ and he seizes me by the leg. I give him the money, and only beg him to let me go;

but they will not believe it is all the money, and try to kill me. I clutch at the old man's hand, and with inexpressible delight begin kissing it; the old man's hand is soft and sweet. At first he snatches it away, but then he gives it me, and even strokes me with the other hand. But Fyodor Filippitch approaches and threatens me. I run into my room; now it is not a room, but a long, white corridor, and some one is holding me by the legs. I pull myself away. My boots and stockings, together with part of my skin, are left in the hands of the man who held me. But I only feel cold and ashamed—all the more ashamed as my aunt with her parasol and her homœopathic medicine-chest is coming to meet me, arm in arm with the drowned man. They are laughing, and do not understand the signs I make to them. I fling myself into a sledge, my legs drag in the snow; but the old man pursues me, his elbows jogging up and down. The old man is close upon me, but I hear two bells ringing in front of me, and I know I am safe if I can reach them. The bells ring more and more distinctly; but the old man has overtaken me and fallen with his body on my face, so that I can hardly hear the bells. I snatch his hand again, and begin kissing it, but he is not the old man but the drowned man, and he shouts, 'Ignashka, stop, yonder are the Ahmetkin stacks, I do believe! Run and look!' That is too dreadful. No, I had better wake up.

I open my eyes. The wind has blown the skirt of Alyoshka's coat over my face; my knee is uncovered; we are driving over a bare surface of ice, and the chime of the bells with its jangling fifth rings out more distinctly in the air.

I look to see where there is a stack; but instead of stacks, I see now with open eyes a house with a balcony and a turreted wall like a fortress. I feel little interest in examining this house and fortress. I want most to see again the white corridor, along which I was running, to hear the church bell ringing and to kiss the old man's hand. I close my eyes again and fall asleep.

IX

I slept soundly; but the chime of the bells was audible all the while, and came into my dreams; at one time in the form of a dog barking and rushing at me, then an organ, of which I am one of the pipes, then French verses which I am composing. Then it seemed that the chime of the bell is an instrument of torture with which my right heel is being continually squeezed. This was so vivid that I woke up and opened my eyes, rubbing my foot. It was beginning to get frost-bitten. The night was as light, as dim, as white as ever. The same movement jolted me and the sledge; Ignashka was sitting sideways as before, clapping his legs together. The trace-horse, as before, craning his neck and not lifting his legs high, ran trotting over the deep snow; the tassel bobbed up and down on the breech, and lashed against the horse's belly. The shaft-horse's head, with his mane flying, swayed regularly up and down, tightening and loosening the reins that were fastened to the yoke. But all this was more than ever covered, buried in snow. The snow whirled in front of us, buried the runners on one side, and the horses' legs up to the knees, and was piled up high on our collars and caps. The wind blew first on the right, then on the left, played with my collar, with the skirt of Ignashka's coat, and the trace-horses' mane, and whistled through the yoke and the shafts.

It had become fearfully cold, and I had hardly peeped out of my fur collar when the dry, frozen, whirling snow settled on my eyelashes, my nose and my mouth, and drifted down my neck. I looked round—all was white, and light and snowy; nowhere anything but dim light and snow. I felt seriously alarmed. Alyoshka was asleep at my feet, right at the bottom of the sledge; his whole back was covered by a thick layer of snow. Ignashka was not depressed; he was incessantly tugging at the reins, shouting and clapping his feet together. The bells rang as strangely as ever. The horses were panting, but they still went on, though rather more slowly, and stumbling more and more often. Ignashka jumped up and down again, brandished his gloves, and began singing a song in his shrill, strained voice. Before he had finished the song, he pulled up, flung the reins on the forepart of the sledge, and got

down. The wind howled ruthlessly; the snow simply poured as it were in shovelfuls on the skirts of my fur cloak. I looked round; the third sledge was not there (it had been left behind somewhere). Beside the second sledge I could see in the snowy fog the old man hopping from one leg to the other. Ignashka walked three steps away from the sledge, sat down on the snow, undid his belt and began taking off his boots.

‘What are you doing?’ I asked.

‘I must take my boots off; or my feet will be quite frost-bitten!’ he answered, going on with what he was about.

It was too cold for me to poke my neck out of my fur collar to see what he was doing. I sat up straight, looking at the trace-horse, who stood with one leg outstretched in an attitude of painful exhaustion, shaking his tied up, snowy tail. The jolt Ignashka gave the sledge in jumping up on the box waked me up.

‘Well, where are we now?’ I asked. ‘Shall we go on till morning?’

‘Don’t you worry yourself, we’ll take you all right,’ he answered. ‘Now my feet are grandly warm since I shifted my boots.’

And he started; the bells began ringing; the sledge began swaying from side to side; and the wind whistled through the runners. And again we set off floating over the boundless sea of snow.

X

I slept soundly. When I was waked up by Alyoshka kicking me, and opened my eyes, it was morning. It seemed even colder than in the night. No snow was falling from above; but the keen, dry wind was still driving the fine snow along the ground and especially under the runners and the horse’s hoofs. To the right the sky in the east was a heavy, dingy blue colour; but bright, orange-red, slanting rays were becoming more and more clearly marked in it. Overhead, behind the flying white clouds, faintly tinged with red, the pale blue sky was visible; on the left the clouds

were light, bright, and moving. Everywhere around, as far as the eye could see, the country lay under deep, white snow, thrown up into sharp ridges. Here and there could be seen a greyish hillock, where the fine, dry snow had persistently blown by. Not a track of sledge, or man, or beast was visible. The outlines and colours of the driver's back and the horses could be seen clearly and distinctly against the white background.... The rim of Ignashka's dark blue cap, his collar, his hair, and even his boots were white. The sledge was completely buried. The grey shaft-horse's head and forelock were covered with snow on the right side; my right trace-horse's legs were buried up to the knee, and all his back, crisp with frozen sweat, was coated with snow on the off-side. The tassel was still dancing in time to any tune one liked to fancy, and the trace-horse stepped to the same rhythm. It was only from his sunken belly, that heaved and fell so often, and his drooping ears that one could see how exhausted he was. Only one new object caught my attention. That was a verst post, from which the snow was falling to the ground, and about which the wind had swept up quite a mountain on the right and kept whirling and shifting the powdery snow from one side to the other. I was utterly amazed to find that we had been driving the whole night with the same horses, twelve hours without stopping or knowing where we were going, and yet had somehow arrived. Our bells chimed more gaily than ever. Ignat kept wrapping himself round and shouting; behind us we heard the snorting of the horses and the ringing of the bells of the sledge in which were the old man and the counsellor; but the man who had been asleep had gone completely astray from us on the steppe. When we had driven on another half-verst, we came upon fresh tracks of a sledge and three horses, not yet covered by the snow, and here and there we saw a red spot of blood, most likely from a horse that had been hurt.

'That's Filip. Why, he's got in before us!' said Ignashka.

And now a little house with a signboard came into sight near the roadside, in the middle of the snow, which buried it almost to the roof and windows. Near the little

inn stood a sledge with three grey horses, with their coats crisp with sweat, their legs stiffly stretched out, and their heads drooping. The snow had been cleared about the door, and a spade stood there; but the droning wind still whirled and drifted the snow from the roof.

At the sound of our bells there came out from the door a big, red-faced, red-haired driver, holding a glass of vodka in his hand, and shouting something to us. Ignashka turned to me and asked my permission to stop here; then, for the first time, I saw his face.

XI

His face was not swarthy, lean, and straight-nosed, as I had expected, judging from his hair and figure. It was a merry, round face, with quite a pug nose, a large mouth, and round, bright, light blue eyes. His face and neck were red, as though they had been rubbed with a polishing cloth; his eyebrows, long eyelashes, and the down that covered all the lower part of his face were stiffly coated with snow and perfectly white. It was only half a verst from the station, and we stopped.

‘Only make haste,’ I said.

‘One minute,’ answered Ignashka, jumping off the box and going towards Filip.

‘Give it here, mate,’ he said, taking the glove off his right hand and flinging it with the whip on the snow, and throwing back his head, he tossed off the glass of vodka at one gulp.

The innkeeper, probably an old Cossack, came out of the door with a pint bottle in his hand.

‘To whom shall I take some?’ said he.

Tall Vassily, a thin, flaxen-headed peasant with a goat’s beard, and the counsellor, a stout man with light eyebrows and a thick light beard framing his red face, came up, and drank a glass each. The old man, too, was approaching the group, but they did

not offer him any, and he moved away to his horses, that were fastened at the back of the sledge, and began stroking one of them on the back.

The old man was just as I had imagined him to be—a thin little man, with a wrinkled, bluish face, a scanty beard, a sharp nose, and decayed, yellow teeth. His cap was a regular driver's cap, perfectly new, but his greatcoat was shabby, smeared with tar, and torn about the shoulders and skirts. It did not cover his knees, and his coarse, hempen undergarment, which was stuffed into his huge, felt boots. He was bent and wrinkled, his face quivering, and his knees trembling. He bustled about the sledge, apparently trying to get warm.

'Why, Mitritch, have a drop; it would warm you finely,' the counsellor said to him.

Mitritch gave a shrug. He straightened the breech on his horse, set the yoke right, and came up to me.

'Well, sir,' said he, taking his cap off his grey hair, and bowing low, 'we've been lost all night along with you, and looking for the road; you might treat me to a glass. Surely, your excellency! Else I've nothing to warm me up,' he added with a deprecating smile.

I gave him twenty-five copecks. The innkeeper brought out a glass, and handed it to the old man. He took off his glove with the whip, and put his black, horny little hand, blue with cold, to the glass; but his thumb was not under his control; he could not hold the glass, and let it drop, spilling the vodka in the snow.

All the drivers laughed.

'I say, Mitritch is so frozen, he can't hold the vodka.'

But Mitritch was greatly mortified at having spilt the drink.

They poured him out another glass, however, and put it to his lips. He became more cheerful at once, ran into the inn, lighted a pipe, began grinning, showing his decayed, yellow teeth, and at every word he uttered an oath. After drinking a last

glass, the drivers got into their sledges, and we drove on.

The snow became whiter and brighter, so that it made one's eyes ache to look at it. The orange-red streaks spread higher and higher, and grew brighter and brighter in the sky overhead. The red disc of the sun appeared on the horizon through the dark blue clouds. The blue became deeper and more brilliant. Along the road near the station there was a distinct yellowish track, with here and there deep ruts in it. In the tense, frozen air there was a peculiar, refreshing lightness.

My sledge flew along very briskly. The head of the shaft-horse, with his mane floating up on the yoke above, bobbed up and down quickly under the sportsman's bell, the clapper of which did not move freely now, but somehow grated against the sides. The gallant trace-horses, pulling together at the twisted, frozen traces, trotted vigorously, and the tassel danced right under the belly and the breech. Sometimes a trace-horse slipped off the beaten track into a snowdrift, and his eyes were all powdered with snow as he plunged smartly out of it. Ignashka shouted in a cheerful tenor; the dry frost crunched under the runners; behind us we heard the two bells ringing out with a clear, festive note, and the drunken shouts of the drivers. I looked round. The grey, crisp-haired trace-horses, breathing regularly, galloped over the snow with outstretched necks and bits askew. Filip cracked his whip and set his cap straight. The old man lay in the middle of the sledge with his legs up as before.

Two minutes later the sledge was creaking over the swept boards of the approach to the posting-station, and Ignashka turned his merry face, all covered with frost and snow, towards me.

'We've brought you safe after all, sir,' said he.

1856.

THREE DEATHS

THREE DEATHS

I

IT was autumn. Two carriages were driving at a rapid trot along the highroad. In the foremost sat two women. One was a lady, thin and pale; the other, her maid, was plump, with shining, red cheeks. Her short, coarse hair stood out under her faded hat; her red hand, in a torn glove, kept hurriedly putting it tidy; her high bosom, covered with a tapestry kerchief, was eloquent of health; her quick, black eyes watched out of the window the fields flying past, then glanced timidly at her mistress, then shifted uneasily about the corners of the carriage. Just before the maid's nose swung the lady's hat, hanging from the rack above; on her lap lay a puppy. Her feet were kept from the floor by the boxes that stood on the carriage floor, and could be faintly heard knocking on it through the shaking of the springs and the rattling of the windows.

With her hands clasped on her knees and her eyes closed, the lady swayed feebly to and fro on the cushions that had been put at her back, and with a slight frown she coughed inwardly. On her head she wore a white nightcap, and a light blue neckerchief was tied on her soft, white neck. A straight parting, retreating under her cap, divided her fair, pomaded, exceedingly flat hair, and there was a dry, deathlike look about the whiteness of the skin of this wide parting. The faded, yellowish skin hung loose on her delicate and beautiful features, and was flushed on her cheeks. Her lips were dry and restless, her eyelashes were thin and straight, and her cloth travelling cloak fell in straight folds over her sunken bosom. Though her eyes were closed, the lady's face expressed fatigue, irritation, and habitual suffering. A footman was dozing on the box, one elbow on the rail of the seat. The driver, hired from the posting-station, shouted briskly to the four sturdy, sweating horses, and looked round now and then at the other driver, who called to him from behind on the

coach. Smoothly and rapidly the wheels made their broad, parallel tracks along the chalky mud of the road. The sky was grey and cold; a damp mist was falling over the fields and the road. The carriage was close, and smelt of eau-de-Cologne and dust. The sick woman stretched her head back and opened her eyes. Her large, handsome, dark eyes were very bright.

‘Again,’ she said, her beautiful, thin hand nervously thrusting away a corner of the maid’s cloak which was just brushing against her knees, and her mouth twitched painfully. Matryosha gathered up her cloak in both hands, lifted it up on her lap, and edged further away. Her blooming face flushed bright red. The sick woman’s fine dark eyes kept eager watch on the servant’s actions. She leaned with both hands on the seat and tried to raise herself, so as to be sitting higher up; but her strength failed her. Her mouth twitched and her whole face worked with an expression of helpless, wrathful irony. ‘You might at least help me!... Ah, you needn’t! I can do it myself, only be so good as not to lay your bundles, bags, or whatever they are behind me, please! You had better not touch me if you’re so awkward!’

The lady shut her eyes, and rapidly raising her eyelids again glanced at the maid. Matryosha was staring at her and biting her red underlip. A heavy sigh rose from the sick woman’s chest, but changed to a cough before it was uttered. She turned away, frowning, and clutched at her chest with both hands. When the cough was over, she closed her eyes again and sat without stirring. The carriage and the coach drove into a village. Matryosha put her stout arm out from under her kerchief and crossed herself.

‘What is it?’ asked the lady.

‘A station, madam.’

‘What do you cross yourself for, I ask?’

‘The church, madam.’

The sick woman turned towards the window, and began slowly crossing herself, her

great eyes fastened on the big village church as the carriage drove by it.

The two carriages stopped together at the station. The sick woman's husband and the doctor got out of the other carriage and came up to her.

'How do you feel?' asked the doctor, taking her pulse.

'Well, how are you, my dear—not tired?' asked her husband, in French. 'Wouldn't you like to get out?'

Matryosha, gathering up her bundles, squeezed into a corner so as not to be in their way as they talked.

'Just the same,' answered the lady. 'I won't get out.'

Her husband stayed a little while beside the carriage, then went into the posting-station. Matryosha got out of the carriage and ran on tiptoe through the mud to the gates.

'If I am ill, it's no reason you shouldn't have your lunch,' the invalid said with a faint smile to the doctor, who was standing at the carriage window.

'None of them care anything about me,' she added to herself, as soon as the doctor had moved with sedate step away from her and run at a trot up the steps of the station-house. 'They are all right, so they don't care. O my God!'

'Well, Edward Ivanovitch,' said her husband, meeting the doctor and rubbing his hands, with a cheery smile. 'I've ordered the case of wine to be brought in; what do you say to a bottle?'

'I shouldn't say no,' answered the doctor.

'Well, how is she?' the husband asked with a sigh, lifting his eyebrows and dropping his voice.

'I have told you she can't possibly get as far as Italy; if she reaches Moscow it will be a wonder, especially in this weather.'

'What are we to do! O my God! my God!' The husband put his hand over his eyes.

‘Put it here,’ he added to the servant who brought in the case of wine.

‘You should have kept her at home,’ the doctor answered, shrugging his shoulders.

‘But tell me, what could I do?’ protested the husband. ‘I did everything I could, you know, to keep her. I talked to her of our pecuniary position, and of the children whom we should have to leave behind, and of my business—she won’t hear a word of anything. She makes plans for her life abroad as though she were strong and well. And to tell her of her position would be her deathblow.’

‘But she has that already, you ought to know it, Vassily Dmitritch. A person can’t live with no lungs, and the lungs can’t grow again. It’s distressing and terrible, but what’s one to do? My duty and yours is simply to see that her end should be as easy as possible. It’s the priest who is needed now.’

‘O my God! But conceive my position, having to speak to her of the last sacrament. Come what will, I can’t tell her. You know how good she is.’

‘You must try, all the same, to persuade her to wait till the roads are frozen,’ said the doctor, shaking his head significantly, ‘or we may have a disaster on the road.’

‘Aksyusha, hey, Aksyusha!’ shrieked the overseer’s daughter, flinging a jacket over her head, and stamping on the dirty back steps of the station; ‘let’s go and have a look at the lady from Shirkin; they say she’s being taken abroad for her lungs. I’ve never seen what people look like in consumption.’

Aksyusha darted out at the doorway, and arm in arm they ran by the gate. Slackening their pace, they walked by the carriage, and peeped in at the lowered window. The sick woman turned her head towards them, but noticing their curiosity, she frowned and turned away.

‘My gra-a-cious!’ said the overseer’s daughter, turning her head away quickly. ‘Such a wonderful beauty as she was, and what does she look like now. Enough to frighten one, really. Did you see, did you see, Aksyusha?’

‘Yes, she is thin!’ Aksyusha assented. ‘Let’s go by and get another look at her, as though we were going to the well. She turned away before I’d seen her properly. I am sorry for her, Masha!’

‘And the mud’s awful!’ answered Masha, and both ran back to the gate.

‘I’ve grown frightful, it seems,’ thought the invalid. ‘Ah, to make haste, to make haste to get abroad, then I shall soon be better!’

‘Well, how are you, my dear?’ said her husband, still munching as he came up to the carriage.

‘Always that invariable question,’ thought the sick woman, ‘and he goes on eating too!’

‘Just the same,’ she muttered through her teeth.

‘Do you know, my dear, I’m afraid the journey will be bad for you in this weather, and Edward Ivanovitch says so too. Hadn’t we better turn back?’

She kept wrathfully silent.

‘The weather will change, and the roads perhaps will be hard, and that would make it better for you; and then we would all go together.’

‘Excuse me. If I hadn’t listened to you long ago, I should be in Berlin by now and should be quite well.’

‘That couldn’t be helped, my angel; it was out of the question, as you know! But now, if you would wait for a month, you would be ever so much better. I should have settled my business, and we could take the children.’

‘The children are quite well, and I am not.’

‘But consider, my dear, with this weather if you get worse on the road ... there, at any rate, you’re at home.’

‘And if I am at home?... To die at home?’ the sick woman answered hotly. But the word die evidently terrified her; she bent an imploring, questioning look upon her

husband. He dropped his eyes and did not speak. The sick woman's mouth puckered all at once like a child's, and tears dropped from her eyes. Her husband buried his face in his handkerchief, and walked away from the carriage without speaking.

'No. I am going,' said the sick woman, lifting her eyes towards heaven, and she fell to whispering disconnected words. 'My God, what for?' she said, and the tears flowed more freely. For a long while she prayed fervently, but there was still the same pain and tightness on her chest. It was still as grey and cheerless in the sky, and in the fields, and along the road; and the same autumn mist, neither thicker nor clearer, hung over the mud of the road, the roofs of the huts, the carriage and the sheepskins of the drivers, who were greasing and harnessing a carriage, chatting together in their vigorous, merry voices.

II

The horses were put in the shafts; but the driver lingered. He went into the drivers' hut. It was hot and stifling, dark and oppressive in the hut; there was a smell of human beings, baking bread, and cabbage, and sheepskins. There were several drivers in the room; the cook was busy at the stove; on the top of the stove lay a sick man wrapped in sheepskins.

'Uncle Fyodor! hey, Uncle Fyodor!' said the driver as he came into the room. He was a young fellow, in a sheepskin coat with a whip stuck in his belt, and he was addressing the sick man.

'What are you asking Fedya?' one of the drivers interposed. 'They are waiting for you in the carriage.'

'I want to ask him for his boots; I've worn mine into holes,' answered the young fellow, tossing back his hair and straightening the gloves in his belt. 'Is he asleep? Hey, Uncle Fyodor?' he repeated, going up to the stove.

'What?' a weak voice was heard in reply, and a thin face with a red beard bent over

from the stove. A big, wasted, white hand, covered with hair, pulled up a coat on the bony shoulder in the dirty shirt. ‘Give me a drink, brother; what do you want?’

The young man handed him a dipper of water.

‘Well, Fedya,’ he said, hesitating, ‘you won’t be wanting your new boots now; give them to me; you won’t be going out, you know.’

Pressing his weary head to the shining dipper, and wetting his scanty, hanging moustaches in the dingy water, the sick man drank feebly and eagerly. His tangled beard was not clean, his sunken, lustreless eyes were lifted with an effort to the young man’s face. When he had finished drinking he tried to lift his hand to wipe his wet lips, but he could not, and he wiped them on the sleeve of the coat. Without uttering a sound, but breathing heavily through his nose, he looked straight into the young man’s eyes, trying to rally his strength.

‘May be you’ve promised them to some one already?’ said the young man; ‘if so, never mind. The thing is, it’s soaking wet outside, and I’ve to go out on a job; and I said to myself, why, I’ll ask Fedya for his boots, he’ll not need them, for sure. If you are likely to need them yourself, say so.’

There was a gurgle and a grumble in the sick man’s throat; he bent over and was choked by a deep, stifling cough.

‘He need them!’ the cook cried out in sudden anger, filling the whole hut with her voice; ‘he’s not got off the stove these two months! Why, he coughs fit to split himself; it makes me ache inside simply to hear him. How could he want boots? He won’t wear new boots to be buried! And time he was, too, long ago—God forgive me the sin! Why, he coughs fit to split himself. He ought to be moved into another hut, or somewhere! There are hospitals, I’ve heard say, for such in the town; he takes up the whole place, and what’s one to do? One hasn’t room to turn round. And then they expect me to keep the place clean!’

‘Hi, Seryoga! go and take your seat; the gentry are waiting,’ the overseer of the

posting-station shouted at the door.

Seryoga would have gone away without waiting for an answer, but the sick man's eyes, while he was coughing, had told him he wanted to answer.

'You take the boots, Seryoga,' said he, stifling the cough and taking breath a minute. 'Only buy me a stone when I die, do you hear?' he added huskily.

'Thanks, uncle, so I'll take them; and as to the stone, ay, ay, I'll buy it.'

'There, lads, you hear?' the sick man managed to articulate, and again he bent over and began choking.

'All right, we heard,' said one of the drivers. 'Go along, Seryoga, or the overseer will be running after you again. The lady from Shirkin is ill.'

Seryoga quickly pulled off his torn and enormously too large boots, and thrust them under a locker. Uncle Fyodor's new boots fitted his feet precisely, and Seryoga went out to the carriage looking at them.

'What grand boots! let me grease them for you,' said a driver with the greasepot in his hand, as Seryoga got on the box and picked up the reins. 'Did he give them you for nothing?'

'Why, are you jealous?' answered Seryoga, getting up and shaking down the skirts of his coat about his legs. 'Hi, get up, my darlings!' he shouted to the horses, brandishing the whip, and the two carriages, with their occupants, boxes, and baggage, rolled swiftly along the wet road, and vanished into the grey autumn mist.

The sick driver remained lying on the stove in the stifling hut. Unrelieved by coughing, he turned over on the other side with an effort, and was quiet. All day till evening, men were coming and going and dining in the hut; there was no sound from the sick man. At nightfall, the cook clambered up into the stove and reached across his legs to get a sheepskin. 'Don't you be angry with me, Nastasya,' said the sick man; 'I shall soon clear out of your place.'

‘That’s all right, that’s all right; why, I didn’t mean it,’ muttered Nastasya. ‘But what is it that’s wrong with you, uncle? Tell me about it.’

‘All my inside’s wasted away. God knows what it is.’

‘My word! and does your throat hurt when you cough!’

‘It hurts me all over. My death is at hand—that’s what it is. Oh, oh, oh!’ moaned the sick man.

‘Cover your legs up like this,’ said Nastasya, pulling a coat over him as she crept off the stove.

A night-light glimmered dimly all night in the hut. Nastasya and some ten drivers lay on the floor and the lockers asleep, and snoring loudly. The sick man alone moaned faintly, coughed, and turned over on the stove. Towards morning he became quite still.

‘A queer dream I had in the night,’ said the cook, stretching next morning in the half-light. ‘I dreamed that Uncle Fyodor got down from the stove and went out to chop wood. “Nastasya,” says he, “I’ll split you some”; and I says to him, “How can you chop the wood?” and he snatched up the axe and starts chopping so fast, so fast that the chips were flying. “Why,” says I, “you were ill, weren’t you?” “No,” says he, “I’m all right,” and he swings the axe, so that it gave me quite a fright. I screamed out and waked up. Isn’t he dead, perhaps? Uncle Fyodor! Hey, uncle!’

Fyodor made no sound in reply.

‘May be he is dead. I’ll get up and see,’ said one of the drivers who was awake.

A thin hand, covered with reddish hairs, hung down from the stove; it was cold and pale.

‘I’ll go and tell the overseer. He’s dead, seemingly,’ said the driver.

Fyodor had no relations—he had come from distant parts. The next day he was buried in the new graveyard beyond the copse, and for several days after Nastasya

told every one of the dream she had had, and how she had been the first to discover that Uncle Fyodor was dead.

III

Spring had come. Streams of water hurried gurgling between the frozen dung-heaps in the wet streets of the town. The people moving to and fro were gaily dressed and gaily chattering. Behind the fences of the little gardens the buds on the trees were swelling, and their branches rustled faintly in the fresh breeze. Everywhere there was a running and a dripping of clear drops.... The sparrows chattered incoherently, and fluttered to and fro on their little wings. On the sunny side, on fences, trees, and houses, all was movement. There was youth and gladness in the sky and in the earth and in the heart of man. In one of the principal streets there was straw lying in front of a large house; in the house lay the dying woman who had been hastening abroad.

At the closed doors of her room stood the sick woman's husband and an elderly woman; on the sofa sat a priest with downcast eyes, holding something wrapped up in his stole. In a corner an old lady, the mother of the sick woman, lay in a low chair, weeping bitterly. Near her stood a maid holding a clean pocket-handkerchief in readiness for the old lady when she should ask for it. Another maid was rubbing the old lady's temples with something and blowing on her grey head under her cap.

'Well, Christ be with you, my dear,' said the husband to the elderly woman who was standing with him at the door; 'she has such confidence in you, you know so well how to talk to her; go in, and have a good talk with her.' He would have opened the door; but the cousin restrained him, put her handkerchief several times to her eyes, and shook her head.

'Come, now, I don't look as if I had been crying, I think,' she said, and opening the door herself, she went into the sick-room.

The husband was in great excitement, and seemed utterly distraught. He walked

towards the old lady, but stopped short a few paces from her, turned, walked about the room, and went up to the priest. The priest looked at him, raised his eyebrows heavenwards, and sighed. His thick, grizzled beard turned upwards too, and then sank again.

‘My God! my God!’ said the husband.

‘There is nothing one can do,’ said the priest, and again his brows and his beard were elevated and drooped again.

‘And her mother here!’ the husband said, almost in despair. ‘She will never support this! She loves her, she loves her so that she ... I don’t know. If you, father, would attempt to soothe her and to persuade her to go out of this room.’

The priest rose and went to the old lady.

‘True it is, that none can sound the depths of a mother’s heart,’ said he; ‘but God is merciful.’

The old lady’s face began suddenly twitching, and she sobbed hysterically.

‘God is merciful,’ the priest went on, when she was a little calmer. ‘In my parish, I must tell you, there was a man ill, much worse than Marya Dmitryevna, and a simple artisan cured him with herbs in a very short time. And this same artisan is in Moscow now, indeed. I told Vassily Dmitryevitch—he might try him. Any way, it would be a comfort to the sick woman. With God all things are possible.’

‘No, she can’t live,’ said the old lady; ‘if it could have been me, but God takes her.’

The sick woman’s husband hid his face in his hands, and ran out of the room.

The first person that met him in the corridor was a boy of six years old, who was running at full speed after a little girl younger than himself.

‘Shouldn’t I take the children to see their mamma?’ asked the nurse.

‘No, she doesn’t want to see them. It upsets her.’

The boy stood still for a moment, staring intently into his father’s face, then

suddenly kicking up his foot, with a merry shriek he ran on.

‘I’m pretending she’s my black horse, papa!’ shouted the boy, pointing to his sister.

Meanwhile in the next room the cousin was sitting by the sick woman’s bedside, and trying by skilfully leading up to the subject to prepare her for the idea of death. The doctor was at the other window mixing a draught.

The sick woman, in a white dressing-gown, sat propped up with pillows in bed, and gazed at the cousin without speaking.

‘Ah, my dear,’ she said, suddenly interrupting her, ‘don’t try to prepare me. Don’t treat me as a child. I am a Christian. I know all about it. I know I haven’t long to live; I know that if my husband would have listened to me sooner, I should have been in Italy, and perhaps, most likely indeed, should have been quite well. Every one told him so. But it can’t be helped, it seems that it was God’s will. We are all great sinners, I know that; but I put my trust in God’s mercy, to forgive all, surely, all. I try to understand myself. I, too, have sinned greatly, my dear. But, to make up, how I have suffered. I have tried to bear my sufferings with patience....’

‘Then may I send for the good father, my dear? You will feel all the easier after the sacrament,’ said the cousin. The sick woman bowed her head in token of assent.

‘God forgive me, a sinner!’ she murmured.

The cousin went out and beckoned to the priest.

‘She is an angel!’ she said to the husband with tears in her eyes. The husband began to weep; the priest went in at the door; the old lady was still unconscious, and in the outer room there was a complete stillness. Five minutes later the priest came out, and taking off his stole smoothed back his hair.

‘Thank God, the lady is calmer now,’ he said; ‘she wants to see you.’

The cousin and the husband went in. The sick woman was weeping quietly, gazing at the holy picture.

‘I congratulate you, my dear,’ said her husband.

‘Thank you! How happy I am now, what unspeakable joy I am feeling!’ said the sick woman, and a faint smile played about her thin lips. ‘How merciful is God! Is it not true? Is He not merciful and almighty?’ And again, with eyes full of tears she gazed at the holy picture in eager prayer.

Then suddenly something seemed to recur to her mind. She beckoned her husband to her.

‘You never will do what I ask,’ she said in a weak, irritable voice.

Her husband, craning his neck forward, listened submissively.

‘What is it, my dear?’

‘How often I’ve told you those doctors don’t know anything; there are simple healers, who work cures.... The holy father told me ... an artisan ... send for him.’

‘For whom, my dear?’

‘My God, he won’t understand anything!...’

And the sick woman frowned and covered her eyes. The doctor went up and took her hand. The pulse was growing perceptibly weaker and weaker. He made a sign to the husband. The sick woman noticed this gesture and looked round in alarm. The cousin turned away, and burst into tears.

‘Don’t cry, don’t torture yourself and me,’ said the sick woman; ‘that destroys all the calm left me.’

‘You are an angel!’ said the cousin, kissing her hand.

‘No, kiss me here, it’s only the dead who are kissed on the hand. My God! my God!’

The same evening the sick woman was a corpse, and the corpse lay in a coffin in the drawing-room of the great house. The doors of the big room were closed, and in it a deacon sat alone, reading the Psalms of David aloud in a rhythmic, nasal tone. The bright light of the wax candles in the tall silver candlesticks fell on the pale brow of

the dead woman, on the heavy, waxen hands and the stone-like folds of the shroud, that jutted up horribly at the knees and toes. The deacon read on rhythmically without taking in the meaning of his own words, and the words echoed and died away strangely in the still room. From time to time the sounds of children's voices and the tramp of their feet came from a far away room.

'"Thou unveilest Thy face, and they are confounded,"' the psalm-reader boomed; '"Thou takest from them Thy breath, they die and return to the dust from which they came. Thou breathest Thy spirit into them—they are created and renew the earth. Glory be to God now and for ever."'

The face of the dead woman was stern and solemn. Nothing stirred the pure, cold brow and the firmly set lips. She was all attention. But did she even now understand those grand words?

IV

A month later a stone monument had been raised over the dead woman's grave. But there was still no stone over the driver's grave, and there was nothing but the bright green grass over the mound, which was the only sign of a man's past existence.

'It'll be a sin in you, Seryoga,' the cook at the station said one day, 'if you don't buy a stone for Fyodor. You were always saying it was winter, but now why don't you keep your word? I was by at the time. He's come back once already to ask you for it; if you don't buy it, he'll come again and stifle you.'

'Why, did I say I wasn't going to?' answered Seryoga; 'I'll buy a stone as I said I would; I'll buy one for a silver rouble and a half. I've not forgotten, but it must be fetched, you know. As soon as I've a chance to go to the town I'll buy it.'

'You might put a cross up anyway,' put in an old driver, 'or else it's a downright shame. You're wearing the boots.'

'Where's one to get a cross? You wouldn't cut one out of a log of fire-wood?'

‘What are you talking about? You can’t hew it out of a log. You take an axe and go early in the morning into the copse; you can cut a cross there. An aspen or something you can fell. And it’ll make a fine wooden monument too. Or else you’ll have to go and stand the forest-reeve a drink of vodka. One doesn’t want to have to give him a drink for every trifle. The other day I broke a splinter-bar; I cut myself a first-rate new one, and no one said a word to me.’

In the early morning, when it was hardly light, Seryoga took his axe and went into the wood. Over all lay a chill, even-coloured veil of still-falling dew, not lighted up by the sun. The east was imperceptibly growing clearer, reflecting its faint light on the arch of sky covered with fine clouds. Not a blade of grass below, not a leaf on the topmost twig stirred. The stillness of the forest was only broken at intervals by the sound of wings in a tree or a rustle on the ground. Suddenly a strange sound, not one of nature’s own, rang out and died away on the edge of the forest. But again the sound was heard, and began to be repeated at regular intervals near the trunk of one of the motionless trees. One of the tree-tops began shaking in a strange way; its sappy leaves whispered something; and a warbler that had been perched on one of its branches fluttered round it twice, and uttering a whistle and wagging its tail, settled on another tree.

The axe gave a duller and duller ring, the sappy, white chips flew out on the dewy grass, and a faint crackling sound followed each blow. The tree shuddered all over, bowed, and quickly stood up straight again, trembling in dismay on its roots. For a moment all was still, but again the tree bent; a crack was heard in its trunk, and with a snapping of twigs its branches dropped, and it crashed down with its top on the damp earth. The sounds of the axe and of steps died away. The warbler whistled and flew up higher. The branch in which it had caught its wings shook for a little while in all its leaves, then became still like the rest. The trees displayed their motionless branches more gladly than ever in the open space. The first beams of the sun, piercing through the transparent cloud, shone out in the sky and darted over the

earth. The mist began rolling in waves into the hollows; the dew glittered sparkling on the green grass; the transparent clouds turned white, and floated in haste across the bluish sky. The birds flitted to and fro in the thickets and twittered some happy song, like mad things. The sappy leaves whispered joyously and calmly on the tree-tops, and the branches of the living trees, slowly, majestically, swayed above the fallen dead tree.

1859.

THE END

PRINTED AT THE BALLANTYNE PRESS LONDON & EDINBURGH

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTES

Simple typographical errors have been silently corrected.

Punctuation, hyphenation, and spelling were made consistent when a predominant preference was found in the original book; otherwise they were not changed.

New original cover art included with this eBook is granted to the public domain.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE DEATH OF IVAN ILYITCH, AND OTHER STORIES ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying

royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE

THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG™ LICENSE

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg electronic works provided that:

• You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60

days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.” • You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works. • You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work. • You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at

www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation's EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state's laws.

The Foundation's business office is located at 41 Watchung Plaza #516, Montclair NJ 07042, USA, +1 (862) 621-9288. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation's website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations ($1 to $5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate.

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.