



THE
POSSESSED
BY
Fyodor
Dostoyevsky

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THE
POSSESSED



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The Possessed

by FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

translated from the Russian by CONSTANCE GARNETT

with a foreword by AVRAHM YARMOLINSKY

AND A TRANSLATION OF THE HITHERTO-
SUPPRESSED CHAPTER "AT TĪHON'S"

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FOREWORD

AT a period when the question of literature as propaganda is being generally debated, and novels with social implications are coming to the fore, *The Possessed* should command special interest. Dostoyevsky's avowed intention in writing it was to drive home certain convictions of his, regardless of whether or not he met the requirements of the art of fiction. He wanted to deal a body blow to the rebels who threatened what he considered to be the foundations of Russian life. Originally he conceived his novel as a political lampoon, a pamphlet against the revolution.

In the troubled days of his youth he had dreamed of a Socialist utopia, and consorted, even plotted, with hot-heads, but imprisonment and exile, strengthening his religiosity, dampened whatever insurgent spirit there was in him. Eventually he came to believe that he had had a change of heart as a result of his contact with the masses. On his return from Siberia the ex-convict fell in with people who were ranged on the side of law and order, although, in the early Sixties, on becoming editor of a fairly influential review, he was capable of making concessions to the prevalent liberal temper. Before long, however, he adopted a definitely conservative stand and took it upon himself both as publicist and novelist to combat the radical tendencies of the day. His own creed was built upon the belief that the Christian principle of brotherly love was capable of solving all the problems of mankind. It also involved the dogma of the unique worth and messianic destiny of the Russian people and of the institutions historically evolved by them—the Orthodox Church and the autocratic régime. In some respects Dostoyevsky's emotional nationalism and racialism anticipate the Fascist philosophy of our own day. Even casual readers of his novels are aware that he tried

to make his fictions the vehicle of his beliefs and opinions. *Crime and Punishment* was written to show the failure of Nihilism, with its utilitarian, irreligious attitude, in the field of private morality. In *The Idiot*, the attempt was to body forth the validity of selfless love in the character of Prince Myshkin, the Christ-man. In *The Possessed*, Dostoyevsky decided, he would expose the danger of Nihilism to the social fabric, and avoid the indirections of the two preceding novels.

He was writing this book in the years 1870 to 1872. In those days the revolutionary movement in Russia was still in its infancy. But debate, confined to a handful of student groups, had already exploded in deeds of violence. On November 25, 1869, the body of a student of the Moscow Agricultural Academy was fished out of a pond near that institution. The young man had been a member of a revolutionary circle and was the victim of his fellow-conspirators, the crime having been perpetrated on the initiative and with the help of one, Sergey Nechayev, the leader of the organization. It was this sensational murder, while it was being retailed in the press, that Dostoyevsky, with his flair for news, seized upon for the plot of his story. Thus, *The Possessed*, like Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*, is based on an actual event. The details of the murder, as disclosed at the public trial, are closely followed, and the young Verkhovensky, the moving spirit of the revolutionary conspiracy in the novel, is modelled on Nechayev himself. Dostoyevsky did not hesitate to introduce other well-known characters not involved in the case, maliciously caricaturing Turgenev, with whom he had quarreled, in the person of Karmazinov. In one important respect he deviated from the facts as he found them in the newspaper accounts of the trial: while Nechayev was of plebeian origin, his Verkhovensky is the son of a gentleman and a Westerner, of the "beautiful-souled" type so happily portrayed by Turgenev himself in *Fathers and Sons*. Dostoyevsky hated the liberals who would Europeanize Russia, and considered them the begetters of revolution.

In the letter accompanying the presentation copy of the novel which he sent to the heir apparent, the future Alexander III, Dostoyevsky said that in his book he sought to show how the revolutionary movement was brought about by the

divorce of the educated classes from the masses, and, indeed, that it was "almost an historical study." As a matter of fact, there is nothing of the scholarly and the objective in *The Possessed*. Quite the contrary. It is a book begotten of fear and wrath. Dostoyevsky had drawn indiscriminately on his memories of the Fourierist dreamers with whom he had associated in his youth, and on more recent phases of social and political insurgency, and he freely intermingled these elements. The result was an exaggerated, distorted, anachronistic picture of gullible fools and fiends with a mania for destruction. And yet *The Possessed* testifies to the fact that Dostoyevsky was not without some insight into the nature of the upheaval from which he was separated by nearly half a century. It was to be such "an upset as the world has never seen before," a transformation ruled by a violent intransigent spirit, and going beyond mere political and economic change. In the midst of the stormy events of 1905-06, Merezhkovsky, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Dostoyevsky's death, spoke of him as "the prophet of the Russian revolution." More recently, opponents of the Bolshevik régime have seen in *The Possessed* a prophetic anticipation of the events of 1917. But if he was a prophet, he was one whose vision was clouded by horror. At bottom what he feared was that the individual, whose needs, he felt, are of a spiritual and irrational order, must be degraded in a Socialist society organized according to a reasoned scheme in the interests of the group.

Dostoyevsky did not keep to his first intention of making the revolution the sole theme of his novel. Like his other major works, *The Possessed* is a tangled skein of many threads. Not alone his political preconceptions found their way into the book, but also his anguished interest in religious and metaphysical problems: besides the account of Pyotr Verkhovensky's subversive scheme, there is the story of Stavrogin, who is the real protagonist of the tale. While the novel was still in germ, the author was revolving in his head a plan for a stupendous narrative to which he was to devote the remainder of his life. He conceived it tentatively as the biography of a man reared in depravity, intimate with sin and crime, but seeking God, and in the end redeemed by the Russian Christ. Stavrogin, and the other characters moving in his orbit, are traceable to

Stavrogin - based on N. Speshnev - member of Petrashevsky's
socialist group in which D. took part

you," but I doubt whether this renunciation, worthy of ancient Rome, was ever really uttered. On the contrary they say that he wept violently. A fortnight after he was superseded, all of them, in a "family party," went one day for a picnic to a wood outside of town to drink tea with their friends. Virginsky was in a feverishly lively mood and took part in the dances. But suddenly, without any preliminary quarrel, he seized the giant Lebyadkin with both hands, by the hair, just as the latter was dancing a *can-can* solo, pushed him down, and began dragging him along with shrieks, shouts, and tears. The giant was so panic-stricken that he did not attempt to defend himself, and hardly uttered a sound all the time he was being dragged along. But afterwards he resented it with all the heat of an honourable man. Virginsky spent a whole night on his knees begging his wife's forgiveness. But this forgiveness was not granted, as he refused to apologise to Lebyadkin; moreover, he was upbraided for the meanness of his ideas and his foolishness, the latter charge based on the fact that he knelt down in the interview with his wife. The captain soon disappeared and did not reappear in our town till quite lately, when he came with his sister, and with entirely different aims; but of him later. It was no wonder that the poor young husband sought our society and found comfort in it. But he never spoke of his home-life to us. On one occasion only, returning with me from Stepan Trofimovitch's, he made a remote allusion to his position, but clutching my hand at once he cried ardently:

"It's of no consequence. It's only a personal incident. It's no hindrance to the 'cause,' not the slightest!"

Stray guests visited our circle too; a Jew, called Lyamshin, and a Captain Kartusov came. An old gentleman of inquiring mind used to come at one time, but he died. Liputin brought an exiled Polish priest called Slontsevsky, and for a time we received him on principle, but afterwards we didn't keep it up.

IX

At one time it was reported about the town that our little circle was a hotbed of Nihilism, profligacy, and godlessness, and the rumour gained more and more strength. And yet we did

nothing but indulge in the most harmless, agreeable, typically Russian, light-hearted liberal chatter. "The higher liberalism" and the "higher liberal," that is, a liberal without any definite aim, is only possible in Russia.

Stepan Trofimovitch, like every witty man, needed a listener, and, besides that, he needed the consciousness that he was fulfilling the lofty duty of disseminating ideas. And finally he had to have some one to drink champagne with, and over the wine to exchange light-hearted views of a certain sort, about Russia and the "Russian spirit," about God in general, and the "Russian God" in particular, to repeat for the hundredth time the same Russian scandalous stories that every one knew and every one repeated. We had no distaste for the gossip of the town which often, indeed, led us to the most severe and loftily moral verdicts. We fell into generalising about humanity, made stern reflections on the future of Europe and mankind in general, authoritatively predicted that after Cæsarism France would at once sink into the position of a second-rate power, and were firmly convinced that this might terribly easily and quickly come to pass. We had long ago predicted that the Pope would play the part of a simple archbishop in a united Italy, and were firmly convinced that this thousand-year-old question had, in our age of humanitarianism, industry, and railways, become a trifling matter. But, of course, "Russian higher liberalism" could not look at the question in any other way. Stepan Trofimovitch sometimes talked of art, and very well, though rather abstractly. He sometimes spoke of the friends of his youth—all names noteworthy in the history of Russian progress. He talked of them with emotion and reverence, though sometimes with envy. If we were very much bored, the Jew, Lyamshin (a little post-office clerk), a wonderful performer on the piano, sat down to play, and in the intervals would imitate a pig, a thunderstorm, a confinement with the first cry of the baby, and so on, and so on; it was only for this that he was invited, indeed. If we had drunk a great deal—and that did happen sometimes, though not often—we flew into raptures, and even on one occasion sang the "Marseillaise" in chorus to the accompaniment of Lyamshin, though I don't know how it went off. The great day, the nineteenth of February, we welcomed enthusiastically, and for a long time be

forehand drank toasts in its honour. But that was long ago, before the advent of Shatov or Virginsky, when Stepan Trofimovitch was still living in the same house with Varvara Petrovna. For some time before the great day Stepan Trofimovitch fell into the habit of muttering to himself well-known, though rather far-fetched, lines which must have been written by some liberal landowner of the past:

*"The peasant with his axe is coming,
Something terrible will happen."*

Something of that sort, I don't remember the exact words. Varvara Petrovna overheard him on one occasion, and crying, "Nonsense, nonsense!" she went out of the room in a rage. Liputin, who happened to be present, observed malignantly to Stepan Trofimovitch:

"It'll be a pity if their former serfs really do some mischief to *messieurs les* landowners to celebrate the occasion," and he drew his forefinger round his throat.

"*Cher ami*," Stepan Trofimovitch observed, "believe me that this (he repeated the gesture) will never be of any use to our landowners nor to any of us in general. We shall never be capable of organising anything even without our heads, though our heads hinder our understanding more than anything."

I may observe that many people among us anticipated that something extraordinary, such as Liputin predicted, would take place on the day of the emancipation, and those who held this view were the so-called "authorities" on the peasantry and the government. I believe Stepan Trofimovitch shared this idea, so much so that almost on the eve of the great day he began asking Varvara Petrovna's leave to go abroad; in fact he began to be uneasy. But this great day passed, and some time passed after it, and the condescending smile reappeared on Stepan Trofimovitch's lips. In our presence he delivered himself of some noteworthy thoughts on the character of the Russian in general, and the Russian peasant in particular.

"Like hasty people we have been in too great a hurry with our peasants," he said in conclusion of a series of remarkable utterances. "We have made them the fashion, and a whole

section of writers have for several years treated them as though they were newly discovered curiosities. We have put laurel-wreaths on lousy heads. The Russian village has given us only 'Kamarinsky' in a thousand years. A remarkable Russian poet who was also something of a wit, seeing the great Rachel on the stage for the first time cried in ecstasy, 'I wouldn't exchange Rachel for a peasant!' I am prepared to go further. I would give all the peasants in Russia for one Rachel. It's high time to look things in the face more soberly, and not to mix up our national rustic pitch with *bouquet de l'Impératrice*."

Liputin agreed at once, but remarked that one had to perjure oneself and praise the peasant all the same for the sake of being progressive, that even ladies in good society shed tears reading "Poor Anton," and that some of them even wrote from Paris to their bailiffs that they were, henceforward, to treat the peasants as humanely as possible.

It happened, and as ill-luck would have it just after the rumours of the Anton Petrov affair had reached us, that there was some disturbance in our province too, only about ten miles from Skvoreshniki, so that a detachment of soldiers was sent down in a hurry.

This time Stepan Trofimovitch was so much upset that he even frightened us. He cried out at the club that more troops were needed, that they ought to be telegraphed for from another province; he rushed off to the governor to protest that he had no hand in it, begged him not to allow his name on account of old associations to be brought into it, and offered to write about his protest to the proper quarter in Petersburg. Fortunately it all passed over quickly and ended in nothing, but I was surprised at Stepan Trofimovitch at the time.

Three years later, as every one knows, people were beginning to talk of nationalism, and "public opinion" first came upon the scene. Stepan Trofimovitch laughed a great deal.

"My friends," he instructed us, "if our nationalism has 'dawned' as they keep repeating in the papers—it's still at school, at some German 'Peterschule,' sitting over a German book and repeating its everlasting German lesson, and its German teacher will make it go down on its knees when he thinks fit. I think highly of the German teacher. But nothing has happened and nothing of the kind has dawned and everything

is going on in the old way, that is, as ordained by God. To my thinking that should be enough for Russia, *pour notre Sainte Russie*. Besides, all this Slavism and nationalism is too old to be new. Nationalism, if you like, has never existed among us except as a distraction for gentlemen's clubs, and Moscow ones at that. I'm not talking of the days of Igor, of course. And besides it all comes of idleness. Everything in Russia comes of idleness, everything good and fine even. It all springs from the charming, cultured, whimsical idleness of our gentry! I'm ready to repeat it for thirty thousand years. We don't know how to live by our own labour. And as for the fuss they're making now about the 'dawn' of some sort of public opinion, has it so suddenly dropped from heaven without any warning? How is it they don't understand that before we can have an opinion of our own we must have work, our own work, our own initiative in things, our own experience. Nothing is to be gained for nothing. If we work we shall have an opinion of our own. But as we never shall work, our opinions will be formed for us by those who have hitherto done the work instead of us, that is, as always, Europe, the everlasting Germans—our teachers for the last two centuries. Moreover, Russia is too big a tangle for us to unravel alone without the Germans, and without hard work. For the last twenty years I've been sounding the alarm, and the summons to work. I've given up my life to that appeal, and in my folly I put faith in it. Now I have lost faith in it, but I sound the alarm still, and shall sound it to the tomb. I will pull at the bell-ropes until they toll for my own requiem!"

Alas! We could do nothing but assent. We applauded our teacher and with what warmth, indeed! And, after all, my friends, don't we still hear to-day, every hour, at every step, the same "charming," "clever," "liberal," old Russian nonsense?

Our teacher believed in God.

"I can't understand why they make me out an infidel here," he used to say sometimes. "I believe in God, *mais distinguons*, I believe in Him as a Being who is conscious of Himself in me only. I cannot believe as my Nastasya (the servant) or like some country gentleman who believes 'to be on the safe side,' or like our dear Shatov—but no, Shatov doesn't come into it,

Shatov believes 'on principle,' like a Moscow Slavophil. As for Christianity, for all my genuine respect for it, I'm not a Christian. I am more of an antique pagan, like the great Goethe, or like an ancient Greek. The very fact that Christianity has failed to understand woman is enough, as George Sand has so splendidly shown in one of her great novels. As for the bowings, fasting and all the rest of it, I don't understand what they have to do with me. However busy the informers may be here, I don't care to become a Jesuit. In the year 1847 Byelinsky, who was abroad, sent his famous letter to Gogol, and warmly reproached him for believing in some sort of God. *Entre nous soit dit*, I can imagine nothing more comic than the moment when Gogol (the Gogol of that period!) read that phrase, and . . . the whole letter! But dismissing the humorous aspect, and, as I am fundamentally in agreement, I point to them and say—these were men! They knew how to love their people, they knew how to suffer for them, they knew how to sacrifice everything for them, yet they knew how to differ from them when they ought, and did not filch certain ideas from them. Could Byelinsky have sought salvation in Lenten oil, or peas with radish! . . ."

But at this point Shatov interposed.

"Those men of yours never loved the people, they didn't suffer for them, and didn't sacrifice anything for them, though they may have amused themselves by imagining it!" he growled sullenly, looking down, and moving impatiently in his chair.

"They didn't love the people!" yelled Stepan Trofimovitch. "Oh, how they loved Russia!"

"Neither Russia nor the people!" Shatov yelled too, with flashing eyes. "You can't love what you don't know and they had no conception of the Russian people. All of them peered at the Russian people through their fingers, and you do too; Byelinsky especially: from that very letter to Gogol one can see it. Byelinsky, like the Inquisitive Man in Krylov's fable, did not notice the elephant in the museum of curiosities, but concentrated his whole attention on the French Socialist beetles; he did not get beyond them. And yet perhaps he was cleverer than any of you. You've not only overlooked the people, you've taken up an attitude of disgusting contempt for them, if only

because you could not imagine any but the French people, the Parisians indeed, and were ashamed that the Russians were not like them. That's the naked truth. And he who has no people has no God. You may be sure that all who cease to understand their own people and lose their connection with them at once lose to the same extent the faith of their fathers, and become atheistic or indifferent. I'm speaking the truth! This is a fact which will be realised. That's why all of you and all of us now are either beastly atheists or careless, dissolute imbeciles, and nothing more. And you too, Stepan Trofimovitch, I don't make an exception of you at all! In fact, it is on your account I am speaking, let me tell you that!"

As a rule, after uttering such monologues (which happened to him pretty frequently) Shatov snatched up his cap and rushed to the door, in the full conviction that everything was now over, and that he had cut short all friendly relations with Stepan Trofimovitch for ever. But the latter always succeeded in stopping him in time.

"Hadh't we better make it up, Shatov, after all these endearments," he would say, benignly holding out his hand to him from his arm-chair.

Shatov, clumsy and bashful, disliked sentimentality. Externally he was rough, but inwardly, I believe, he had great delicacy. Although he often went too far, he was the first to suffer for it. Muttering something between his teeth in response to Stepan Trofimovitch's appeal, and shuffling with his feet like a bear, he gave a sudden and unexpected smile, put down his cap, and sat down in the same chair as before, with his eyes stubbornly fixed on the ground. Wine was, of course, brought in, and Stepan Trofimovitch proposed some suitable toast, for instance the memory of some leading man of the past.

CHAPTER II

PRINCE HARRY. MATCHMAKING

I

THERE was another being in the world to whom Varvara Petrovna was as much attached as she was to Stepan Trofimovitch, her only son, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch Stavrogin. It was to undertake his education that Stepan Trofimovitch had been engaged. The boy was at that time eight years old, and his frivolous father, General Stavrogin, was already living apart from Varvara Petrovna, so that the child grew up entirely in his mother's care. To do Stepan Trofimovitch justice, he knew how to win his pupil's heart. The whole secret of this lay in the fact that he was a child himself. I was not there in those days, and he continually felt the want of a real friend. He did not hesitate to make a friend of this little creature as soon as he had grown a little older. It somehow came to pass quite naturally that there seemed to be no discrepancy of age between them. More than once he awaked his ten- or eleven-year-old friend at night, simply to pour out his wounded feelings and weep before him, or to tell him some family secret, without realising that this was an outrageous proceeding. They threw themselves into each other's arms and wept. The boy knew that his mother loved him very much, but I doubt whether he cared much for her. She talked little to him and did not often interfere with him, but he was always morbidly conscious of her intent, searching eyes fixed upon him. Yet the mother confided his whole instruction and moral education to Stepan Trofimovitch. At that time her faith in him was unshaken. One can't help believing that the tutor had rather a bad influence on his pupil's nerves. When at sixteen

tance, allowing him to take lodgings in another house (a change for which he had long been worrying her under various pretexts). Little by little Stepan Trofimovitch began to call her a prosaic woman, or more jestingly, "My prosaic friend." I need hardly say he only ventured on such jests in an extremely respectful form, and on rare, and carefully chosen, occasions.

All of us in her intimate circle felt—Stepan Trofimovitch more acutely than any of us—that her son had come to her almost, as it were, as a new hope, and even as a sort of new aspiration. Her passion for her son dated from the time of his successes in Petersburg society, and grew more intense from the moment that he was degraded in the army. Yet she was evidently afraid of him, and seemed like a slave in his presence. It could be seen that she was afraid of something vague and mysterious which she could not have put into words, and she often stole searching glances at "Nicolas," scrutinising him reflectively . . . and behold—the wild beast suddenly showed his claws.

II

Suddenly, apropos of nothing, our prince was guilty of incredible outrages upon various persons and, what was most striking, these outrages were utterly unheard of, quite inconceivable, unlike anything commonly done, utterly silly and mischievous, quite unprovoked and objectless. One of the most respected of our club members, on our committee of management, Pyotr Pavlovitch Gaganov, an elderly man of high rank in the service, had formed the innocent habit of declaring vehemently on all sorts of occasions: "No, you can't lead me by the nose!" Well, there is no harm in that. But one day at the club, when he brought out this phrase in connection with some heated discussion in the midst of a little group of members (all persons of some consequence) Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, who was standing on one side, alone and unnoticed, suddenly went up to Pyotr Pavlovitch, took him unexpectedly and firmly with two fingers by the nose, and succeeded in leading him two or three steps across the room. He could have had no grudge against Mr. Gaganov. It might be thought to be a

mere schoolboy prank, though, of course, a most unpardonable one. Yet, describing it afterwards, people said that he looked almost dreamy at the very instant of the operation, "as though he had gone out of his mind," but that was recalled and reflected upon long afterwards. In the excitement of the moment all they recalled was the minute after, when he certainly saw it all as it really was, and far from being confused smiled gaily and maliciously "without the slightest regret." There was a terrific outcry; he was surrounded. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch kept turning round, looking about him, answering nobody, and glancing curiously at the persons exclaiming around him. At last he seemed suddenly, as it were, to sink into thought again—so at least it was reported—frowned, went firmly up to the affronted Pyotr Pavlovitch, and with evident vexation said in a rapid mutter:

"You must forgive me, of course . . . I really don't know what suddenly came over me . . . it's silly."

The carelessness of his apology was almost equivalent to a fresh insult. The outcry was greater than ever. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch shrugged his shoulders and went away.

All this was very stupid, to say nothing of its gross indecency—a calculated and premeditated indecency as it seemed at first sight—and therefore a premeditated and utterly brutal insult to our whole society. So it was taken to be by every one. We began by promptly and unanimously striking young Stavrogin's name off the list of club members. Then it was decided to send an appeal in the name of the whole club to the governor, begging him at once (without waiting for the case to be formally tried in court) to use "the administrative power entrusted to him" to restrain this dangerous ruffian, "this duelling bully from the capital, and so protect the tranquillity of all the gentry of our town from injurious encroachments." It was added with angry resentment that "a law might be found to control even Mr. Stavrogin." This phrase was prepared by way of a thrust at the governor on account of Varvara Petrovna. They elaborated it with relish. As ill luck would have it, the governor was not in the town at the time. He had gone to a little distance to stand godfather to the child of a very charming lady, recently left a widow in an interesting condition. But it was known that he would soon be back. In

the meanwhile they got up a regular ovation for the respected and insulted gentleman; people embraced and kissed him; the whole town called upon him. It was even proposed to give a subscription dinner in his honour, and they only gave up the idea at his earnest request—reflecting possibly at last that the man had, after all, been pulled by the nose and that that was really nothing to congratulate him upon.

Yet, how had it happened? How could it have happened? It is remarkable that no one in the whole town put down this savage act to madness. They must have been predisposed to expect such actions from Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, even when he was sane. For my part I don't know to this day how to explain it, in spite of the event that quickly followed and apparently explained everything, and conciliated every one. I will add also that, four years later, in reply to a discreet question from me about the incident at the club, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch answered, frowning: "I wasn't quite well at the time." But there is no need to anticipate events.

The general outburst of hatred with which every one fell upon the "ruffian and duelling bully from the capital" also struck me as curious. They insisted on seeing an insolent design and deliberate intention to insult our whole society at once. The truth was no one liked the fellow, but, on the contrary, he had set every one against him—and one wonders how. Up to the last incident he had never quarrelled with anyone, nor insulted anyone, but was as courteous as a gentleman in a fashion-plate, if only the latter were able to speak. I imagine that he was hated for his pride. Even our ladies, who had begun by adoring him, railed against him now, more loudly than the men.

Varvara Petrovna was dreadfully overwhelmed. She confessed afterwards to Stepan Trofimovitch that she had had a foreboding of all this long before, that every day for the last six months she had been expecting "just something of that sort," a remarkable admission on the part of his own mother. "It's begun!" she thought to herself with a shudder. The morning after the incident at the club she cautiously but firmly approached the subject with her son, but the poor woman was trembling all over in spite of her firmness. She had not

slept all night and even went out early to Stepan Trofimovitch's lodgings to ask his advice, and shed tears there, a thing she had never been known to do before anyone. She longed for "Nicolas" to say something to her, to deign to give some explanation. Nikolay, who was always so polite and respectful to his mother, listened to her for some time scowling, but very seriously. He suddenly got up without saying a word, kissed her hand and went away. That very evening, as though by design, he perpetrated another scandal. It was of a more harmless and ordinary character than the first. Yet, owing to the state of the public mind, it increased the outcry in the town.

Our friend Liputin turned up and called on Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch immediately after the latter's interview with his mother, and earnestly begged for the honour of his company at a little party he was giving for his wife's birthday that evening. Varvara Petrovna had long watched with a pang at her heart her son's taste for such low company, but she had not dared to speak of it to him. He had made several acquaintances besides Liputin in the third rank of our society, and even in lower depths—he had a propensity for making such friends. He had never been in Liputin's house before, though he had met the man himself. He guessed that Liputin's invitation now was the consequence of the previous day's scandal, and that as a local liberal he was delighted at the scandal, genuinely believing that that was the proper way to treat stewards at the club, and that it was very well done. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch smiled and promised to come.

A great number of guests had assembled. The company was not very presentable, but very sprightly. Liputin, vain and envious, only entertained visitors twice a year, but on those occasions he did it without stint. The most honoured of the invited guests, Stepan Trofimovitch, was prevented by illness from being present. Tea was handed, and there were refreshments and vodka in plenty. Cards were played at three tables, and while waiting for supper the young people got up a dance. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch led out Madame Liputin—a very pretty little woman who was dreadfully shy of him—took two turns round the room with her, sat down beside her, drew her into conversation and made her laugh. Noticing at last how

pretty she was when she laughed, he suddenly, before all the company, seized her round the waist and kissed her on the lips two or three times with great relish. The poor frightened lady fainted. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch took his hat and went up to the husband, who stood petrified in the middle of the general excitement. Looking at him he, too, became confused and muttering hurriedly "Don't be angry," went away. Liputin ran after him in the entry, gave him his fur-coat with his own hands, and saw him down the stairs, bowing. But next day a rather amusing sequel followed this comparatively harmless prank—a sequel from which Liputin gained some credit, and of which he took the fullest possible advantage.

At ten o'clock in the morning Liputin's servant Agafya, an easy-mannered, lively, rosy-cheeked peasant woman of thirty, made her appearance at Stavrogin's house, with a message for Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. She insisted on seeing "his honour himself." He had a very bad headache, but he went out. Varvara Petrovna succeeded in being present when the message was given.

"Sergay Vassilyevitch" (Liputin's name), Agafya rattled off briskly, "bade me first of all give you his respectful greetings and ask after your health, what sort of night your honour spent after yesterday's doings, and how your honour feels now after yesterday's doings?"

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch smiled.

"Give him my greetings and thank him, and tell your master from me, Agafya, that he's the most sensible man in the town."

"And he told me to answer that," Agafya caught him up still more briskly, "that he knows that without your telling him, and wishes you the same."

"Really! But how could he tell what I should say to you?"

"I can't say in what way he could tell, but when I had set off and had gone right down the street, I heard something, and there he was, running after me without his cap. 'I say, Agafya, if by any chance he says to you, 'Tell your master that he has more sense than all the town,' you tell him at once, don't forget, 'The master himself knows that very well, and wishes you the same.'"

III

At last the interview with the governor took place too. Our dear, mild, Ivan Ossipovitch had only just returned and only just had time to hear the angry complaint from the club. There was no doubt that something must be done, but he was troubled. The hospitable old man seemed also rather afraid of his young kinsman. He made up his mind, however, to induce him to apologise to the club and to his victim in satisfactory form, and, if required, by letter, and then to persuade him to leave us for a time, travelling, for instance, to improve his mind, in Italy, or in fact anywhere abroad. In the waiting-room in which on this occasion he received Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch (who had been at other times privileged as a relation to wander all over the house unchecked), Alyosha Telyatnikov, a clerk of refined manners, who was also a member of the governor's household, was sitting in a corner opening envelopes at a table, and in the next room, at the window nearest to the door, a stout and sturdy colonel, a former friend and colleague of the governor, was sitting alone reading the *Golos*, paying no attention, of course, to what was taking place in the waiting-room; in fact, he had his back turned. Ivan Ossipovitch approached the subject in a roundabout way, almost in a whisper, but kept getting a little muddled. Nikolay looked anything but cordial, not at all as a relation should. He was pale and sat looking down and continually moving his eyebrows as though trying to control acute pain.

"You have a kind heart and a generous one, Nicolas," the old man put in among other things, "you're a man of great culture, you've grown up in the highest circles, and here too your behaviour has hitherto been a model, which has been a great consolation to your mother, who is so precious to all of us. . . . And now again everything has appeared in such an unaccountable light, so detrimental to all! I speak as a friend of your family, as an old man who loves you sincerely and a relation, at whose words you cannot take offence. . . . Tell me, what drives you to such reckless proceedings so contrary

to all accepted rules and habits? What can be the meaning of such acts which seem almost like outbreaks of delirium?"

Nikolay listened with vexation and impatience. All at once there was a gleam of something sly and mocking in his eyes.

"I'll tell you what drives me to it," he said sullenly, and looking around him he bent down to Ivan Ossipovitch's ear. The refined Alyosha Telyatnikov moved three steps farther away towards the window, and the colonel coughed over the *Golos*. Poor Ivan Ossipovitch hurriedly and trustfully inclined his ear; he was exceedingly curious. And then something utterly incredible, though on the other side only too unmistakable, took place. The old man suddenly felt that, instead of telling him some interesting secret, Nikolay had seized the upper part of his ear between his teeth and was nipping it rather hard. He shuddered, and breath failed him.

"Nicolas, this is beyond a joke!" he moaned mechanically in a voice not his own.

Alyosha and the colonel had not yet grasped the situation, besides they couldn't see, and fancied up to the end that the two were whispering together; and yet the old man's desperate face alarmed them. They looked at one another with wide-open eyes, not knowing whether to rush to his assistance as agreed or to wait. Nikolay noticed this perhaps, and bit the harder.

"Nicolas! Nicolas!" his victim moaned again, "come . . . you've had your joke, that's enough!"

In another moment the poor governor would certainly have died of terror; but the monster had mercy on him, and let go his ear. The old man's deadly terror lasted for a full minute, and it was followed by a sort of fit. Within half an hour Nikolay was arrested and removed for the time to the guard-room, where he was confined in a special cell, with a special sentinel at the door. This decision was a harsh one, but our mild governor was so angry that he was prepared to take the responsibility even if he had to face Varvara Petrovna. To the general amazement, when this lady arrived at the governor's in haste and in nervous irritation to discuss the matter with him at once, she was refused admittance, whereupon, without getting out of the carriage, she returned home, unable to believe her senses.

And at last everything was explained! At two o'clock in the

morning the prisoner, who had till then been calm and had even slept, suddenly became noisy, began furiously beating on the door with his fists, with unnatural strength wrenched the iron grating off the door, broke the window, and cut his hands all over. When the officer on duty ran with a detachment of men and the keys and ordered the cell to be opened that they might rush in and bind the maniac, it appeared that he was suffering from acute brain fever. He was taken home to his mother.

Everything was explained at once. All our three doctors gave it as their opinion that the patient might well have been in a delirious state for three days before, and that though he might have apparently been in possession of full consciousness and cunning, yet he might have been deprived of common sense and will, which was indeed borne out by the facts. So it turned out that Liputin had guessed the truth sooner than any one. Ivan Ossipovitch, who was a man of delicacy and feeling, was completely abashed. But what was striking was that he, too, had considered Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch capable of any mad action even when in the full possession of his faculties. At the club, too, people were ashamed and wondered how it was they had failed to "see the elephant" and had missed the only explanation of all these marvels: there were, of course, sceptics among them, but they could not long maintain their position.

Nikolay was in bed for more than two months. A famous doctor was summoned from Moscow for a consultation; the whole town called on Varvara Petrovna. She forgave them. When in the spring Nikolay had completely recovered and assented without discussion to his mother's proposal that he should go for a tour to Italy, she begged him further to pay visits of farewell to all the neighbours, and so far as possible to apologise where necessary. Nikolay agreed with great alacrity. It became known at the club that he had had a most delicate explanation with Pyotr Pavlovitch Gaganov, at the house of the latter, who had been completely satisfied with his apology. As he went round to pay these calls Nikolay was very grave and even gloomy. Every one appeared to receive him sympathetically, but everybody seemed embarrassed and glad that he was going to Italy. Ivan Ossipovitch was positively tearful, but was, for some reason, unable to bring himself to

embrace him, even at the final leave-taking. It is true that some of us retained the conviction that the scamp had simply been making fun of us, and that the illness was neither here nor there. He went to see Liputin too.

"Tell me," he said, "how could you guess beforehand what I should say about your sense and prime Agafya with an answer to it?"

"Why," laughed Liputin, "it was because I recognised that you were a clever man, and so I foresaw what your answer would be."

"Anyway, it was a remarkable coincidence. But, excuse me, did you consider me a sensible man and not insane when you sent Agafya?"

"For the cleverest and most rational, and I only pretended to believe that you were insane. . . . And you guessed at once what was in my mind, and sent a testimonial to my wit through Agafya."

"Well, there you're a little mistaken. I really was . . . unwell . . ." muttered Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, frowning. "Bah!" he cried, "do you suppose I'm capable of attacking people when I'm in my senses? What object would there be in it?"

Liputin shrank together and didn't know what to answer. Nikolay turned pale or, at least, so it seemed to Liputin.

"You have a very peculiar way of looking at things, anyhow," Nikolay went on, "but as for Agafya, I understand, of course, that you simply sent her to be rude to me."

"I couldn't challenge you to a duel, could I?"

"Oh, no, of course! I seem to have heard that you're not fond of duels. . . ."

"Why borrow from the French?" said Liputin, doubling up again.

"You're for nationalism, then?"

Liputin shrank into himself more than ever.

"Bah, bah! What do I see?" cried Nicolas, noticing a volume of *Considérant* in the most conspicuous place on the table. "You don't mean to say you're a Fourierist! I'm afraid you must be! And isn't this too borrowing from the French?" he laughed, tapping the book with his finger.

"No, that's not taken from the French," Liputin cried with

positive fury, jumping up from his chair. "That is taken from the universal language of humanity, not simply from the French. From the language of the universal social republic and harmony of mankind, let me tell you! Not simply from the French!"

"Foo! hang it all! There's no such language!" laughed Nikolay.

Sometimes a trifle will catch the attention and exclusively absorb it for a time. Most of what I have to tell of young Stavrogin will come later. But I will note now as a curious fact that of all the impressions made on him by his stay in our town, the one most sharply imprinted on his memory was the unsightly and almost abject figure of the little provincial official, the coarse and jealous family despot, the miserly money-lender who picked up the candle-ends and scraps left from dinner, and was at the same time a passionate believer in some visionary future "social harmony," who at night gloated in ecstasies over fantastic pictures of a future phalanstery, in the approaching realisation of which, in Russia, and in our province, he believed as firmly as in his own existence. And that in the very place where he had saved up to buy himself a "little home," where he had married for the second time, getting a dowry with his bride, where perhaps, for a hundred miles round there was not one man, himself included, who was the very least like a future member "of the universal human republic and social harmony."

"God knows how these people come to exist" Nikolay wondered, recalling sometimes the unlooked-for Fourierist.

IV

Our prince travelled for over three years, so that he was almost forgotten in the town. We learned from Stepan Trofimovitch that he had travelled all over Europe, that he had even been in Egypt and had visited Jerusalem, and then had joined some scientific expedition to Iceland, and he actually did go to Iceland. It was reported too that he had spent one winter attending lectures in a German university. He did not write often to his mother, twice a year, or even less, but Varvart

(Turgenev.)
58

THE POSSESSED

"Karmazinov, the novelist?"

"Yes, the writer. Why does it surprise you? Of course he considers himself a great man. Stuck-up creature! She's coming here with him. Now she's making a fuss of him out there. She's got a notion of setting up a sort of literary society here. He's coming for a month, he wants to sell his last piece of property here. I very nearly met him in Switzerland, and was very anxious not to. Though I hope he will deign to recognize me. He wrote letters to me in the old days, he has been in my house. I should like you to dress better, Stepan Trofimovitch; you're growing more slovenly every day. . . . Oh, how you torment me! What are you reading now?"

" . . . I . . . "

"I understand. The same as ever, friends and drinking, the club and cards, and the reputation of an atheist. I don't like that reputation, Stepan Trofimovitch; I don't care for you to be called an atheist, particularly now. I didn't care for it in old days, for it's all nothing but empty chatter. It must be said at last."

"Mais, ma chère . . . "

"Listen, Stepan Trofimovitch, of course I'm ignorant compared with you on all learned subjects, but as I was travelling here I thought a great deal about you. I've come to one conclusion."

"What conclusion?"

"That you and I are not the wisest people in the world, but that there are people wiser than we are."

"Witty and apt. If there are people wiser than we are, then there are people more right than we are, and we may be mistaken, you mean? Mais, ma bonne amie, granted that I may make a mistake, yet have I not the common, human, eternal, supreme right of freedom of conscience? I have the right not to be bigoted or superstitious if I don't wish to, and for that I shall naturally be hated by certain persons to the end of time. Et puis, comme on trouve toujours plus de moines que de raison, and as I thoroughly agree with that . . . "

"What, what did you say?"

"I said, on trouve toujours plus de moines que de raison, and as I thoroughly . . . "

PRINCE HARRY. MATCHMAKING

59

"I'm sure that's not your saying. You must have taken it from somewhere."

"It was Pascal said that."

"Just as I thought . . . it's not your own. Why don't you ever say anything like that yourself, so shortly and to the point, instead of dragging things out to such a length? That's much better than what you said just now about administrative ardour. . . . "

"Ma foi, chère . . . why? In the first place probably because I'm not a Pascal after all, et puis . . . secondly, we Russians never can say anything in our own language. . . . We never have said anything hitherto, at any rate. . . . "

"H'm! That's not true, perhaps. Anyway, you'd better make a note of such phrases, and remember them, you know, in case you have to talk. . . . Ach, Stepan Trofimovitch. I have come to talk to you seriously, quite seriously."

"Chère, chère amie!"

"Now that all these Von Lembkes and Karmazinovs . . . Oh, my goodness, how you have deteriorated! . . . Oh, my goodness, how you do torment me! . . . I should have liked these people to feel a respect for you, for they're not worth your little finger—but the way you behave! . . . What will they see? What shall I have to show them? Instead of nobly standing as an example, keeping up the tradition of the past, you surround yourself with a wretched rabble, you have picked up impossible habits, you've grown feeble, you can't do without wine and cards, you read nothing but Paul de Kock, and write nothing, while all of them write; all your time's wasted in gossip. How can you bring yourself to be friends with a wretched creature like your inseparable Liputin?"

"Why is he mine and inseparable?" Stepan Trofimovitch protested timidly.

"Where is he now?" Varvara Petrovna went on, sharply and sternly.

"He . . . he has an infinite respect for you, and he's gone to S—k, to receive an inheritance left him by his mother."

"He seems to do nothing but get money. And how's Shatov? Is he just the same?"

"Irascible, mais bon."

come of you, even if you have money? You'll be deceived and robbed of your money, you'll be lost in fact. But married to him you're the wife of a distinguished man. Look at him on the other hand. Though I've provided for him, if I die what will become of him? But I could trust him to you. Stay, I've not finished. He's frivolous, shilly-shally, cruel, egoistic, he has low habits. But mind you think highly of him, in the first place because there are many worse. I don't want to get you off my hands by marrying you to a rascal, you don't imagine anything of that sort, do you? And, above all, because I ask you, you'll think highly of him." She broke off suddenly and irritably. "Do you hear? Why won't you say something?"

Dasha still listened and did not speak.

"Stay, wait a little. He's an old woman, but you know, that's all the better for you. Besides, he's a pathetic old woman. He doesn't deserve to be loved by a woman at all, but he deserves to be loved for his helplessness, and you must love him for his helplessness. You understand me, don't you? Do you understand me?"

Dasha nodded her head affirmatively.

"I knew you would. I expected as much of you. He will love you because he ought, he ought; he ought to adore you." Varvara Petrovna almost shrieked with peculiar exasperation. "Besides, he will be in love with you without any ought about it. I know him. And another thing, I shall always be here. You may be sure I shall always be here. He will complain of you, he'll begin to say things against you behind your back, he'll whisper things against you to any stray person he meets, he'll be for ever whining and whining; he'll write you letters from one room to another, two a day, but he won't be able to get on without you all the same, and that's the chief thing. Make him obey you. If you can't make him you'll be a fool. He'll want to hang himself and threaten to—don't you believe it. It's nothing but nonsense. Don't believe it; but still keep a sharp look-out, you never can tell, and one day he may hang himself. It does happen with people like that. It's not through strength of will but through weakness that people hang themselves, and so never drive him to an extreme, that's the first rule in married life. Remember, too, that he's a poet. Listen, Dasha, there's no greater happiness than self-sacrifice. And be-

sides, you'll be giving me great satisfaction and that's the chief thing. Don't think I've been talking nonsense. I understand what I'm saying. I'm an egoist, you be an egoist, too. Of course I'm not forcing you. It's entirely for you to decide. As you say, so it shall be. Well, what's the good of sitting like this. Speak!"

"I don't mind, Varvara Petrovna, if I really must be married," said Dasha firmly.

"Must? What are you hinting at?" Varvara Petrovna looked sternly and intently at her.

Dasha was silent, picking at her embroidery canvas with her needle.

"Though you're a clever girl, you're talking nonsense; though it is true that I have certainly set my heart on marrying you, yet it's not because it's necessary, but simply because the idea has occurred to me, and only to Stepan Trofimovitch. If it had not been for Stepan Trofimovitch, I should not have thought of marrying you yet, though you are twenty. . . . Well?"

"I'll do as you wish, Varvara Petrovna."

"Then you consent! Stay, be quiet. Why are you in such a hurry? I haven't finished. In my will I've left you fifteen thousand roubles. I'll give you that at once, on your wedding-day. You will give eight thousand of it to him; that is, not to him but to me. He has a debt of eight thousand. I'll pay it, but he must know that it is done with your money. You'll have seven thousand left in your hands. Never let him touch a farthing of it. Don't pay his debts ever. If once you pay them, you'll never be free of them. Besides, I shall always be here. You shall have twelve hundred roubles a year from me, with extras, fifteen hundred, besides board and lodging, which shall be at my expense, just as he has it now. Only you must set up your own servants. Your yearly allowance shall be paid to you all at once straight into your hands. But be kind, and sometimes give him something, and let his friends come to see him once a week, but if they come more often, turn them out. But I shall be here, too. And if I die, your pension will go on till his death, do you hear, till *his* death, for it's his pension, not yours. And besides the seven thousand you'll have now, which you ought to keep untouched if you're not foolish, I'll

was much pleased with her answers, and ended by offering to give her a serious and comprehensive course of lessons on the history of Russian literature. Varvara Petrovna approved, and thanked him for his excellent idea, and Dasha was delighted. Stepan Trofimovitch proceeded to make special preparations for the lectures, and at last they began. They began with the most ancient period. The first lecture went off enchantingly. Varvara Petrovna was present. When Stepan Trofimovitch had finished, and as he was going informed his pupil that the next time he would deal with "The Story of the Expedition of Igor," Varvara Petrovna suddenly got up and announced that there would be no more lessons. Stepan Trofimovitch winced, but said nothing, and Dasha flushed crimson. It put a stop to the scheme, however. This had happened just three years before Varvara Petrovna's unexpected fancy.

Poor Stepan Trofimovitch was sitting alone free from all misgivings. Plunged in mournful reveries he had for some time been looking out of the window to see whether any of his friends were coming. But nobody would come. It was drizzling. It was turning cold, he would have to have the stove heated. He sighed. Suddenly a terrible apparition flashed upon his eyes: Varvara Petrovna in such weather and at such an unexpected hour to see him! And on foot! He was so astounded that he forgot to put on his coat, and received her as he was, in his everlasting pink-wadded dressing-jacket.

"*Ma bonne amie!*" he cried faintly, to greet her.

"You're alone; I'm glad; I can't endure your friends. How you do smoke! Heavens, what an atmosphere! You haven't finished your morning tea and it's nearly twelve o'clock. It's your idea of bliss—disorder! You take pleasure in dirt. What's that torn paper on the floor? Nastasya, Nastasya! What is your Nastasya about? Open the window, the casement, the doors, fling everything wide open. And we'll go into the drawing-room. I've come to you on a matter of importance. And you sweep up, my good woman, for once in your life."

"They make such a muck!" Nastasya whined in a voice of plaintive exasperation.

"Well, you must sweep, sweep it up fifteen times a day! You've a wretched drawing-room" (when they had gone into the drawing-room). "Shut the door properly. She'll be listen-

ing. You must have it repapered. Didn't I send a paperhanger to you with patterns? Why didn't you choose one? Sit down, and listen. Do sit down, I beg you. Where are you off to? Where are you off to? Where are you off to? Where are you off to?"

"I'll be back directly," Stepan Trofimovitch cried from the next room. "Here, I am again."

"Ah, you've changed your coat." She scanned him mockingly. (He had flung his coat on over the dressing-jacket.) "Well, certainly that's more suited to our subject. Do sit down, I entreat you."

She told him everything at once, abruptly and impressively. She hinted at the eight thousand of which he stood in such terrible need. She told him in detail of the dowry. Stepan Trofimovitch sat trembling, opening his eyes wider and wider. He heard it all, but he could not realise it clearly. He tried to speak, but his voice kept breaking. All he knew was that everything would be as she said, that to protest and refuse to agree would be useless, and that he was a married man irrevocably.

"*Mais, ma bonne amie!* . . . for the third time, and at my age . . . and to such a child." He brought out at last, "*Mais, c'est une enfant!*"

"A child who is twenty years old, thank God. Please don't roll your eyes, I entreat you, you're not on the stage. You're very clever and learned, but you know nothing at all about life. You will always want a nurse to look after you. I shall die, and what will become of you? She will be a good nurse to you; she's a modest girl, strong-willed, reasonable; besides, I shall be here too, I shan't die directly. She's fond of home, she's an angel of gentleness. This happy thought came to me in Switzerland. Do you understand if I tell you myself that she is an angel of gentleness!" she screamed with sudden fury. "Your house is dirty, she will bring in order, cleanliness. Everything will shine like a mirror. Good gracious, do you expect me to go on my knees to you with such a treasure, to enumerate all the advantages, to court you! Why, you ought to be on your knees. . . . Oh, you shallow, shallow, faint-hearted man!"

"But . . . I'm an old man!"

"What do your fifty-three years matter! Fifty is the middle

of life, not the end of it. You are a handsome man and you know it yourself. You know, too, what a respect she has for you. If I die, what will become of her? But married to you she'll be at peace, and I shall be at peace. You have renown, a name, a loving heart. You receive a pension which I look upon as an obligation. You will save her perhaps, you will save her! In any case you will be doing her an honour. You will form her for life, you will develop her heart, you will direct her ideas. How many people come to grief nowadays because their ideas are wrongly directed. By that time your book will be ready, and you will at once set people talking about you again."

"I am, in fact," he muttered, at once flattered by Varvara Petrovna's adroit insinuations. "I was just preparing to sit down to my 'Tales from Spanish History.'"

"Well, there you are. It's just come right."

"But . . . she? Have you spoken to her?"

"Don't worry about her. And there's no need for you to be inquisitive. Of course, you must ask her yourself, entreat her to do you the honour, you understand? But don't be uneasy. I shall be here. Besides, you love her."

Stepan Trofimovitch felt giddy. The walls were going round. There was one terrible idea underlying this to which he could not reconcile himself.

"*Excellente amie*," his voice quivered suddenly. "I could never have conceived that you would make up your mind to give me in marriage to another . . . woman."

"You're not a girl, Stepan Trofimovitch. Only girls are given in marriage. You are taking a wife," Varvara Petrovna hissed malignantly.

"*Oui, j'ai pris un mot pour un autre. Mais c'est égal.*" He gazed at her with a hopeless air.

"I see that *c'est égal*," she muttered contemptuously through her teeth. "Good heavens! Why he's going to faint. Nastasya, Nastasya, water!"

But water was not needed. He came to himself. Varvara Petrovna took up her umbrella.

"I see it's no use talking to you now. . . ."

"*Oui, oui, je suis incapable.*"

"But by to-morrow you'll have rested and thought it over.

Stay at home. If anything happens let me know, even if it's at night. Don't write letters, I shan't read them. To-morrow I'll come again at this time alone, for a final answer, and I trust it will be satisfactory. Try to have nobody here and no untidiness, for the place isn't fit to be seen. Nastasya, Nastasya!"

The next day, of course, he consented, and, indeed, he could do nothing else. There was one circumstance . . .

VIII

Stepan Trofimovitch's estate, as we used to call it (which consisted of fifty souls, reckoning in the old fashion, and bordered on Skvoreshniki), was not really his at all, but his first wife's, and so belonged now to his son Pyotr Stepanovitch Verhovensky. Stepan Trofimovitch was simply his trustee, and so, when the nestling was full-fledged, he had given his father a formal authorisation to manage the estate. This transaction was a profitable one for the young man. He received as much as a thousand roubles a year by way of revenue from the estate, though under the new régime it could not have yielded more than five hundred, and possibly not that. God knows how such an arrangement had arisen. The whole sum, however, was sent the young man by Varvara Petrovna, and Stepan Trofimovitch had nothing to do with a single rouble of it. On the other hand, the whole revenue from the land remained in his pocket, and he had, besides, completely ruined the estate, letting it to a mercenary rogue and without the knowledge of Varvara Petrovna selling the timber which gave the estate its chief value. He had some time before sold the woods bit by bit. It was worth at least eight thousand, yet he had only received five thousand for it. But he sometimes lost too much at the club, and was afraid to ask Varvara Petrovna for the money. She clenched her teeth when she heard at last of everything. And now, all at once, his son announced that he was coming himself to sell his property for what he could get for it, and commissioned his father to take steps promptly to arrange the sale. It was clear that Stepan Trofimovitch, being a generous and disinterested man, felt ashamed of his treatment of *ce cher enfant* (whom he had seen for the last time nine years before as

a student in Petersburg). The estate might originally have been worth thirteen or fourteen thousand. Now it was doubtful whether anyone would give five for it. No doubt Stepan Trofimovitch was fully entitled by the terms of the trust to sell the wood, and taking into account the incredibly large yearly revenue of a thousand roubles which had been sent punctually for so many years, he could have put up a good defence of his management. But Stepan Trofimovitch was a generous man of exalted impulses. A wonderfully fine inspiration occurred to his mind: when Petrusha returned, to lay on the table before him the maximum price of fifteen thousand roubles without a hint at the sums that had been sent him hitherto, and warmly and with tears to press *ce cher fils* to his heart, and so to make an end of all accounts between them. He began cautiously and indirectly unfolding this picture before Varvara Petrovna. He hinted that this would add a peculiarly noble note to their friendship . . . to their "idea." This would set the parents of the last generation—and people of the last generation generally—in such a disinterested and magnanimous light in comparison with the new frivolous and socialistic younger generation. He said a great deal more, but Varvara Petrovna was obstinately silent. At last she informed him airily that she was prepared to buy their estate, and to pay for it the maximum price, that is, six or seven thousand (though four would have been a fair price for it). Of the remaining eight thousand which had vanished with the woods she said not a word.

This conversation took place a month before the match was proposed to him. Stepan Trofimovitch was overwhelmed, and began to ponder. There might in the past have been a hope that his son would not come, after all—an outsider, that is to say, might have hoped so. Stepan Trofimovitch as a father would have indignantly rejected the insinuation that he could entertain such a hope. Anyway queer rumours had hitherto been reaching us about Petrusha. To begin with, on completing his studies at the university six years before, he had hung about in Petersburg without getting work. Suddenly we got the news that he had taken part in issuing some anonymous manifesto and that he was implicated in the affair. Then he

suddenly turned up abroad in Switzerland at Geneva—he had escaped, very likely.

"It's surprising to me," Stepan Trofimovitch commented, greatly disconcerted. "*Petrusha, c'est une si pauvre tête!* He's good, noble-hearted, very sensitive, and I was so delighted with him in Petersburg, comparing him with the young people of to-day. But *c'est un pauvre sire, tout de même*. . . . And you know it all comes from that same half-bakedness, that sentimentality. They are fascinated, not by realism, but by the emotional ideal side of Socialism, by the religious note in it, so to say, by the poetry of it . . . second-hand, of course. And for me, for me, think what it means! I have so many enemies here and more still *there*, they'll put it down to the father's influence. Good God! Petrusha a revolutionist! What times we live in!"

Very soon, however, Petrusha sent his exact address from Switzerland for money to be sent him as usual; so he could not be exactly an exile. And now, after four years abroad, he was suddenly making his appearance again in his own country, and announced that he would arrive shortly, so there could be no charge against him. What was more, some one seemed to be interested in him and protecting him. He wrote now from the south of Russia, where he was busily engaged in some private but important business. All this was capital, but where was his father to get that other seven or eight thousand, to make up a suitable price for the estate? And what if there should be an outcry, and instead of that imposing picture it should come to a lawsuit? Something told Stepan Trofimovitch that the sensitive Petrusha would not relinquish anything that was to his interest. "Why is it—as I've noticed," Stepan Trofimovitch whispered to me once, "why it is that all these desperate Socialists and Communists are at the same time such incredible skinflints, so avaricious, so keen over property, and, in fact, the more socialistic, the more extreme they are, the keener they are over property . . . why is it? Can that, too, come from sentimentalism?" I don't know whether there is any truth in this observation of Stepan Trofimovitch's. I only know that Petrusha had somehow got wind of the sale of the woods and the rest of it, and that Stepan Trofimovitch was aware of the

vitch among ourselves) a special job, to arrange in order some correspondence lasting over many years; that he had shut himself up to do it and I was helping him. Liputin was the only one I did not have time to visit, and I kept putting it off—to tell the real truth I was afraid to go to him. I knew beforehand that he would not believe one word of my story, that he would certainly imagine that there was some secret at the bottom of it, which we were trying to hide from him alone, and as soon as I left him he would set to work to make inquiries and gossip all over the town. While I was picturing all this to myself I happened to run across him in the street. It turned out that he had heard all about it from our friends, whom I had only just informed. But, strange to say, instead of being inquisitive and asking questions about Stepan Trofimovitch, he interrupted me, when I began apologising for not having come to him before, and at once passed to other subjects. It is true that he had a great deal stored up to tell me. He was in a state of great excitement, and was delighted to have got hold of me for a listener. He began talking of the news of the town, of the arrival of the governor's wife, "with new topics of conversation," of an opposition party already formed in the club, of how they were all in a hubbub over the new ideas, and how charmingly this suited him, and so on. He talked for a quarter of an hour and so amusingly that I could not tear myself away. Though I could not endure him, yet I must admit he had the gift of making one listen to him, especially when he was very angry at something. This man was, in my opinion, a regular spy from his very nature. At every moment he knew the very latest gossip and all the trifling incidents of our town, especially the unpleasant ones, and it was surprising to me how he took things to heart that were sometimes absolutely no concern of his. It always seemed to me that the leading feature of his character was envy. When I told Stepan Trofimovitch the same evening of my meeting Liputin that morning and our conversation, the latter to my amazement became greatly agitated, and asked me the wild question:

"Does Liputin know or not?"

I began trying to prove that there was no possibility of his finding it out so soon, and that there was nobody from whom he could hear it. But Stepan Trofimovitch was not to be shaken.

"Well, you may believe it or not," he concluded unexpectedly at last, "but I'm convinced that he not only knows every detail of 'our' position, but that he knows something else besides, something neither you nor I know yet, and perhaps never shall, or shall only know when it's too late, when there's no turning back! . . ."

I said nothing, but these words suggested a great deal. For five whole days after that we did not say one word about Liputin; it was clear to me that Stepan Trofimovitch greatly regretted having let his tongue run away with him, and having revealed such suspicions before me.

II

One morning, on the seventh or eighth day after Stepan Trofimovitch had consented to become "engaged," about eleven o'clock, when I was hurrying as usual to my afflicted friend, I had an adventure on the way.

I met Karmazinov, "the great writer," as Liputin called him. I had read Karmazinov since childhood. His novels and tales were well known to the past and even to the present generation. I revelled in them; they were the great enjoyment of my childhood and youth. Afterwards I grew rather less enthusiastic over his work. I did not care so much for the novels with a purpose which he had been writing of late as for his first, early works, which were so full of spontaneous poetry, and his latest publications I had not liked at all. Speaking generally, if I may venture to express my opinion on so delicate a subject, all these talented gentlemen of the middling sort who are sometimes in their lifetime accepted almost as geniuses, pass out of memory quite suddenly and without a trace when they die, and what's more, it often happens that even during their lifetime, as soon as a new generation grows up and takes the place of the one in which they have flourished, they are forgotten and neglected by every one in an incredibly short time. This somehow happens among us quite suddenly, like the shifting of the scenes on the stage. Oh, it's not at all the same as with Pushkin, Gogol, Molière, Voltaire, all those great men who really had a new original word to say! It's true, too, that these talented gentlemen of the middling sort in the decline of their venerable

years usually write themselves out in the most pitiful way, though they don't observe the fact themselves. It happens not infrequently that a writer who has been for a long time credited with extraordinary profundity and expected to exercise a great and serious influence on the progress of society, betrays in the end such poverty, such insipidity in his fundamental ideas that no one regrets that he succeeded in writing himself out so soon. But the old grey-beards don't notice this, and are angry. Their vanity sometimes, especially towards the end of their career, reaches proportions that may well provoke wonder. God knows what they begin to take themselves for—for gods at least! People used to say about Karmazinov that his connections with aristocratic society and powerful personages were dearer to him than his own soul. People used to say that on meeting you he would be cordial, that he would fascinate and enchant you with his open-heartedness, especially if you were of use to him in some way, and if you came to him with some preliminary recommendation. But that before any stray prince, any stray countess, anyone that he was afraid of, he would regard it as his sacred duty to forget your existence with the most insulting carelessness, like a chip of wood, like a fly, before you had even time to get out of his sight; he seriously considered this the best and most aristocratic style. In spite of the best of breeding and perfect knowledge of good manners he is, they say, vain to such an hysterical pitch that he cannot conceal his irritability as an author even in those circles of society where little interest is taken in literature. If anyone were to surprise him by being indifferent, he would be morbidly chagrined, and try to revenge himself.

A year before, I had read an article of his in a review, written with an immense affectation of naïve poetry, and psychology too. He described the wreck of some steamer on the English coast, of which he had been the witness, and how he had seen the drowning people saved, and the dead bodies brought ashore. All this rather long and verbose article was written solely with the object of self-display. One seemed to read between the lines: "Concentrate yourselves on me. Behold what I was like at those moments. What are the sea, the storm, the rocks, the splinters of wrecked ships to you? I have described all that sufficiently to you with my mighty pen. Why look at

that drowned woman with the dead child in her dead arms? Look rather at me, see how I was unable to bear that sight and turned away from it. Here I stood with my back to it; here I was horrified and could not bring myself to look; I blinked my eyes—isn't that interesting?" When I told Stepan Trofimovitch my opinion of Karmazinov's article he quite agreed with me.

When rumours had reached us of late that Karmazinov was coming to the neighbourhood I was, of course, very eager to see him, and, if possible, to make his acquaintance. I knew that this might be done through Stepan Trofimovitch, they had once been friends. And now I suddenly met him at the cross-roads. I knew him at once. He had been pointed out to me two or three days before when he drove past with the governor's wife. He was a short, stiff-looking old man, though not over fifty-five, with a rather red little face, with thick grey locks of hair clustering under his chimney-pot hat, and curling round his clean little pink ears. His clean little face was not altogether handsome with its thin, long, crafty-looking lips, with its rather fleshy nose, and its sharp, shrewd little eyes. He was dressed somewhat shabbily in a sort of cape such as would be worn in Switzerland or North Italy at that time of year. But, at any rate, all the minor details of his costume, the little studs, and collar, the buttons, the tortoise-shell lorgnette on a narrow black ribbon, the signet-ring, were all such as are worn by persons of the most irreproachable good form. I am certain that in summer he must have worn light prunella shoes with mother-of-pearl buttons at the side. When we met he was standing still at the turning and looking about him, attentively. Noticing that I was looking at him with interest, he asked me in a sugary, though rather shrill voice:

"Allow me to ask, which is my nearest way to Bykovy Street?"

"To Bykovy Street? Oh, that's here, close by," I cried in great excitement. "Straight on along this street and the second turning to the left."

"Very much obliged to you."

A curse on that minute! I fancy I was shy, and looked cringing. He instantly noticed all that, and of course realised it all at once; that is, realised that I knew who he was, that I had

read him and revered him since childhood, and that I was shy and looked at him cringingly. He smiled, nodded again, and walked on as I had directed him. I don't know why I turned back to follow him; I don't know why I ran for ten paces beside him. He suddenly stood still again.

"And could you tell me where is the nearest cab-stand?" he shouted out to me again.

It was a horrid shout! A horrid voice!

"A cab-stand? The nearest cab-stand is . . . by the Cathedral; there are always cabs standing there," and I almost turned to run for a cab for him. I almost believe that that was what he expected me to do. Of course I checked myself at once, and stood still, but he had noticed my movement and was still watching me with the same horrid smile. Then something happened which I shall never forget.

He suddenly dropped a tiny bag, which he was holding in his left hand; though indeed it was not a bag, but rather a little box, or more properly some part of a pocket-book, or to be more accurate a little reticule, rather like an old-fashioned lady's reticule, though I really don't know what it was. I only know that I flew to pick it up.

I am convinced that I did not really pick it up, but my first motion was unmistakable. I could not conceal it, and, like a fool, I turned crimson. The cunning fellow at once got all that could be got out of the circumstance.

"Don't trouble, I'll pick it up," he pronounced charmingly; that is, when he was quite sure that I was not going to pick up the reticule, he picked it up as though forestalling me, nodded once more, and went his way, leaving me to look like a fool. It was as good as though I had picked it up myself. For five minutes I considered myself utterly disgraced for ever, but as I reached Stepan Trofimovitch's house I suddenly burst out laughing; the meeting struck me as so amusing that I immediately resolved to entertain Stepan Trofimovitch with an account of it, and even to act the whole scene to him.

III

But this time to my surprise I found an extraordinary change in him. He pounced on me with a sort of avidity, it is

true, as soon as I went in, and began listening to me, but with such a distracted air that at first he evidently did not take in my words. But as soon as I pronounced the name of Karmazinov he suddenly flew into a frenzy.

"Don't speak of him! Don't pronounce that name!" he exclaimed, almost in a fury. "Here, look, read it! Read it!"

He opened the drawer and threw on the table three small sheets of paper, covered with a hurried pencil scrawl, all from Varvara Petrovna. The first letter was dated the day before yesterday, the second had come yesterday, and the last that day, an hour before. Their contents were quite trivial, and all referred to Karmazinov and betrayed the vain and fussy uneasiness of Varvara Petrovna and her apprehension that Karmazinov might forget to pay her a visit. Here is the first one dating from two days before. (Probably there had been one also three days before, and possibly another four days before as well.)

"If he deigns to visit you to-day, not a word about me, I beg. Not the faintest hint. Don't speak of me, don't mention me.—V. S."

The letter of the day before:

"If he decides to pay you a visit this morning, I think the most dignified thing would be not to receive him. That's what I think about it; I don't know what you think.—V. S."

To-day's, the last:

"I feel sure that you're in a regular litter and clouds of tobacco smoke. I'm sending you Marya and Fomushka. They'll tidy you up in half an hour. And don't hinder them, but go and sit in the kitchen while they clear up. I'm sending you a Bokhara rug and two china vases. I've long been meaning to make you a present of them, and I'm sending you my Teniers, too, for a time. You can put the vases in the window and hang the Teniers on the right under the portrait of Goethe; it will be more conspicuous there and it's always light there in the morning. If he does turn up at last, receive him with the utmost courtesy but try and talk of trifling matters, of some intellectual subject, and behave as though you had seen each other lately. Not a word about me. Perhaps I may look in on you in the evening.—V. S.

"P.S.—If he does not come to-day he won't come at all."

I read and was amazed that he was in such excitement over such trifles. Looking at him inquiringly, I noticed that he had had time while I was reading to change the everlasting white tie he always wore, for a red one. His hat and stick lay on the table. He was pale, and his hands were positively trembling.

"I don't care a hang about her anxieties," he cried frantically, in response to my inquiring look. "*Je m'en fiche!* She has the face to be excited about Karmazinov, and she does not answer my letters. Here is my unopened letter which she sent me back yesterday, here on the table under the book, under *L'Homme qui rit*. What is it to me that she's wearing herself out over Nikolay! *Je m'en fiche, et je proclame ma liberté! Au diable le Karmazinov! Au diable la Lembke!* I've hidden the vases in the entry, and the Teniers in the chest of drawers, and I have demanded that she is to see me at once. Do you hear? I've insisted! I've sent her just such a scrap of paper, a pencil scrawl, unsealed, by Nastasya, and I'm waiting. I want Darya Pavlovna to speak to me with her own lips, before the face of Heaven, or at least before you. *Vous me seconderez, n'est-ce pas, comme ami et témoin.* I don't want to have to blush, to lie, I don't want secrets, I won't have secrets in this matter. Let them confess everything to me openly, frankly, honourably and then . . . then perhaps I may surprise the whole generation by my magnanimity. . . . Am I a scoundrel or not, my dear sir?" he concluded suddenly, looking menacingly at me, as though I'd considered him a scoundrel.

I offered him a sip of water; I had never seen him like this before. All the while he was talking he kept running from one end of the room to the other, but he suddenly stood still before me in an extraordinary attitude.

"Can you suppose," he began again with hysterical haughtiness, looking me up and down, "can you imagine that I, Stepan Verhovensky, cannot find in myself the moral strength to take my bag—my beggar's bag—and laying it on my feeble shoulders to go out at the gate and vanish for ever, when honour and the great principle of independence demand it? It's not the first time that Stepan Verhovensky has had to repel despotism by moral force, even though it be the despotism of a crazy woman, that is, the most cruel and insulting despotism which can exist on earth, although you have, I fancy, forgot-

ten yourself so much as to laugh at my phrase, my dear sir! Oh, you don't believe that I can find the moral strength in myself to end my life as a tutor in a merchant's family, or to die of hunger in a ditch! Answer me, answer me at once; do you believe it, or don't you believe it?"

But I was purposely silent. I even affected to hesitate to wound him by answering in the negative, but to be unable to answer affirmatively. In all this nervous excitement of his there was something which really did offend me, and not personally, oh, no! But . . . I will explain later on.

He positively turned pale.

"Perhaps you are bored with me, G——v (this is my surname), and you would like . . . not to come and see me at all?" he said in that tone of pale composure which usually precedes some extraordinary outburst. I jumped up in alarm. At that moment Nastasya came in, and, without a word, handed Stepan Trofimovitch a piece of paper, on which something was written in pencil. He glanced at it and flung it to me. On the paper, in Varvara Petrovna's hand three words were written: "Stay at home."

Stepan Trofimovitch snatched up his hat and stick in silence and went quickly out of the room. Mechanically I followed him. Suddenly voices and sounds of rapid footsteps were heard in the passage. He stood still, as though thunder-struck.

"It's Liputin; I am lost!" he whispered, clutching at my arm. At the same instant Liputin walked into the room.

IV

Why he should be lost owing to Liputin I did not know, and indeed I did not attach much significance to the words; I put it all down to his nerves. His terror, however, was remarkable, and I made up my mind to keep a careful watch on him.

The very appearance of Liputin as he came in assured us that he had on this occasion a special right to come in, in spite of the prohibition. He brought with him an unknown gentleman, who must have been a new arrival in the town. In reply to the senseless stare of my petrified friend, he called out immediately in a loud voice:

is laughing. I understand and don't mind. I'm not ready to take offence, only annoyed at his liberty. And if I don't explain my ideas to you," he concluded unexpectedly, scanning us all with resolute eyes, "it's not at all that I'm afraid of your giving information to the government; that's not so; please do not imagine nonsense of that sort."

No one made any reply to these words. We only looked at each other. Even Liputin forgot to snigger.

"Gentlemen, I'm very sorry"—Stepan Trofimovitch got up resolutely from the sofa—"but I feel ill and upset. Excuse me."

"Ach, that's for us to go." Mr. Kirillov started, snatching up his cap. "It's a good thing you told us. I'm so forgetful."

He rose, and with a good-natured air went up to Stepan Trofimovitch, holding out his hand.

"I'm sorry you're not well, and I came."

"I wish you every success among us," answered Stepan Trofimovitch, shaking hands with him heartily and without haste. "I understand that, if as you say you have lived so long abroad, cutting yourself off from people for objects of your own and forgetting Russia, you must inevitably look with wonder on us who are Russians to the backbone, and we must feel the same about you. *Mais cela passera*. I'm only puzzled at one thing: you want to build our bridge and at the same time you declare that you hold with the principle of universal destruction. They won't let you build our bridge."

"What! What's that you said? Ach, I say!" Kirillov cried, much struck, and he suddenly broke into the most frank and good-humoured laughter. For a moment his face took a quite childlike expression, which I thought suited him particularly. Liputin rubbed his hands with delight at Stepan Trofimovitch's witty remark. I kept wondering to myself why Stepan Trofimovitch was so frightened of Liputin, and why he had cried out "I am lost" when he heard him coming.

V

We were all standing in the doorway. It was the moment when hosts and guests hurriedly exchange the last and most cordial words, and then part to their mutual gratification.

"The reason he's so cross to-day," Liputin dropped all at once, as it were casually, when he was just going out of the room, "is because he had a disturbance to-day with Captain Lebyadkin over his sister. Captain Lebyadkin thrashes that precious sister of his, the mad girl, every day with a whip, a real Cossack whip, every morning and evening. So Alexey Nilitch has positively taken the lodge so as not to be present. Well, good-bye."

"A sister? An invalid? With a whip?" Stepan Trofimovitch cried out, as though he had suddenly been lashed with a whip himself. "What sister? What Lebyadkin?"

All his former terror came back in an instant.

"Lebyadkin! Oh, that's the retired captain; he used only to call himself a lieutenant before. . . ."

"Oh, what is his rank to me? What sister? Good heavens! . . . You say Lebyadkin? But there used to be a Lebyadkin here. . . ."

"That's the very man. 'Our' Lebyadkin, at Virginsky's, you remember?"

"But he was caught with forged papers?"

"Well, now he's come back. He's been here almost three weeks and under the most peculiar circumstances."

"Why, but he's a scoundrel?"

"As though no one could be a scoundrel among us," Liputin grinned suddenly, his knavish little eyes seeming to peer into Stepan Trofimovitch's soul.

"Good heavens! I didn't mean that at all . . . though I quite agree with you about that, with you particularly. But what then, what then? What did you mean by that? You certainly meant something by that."

"Why, it's all so trivial. . . . This captain to all appearances went away from us at that time; not because of the forged papers, but simply to look for his sister, who was in hiding from him somewhere, it seems; well, and now he's brought her and that's the whole story. Why do you seem frightened, Stepan Trofimovitch? I only tell this from his drunken chatter though, he doesn't speak of it himself when he's sober. He's an irritable man, and, so to speak, æsthetic in a military style; only he has bad taste. And this sister is lame as well as mad. She seems to have been seduced by some one, and Mr

Lebyadkin has, it seems, for many years received a yearly grant from the seducer by way of compensation for the wound to his honour, so it would seem at least from his chatter, though I believe it's only drunken talk. It's simply his brag. Besides, that sort of thing is done much cheaper. But that he has a sum of money is perfectly certain. Ten days ago he was walking barefoot, and now I've seen hundreds in his hands. His sister has fits of some sort every day, she shrieks and he 'keeps her in order' with the whip. You must inspire a woman with respect, he says. What I can't understand is how Shatov goes on living above him. Alexey Nilitch has only been three days with them. They were acquainted in Petersburg, and now he's taken the lodge to get away from the disturbance."

"Is this all true?" said Stepan Trofimovitch, addressing the engineer.

"You do gossip a lot, Liputin," the latter muttered wrathfully.

"Mysteries, secrets! Where have all these mysteries and secrets among us sprung from?" Stepan Trofimovitch could not refrain from exclaiming.

The engineer frowned, flushed red, shrugged his shoulders and went out of the room.

"Alexey Nilitch positively snatched the whip out of his hand, broke it and threw it out of the window, and they had a violent quarrel," added Liputin.

"Why are you chattering, Liputin; it's stupid. What for?" Alexey Nilitch turned again instantly.

"Why be so modest and conceal the generous impulses of one's soul; that is, of your soul? I'm not speaking of my own."

"How stupid it is . . . and quite unnecessary. Lebyadkin's stupid and quite worthless—and no use to the cause, and . . . utterly mischievous. Why do you keep babbling all sorts of things? I'm going."

"Oh, what a pity!" cried Liputin with a candid smile, "or I'd have amused you with another little story, Stepan Trofimovitch. I came, indeed, on purpose to tell you, though I dare say you've heard it already. Well, till another time, Alexey Nilitch is in such a hurry. Good-bye for the present. The story concerns Varvara Petrovna. She amused me the day before yesterday; she sent for me on purpose. It's simply killing. Good-bye."

But at this Stepan Trofimovitch absolutely would not let him go. He seized him by the shoulders, turned him sharply back into the room, and sat him down in a chair. Liputin was positively scared.

"Why, to be sure," he began, looking warily at Stepan Trofimovitch from his chair, "she suddenly sent for me and asked me 'confidentially' my private opinion, whether Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch is mad or in his right mind. Isn't that astonishing?"

"You're out of your mind!" muttered Stepan Trofimovitch, and suddenly, as though he were beside himself: "Liputin, you know perfectly well that you only came here to tell me something insulting of that sort and . . . something worse!"

In a flash, I recalled his conjecture that Liputin knew not only more than we did about our affair, but something else which we should never know.

"Upon my word, Stepan Trofimovitch," muttered Liputin, seeming greatly alarmed, "upon my word . . ."

"Hold your tongue and begin! I beg you, Mr. Kirillov, to come back too, and be present. I earnestly beg you! Sit down, and you, Liputin, begin directly, simply and without any excuses."

"If I had only known it would upset you so much I wouldn't have begun at all. And of course I thought you knew all about it from Varvara Petrovna herself."

"You didn't think that at all. Begin, begin, I tell you."

"Only do me the favour to sit down yourself, or how can I sit here when you are running about before me in such excitement. I can't speak coherently."

Stepan Trofimovitch restrained himself and sank impressively into an easy chair. The engineer stared gloomily at the floor. Liputin looked at them with intense enjoyment.

"How am I to begin? . . . I'm too overwhelmed. . . ."

VI

"The day before yesterday a servant was suddenly sent to me: 'You are asked to call at twelve o'clock,' said he. Can you

fancy such a thing? I threw aside my work, and precisely at midday yesterday I was ringing at the bell. I was let into the drawing-room; I waited a minute—she came in; she made me sit down and sat down herself, opposite. I sat down, and I couldn't believe it; you know how she has always treated me. She began at once without beating about the bush, you know her way. 'You remember,' she said, 'that four years ago when Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was ill he did some strange things which made all the town wonder till the position was explained. One of those actions concerned you personally. When Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch recovered he went at my request to call on you. I know that he talked to you several times before, too. Tell me openly and candidly what you . . . (she faltered a little at this point) what you thought of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch then . . . what was your view of him altogether . . . what idea you were able to form of him at that time . . . and still have?'

"Here she was completely confused, so that she paused for a whole minute, and suddenly flushed. I was alarmed. She began again—touchingly is not quite the word, it's not applicable to her—but in a very impressive tone:

"I want you,' she said, 'to understand me clearly and without mistake. I've sent for you now because I look upon you as a keen-sighted and quick-witted man, qualified to make accurate observations.' (What compliments!) 'You'll understand too,' she said, 'that I am a mother appealing to you. . . . Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch has suffered some calamities and has passed through many changes of fortune in his life. All that,' she said, 'might well have affected the state of his mind. I'm not speaking of madness, of course,' she said, 'that's quite out of the question!' (This was uttered proudly and resolutely.) 'But there might be something strange, something peculiar, some turn of thought, a tendency to some particular way of looking at things.' (Those were her exact words, and I admired, Stepan Trofimovitch, the exactness with which Varvara Petrovna can put things. She's a lady of superior intellect!) 'I have noticed in him, anyway,' she said, 'a perpetual restlessness and a tendency to peculiar impulses. But I am a mother and you are an impartial spectator, and therefore qualified with your intelligence to form a more impartial opinion. I implore

you, in fact' (yes, that word, 'implore' was uttered!), 'to tell me the whole truth, without mincing matters. And if you will give me your word never to forget that I have spoken to you in confidence, you may reckon upon my always being ready to seize every opportunity in the future to show my gratitude.' Well, what do you say to that?"

"You have . . . so amazed me . . ." faltered Stepan Trofimovitch, "that I don't believe you."

"Yes, observe, observe," cried Liputin, as though he had not heard Stepan Trofimovitch, "observe what must be her agitation and uneasiness if she stoops from her grandeur to appeal to a man like me, and even condescends to beg me to keep it secret. What do you call that? Hasn't she received some news of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, something unexpected?"

"I don't know . . . of news of any sort . . . I haven't seen her for some days, but . . . but I must say . . ." lisped Stepan Trofimovitch, evidently hardly able to think clearly, "but I must say, Liputin, that if it was said to you in confidence, and here you're telling it before every one . . ."

"Absolutely in confidence! But God strike me dead if I . . . But as for telling it here . . . what does it matter? Are we strangers, even Alexey Nilitch?"

"I don't share that attitude. No doubt we three here will keep the secret, but I'm afraid of the fourth, you, and wouldn't trust you in anything. . . ."

"What do you mean by that? Why it's more to my interest than anyone's, seeing I was promised eternal gratitude! What I wanted was to point out in this connection one extremely strange incident, rather to say, psychological than simply strange. Yesterday evening, under the influence of my conversation with Varvara Petrovna—you can fancy yourself what an impression it made on me—I approached Alexey Nilitch with a discreet question: 'You knew Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch abroad,' said I, 'and used to know him before in Petersburg too. What do you think of his mind and his abilities?' said I. He answered laconically, as his way is, that he was a man of subtle intellect and sound judgment. 'And have you never noticed in the course of years,' said I, 'any turn of ideas or peculiar way of looking at things, or any, so to say, insanity?' In fact, I repeated Varvara Petrovna's own question. And would you be-

"Take care, Liputin. I warn you, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch meant to be here soon himself, and he knows how to defend himself."

"Why warn me? I am the first to cry out that he is a man of the most subtle and refined intelligence, and I quite reassured Varvara Petrovna yesterday on that score. 'It's his character,' I said to her, 'that I can't answer for.' Lebyadkin said the same thing yesterday: 'A lot of harm has come to me from his character,' he said. Ach, Stepan Trofimovitch, it's all very well for you to cry out about slander and spying, and at the very time observe that you wring it all out of me, and with such immense curiosity too. Now, Varvara Petrovna went straight to the point yesterday. 'You have had a personal interest in the business,' she said, 'that's why I appeal to you.' I should say so! What need to look for motives when I've swallowed a personal insult from his excellency before the whole society of the place. I should think I have grounds to be interested, not merely for the sake of gossip. He shakes hands with you one day, and next day, for no earthly reason, he returns your hospitality by slapping you on the cheeks in the face of all decent society, if the fancy takes him, out of sheer wantonness. And what's more, the fair sex is everything for them, these butterflies and mettle-some cocks! Grand gentlemen with little wings like ancient cupids, lady-killing Petchorins! It's all very well for you, Stepan Trofimovitch, a confirmed bachelor, to talk like that, stick up for his excellency and call me a slanderer. But if you married a pretty young wife—as you're still such a fine fellow—then I dare say you'd bolt your door against our prince, and throw up barricades in your house! Why, if only that Mademoiselle Lebyadkin, who is thrashed with a whip, were not mad and bandy-legged, by Jove, I should fancy she was the victim of the passions of our general, and that it was from him that Captain Lebyadkin had suffered 'in his family dignity,' as he expresses it himself. Only perhaps that is inconsistent with his refined taste, though, indeed, even that's no hindrance to him. Every berry is worth picking if only he's in the mood for it. You talk of slander, but I'm not crying this aloud though the whole town is ringing with it; I only listen and assent. That's not prohibited."

"The town's ringing with it? What's the town ringing with?"

"That is, Captain Lebyadkin is shouting for all the town to hear, and isn't that just the same as the market-place ringing with it? How am I to blame? I interest myself in it only among friends, for, after all, I consider myself among friends here." He looked at us with an innocent air. "Something's happened, only consider: they say his excellency has sent three hundred roubles from Switzerland by a most honourable young lady, and, so to say, modest orphan, whom I have the honour of knowing, to be handed over to Captain Lebyadkin. And Lebyadkin, a little later, was told as an absolute fact also by a very honourable and therefore trustworthy person, I won't say whom, that not three hundred but a thousand roubles had been sent! . . . And so, Lebyadkin keeps crying out 'the young lady has grabbed seven hundred roubles belonging to me,' and he's almost ready to call in the police; he threatens to, anyway, and he's making an uproar all over the town."

"This is vile, vile of you!" cried the engineer, leaping up suddenly from his chair.

"But I say, you are yourself the honourable person who brought word to Lebyadkin from Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch that a thousand roubles were sent, not three hundred. Why, the captain told me so himself when he was drunk."

"It's . . . it's an unhappy misunderstanding. Some one's made a mistake and it's led to . . . It's nonsense, and it's base of you."

"But I'm ready to believe that it's nonsense, and I'm distressed at the story, for, take it as you will, a girl of an honourable reputation is implicated first over the seven hundred roubles, and secondly in unmistakable intimacy with Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. For how much does it mean to his excellency to disgrace a girl of good character, or put to shame another man's wife, like that incident with me? If he comes across a generous-hearted man he'll force him to cover the sins of others under the shelter of his honourable name. That's just what I had to put up with, I'm speaking of myself. . . ."

"Be careful, Liputin." Stepan Trofimovitch got up from his easy chair and turned pale.

"Don't believe it, don't believe it! Somebody has made a mistake and Lebyadkin's drunk . . ." exclaimed the engineer in indescribable excitement. "It will all be explained, but I can't. . . . And I think it's low. . . . And that's enough, enough!"

He ran out of the room.

"What are you about? Why, I'm going with you!" cried Liputin, startled. He jumped up and ran after Alexey Nilitch.

VII

Stepan Trofimovitch stood a moment reflecting, looked at me as though he did not see me, took up his hat and stick and walked quietly out of the room. I followed him again, as before. As we went out of the gate, noticing that I was accompanying him, he said:

"Oh yes, you may serve as a witness . . . *de l'accident. Vous m'accompagnez, n'est-ce pas?*"

"Stepan Trofimovitch, surely you're not going there again? Think what may come of it!"

With a pitiful and distracted smile, a smile of shame and utter despair, and at the same time of a sort of strange ecstasy, he whispered to me, standing still for an instant:

"I can't marry to cover 'another man's sins!'"

These words were just what I was expecting. At last that fatal sentence that he had kept hidden from me was uttered aloud, after a whole week of shuffling and pretence. I was positively enraged.

"And you, Stepan Verhovensky, with your luminous mind, your kind heart, can harbour such a dirty, such a low idea . . . and could before Liputin came!"

He looked at me, made no answer and walked on in the same direction. I did not want to be left behind. I wanted to give Varvara Petrovna my version. I could have forgiven him if he had simply with his womanish faint-heartedness believed Liputin, but now it was clear that he had thought of it all himself long before, and that Liputin had only confirmed his suspicions and poured oil on the flames. He had not hesitated to suspect the girl from the very first day, before he had any kind of grounds, even Liputin's words, to go upon. Varvara Pe-

trovna's despotic behaviour he had explained to himself as due to her haste to cover up the aristocratic misdoings of her precious "Nicolas" by marrying the girl to an honourable man! I longed for him to be punished for it.

"*Oh, Dieu, qui est si grand et si bon!* Oh, who will comfort me!" he exclaimed, halting suddenly again, after walking a hundred paces.

"Come straight home and I'll make everything clear to you," I cried, turning him by force towards home.

"It's he! Stepan Trofimovitch, it's you? You?" A fresh, joyous young voice rang out like music behind us.

We had seen nothing, but a lady on horseback suddenly made her appearance beside us—Lizaveta Nikolaevna with her invariable companion. She pulled up her horse.

"Come here, come here quickly!" she called to us, loudly and merrily. "It's twelve years since I've seen him, and I know him, while he. . . . Do you really not know me?"

Stepan Trofimovitch clasped the hand held out to him and kissed it reverently. He gazed at her as though he were praying and could not utter a word.

"He knows me, and is glad! Mavriky Nikolaevitch, he's delighted to see me! Why is it you haven't been to see us all this fortnight? Auntie tried to persuade me you were ill and must not be disturbed; but I know Auntie tells lies. I kept stamping and swearing at you, but I had made up my mind, quite made up my mind, that you should come to me first, that was why I didn't send to you. Heavens, why he hasn't changed a bit!" She scrutinised him, bending down from the saddle. "He's absurdly unchanged. Oh, yes, he has wrinkles, a lot of wrinkles, round his eyes and on his cheeks some grey hair, but his eyes are just the same. And have I changed? Have I changed? Why don't you say something?"

I remembered at that moment the story that she had been almost ill when she was taken away to Petersburg at eleven years old, and that she had cried during her illness and asked for Stepan Trofimovitch.

"You . . . I . . ." he faltered now in a voice breaking with joy. "I was just crying out 'who will comfort me?' and I heard your voice. I look on it as a miracle *et je commence à croire.*"

"*En Dieu! En Dieu qui est là-haut et qui est si grand et si bon!* You see, I know all your lectures by heart. Mavriky Nikolaevitch, what faith he used to preach to me then, *en Dieu qui est si grand et si bon!* And do you remember your story of how Columbus discovered America, and they all cried out, 'Land! land!?' My nurse Alyona Frolovna says I was light-headed at night afterwards, and kept crying out 'land! land!' in my sleep. And do you remember how you told me the story of Prince Hamlet? And do you remember how you described to me how the poor emigrants were transported from Europe to America? And it was all untrue; I found out afterwards how they were transported. But what beautiful fibs he used to tell me then, Mavriky Nikolaevitch! They were better than the truth. Why do you look at Mavriky Nikolaevitch like that? He is the best and finest man on the face of the globe and you must like him just as you do me! *Il fait tout ce que je veux.* But, dear Stepan Trofimovitch, you must be unhappy again, since you cry out in the middle of the street asking who will comfort you. Unhappy, aren't you? Aren't you?"

"Now I'm happy. . . ."

"Aunt is horrid to you?" she went on, without listening. "She's just the same as ever, cross, unjust, and always our precious aunt! And do you remember how you threw yourself into my arms in the garden and I comforted you and cried—don't be afraid of Mavriky Nikolaevitch; he has known all about you, everything, for ever so long; you can weep on his shoulder as long as you like, and he'll stand there as long as you like! . . . Lift up your hat, take it off altogether for a minute, lift up your head, stand on tiptoe, I want to kiss you on the forehead as I kissed you for the last time when we parted. Do you see that young lady's admiring us out of the window? Come closer, closer! Heavens! How grey he is!"

And bending over in the saddle she kissed him on the forehead.

"Come, now to your home! I know where you live. I'll be with you directly, in a minute. I'll make you the first visit, you stubborn man, and then I must have you for a whole day at home. You can go and make ready for me."

And she galloped off with her cavalier. We returned. Stepan Trofimovitch sat down on the sofa and began to cry.

"*Dieu, Dieu!*" he exclaimed, "*enfin une minute de bonheur!*" Not more than ten minutes afterwards she reappeared according to her promise, escorted by her Mavriky Nikolaevitch.

"*Vous et le bonheur, vous arrivez en même temps!*" He got up to meet her.

"Here's a nosegay for you; I rode just now to Madame Chevalier's, she has flowers all the winter for name-days. Here's Mavriky Nikolaevitch, please make friends. I wanted to bring you a cake instead of a nosegay, but Mavriky Nikolaevitch declares that is not in the Russian spirit."

Mavriky Nikolaevitch was an artillery captain, a tall and handsome man of thirty-three, irreproachably correct in appearance, with an imposing and at first sight almost stern countenance, in spite of his wonderful and delicate kindness which no one could fail to perceive almost the first moment of making his acquaintance. He was taciturn, however, seemed very self-possessed and made no efforts to gain friends. Many of us said later that he was by no means clever; but this was not altogether just.

I won't attempt to describe the beauty of Lizaveta Nikolaevna. The whole town was talking of it, though some of our ladies and young girls indignantly differed on the subject. There were some among them who already detested her, and principally for her pride. The Drozdovs had scarcely begun to pay calls, which mortified them, though the real reason for the delay was Praskovya Ivanovna's invalid state. They detested her in the second place because she was a relative of the governor's wife, and thirdly because she rode out every day on horseback. We had never had young ladies who rode on horseback before; it was only natural that the appearance of Lizaveta Nikolaevna on horseback and her neglect to pay calls was bound to offend local society. Yet every one knew that riding was prescribed her by the doctor's orders, and they talked sarcastically of her illness. She really was ill. What struck me at first sight in her was her abnormal, nervous, incessant restlessness. Alas, the poor girl was very unhappy, and everything was explained later. To-day, recalling the past, I should not say she was such a beauty as she seemed to me then. Perhaps she was really not pretty at all. Tall, slim, but strong and supple, she struck one by the irregularities of the lines of her face. Her

eyes were set somewhat like a Kalmuck's, slanting; she was pale and thin in the face with high cheek-bones, but there was something in the face that conquered and fascinated! There was something powerful in the ardent glance of her dark eyes. She always made her appearance "like a conquering heroine, and to spread her conquests." She seemed proud and at times even arrogant. I don't know whether she succeeded in being kind, but I know that she wanted to, and made terrible efforts to force herself to be a little kind. There were, no doubt, many fine impulses and the very best elements in her character, but everything in her seemed perpetually seeking its balance and unable to find it; everything was in chaos, in agitation, in uneasiness. Perhaps the demands she made upon herself were too severe, and she was never able to find in herself the strength to satisfy them.

She sat on the sofa and looked round the room.

"Why do I always begin to feel sad at such moments; explain that mystery, you learned person? I've been thinking all my life that I should be goodness knows how pleased at seeing you and recalling everything, and here I somehow don't feel pleased at all, although I do love you. . . . Ach, heavens! He has my portrait on the wall! Give it here. I remember it! I remember it!"

An exquisite miniature in water-colour of Liza at twelve years old had been sent nine years before to Stepan Trofimovitch from Petersburg by the Drozdovs. He had kept it hanging on his wall ever since.

"Was I such a pretty child? Can that really have been my face?"

She stood up, and with the portrait in her hand looked in the looking-glass.

"Make haste, take it!" she cried, giving back the portrait. "Don't hang it up now, afterwards. I don't want to look at it." She sat down on the sofa again. "One life is over and another is begun, then that one is over—a third begins, and so on, endlessly. All the ends are snipped off as it were with scissors. See what stale things I'm telling you. Yet how much truth there is in them!"

She looked at me, smiling; she had glanced at me several

times already, but in his excitement Stepan Trofimovitch forgot that he had promised to introduce me.

"And why have you hung my portrait under those daggers? And why have you got so many daggers and sabres?"

He had as a fact hanging on the wall, I don't know why, two crossed daggers and above them a genuine Circassian sabre. As she asked this question she looked so directly at me that I wanted to answer, but hesitated to speak. Stepan Trofimovitch grasped the position at last and introduced me.

"I know, I know," she said, "I'm delighted to meet you. Mother has heard a great deal about you, too. Let me introduce you to Mavriky Nikolaevitch too, he's a splendid person. I had formed a funny notion of you already. You're Stepan Trofimovitch's confidant, aren't you?"

I turned rather red.

"Ach, forgive me, please. I used quite the wrong word: not funny at all, but only" She was confused and blushed. "Why be ashamed though at your being a splendid person? Well, it's time we were going, Mavriky Nikolaevitch! Stepan Trofimovitch, you must be with us in half an hour. Mercy, what a lot we shall talk! Now I'm your confidante, and about everything, *everything*, you understand?"

Stepan Trofimovitch was alarmed at once.

"Oh, Mavriky Nikolaevitch knows everything, don't mind him!"

"What does he know?"

"Why, what do you mean?" she cried in astonishment. "Bah, why it's true then that they're hiding it! I wouldn't believe it! And they're hiding Dasha, too. Aunt wouldn't let me go in to see Dasha to-day. She says she's got a headache."

"But . . . but how did you find out?"

"My goodness, like every one else. That needs no cunning!"

"But does every one else . . . ?"

"Why, of course. Mother, it's true, heard it first through Alyona Frolovna, my nurse; your Nastasya ran round to tell her. You told Nastasya, didn't you? She says you told her yourself."

"I . . . I did once speak," Stepan Trofimovitch faltered, crimsoning all over, "but . . . I only hinted . . . *j'étais si nerveux et malade, et puis . . .*"

that is, a very large tea-pot of boiling water, a little tea-pot full of strong tea, two large earthenware cups, coarsely decorated, a fancy loaf, and a whole deep saucer of lump sugar.

"I love tea at night," said he. "I walk much and drink it till daybreak. Abroad tea at night is inconvenient."

"You go to bed at daybreak?"

"Always; for a long while. I eat little; always tea. Liputin's sly, but impatient."

I was surprised at his wanting to talk; I made up my mind to take advantage of the opportunity. "There were unpleasant misunderstandings this morning," I observed.

He scowled.

"That's foolishness; that's great nonsense. All this is nonsense because Lebyadkin is drunk. I did not tell Liputin, but only explained the nonsense, because he got it all wrong. Liputin has a great deal of fantasy, he built up a mountain out of nonsense. I trusted Liputin yesterday."

"And me to-day?" I said, laughing.

"But you see, you knew all about it already this morning; Liputin is weak or impatient, or malicious or . . . he's envious."

The last word struck me.

"You've mentioned so many adjectives, however, that it would be strange if one didn't describe him."

"Or all at once."

"Yes, and that's what Liputin really is—he's a chaos. He was lying this morning when he said you were writing something, wasn't he?"

"Why should he?" he said, scowling again and staring at the floor.

I apologised, and began assuring him that I was not inquisitive. He flushed.

"He told the truth; I am writing. Only that's no matter."

We were silent for a minute. He suddenly smiled with the childlike smile I had noticed that morning.

"He invented that about heads himself out of a book, and told me first himself, and understands badly. But I only seek the causes why men dare not kill themselves; that's all. And it's all no matter."

"How do you mean they don't dare? Are there so few suicides?"

"Very few."

"Do you really think so?"

He made no answer, got up, and began walking to and fro lost in thought.

"What is it restrains people from suicide, do you think?" I asked.

He looked at me absent-mindedly, as though trying to remember what we were talking about.

"I . . . I don't know much yet. . . . Two prejudices restrain them, two things; only two, one very little, the other very big."

"What is the little thing?"

"Pain."

"Pain? Can that be of importance at such a moment?"

"Of the greatest. There are two sorts: those who kill themselves either from great sorrow or from spite, or being mad, or no matter what . . . they do it suddenly. They think little about the pain, but kill themselves suddenly. But some do it from reason—they think a great deal."

"Why, are there people who do it from reason?"

"Very many. If it were not for superstition there would be more, very many, all."

"What, all?"

He did not answer.

"But aren't there means of dying without pain?"

"Imagine"—he stopped before me—"imagine a stone as big as a great house; it hangs and you are under it; if it falls on you, on your head, will it hurt you?"

"A stone as big as a house? Of course it would be fearful."

"I speak not of the fear. Will it hurt?"

"A stone as big as a mountain, weighing millions of tons? Of course it wouldn't hurt."

"But really stand there and while it hangs you will fear very much that it will hurt. The most learned man, the greatest doctor, all, all will be very much frightened. Every one will know that it won't hurt, and every one will be afraid that it will hurt."

"Well, and the second cause, the big one?"

"The other world!"

"You mean punishment?"

"That's no matter. The other world; only the other world."

"Are there no atheists, such as don't believe in the other world at all?"

Again he did not answer.

"You judge from yourself, perhaps."

"Every one cannot judge except from himself," he said, red-
dening. "There will be full freedom when it will be just the
same to live or not to live. That's the goal for all."

"The goal? But perhaps no one will care to live then?"

"No one," he pronounced with decision.

"Man fears death because he loves life. That's how I under-
stand it," I observed, "and that's determined by nature."

"That's abject; and that's where the deception comes in."
His eyes flashed. "Life is pain, life is terror, and man is un-
happy. Now all is pain and terror. Now man loves life, because
he loves pain and terror, and so they have done according. Life
is given now for pain and terror, and that's the deception.
Now man is not yet what he will be. There will be a new man,
happy and proud. For whom it will be the same to live or not
to live, he will be the new man. He who will conquer pain and
terror will himself be a god. And this God will not be."

"Then this God does exist according to you?"

"He does not exist, but He is. In the stone there is no pain,
but in the fear of the stone is the pain. God is the pain of the
fear of death. He who will conquer pain and terror will become
himself a god. Then there will be a new life, a new man;
everything will be new . . . then they will divide history into
two parts: from the gorilla to the annihilation of God, and
from the annihilation of God to . . ."

"To the gorilla?"

". . . To the transformation of the earth, and of man
physically. Man will be God, and will be transformed physi-
cally, and the world will be transformed and things will be
transformed and thoughts and all feelings. What do you
think: will man be changed physically then?"

"If it will be just the same living or not living, all will kill
themselves, and perhaps that's what the change will be?"

"That's no matter. They will kill deception. Every one who
wants the supreme freedom must dare to kill himself. He who
dares to kill himself has found out the secret of the deception.
There is no freedom beyond; that is all, and there is nothing
beyond. He who dares kill himself is God. Now every one
can do so that there shall be no God and shall be nothing. But
no one has once done it yet."

"There have been millions of suicides."

"But always not for that; always with terror and not for
that object. Not to kill fear. He who kills himself only to kill
fear will become a god at once."

"He won't have time, perhaps," I observed.

"That's no matter," he answered softly, with calm pride,
almost disdain. "I'm sorry that you seem to be laughing," he
added half a minute later.

"It seems strange to me that you were so irritable this morn-
ing and are now so calm, though you speak with warmth."

"This morning? It was funny this morning," he answered
with a smile. "I don't like scolding, and I never laugh," he
added mournfully.

"Yes, you don't spend your nights very cheerfully over
your tea."

I got up and took my cap.

"You think not?" he smiled with some surprise. "Why?
No, I . . . I don't know." He was suddenly confused. "I
know not how it is with the others, and I feel that I cannot do
as others. Everybody thinks and then at once thinks of some-
thing else. I can't think of something else. I think all my life
of one thing. God has tormented me all my life," he ended up
suddenly with astonishing expansiveness.

"And tell me, if I may ask, why is it you speak Russian not
quite correctly? Surely you haven't forgotten it after five
years abroad?"

"Don't I speak correctly? I don't know. No, it's not because
of abroad. I have talked like that all my life . . . it's no mat-
ter to me."

"Another question, a more delicate one. I quite believe you
that you're disinclined to meet people and talk very little.
Why have you talked to me now?"

"To you? This morning you sat so nicely and you . . .

but it's all no matter . . . you are like my brother, very much, extremely," he added, flushing. "He has been dead seven years. He was older, very, very much."

"I suppose he had a great influence on your way of thinking?"

"N-no. He said little; he said nothing. I'll give your note."

He saw me to the gate with a lantern, to lock it after me. "Of course he's mad," I decided. In the gateway I met with another encounter.

IX

I had only just lifted my leg over the high barrier across the bottom of the gateway, when suddenly a strong hand clutched at my chest.

"Who's this?" roared a voice, "a friend or an enemy? Own up!"

"He's one of us; one of us!" Liputin's voice squealed near by. "It's Mr. G——v, a young man of classical education, in touch with the highest society."

"I love him if he's in society, clas-si . . . that means he's high-ly ed-u-cated. The retired Captain Ignat Lebyadkin, at the service of the world and his friends . . . if they're true ones, if they're true ones, the scoundrels."

Captain Lebyadkin, a stout, fleshy man over six feet in height, with curly hair and a red face, was so extremely drunk that he could scarcely stand up before me, and articulated with difficulty. I had seen him before, however, in the distance.

"And this one!" he roared again, noticing Kirillov, who was still standing with the lantern; he raised his fist, but let it fall again at once.

"I forgive you for your learning! Ignat Lebyadkin—high-ly ed-u-cated. . . .

*'A bomb of love with stinging smart
Exploded in Ignaty's heart.
In anguish dire I weep again
The arm that at Sevastopol
I lost in bitter pain!'*

Not that I ever was at Sevastopol, or ever lost my arm, but you know what rhyme is." He pushed up to me with his ugly, tipsy face.

"He is in a hurry, he is going home!" Liputin tried to persuade him. "He'll tell Lizaveta Nikolaevna to-morrow."

"Lizaveta!" he yelled again. "Stay, don't go! A variation:

*'Among the Amazons a star,
Upon her steed she flashes by,
And smiles upon me from afar,
The child of aris-to-cra-cy!'
To a Starry Amazon.*

You know that's a hymn. It's a hymn, if you're not an ass! The duffers, they don't understand! Stay!"

He caught hold of my coat, though I pulled myself away with all my might.

"Tell her I'm a knight and the soul of honour, and as for that Dasha . . . I'd pick her up and chuck her out. . . . She's only a serf, she daren't . . ."

At this point he fell down, for I pulled myself violently out of his hands and ran into the street. Liputin clung on to me.

"Alexey Nilitch will pick him up. Do you know what I've just found out from him?" he babbled in desperate haste. "Did you hear his verses? He's sealed those verses to the 'Starry Amazon' in an envelope and is going to send them to-morrow to Lizaveta Nikolaevna, signed with his name in full. What a fellow!"

"I bet you suggested it to him yourself."

"You'll lose your bet," laughed Liputin. "He's in love, in love like a cat, and do you know it began with hatred. He hated Lizaveta Nikolaevna at first so much for riding on horse-back that he almost swore aloud at her in the street. Yes, he did abuse her! Only the day before yesterday he swore at her when she rode by—luckily she didn't hear. And, suddenly, to-day—poetry! Do you know he means to risk a proposal? Seriously! Seriously!"

"I wonder at you, Liputin; whenever there's anything nasty going on you're always on the spot taking a leading part in it," I said angrily.

"You're going rather far, Mr. G——v. Isn't your poor little heart quaking, perhaps, in terror of a rival?"

"Wha-at!" I cried, standing still.

"Well, now to punish you I won't say anything more, and wouldn't you like to know though? Take this alone, that that lout is not a simple captain now but a landowner of our province, and rather an important one, too, for Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch sold him all his estate the other day, formerly of two hundred serfs; and as God's above, I'm not lying. I've only just heard it, but it was from a most reliable source. And now you can ferret it out for yourself; I'll say nothing more; good-bye."

X

Stepan Trofimovitch was awaiting me with hysterical impatience. It was an hour since he had returned. I found him in a state resembling intoxication; for the first five minutes at least I thought he was drunk. Alas, the visit to the Drozdovs had been the finishing-stroke.

"*Mon ami!* I have completely lost the thread . . . Lise . . . I love and respect that angel as before; just as before; but it seems to me they both asked me simply to find out something from me, that is more simply to get something out of me, and then to get rid of me. . . . That's how it is."

"You ought to be ashamed!" I couldn't help exclaiming.

"My friend, now I am utterly alone. *Enfin, c'est ridicule.* Would you believe it, the place is positively packed with mysteries there too. They simply flew at me about those ears and noses, and some mysteries in Petersburg too. You know they hadn't heard till they came about the tricks Nicolas played here four years ago. 'You were here, you saw it, is it true that he is mad?' Where they got the idea I can't make out: Why is it that Praskovya is so anxious Nicolas should be mad? The woman will have it so, she will. *Ce Maurice*, or what's his name, Mavriky Nikolaevitch, *brave homme tout de même* . . . but can it be for his sake, and after she wrote herself from Paris to *cette pauvre amie*? . . . *Enfin*, this Praskovya, as *cette chère amie* calls her, is a type. She's Gogol's Madame Box, of

immortal memory, only she's a spiteful Madame Box, a malignant Box, and in an immensely exaggerated form."

"That's making her out a regular packing-case if it's an exaggerated form."

"Well, perhaps it's the opposite; it's all the same, only don't interrupt me, for I'm all in a whirl. They are all at loggerheads, except Lise, she keeps on with her 'Auntie, auntie!' but Lise's sly, and there's something behind it too. Secrets. She has quarrelled with the old lady. *Cette pauvre auntie* tyrannises over every one it's true, and then there's the governor's wife, and the rudeness of local society, and Karmazinov's 'rudeness'; and then this idea of madness, *ce Lipoutine ce que je ne comprends pas* . . . and . . . and they say she's been putting vinegar on her head, and here are we with our complaints and letters. . . . Oh, how I have tormented her and at such a time! *Je suis un ingrat!* Only imagine, I come back and find a letter from her; read it, read it! Oh, how ungrateful it was of me!"

He gave me a letter he had just received from Varvara Petrovna. She seemed to have repented of her "stay at home." The letter was amiable but decided in tone, and brief. She invited Stepan Trofimovitch to come to her the day after tomorrow, which was Sunday, at twelve o'clock, and advised him to bring one of his friends with him. (My name was mentioned in parenthesis). She promised on her side to invite Shatov, as the brother of Darya Pavlovna. "You can obtain a final answer from her: will that be enough for you? Is this the formality you were so anxious for?"

"Observe that irritable phrase about formality. Poor thing, poor thing, the friend of my whole life! I confess the sudden determination of my whole future almost crushed me. . . . I confess I still had hopes, but now *tout est dit*. I know now that all is over. *C'est terrible!* Oh, that that Sunday would never come and everything would go on in the old way. You would have gone on coming and I'd have gone on here. . . ."

"You've been upset by all those nasty things Liputin said, those slanders."

"My dear, you have touched on another sore spot with your friendly finger. Such friendly fingers are generally merciless and sometimes unreasonable; *pardon*, you may not believe it,

but I'd almost forgotten all that, all that nastiness, not that I forgot it, indeed, but in my foolishness I tried all the while I was with Lise to be happy and persuaded myself I was happy. But now . . . Oh, now I'm thinking of that generous, humane woman, so long-suffering with my contemptible failings—not that she's been altogether long-suffering, but what have I been with my horrid, worthless character! I'm a capricious child, with all the egoism of a child and none of the innocence. For the last twenty years she's been looking after me like a nurse, *cette pauvre* auntie, as Lise so charmingly calls her. . . . And now, after twenty years, the child clamours to be married, sending letter after letter, while her head's in a vinegar-compress and . . . now he's got it—on Sunday I shall be a married man, that's no joke. . . . And why did I keep insisting myself, what did I write those letters for? Oh, I forgot. Lise idolises Darya Pavlovna, she says so anyway; she says of her '*c'est un ange*, only rather a reserved one.' They both advised me, even Praskovya. . . . Praskovya didn't advise me though. Oh, what venom lies concealed in that 'Box'! And Lise didn't exactly advise me: 'What do you want to get married for,' she said, 'your intellectual pleasures ought to be enough for you.' She laughed. I forgive her for laughing, for there's an ache in her own heart. You can't get on without a woman though, they said to me. The infirmities of age are coming upon you, and she will tuck you up, or whatever it is. . . . *Ma foi*, I've been thinking myself all this time I've been sitting with you that Providence was sending her to me in the decline of my stormy years and that she would tuck me up, or whatever they call it . . . *enfin*, she'll be handy for the housekeeping. See what a litter there is, look how everything's lying about. I said it must be cleared up this morning, and look at the book on the floor! *La pauvre amie* was always angry at the untidiness here. . . . Ah, now I shall no longer hear her voice! *Vingt ans*! And it seems they've had anonymous letters. Only fancy, it's said that Nicolas has sold Lebyadkin his property. *C'est un monstre; et enfin* what is Lebyadkin? Lise listens, and listens, ooh, how she listens! I forgave her laughing. I saw her face as she listened, and *ce Maurice* . . . I shouldn't care to be in his shoes now, *brave homme tout de même*, but rather shy; but never mind him. . . ."

He paused. He was tired and upset, and sat with drooping head, staring at the floor with his tired eyes. I took advantage of the interval to tell him of my visit to Filipov's house, and curtly and dryly expressed my opinion that Lebyadkin's sister (whom I had never seen) really might have been somehow victimised by Nicolas at some time during that mysterious period of his life, as Liputin had called it, and that it was very possible that Lebyadkin received sums of money from Nicolas for some reason, but that was all. As for the scandal about Darya Pavlovna, that was all nonsense, all that brute Liputin's misrepresentations, that this was anyway what Alexey Nilitch warmly maintained, and we had no grounds for disbelieving him. Stepan Trofimovitch listened to my assurances with an absent air, as though they did not concern him. I mentioned by the way my conversation with Kirillov, and added that he might be mad.

"He's not mad, but one of those shallow-minded people," he mumbled listlessly. "*Ces gens-là supposent la nature et la société humaine autres que Dieu ne les a faites et qu'elles ne sont réellement*. People try to make up to them, but Stepan Verhovensky does not, anyway. I saw them that time in Petersburg *avec cette chère amie* (oh, how I used to wound her then), and I wasn't afraid of their abuse or even of their praise. I'm not afraid now either. *Mais parlons d'autre chose*. . . . I believe I have done dreadful things. Only fancy, I sent a letter yesterday to Darya Pavlovna and . . . how I curse myself for it!"

"What did you write about?"

"Oh, my friend, believe me, it was all done in a noble spirit. I let her know that I had written to Nicolas five days before, also in a noble spirit."

"I understand now!" I cried with heat. "And what right had you to couple their names like that?"

"But, *mon cher*, don't crush me completely, don't shout at me; as it is I'm utterly squashed like . . . a black-beetle. And, after all, I thought it was all so honourable. Suppose that something really happened . . . *en Suisse* . . . or was beginning. I was bound to question their hearts beforehand that I . . . *enfin*, that I might not constrain their hearts, and be a

stumbling-block in their paths. I acted simply from honourable feeling."

"Oh, heavens! What a stupid thing you've done!" I cried involuntarily.

"Yes, yes," he assented with positive eagerness. "You have never said anything more just, *c'était bête, mais que faire? Tout est dit*. I shall marry her just the same even if it be to cover 'another's sins.' So there was no object in writing, was there?"

"You're at that idea again!"

"Oh, you won't frighten me with your shouts now. You see a different Stepan Verhovensky before you now. The man I was is buried. *Enfin, tout est dit*. And why do you cry out? Simply because you're not getting married, and you won't have to wear a certain decoration on your head. Does that shock you again? My poor friend, you don't know woman, while I have done nothing but study her. 'If you want to conquer the world, conquer yourself'—the one good thing that another romantic like you, my bride's brother, Shatov, has succeeded in saying. I would gladly borrow from him his phrase. Well, here I am ready to conquer myself, and I'm getting married. And what am I conquering by way of the whole world? Oh, my friend, marriage is the moral death of every proud soul, of all independence. Married life will corrupt me, it will sap my energy, my courage in the service of the cause. Children will come, probably not my own either—certainly not my own: a wise man is not afraid to face the truth. Liputin proposed this morning putting up barricades to keep out Nicolas; Liputin's a fool. A woman would deceive the all-seeing eye itself. *Le bon Dieu* knew what He was in for when He was creating woman, but I'm sure that she meddled in it herself and forced Him to create her such as she is . . . and with such attributes: for who would have incurred so much trouble for nothing? I know Nastasya may be angry with me for free-thinking, but . . . *enfin, tout est dit*."

He wouldn't have been himself if he could have dispensed with the cheap gibing free-thought which was in vogue in his day. Now, at any rate, he comforted himself with a gibe, but not for long.

"Oh, if that day after to-morrow, that Sunday, might never

come!" he exclaimed suddenly, this time in utter despair. "Why could not this one week be without a Sunday—*si le miracle existe*? What would it be to Providence to blot out one Sunday from the calendar? If only to prove His power to the *atheists et que tout soit dit*! Oh, how I loved her! Twenty years, these twenty years, and she has never understood me!"

"But of whom are you talking? Even I don't understand you!" I asked, wondering.

"*Vingt ans*! And she has not once understood me; oh, it's cruel! And can she really believe that I am marrying from fear, from poverty? Oh, the shame of it! Oh, Auntie, Auntie, I do it for you! . . . Oh, let her know, that Auntie, that she is the one woman I have adored for twenty years! She must learn this, it must be so, if not they will need force to drag me under *ce qu'on appelle* le wedding-crown."

It was the first time I had heard this confession, and so vigorously uttered. I won't conceal the fact that I was terribly tempted to laugh. I was wrong.

"He is the only one left me now, the only one, my one hope!" he cried suddenly, clasping his hands as though struck by a new idea. "Only he, my poor boy, can save me now, and, oh, why doesn't he come! Oh, my son, oh, my Petrusha. . . . And though I do not deserve the name of father, but rather that of tiger, yet . . . *Laissez-moi, mon ami*, I'll lie down a little, to collect my ideas. I am so tired, so tired. And I think it's time you were in bed. *Voyez vous*, it's twelve o'clock."

CHAPTER IV

THE CRIPPLE

I

SHATOV was not perverse but acted on my note, and called at midday on Lizaveta Nikolaevna. We went in almost together; I was also going to make my first call. They were all, that is Liza, her mother, and Mavriky Nikolaevitch, sitting in the big drawing-room, arguing. The mother was asking Liza to play some waltz on the piano, and as soon as Liza began to play the piece asked for, declared it was not the right one. Mavriky Nikolaevitch in the simplicity of his heart took Liza's part, maintaining that it was the right waltz. The elder lady was so angry that she began to cry. She was ill and walked with difficulty. Her legs were swollen, and for the last few days she had been continually fractious, quarrelling with every one, though she always stood rather in awe of Liza. They were pleased to see us. Liza flushed with pleasure, and saying "*merci*" to me, on Shatov's account of course, went to meet him, looking at him with interest.

Shatov stopped awkwardly in the doorway. Thanking him for coming she led him up to her mother.

"This is Mr. Shatov, of whom I have told you, and this is Mr. G——v, a great friend of mine and of Stepan Trofimovitch's. Mavriky Nikolaevitch made his acquaintance yesterday, too."

"And which is the professor?"

"There's no professor at all, maman."

"But there is. You said yourself that there'd be a professor. It's this one, probably." She disdainfully indicated Shatov.

"I didn't tell you that there'd be a professor. Mr. G——v is in the service, and Mr. Shatov is a former student."

"A student or professor, they all come from the university just the same. You only want to argue. But the Swiss one had moustaches and a beard."

"It's the son of Stepan Trofimovitch that maman always calls the professor," said Liza, and she took Shatov away to the sofa at the other end of the drawing-room.

"When her legs swell, she's always like this, you understand she's ill," she whispered to Shatov, still with the same marked curiosity, scrutinising him, especially his shock of hair.

"Are you an officer?" the old lady inquired of me. Liza had mercilessly abandoned me to her.

"N-no. I'm in the service. . . ."

"Mr. G——v is a great friend of Stepan Trofimovitch's," Liza chimed in immediately.

"Are you in Stepan Trofimovitch's service? Yes, and he's a professor, too, isn't he?"

"Ah, maman, you must dream at night of professors," cried Liza with annoyance.

"I see too many when I'm awake. But you always will contradict your mother. Were you here four years ago when Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was in the neighbourhood?"

I answered that I was.

"And there was some Englishman with you?"

"No, there was not."

Liza laughed.

"Well, you see there was no Englishman, so it must have been idle gossip. And Varvara Petrovna and Stepan Trofimovitch both tell lies. And they all tell lies."

"Auntie and Stepan Trofimovitch yesterday thought there was a resemblance between Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch and Prince Harry in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, and in answer to that maman says that there was no Englishman here," Liza explained to us.

"If Harry wasn't here, there was no Englishman. It was no one else but Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch at his tricks."

"I assure you that maman's doing it on purpose," Liza thought necessary to explain to Shatov. "She's really heard of Shakespeare. I read her the first act of *Othello* myself. But she's in great pain now. Maman, listen, it's striking twelve, it's time you took your medicine."

"The doctor's come," a maid-servant announced at the door.

The old lady got up and began calling her dog: "Zemirka, Zemirka, you come with me at least."

Zemirka, a horrid little old dog, instead of obeying, crept under the sofa where Liza was sitting.

"Don't you want to? Then I don't want you. Good-bye, my good sir, I don't know your name or your father's," she said, addressing me.

"Anton Lavrentyevitch . . ."

"Well, it doesn't matter, with me it goes in at one ear and out of the other. Don't you come with me, Mavriky Nikolaevitch, it was Zemirka I called. Thank God I can still walk without help and to-morrow I shall go for a drive."

She walked angrily out of the drawing-room.

"Anton Lavrentyevitch, will you talk meanwhile to Mavriky Nikolaevitch; I assure you you'll both be gainers by getting to know one another better," said Liza, and she gave a friendly smile to Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who beamed all over as she looked at him. There was no help for it, I remained to talk to Mavriky Nikolaevitch.

II

Lizaveta Nikolaevna's business with Shatov turned out, to my surprise, to be really only concerned with literature. I had imagined, I don't know why, that she had asked him to come with some other object. We, Mavriky Nikolaevitch and I that is, seeing that they were talking aloud and not trying to hide anything from us, began to listen, and at last they asked our advice. It turned out that Lizaveta Nikolaevna was thinking of bringing out a book which she thought would be of use, but being quite inexperienced she needed some one to help her. The earnestness with which she began to explain her plan to Shatov quite surprised me.

"She must be one of the new people," I thought. "She has not been to Switzerland for nothing."

Shatov listened with attention, his eyes fixed on the ground, showing not the slightest surprise that a giddy young lady in society should take up work that seemed so out of keeping with her.

Her literary scheme was as follows. Numbers of papers and journals are published in the capitals and the provinces of Russia, and every day a number of events are reported in them. The year passes, the newspapers are everywhere folded up and put away in cupboards, or are torn up and become litter, or are used for making parcels or wrapping things. Numbers of these facts make an impression and are remembered by the public, but in the course of years they are forgotten. Many people would like to look them up, but it is a labour for them to embark upon this sea of paper, often knowing nothing of the day or place or even year in which the incident occurred. Yet if all the facts for a whole year were brought together into one book, on a definite plan, and with a definite object, under headings with references, arranged according to months and days, such a compilation might reflect the characteristics of Russian life for the whole year, even though the facts published are only a small fraction of the events that take place.

"Instead of a number of newspapers there would be a few fat books, that's all," observed Shatov.

But Lizaveta Nikolaevna clung to her idea, in spite of the difficulty of carrying it out and her inability to describe it. "It ought to be one book, and not even a very thick one," she maintained. But even if it were thick it would be clear, for the great point would be the plan and the character of the presentation of facts. Of course not all would be collected and reprinted. The decrees and acts of government, local regulations, laws—all such facts, however important, might be altogether omitted from the proposed publication. They could leave out a great deal and confine themselves to a selection of events more or less characteristic of the moral life of the people, of the personal character of the Russian people at the present moment. Of course everything might be put in: strange incidents, fires, public subscriptions, anything good or bad, every speech or word, perhaps even floodings of the rivers, perhaps even some government decrees, but only such things to be selected as are characteristic of the period; everything would be put in with a certain view, a special significance and intention, with an idea which would illuminate the facts looked at in the aggregate, as a whole. And finally the book ought to be interesting even for light reading, apart from its value as a

work of reference. It would be, so to say, a presentation of the spiritual, moral, inner life of Russia for a whole year.

"We want every one to buy it, we want it to be a book that will be found on every table," Liza declared. "I understand that all lies in the plan, and that's why I apply to you," she concluded. She grew very warm over it, and although her explanation was obscure and incomplete, Shatov began to understand.

"So it would amount to something with a political tendency, a selection of facts with a special tendency," he muttered, still not raising his head.

"Not at all, we must not select with a particular bias, and we ought not to have any political tendency in it. Nothing but impartiality—that will be the only tendency."

"But a tendency would be no harm," said Shatov, with a slight movement, "and one can hardly avoid it if there is any selection at all. The very selection of facts will suggest how they are to be understood. Your idea is not a bad one."

"Then such a book is possible?" cried Liza delightedly.

"We must look into it and consider. It's an immense undertaking. One can't work it out on the spur of the moment. We need experience. And when we do publish the book I doubt whether we shall find out how to do it. Possibly after many trials; but the thought is alluring. It's a useful idea."

He raised his eyes at last, and they were positively sparkling with pleasure, he was so interested.

"Was it your own idea?" he asked Liza, in a friendly and, as it were, bashful way.

"The idea's no trouble, you know, it's the plan is the trouble," Liza smiled. "I understand very little. I am not very clever, and I only pursue what is clear to me, myself. . . ."

"Pursue?"

"Perhaps that's not the right word?" Liza inquired quickly.

"The word is all right; I meant nothing."

"I thought while I was abroad that even I might be of some use. I have money of my own lying idle. Why shouldn't I—even I—work for the common cause? Besides, the idea somehow occurred to me all at once of itself. I didn't invent it at all, and was delighted with it. But I saw at once that I couldn't get on without some one to help, because I am not competent

to do anything of myself. My helper, of course, would be the co-editor of the book. We would go halves. You would give the plan and the work. Mine would be the original idea and the means for publishing it. Would the book pay its expenses, do you think?"

"If we hit on a good plan the book will go."

"I warn you that I am not doing it for profit; but I am very anxious that the book should circulate and should be very proud of making a profit."

"Well, but how do I come in?"

"Why, I invite you to be my fellow-worker, to go halves. You will think out the plan."

"How do you know that I am capable of thinking out the plan?"

"People have talked about you to me, and here I've heard . . . I know that you are very clever and . . . are working for the cause . . . and think a great deal. Pytor Stepanovitch Verhovensky spoke about you in Switzerland," she added hurriedly. "He's a very clever man, isn't he?"

Shatov stole a fleeting, momentary glance at her, but dropped his eyes again.

"Nikolay Vsevolodovitch told me a great deal about you, too."

Shatov suddenly turned red.

"But here are the newspapers," Liza hurriedly picked up from a chair a bundle of newspapers that lay tied up ready. "I've tried to mark the facts here for selection, to sort them, and I have put the papers together . . . you will see."

Shatov took the bundle.

"Take them home and look at them. Where do you live?"

"In Bogoyavlensky Street, Filipov's house."

"I know. I think it's there, too, I've been told, a captain lives, beside you, Mr. Lebyadkin," said Liza in the same hurried manner.

Shatov sat for a full minute with the bundle in his outstretched hand, making no answer and staring at the floor.

"You'd better find some one else for these jobs. I shouldn't suit you at all," he brought out at last, dropping his voice in an awfully strange way, almost to a whisper.

Liza flushed crimson.

"I have never seen her, but I've heard that she's lame. I heard it yesterday," I said with hurried readiness, and also in a whisper.

"I must see her, absolutely. Could you arrange it to-day?" I felt dreadfully sorry for her.

"That's utterly impossible, and, besides, I should not know at all how to set about it," I began persuading her. "I'll go to Shatov. . . ."

"If you don't arrange it by to-morrow I'll go to her by myself, alone, for Mavriky Nikolaevitch has refused. I rest all my hopes on you and I've no one else; I spoke stupidly to Shatov. . . . I'm sure that you are perfectly honest and perhaps ready to do anything for me, only arrange it."

I felt a passionate desire to help her in every way.

"This is what I'll do," I said, after a moment's thought. "I'll go myself to-day and will see her sure, *for sure*. I will manage so as to see her. I give you my word of honour. Only let me confide to Shatov."

"Tell him that I do desire it, and that I can't wait any longer, but that I wasn't deceiving him just now. He went away perhaps because he's very honest and he didn't like my seeming to deceive him. I wasn't deceiving him, I really do want to edit books and found a printing-press. . . ."

"He is honest, very honest," I assented warmly.

"If it's not arranged by to-morrow, though, I shall go myself whatever happens, and even if every one were to know."

"I can't be with you before three o'clock to-morrow," I observed, after a moment's deliberation.

"At three o'clock then. Then it was true what I imagined yesterday at Stepan Trofimovitch's, that you—are rather devoted to me?" she said with a smile, hurriedly pressing my hand to say good-bye, and hurrying back to the forsaken Mavriky Nikolaevitch.

I went out weighed down by my promise, and unable to understand what had happened. I had seen a woman in real despair, not hesitating to compromise herself by confiding in a man she hardly knew. Her womanly smile at a moment so terrible for her and her hint that she had noticed my feelings the day before sent a pang to my heart; but I felt sorry for her, very sorry—that was all! Her secrets became at once something

sacred for me, and if anyone had begun to reveal them to me now, I think I should have covered my ears, and should have refused to hear anything more. I only had a presentiment of something . . . yet I was utterly at a loss to see how I could do anything. What's more I did not even yet understand exactly what I had to arrange; an interview, but what sort of an interview? And how could I bring them together? My only hope was Shatov, though I could be sure that he wouldn't help me in any way. But all the same, I hurried to him.

IV

I did not find him at home till past seven o'clock that evening. To my surprise he had visitors with him—Alexey Nilitch, and another gentleman I hardly knew, one Shigalov, the brother of Virginsky's wife.

This gentleman must, I think, have been staying about two months in the town; I don't know where he came from. I had only heard that he had written some sort of article in a progressive Petersburg magazine. Virginsky had introduced me casually to him in the street. I had never in my life seen in a man's face so much despondency, gloom, and moroseness. He looked as though he were expecting the destruction of the world, and not at some indefinite time in accordance with prophecies, which might never be fulfilled, but quite definitely, as though it were to be the day after to-morrow at twenty-five minutes past ten. We hardly said a word to one another on that occasion, but had simply shaken hands like two conspirators. I was most struck by his ears, which were of unnatural size, long, broad, and thick, sticking out in a peculiar way. His gestures were slow and awkward. If Liputin had imagined that a phalanstery might be established in our province, this gentleman certainly knew the day and the hour when it would be founded. He made a sinister impression on me. I was the more surprised at finding him here, as Shatov was not fond of visitors.

I could hear from the stairs that they were talking very loud, all three at once, and I fancy they were disputing; but as soon as I went in, they all ceased speaking. They were arguing,

standing up, but now they all suddenly sat down, so that I had to sit down too. There was a stupid silence that was not broken for fully three minutes. Though Shigalov knew me, he affected not to know me, probably not from hostile feelings, but for no particular reason. Alexey Nilitch and I bowed to one another in silence, and for some reason did not shake hands. Shigalov began at last looking at me sternly and frowningly, with the most naïve assurance that I should immediately get up and go away. At last Shatov got up from his chair and the others jumped up at once. They went out without saying good-bye. Shigalov only said in the doorway to Shatov, who was seeing him out:

"Remember that you are bound to give an explanation."

"Hang your explanation, and who the devil am I bound to?" said Shatov. He showed them out and fastened the door with the latch.

"Snipes!" he said, looking at me, with a sort of wry smile.

His face looked angry, and it seemed strange to me that he spoke first. When I had been to see him before (which was not often) it had usually happened that he sat scowling in a corner, answering ill-humouredly and only completely thawed and began to talk with pleasure after a considerable time. Even so, when he was saying good-bye he always scowled, and let one out as though he were getting rid of a personal enemy.

"I had tea yesterday with that Alexey Nilitch," I observed. "I think he's mad on atheism."

"Russian atheism has never gone further than making a joke," growled Shatov, putting up a new candle in place of an end that had burnt out.

"No, this one doesn't seem to me a joker, I think he doesn't know how to talk, let alone trying to make jokes."

"Men made of paper! It all comes from flunkeyism of thought," Shatov observed calmly, sitting down on a chair in the corner, and pressing the palms of both hands on his knees.

"There's hatred in it, too," he went on, after a minute's pause. "They'd be the first to be terribly unhappy if Russia could be suddenly reformed, even to suit their own ideas, and became extraordinarily prosperous and happy. They'd have no one to hate then, no one to curse, nothing to find fault with. There is nothing in it but an immense animal hatred for Rus-

sia which has eaten into their organism. . . . And it isn't a case of tears unseen by the world under cover of a smile! There has never been a false word said in Russia than about those unseen tears," he cried, almost with fury.

"Goodness only knows what you're saying," I laughed.

"Oh, you're a 'moderate liberal,' said Shatov, smiling too. "Do you know," he went on suddenly, "I may have been talking nonsense about the 'flunkeyism of thought.' You will say to me no doubt directly, 'it's you who are the son of a flunkey, but I'm not a flunkey.'"

"I wasn't dreaming of such a thing. . . . What are you saying!"

"You need not apologise. I'm not afraid of you. Once I was only the son of a flunkey, but now I've become a flunkey myself, like you. Our Russian liberal is a flunkey before everything, and is only looking for some one whose boots he can clean."

"What boots? What allegory is this?"

"Allegory, indeed! You are laughing, I see. . . . Stepan Trofimovitch said truly that I lie under a stone, crushed but not killed, and do nothing but wriggle. It was a good comparison of his."

"Stepan Trofimovitch declares that you are mad over the Germans," I laughed. "We've borrowed something from them anyway."

"We took twenty kopecks, but we gave up a hundred roubles of our own."

We were silent a minute.

"He got that sore lying in America."

"Who? What sore?"

"I mean Kirillov. I spent four months with him lying on the floor of a hut."

"Why, have you been in America?" I asked, surprised. "You never told me about it."

"What is there to tell? The year before last we spent our last farthing, three of us, going to America in an emigrant steamer, to test the life of the American workman on ourselves, and to verify by *personal* experiment the state of a man in the hardest social conditions. That was our object in going there."

"Good Lord!" I laughed. "You'd much better have gone

somewhere in our province at harvest-time if you wanted to 'make a personal experiment' instead of bolting to America."

"We hired ourselves out as workmen to an exploiter; there were six of us Russians working for him—students, even land-owners coming from their estates, some officers, too, and all with the same grand object. Well, so we worked, sweated, wore ourselves out; Kirillov and I were exhausted at last; fell ill—went away—we couldn't stand it. Our employer cheated us when he paid us off; instead of thirty dollars, as he had agreed, he paid me eight and Kirillov fifteen; he beat us, too, more than once. So then we were left without work, Kirillov and I, and we spent four months lying on the floor in that little town. He thought of one thing and I thought of another."

"You don't mean to say your employer beat you? In America? How you must have sworn at him!"

"Not a bit of it. On the contrary, Kirillov and I made up our minds from the first that we Russians were like little children beside the Americans, and that one must be born in America, or at least live for many years with Americans to be on a level with them. And do you know, if we were asked a dollar for a thing worth a farthing, we used to pay it with pleasure, in fact with enthusiasm. We approved of everything: spiritualism, lynch-law, revolvers, tramps. Once when we were travelling a fellow slipped his hand into my pocket, took my brush, and began brushing his hair with it. Kirillov and I only looked at one another, and made up our minds that that was the right thing and that we liked it very much. . . ."

"The strange thing is that with us all this is not only in the brain but is carried out in practice," I observed.

"Men made of paper," Shatov repeated.

"But to cross the ocean in an emigrant steamer, though, to go to an unknown country, even to make a personal experiment and all that—by Jove . . . there really is a large-hearted staunchness about it. . . . But how did you get out of it?"

"I wrote to a man in Europe and he sent me a hundred roubles."

As Shatov talked he looked doggedly at the ground as he always did, even when he was excited. At this point he suddenly raised his head.

"Do you want to know the man's name?"

"Who was it?"

"Nikolay Stavrogin."

He got up suddenly, turned to his limewood writing-table and began searching for something on it. There was a vague, though well-authenticated rumour among us that Shatov's wife had at one time had a liaison with Nikolay Stavrogin, in Paris, and just about two years ago, that is when Shatov was in America. It is true that this was long after his wife had left him in Geneva.

"If so, what possesses him now to bring his name forward and to lay stress on it?" I thought.

"I haven't paid him back yet," he said, turning suddenly to me again, and looking at me intently he sat down in the same place as before in the corner, and asked abruptly, in quite a different voice:

"You have come no doubt with some object. What do you want?"

I told him everything immediately, in its exact historical order, and added that though I had time to think it over coolly after the first excitement was over, I was more puzzled than ever. I saw that it meant something very important to Lizaveta Nikolaevna. I was extremely anxious to help her, but the trouble was that I didn't know how to keep the promise I had made her, and didn't even quite understand now what I had promised her. Then I assured him impressively once more that she had not meant to deceive him, and had had no thought of doing so; that there had been some misunderstanding, and that she had been very much hurt by the extraordinary way in which he had gone off that morning.

He listened very attentively.

"Perhaps I was stupid this morning, as I usually am. . . . Well, if she didn't understand why I went away like that . . . so much the better for her."

He got up, went to the door, opened it, and began listening on the stairs.

"Do you want to see that person yourself?"

"That's just what I wanted, but how is it to be done?" I cried, delighted.

"Let's simply go down while she's alone. When he comes in he'll beat her horribly if he finds out we've been there. I

often go in ~~on~~ the sly. I went for him this morning when he began beating her again."

"What do you mean?"

"I dragged him off her by the hair. He tried to beat me, but I frightened him, and so it ended. I'm afraid he'll come back drunk, and won't forget it—he'll give her a bad beating because of it."

We went downstairs at once.

V

The Lebyadkins' door was shut but not locked, and we were able to go in. Their lodging consisted of two nasty little rooms, with smoke-begrimed walls on which the filthy wall-paper literally hung in tatters. It had been used for some years as an eating-house, until Filipov, the tavern-keeper, moved to another house. The other rooms below what had been the eating-house were now shut up, and these two were all the Lebyadkins had. The furniture consisted of plain benches and deal tables, except for an old arm-chair that had lost its arms. In the second room there was the bedstead that belonged to Mlle. Lebyadkin standing in the corner, covered with a chintz quilt; the captain himself went to bed anywhere on the floor, often without undressing. Everything was in disorder, wet and filthy; a huge soaking rag lay in the middle of the floor in the first room, and a battered old shoe lay beside it in the wet. It was evident that no one looked after anything here. The stove was not heated, food was not cooked; they had not even a samovar as Shatov told me. The captain had come to the town with his sister utterly destitute, and had, as Liputin said, at first actually gone from house to house begging. But having unexpectedly received some money, he had taken to drinking at once, and had become so besotted that he was incapable of looking after things.

Mlle. Lebyadkin, whom I was so anxious to see, was sitting quietly at a deal kitchen table on a bench in the corner of the inner room, not making a sound. When we opened the door she did not call out to us or even move from her place. Shatov said that the door into the passage would not lock and it had

once stood wide open all night. By the dim light of a thin candle in an iron candlestick, I made out a woman of about thirty, perhaps, sickly and emaciated, wearing an old dress of dark cotton material, with her long neck uncovered, her scanty dark hair twisted into a knot on the nape of her neck, no larger than the fist of a two-year-old child. She looked at us rather cheerfully. Besides the candlestick, she had on the table in front of her a little peasant looking-glass, an old pack of cards, a tattered book of songs, and a white roll of German bread from which one or two bites had been taken. It was noticeable that Mlle. Lebyadkin used powder and rouge, and painted her lips. She also blackened her eyebrows, which were fine, long, and black enough without that. Three long wrinkles stood sharply conspicuous across her high, narrow forehead in spite of the powder on it. I already knew that she was lame, but on this occasion she did not attempt to get up or walk. At some time, perhaps in early youth, that wasted face may have been pretty; but her soft, gentle grey eyes were remarkable even now. There was something dreamy and sincere in her gentle, almost joyful, expression. This gentle serene joy, which was reflected also in her smile, astonished me after all I had heard of the Cossack whip and her brother's violence. Strange to say, instead of the oppressive repulsion and almost dread one usually feels in the presence of these creatures afflicted by God, I felt it almost pleasant to look at her from the first moment, and my heart was filled afterwards with pity in which there was no trace of aversion.

"This is how she sits literally for days together, utterly alone, without moving; she tries her fortune with the cards, or looks in the looking-glass," said Shatov, pointing her out to me from the doorway. "He doesn't feed her, you know. The old woman in the lodge brings her something sometimes out of charity; how can they leave her all alone like this with a candle!"

To my surprise Shatov spoke aloud, just as though she were not in the room.

"Good day, Shatushka!" Mlle. Lebyadkin said genially.

"I've brought you a visitor, Marya Timofyevna," said Shatov.

"The visitor is very welcome. I don't know who it is you've

brought, I don't seem to remember him." She scrutinised me intently from behind the candle, and turned again at once to Shatov (and she took no more notice of me for the rest of the conversation, as though I had not been near her).

"Are you tired of walking up and down alone in your garret?" she laughed, displaying two rows of magnificent teeth.

"I was tired of it, and I wanted to come and see you."

Shatov moved a bench up to the table, sat down on it and made me sit beside him.

"I'm always glad to have a talk, though you're a funny person, Shatushka, just like a monk. When did you comb your hair last? Let me do it for you." And she pulled a little comb out of her pocket. "I don't believe you've touched it since I combed it last."

"Well, I haven't got a comb," said Shatov, laughing too.

"Really? Then I'll give you mine; only remind me, not this one but another."

With a more serious expression she set to work to comb his hair. She even parted it on one side; drew back a little, looked to see whether it was right and put the comb back in her pocket.

"Do you know what, Shatushka?" She shook her head. "You may be a very sensible man but you're dull. It's strange for me to look at all of you. I don't understand how it is people are dull. Sadness is not dullness. I'm happy."

"And are you happy when your brother's here?"

"You mean Lebyadkin? He's my footman. And I don't care whether he's here or not. I call to him: 'Lebyadkin, bring the water!' or 'Lebyadkin, bring my shoes!' and he runs. Sometimes one does wrong and can't help laughing at him."

"That's just how it is," said Shatov, addressing me aloud without ceremony. "She treats him just like a footman. I've heard her myself calling to him, 'Lebyadkin, give me some water!' And she laughed as she said it. The only difference is that he doesn't fetch the water but beats her for it; but she isn't a bit afraid of him. She has some sort of nervous fits, almost every day, and they are destroying her memory so that afterwards she forgets everything that's just happened, and is always in a muddle over time. You imagine she remembers how you came in; perhaps she does remember, but no doubt

she has changed everything to please herself, and she takes us now for different people from what we are, though she knows I'm 'Shatushka.' It doesn't matter my speaking aloud, she soon leaves off listening to people who talk to her, and plunges into dreams. Yes, plunges. She's an extraordinary person for dreaming; she'll sit for eight hours, for whole days together in the same place. You see there's a roll lying there, perhaps she's only taken one bite at it since the morning, and she'll finish it to-morrow. Now she's begun trying her fortune on cards."

"I keep trying my fortune, Shatushka, but it doesn't come out right," Marya Timofeyevna put in suddenly, catching the last word, and without looking at it she put out her left hand for the roll (she had heard something about the roll too very likely). She got hold of the roll at last and after keeping it for some time in her left hand, while her attention was distracted by the conversation which sprang up again, she put it back again on the table unconsciously without having taken a bite of it.

"It always comes out the same, a journey, a wicked man, somebody's treachery, a death-bed, a letter, unexpected news. I think it's all nonsense. Shatushka, what do you think? If people can tell lies why shouldn't a card?" She suddenly threw the cards together again. "I said the same thing to Mother Praskovya, she's a very venerable woman, she used to run to my cell to tell her fortune on the cards, without letting the Mother Superior know. Yes, and she wasn't the only one who came to me. They sigh, and shake their heads at me, they talk it over while I laugh. 'Where are you going to get a letter from, Mother Praskovya,' I say, 'when you haven't had one for twelve years?' Her daughter had been taken away to Turkey by her husband, and for twelve years there had been no sight nor sound of her. Only I was sitting the next evening at tea with the Mother Superior (she was a princess by birth); there was some lady there too, a visitor, a great dreamer, and a little monk from Athos was sitting there too, a rather absurd man to my thinking. What do you think, Shatushka, that monk from Athos had brought Mother Praskovya a letter from her daughter in Turkey, that morning—so much for the knave of diamonds—unexpected news! We were drinking our tea, and the monk from Athos said to the Mother Superior,

'Blessed Mother Superior, God has blessed your convent above all things in that you preserve so great a treasure in its precincts,' said he. 'What treasure is that?' asked the Mother Superior. 'The Mother Lizaveta, the Blessed.' This Lizaveta the Blessed was enshrined in the nunnery wall, in a cage seven feet long and five feet high, and she had been sitting there for seventeen years in nothing but a hempen shift, summer and winter, and she always kept pecking at the hempen cloth with a straw or a twig of some sort, and she never said a word, and never combed her hair, or washed, for seventeen years. In the winter they used to put a sheepskin in for her, and every day a piece of bread and a jug of water. The pilgrims gaze at her, sigh and exclaim, and make offerings of money. 'A treasure you've pitched on,' answered the Mother Superior—(she was angry, she disliked Lizaveta dreadfully)—'Lizaveta only sits there out of spite, out of pure obstinacy, it is nothing but hypocrisy.' I didn't like this; I was thinking at the time of shutting myself up too. 'I think,' said I, 'that God and nature are just the same thing.' They all cried out with one voice at me, 'Well, now!' The Mother Superior laughed, whispered something to the lady and called me up, petted me, and the lady gave me a pink ribbon. Would you like me to show it to you? And the monk began to admonish me. But he talked so kindly, so humbly, and so wisely, I suppose. I sat and listened. 'Do you understand?' he asked. 'No,' I said, 'I don't understand a word, but leave me quite alone.' Ever since then they've left me in peace, Shatushka. And at that time an old woman who was living in the convent doing penance for prophesying the future, whispered to me as she was coming out of church, 'What is the mother of God? What do you think?' 'The great mother,' I answer, 'the hope of the human race.' 'Yes,' she answered, 'the mother of God is the great mother—the damp earth, and therein lies great joy for men. And every earthly woe and every earthly tear is a joy for us; and when you water the earth with your tears a foot deep, you will rejoice at everything at once, and your sorrow will be no more, such is the prophecy.' That word sank into my heart at the time. Since then when I bow down to the ground at my prayers, I've taken to kissing the earth. I kiss it and weep. And let me tell you, Shatushka, there's no harm in those tears; and

even if one has no grief, one's tears flow from joy. The tears flow of themselves, that's the truth. I used to go out to the shores of the lake; on one side was our convent and on the other the pointed mountain, they called it the Peak. I used to go up that mountain, facing the east, fall down to the ground, and weep and weep, and I don't know how long I wept, and I don't remember or know anything about it. I would get up, and turn back when the sun was setting, it was so big, and splendid and glorious—do you like looking at the sun, Shatushka? It's beautiful but sad. I would turn to the east again, and the shadow, the shadow of our mountain was flying like an arrow over our lake, long, long and narrow, stretching a mile beyond, right up to the island on the lake and cutting that rocky island right in two, and as it cut it in two, the sun would set altogether and suddenly all would be darkness. And then I used to be quite miserable, suddenly I used to remember, I'm afraid of the dark, Shatushka. And what I wept for most was my baby. . . ."

"Why, had you one?" And Shatov, who had been listening attentively all the time, nudged me with his elbow.

"Why, of course. A little rosy baby with tiny little nails, and my only grief is I can't remember whether it was a boy or a girl. Sometimes I remember it was a boy, and sometimes it was a girl. And when he was born, I wrapped him in cambric and lace, and put pink ribbons on him, strewed him with flowers, got him ready, said prayers over him. I took him away unchristened and carried him through the forest, and I was afraid of the forest, and I was frightened, and what I weep for most is that I had a baby and I never had a husband."

"Perhaps you had one?" Shatov queried cautiously.

"You're absurd, Shatushka, with your reflections. I had, perhaps I had, but what's the use of my having had one if it's just the same as though I hadn't. There's an easy riddle for you. Guess it!" she laughed.

"Where did you take your baby?"

"I took it to the pond," she said with a sigh.

Shatov nudged me again.

"And what if you never had a baby and all this is only a wild dream?"

"You ask me a hard question, Shatushka," she answered

dreamily, without a trace of surprise at such a question. "I can't tell you anything about that, perhaps I hadn't; I think that's only your curiosity. I shan't leave off crying for him anyway, I couldn't have dreamt it." And big tears glittered in her eyes. "Shatushka, Shatushka, is it true that your wife ran away from you?"

She suddenly put both hands on his shoulders, and looked at him pityingly. "Don't be angry, I feel sick myself. Do you know, Shatushka, I've had a dream: he came to me again, he beckoned me, called me. 'My little puss,' he cried to me, 'little puss, come to me!' And I was more delighted at that 'little puss' than anything; he loves me, I thought."

"Perhaps he will come in reality," Shatov muttered in an undertone.

"No, Shatushka, that's a dream. . . . He can't come in reality. You know the song:

*'A new fine house I do not crave,
This tiny cell's enough for me;
There will I dwell my soul to save
And ever pray to God for thee.'*

Ach, Shatushka, Shatushka, my dear, why do you never ask me about anything?"

"Why, you won't tell. That's why I don't ask."

"I won't tell, I won't tell," she answered quickly. "You may kill me, I won't tell. You may burn me, I won't tell. And whatever I had to bear I'd never tell, people won't find out!"

"There, you see. Every one has something of their own," Shatov said, still more softly, his head drooping lower and lower.

"But if you were to ask perhaps I should tell, perhaps I should!" she repeated ecstatically. "Why don't you ask? Ask, ask me nicely, Shatushka, perhaps I shall tell you. Entreat me, Shatushka, so that I shall consent of myself. Shatushka, Shatushka!"

But Shatushka was silent. There was complete silence lasting a minute. Tears slowly trickled down her painted cheeks. She

sat forgetting her two hands on Shatov's shoulders, but no longer looking at him.

"Ach, what is it to do with me, and it's a sin." Shatov suddenly got up from the bench.

"Get up!" He angrily pulled the bench from under me and put it back where it stood before.

"He'll be coming, so we must mind he doesn't guess. It's time we were off."

"Ach, you're talking of my footman," Marya Timofyevna laughed suddenly. "You're afraid of him. Well, good-bye, dear visitors, but listen for one minute, I've something to tell you. That Nilitch came here with Filipov, the landlord, a red beard, and my fellow had flown at me just then, so the landlord caught hold of him and pulled him about the room while he shouted 'It's not my fault, I'm suffering for another man's sin!' So would you believe it, we all burst out laughing. . . ."

"Ach, Timofyevna, why it was I, not the red beard, it was I pulled him away from you by his hair, this morning; the landlord came the day before yesterday to make a row; you've mixed it up."

"Stay, I really have mixed it up. Perhaps it was you. Why dispute about trifles? What does it matter to him who it is gives him a beating?" She laughed.

"Come along!" Shatov pulled me. "The gate's creaking, he'll find us and beat her."

And before we had time to run out on to the stairs we heard a drunken shout and a shower of oaths at the gate.

Shatov let me into his room and locked the door.

"You'll have to stay a minute if you don't want a scene. He's squealing like a little pig, he must have stumbled over the gate again. He falls flat every time."

We didn't get off without a scene, however.

VI

Shatov stood at the closed door of his room and listened; suddenly he sprang back.

"He's coming here, I knew he would," he whispered fu-

riously. "Now there'll be no getting rid of him till midnight."

Several violent thumps of a fist on the door followed.

"Shatov, Shatov, open!" yelled the captain. "Shatov, friend!

*'I have come to thee to tell thee
That the sun doth r-r-rise apace,
That the forest glows and tr-r-rembles
In . . . the fire of . . . his . . . embrace.
Tell thee I have waked, God damn thee,
Wakened under the birch-twigs. . . . '*

("As it might be under the birch-rods, ha ha!")

*'Every little bird . . . is . . . thirsty,
Says I'm going to . . . have a drink,
But I don't . . . know what to drink. . . . '*

"Damn his stupid curiosity! Shatov, do you understand how good it is to be alive!"

"Don't answer!" Shatov whispered to me again.

"Open the door! Do you understand that there's something higher than brawling . . . in mankind; there are moments of an hon-hon-honourable man. . . . Shatov, I'm good; I'll forgive you. . . . Shatov, damn the manifestoes, eh?"

Silence.

"Do you understand, you ass, that I'm in love, that I've bought a dress-coat, look, the garb of love, fifteen roubles; a captain's love calls for the niceties of style. . . . Open the door!" he roared savagely all of a sudden, and he began furiously banging with his fists again.

"Go to hell!" Shatov roared suddenly.

"S-s-slave! Bond-slave, and your sister's a slave, a bonds-woman . . . a th . . . th . . . ief!"

"And you sold your sister."

"That's a lie! I put up with the libel though. I could with one word . . . do you understand what she is?"

"What?" Shatov at once drew near the door inquisitively.

"But will you understand?"

"Yes, I shall understand, tell me what?"

"I'm not afraid to say! I'm never afraid to say anything in public! . . . "

"You not afraid? A likely story," said Shatov, taunting him, and nodding to me to listen.

"Me afraid?"

"Yes, I think you are."

"Me afraid?"

"Well then, tell away if you're not afraid of your master's whip. . . . You're a coward, though you are a captain!"

"I . . . I . . . she's . . . she's . . . " faltered Lebyadkin in a voice shaking with excitement.

"Well?" Shatov put his ear to the door.

A silence followed, lasting at least half a minute.

"Sc-ou-oundrell!" came from the other side of the door at last, and the captain hurriedly beat a retreat downstairs, puffing like a samovar, stumbling on every step.

"Yes, he's a sly one, and won't give himself away even when he's drunk."

Shatov moved away from the door.

"What's it all about?" I asked.

Shatov waved aside the question, opened the door and began listening on the stairs again. He listened a long while, and even stealthily descended a few steps. At last he came back.

"There's nothing to be heard; he isn't beating her; he must have flopped down at once to go to sleep. It's time for you to go."

"Listen, Shatov, what am I to gather from all this?"

"Oh, gather what you like!" he answered in a weary and disgusted voice, and he sat down to his writing-table.

I went away. An improbable idea was growing stronger and stronger in my mind. I thought of the next day with distress. . . .

VII

This "next day," the very Sunday which was to decide Stepan Trofimovitch's fate irrevocably, was one of the most memorable days in my chronicle. It was a day of surprises, a day that solved past riddles and suggested new ones, a day of

startling revelations, and still more hopeless perplexity. In the morning, as the reader is already aware, I had by Varvara Petrovna's particular request to accompany my friend on his visit to her, and at three o'clock in the afternoon I had to be with Lizaveta Nikolaevna in order to tell her—I did not know what—and to assist her—I did not know how. And meanwhile it all ended as no one could have expected. In a word, it was a day of wonderful coincidences.

To begin with, when Stepan Trofimovitch and I arrived at Varvara Petrovna's at twelve o'clock punctually, the time she had fixed, we did not find her at home; she had not yet come back from church. My poor friend was so disposed, or, more accurately speaking, so indisposed that this circumstance crushed him at once; he sank almost helpless into an arm-chair in the drawing-room. I suggested a glass of water; but in spite of his pallor and the trembling of his hands, he refused it with dignity. His get-up for the occasion was, by the way, extremely *recherché*: a shirt of batiste and embroidered, almost fit for a ball, a white tie, a new hat in his hand, new straw-coloured gloves, and even a suspicion of scent. We had hardly sat down when Shatov was shown in by the butler, obviously also by official invitation. Stepan Trofimovitch was rising to shake hands with him, but Shatov, after looking attentively at us both, turned away into a corner, and sat down there without even nodding to us. Stepan Trofimovitch looked at me in dismay again.

We sat like this for some minutes longer in complete silence. Stepan Trofimovitch suddenly began whispering something to me very quickly, but I could not catch it; and indeed, he was so agitated himself that he broke off without finishing. The butler came in once more, ostensibly to set something straight on the table, more probably to take a look at us.

Shatov suddenly addressed him with a loud question:

"Alexey Yegorytch, do you know whether Darya Pavlovna has gone with her?"

"Varvara Petrovna was pleased to drive to the cathedral alone, and Darya Pavlovna was pleased to remain in her room upstairs, being indisposed," Alexey Yegorytch announced formally and reprovingly.

My poor friend again stole a hurried and agitated glance at

me, so that at last I turned away from him. Suddenly a carriage rumbled at the entrance, and some commotion at a distance in the house made us aware of the lady's return. We all leapt up from our easy chairs, but again a surprise awaited us; we heard the noise of many footsteps, so our hostess must have returned not alone, and this certainly was rather strange, since she had fixed that time herself. Finally, we heard some one come in with strange rapidity as though running, in a way that Varvara Petrovna could not have come in. And, all at once she almost flew into the room, panting and extremely agitated. After her a little later and much more quickly Lizaveta Nikolaevna came in, and with her, hand in hand, Marya Timofyevna Lebyadkin! If I had seen this in my dreams, even then I should not have believed it.

To explain their utterly unexpected appearance, I must go back an hour and describe more in detail an extraordinary adventure which had befallen Varvara Petrovna in church.

In the first place almost the whole town, that is, of course, all of the upper stratum of society, were assembled in the cathedral. It was known that the governor's wife was to make her appearance there for the first time since her arrival amongst us. I must mention that there were already rumours that she was a free-thinker, and a follower of "the new principles." All the ladies were also aware that she would be dressed with magnificence and extraordinary elegance. And so the costumes of our ladies were elaborate and gorgeous for the occasion. Only Varvara Petrovna was modestly dressed in black as she always was, and had been for the last four years. She had taken her usual place in church in the first row on the left, and a footman in livery had put down a velvet cushion for her to kneel on; everything in fact, had been as usual. But it was noticed, too, that all through the service she prayed with extreme fervour. It was even asserted afterwards when people recalled it, that she had had tears in her eyes. The service was over at last, and our chief priest, Father Pavel, came out to deliver a solemn sermon. We liked his sermons and thought very highly of them. We used even to try to persuade him to print them, but he never could make up his mind to. On this occasion the sermon was a particularly long one.

And behold, during the sermon a lady drove up to the

near the cathedral. Liza told me afterwards that Miss Lebyadkin laughed hysterically for the three minutes that the drive lasted, while Varvara Petrovna sat "as though in a mesmeric sleep." Liza's own expression.

CHAPTER V

THE SUBTLE SERPENT

I

VARVARA PETROVNA rang the bell and threw herself into an easy chair by the window.

"Sit here, my dear." She motioned Marya Timofyevna to a seat in the middle of the room, by a large round table. "Stepan Trofimovitch, what is the meaning of this? See, see, look at this woman, what is the meaning of it?"

"I . . . I . . ." faltered Stepan Trofimovitch.

But a footman came in.

"A cup of coffee at once, we must have it as quickly as possible! Keep the horses!"

"*Mais, chère et excellente amie, dans quelle inquiétude . . .*" Stepan Trofimovitch exclaimed in a dying voice.

"Ach! French! French! I can see at once that it's the highest society," cried Marya Timofyevna, clapping her hands, ecstatically preparing herself to listen to a conversation in French. Varvara Petrovna stared at her almost in dismay.

We all sat in silence, waiting to see how it would end. Shatov did not lift up his head, and Stepan Trofimovitch was overwhelmed with confusion as though it were all his fault; the perspiration stood out on his temples. I glanced at Liza (she was sitting in the corner almost beside Shatov). Her eyes darted keenly from Varvara Petrovna to the cripple and back again; her lips were drawn into a smile, but not a pleasant one. Varvara Petrovna saw that smile. Meanwhile Marya Timofyevna was absolutely transported. With evident enjoyment and without a trace of embarrassment she stared at Varvara Petrovna's beautiful drawing-room—the furniture,

Timofyevna, who had watched her all the time with light-hearted curiosity, laughed exultingly at the sight of the wrathful guest's finger pointed impetuously at her, and wriggled gleefully in her easy chair.

"God Almighty have mercy on us, they've all gone crazy!" exclaimed Varvara Petrovna, and turning pale she sank back in her chair.

She turned so pale that it caused some commotion. Stepan Trofimovitch was the first to rush up to her. I drew near also; even Liza got up from her seat, though she did not come forward. But the most alarmed of all was Praskovya Ivanovna herself. She uttered a scream, got up as far as she could and almost wailed in a lachrymose voice:

"Varvara Petrovna, dear, forgive me for my wicked foolishness! Give her some water, somebody."

"Don't whimper, please, Praskovya Ivanovna, and leave me alone, gentlemen, please, I don't want any water!" Varvara Petrovna pronounced in a firm though low voice, with blanched lips.

"Varvara Petrovna, my dear," Praskovya Ivanovna went on, a little reassured, "though I am to blame for my reckless words, what's upset me more than anything are these anonymous letters that some low creatures keep bombarding me with; they might write to you, since it concerns you, but I've a daughter!"

Varvara Petrovna looked at her in silence, with wide-open eyes, listening with wonder. At that moment a side-door in the corner opened noiselessly, and Darya Pavlovna made her appearance. She stood still and looked round. She was struck by our perturbation. Probably she did not at first distinguish Marya Timofyevna, of whose presence she had not been informed. Stepan Trofimovitch was the first to notice her; he made a rapid movement, turned red, and for some reason proclaimed in a loud voice: "Darya Pavlovna!" so that all eyes turned on the new-comer.

"Oh, is this your Darya Pavlovna!" cried Marya Timofyevna. "Well, Shatushka, your sister's not like you. How can my fellow call such a charmer the serf-wench Dasha?"

Meanwhile Darya Pavlovna had gone up to Varvara Petrovna, but struck by Marya Timofyevna's exclamation she

turned quickly and stopped just before her chair, looking at the imbecile with a long fixed gaze.

"Sit down, Dasha," Varvara Petrovna brought out with terrifying composure. "Nearer, that's right. You can see this woman, sitting down. Do you know her?"

"I have never seen her," Dasha answered quietly, and after a pause she added at once:

"She must be the invalid sister of Captain Lebyadkin."

"And it's the first time I've set eyes on you, my love, though I've been interested and wanted to know you a long time, for I see how well-bred you are in every movement you make," Marya Timofyevna cried enthusiastically. "And though my footman swears at you, can such a well-educated charming person as you really have stolen money from him? For you are sweet, sweet, sweet, I tell you that from myself!" she concluded, enthusiastically waving her hand.

"Can you make anything of it?" Varvara Petrovna asked with proud dignity.

"I understand it. . . ."

"Have you heard about the money?"

"No doubt it's the money that I undertook at Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's request to hand over to her brother, Captain Lebyadkin."

A silence followed.

"Did Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch himself ask you to do so?"

"He was very anxious to send that money, three hundred roubles, to Mr. Lebyadkin. And as he didn't know his address, but only knew that he was to be in our town, he charged me to give it to Mr. Lebyadkin if he came."

"What is the money . . . lost? What was this woman speaking about just now?"

"That I don't know. I've heard before that Mr. Lebyadkin says I didn't give him all the money, but I don't understand his words. There were three hundred roubles and I sent him three hundred roubles."

Darya Pavlovna had almost completely regained her composure. And it was difficult, I may mention, as a rule, to astonish the girl or ruffle her calm for long—whatever she might be feeling. She brought out all her answers now without haste, replied immediately to every question with accuracy, quietly.

smoothly, and without a trace of the sudden emotion she had shown at first, or the slightest embarrassment which might have suggested a consciousness of guilt. Varvara Petrovna's eyes were fastened upon her all the time she was speaking. Varvara Petrovna thought for a minute.

"If," she pronounced at last firmly, evidently addressing all present, though she only looked at Dasha, "if Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch did not appeal even to me but asked you to do this for him, he must have had his reasons for doing so. I don't consider I have any right to inquire into them, if they are kept secret from me. But the very fact of your having taken part in the matter reassures me on that score, be sure of that, Darya, in any case. But you see, my dear, you may, through ignorance of the world, have quite innocently done something imprudent; and you did so when you undertook to have dealings with a low character. The rumours spread by this rascal show what a mistake you made. But I will find out about him, and as it is my task to protect you, I shall know how to defend you. But now all this must be put a stop to."

"The best thing to do," said Marya Timofyevna, popping up from her chair, "is to send him to the footmen's room when he comes. Let him sit on the benches there and play cards with them while we sit here and drink coffee. We might send him a cup of coffee too, but I have a great contempt for him."

And she wagged her head expressively.

"We must put a stop to this," Varvara Petrovna repeated, listening attentively to Marya Timofyevna. "Ring, Stepan Trofimovitch, I beg you."

Stepan Trofimovitch rang, and suddenly stepped forward, all excitement.

"If . . . if . . . " he faltered feverishly, flushing, breaking off and stuttering, "if I too have heard the most revolting story, or rather slander, it was with utter indignation . . . *enfin c'est un homme perdu, et quelque chose comme un forçat évadé. . . .*"

He broke down and could not go on. Varvara Petrovna, screwing up her eyes, looked him up and down.

The ceremonious butler Alexey Yegorytch came in.

"The carriage," Varvara Petrovna ordered. "And you, Alex-

ey Yegorytch, get ready to escort Miss Lebyadkin home; she will give you the address herself."

"Mr. Lebyadkin has been waiting for her for some time downstairs, and has been begging me to announce him."

"That's impossible, Varvara Petrovna!" and Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who had sat all the time in unbroken silence, suddenly came forward in alarm. "If I may speak, he is not a man who can be admitted into society. He . . . he . . . he's an impossible person, Varvara Petrovna!"

"Wait a moment," said Varvara Petrovna to Alexey Yegorytch, and he disappeared at once.

"*C'est un homme malhonnête et je crois même que c'est un forçat évadé ou quelque chose dans ce genre,*" Stepan Trofimovitch muttered again, and again he flushed red and broke off.

"Liza, it's time we were going," announced Praskovya Ivanovna disdainfully, getting up from her seat. She seemed sorry that in her alarm she had called herself a fool. While Darya Pavlovna was speaking, she listened, pressing her lips superciliously. But what struck her most was the expression of Lizaveta Nikolaevna from the moment Darya Pavlovna had come in. There was a gleam of hatred and hardly disguised contempt in her eyes.

"Wait one minute, Praskovya Ivanovna, I beg you." Varvara Petrovna detained her, still with the same exaggerated composure. "Kindly sit down. I intend to speak out, and your legs are bad. That's right, thank you. I lost my temper just now and uttered some impatient words. Be so good as to forgive me. I behaved foolishly and I'm the first to regret it, because I like fairness in everything. Losing your temper too, of course, you spoke of certain anonymous letters. Every anonymous communication is deserving of contempt, just because it's not signed. If you think differently I'm sorry for you. In any case, if I were in your place, I would not pry into such dirty corners, I would not soil my hands with it. But you have soiled yours. However, since you have begun on the subject yourself, I must tell you that six days ago I too received a clownish anonymous letter. In it some rascal informs me that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch has gone out of his mind, and that I have reason to fear some lame woman, who is destined to play a great part in

my life.' I remember the expression. Reflecting and being aware that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch has very numerous enemies, I promptly sent for a man living here, one of his secret enemies, and the most vindictive and contemptible of them, and from my conversation with him I gathered what was the despicable source of the anonymous letter. If you too, my poor Praskovya Ivanovna, have been worried by similar letters on my account, and as you say 'bombarded' with them, I am, of course, the first to regret having been the innocent cause of it. That's all I wanted to tell you by way of explanation. I'm very sorry to see that you are so tired and so upset. Besides, I have quite made up my mind to see that suspicious personage of whom Mavriky Nikolaevitch said just now, a little inappropriately, that it was impossible to receive him. Liza in particular need have nothing to do with it. Come to me, Liza, my dear, let me kiss you again."

Liza crossed the room and stood in silence before Varvara Petrovna. The latter kissed her, took her hands, and, holding her at arm's length, looked at her with feeling, then made the sign of the cross over her and kissed her again.

"Well, good-bye, Liza" (there was almost the sound of tears in Varvara Petrovna's voice), "believe that I shall never cease to love you whatever fate has in store for you. God be with you. I have always blessed His holy Will. . . ."

She would have added something more, but restrained herself and broke off. Liza was walking back to her place, still in the same silence, as it were plunged in thought, but she suddenly stopped before her mother.

"I am not going yet, mother. I'll stay a little longer at auntie's," she brought out in a low voice, but there was a note of iron determination in those quiet words.

"My goodness! What now?" wailed Praskovya Ivanovna, clasping her hands helplessly. But Liza did not answer, and seemed indeed not to hear her; she sat down in the same corner and fell to gazing into space again as before.

There was a look of pride and triumph in Varvara Petrovna's face.

"Mavriky Nikolaevitch, I have a great favour to ask of you. Be so kind as to go and take a look at that person downstairs,

and if there is any possibility of admitting him, bring him up here."

Mavriky Nikolaevitch bowed and went out. A moment later he brought in Mr. Lebyadkin.

IV

I have said something of this gentleman's outward appearance. He was a tall, curly-haired, thick-set fellow about forty with a purplish, rather bloated and flabby face, with cheeks that quivered at every movement of his head, with little blood-shot eyes that were sometimes rather crafty, with moustaches and sidewhiskers, and with an incipient double chin, fleshy and rather unpleasant-looking. But what was most striking about him was the fact that he appeared now wearing a dress-coat and clean linen.

"There are people on whom clean linen is almost unseemly," as Liputin had once said when Stepan Trofimovitch reproached him in jest for being untidy. The captain had perfectly new black gloves too, of which he held the right one in his hand, while the left, tightly stretched and unbuttoned, covered part of the huge fleshy fist in which he held a bran-new, glossy round hat, probably worn for the first time that day. It appeared therefore that "the garb of love," of which he had shouted to Shatov the day before, really did exist. All this, that is, the dress-coat and clean linen, had been procured by Liputin's advice with some mysterious object in view (as I found out later). There was no doubt that his coming now (in a hired carriage) was at the instigation and with the assistance of some one else; it would never have dawned on him, nor could he by himself have succeeded in dressing, getting ready and making up his mind in three-quarters of an hour, even if the scene in the porch of the cathedral had reached his ears at once. He was not drunk, but was in the dull, heavy, dazed condition of a man suddenly awakened after many days of drinking. It seemed as though he would be drunk again if one were to put one's hands on his shoulders and rock him to and fro once or twice. He was hurrying into the drawing-room but stumbled

over a rug near the doorway. Marya Timofyevna was helpless with laughter. He looked savagely at her and suddenly took a few rapid steps towards Varvara Petrovna.

"I have come, madam . . . " he blared out like a trumpet-blast.

"Be so good, sir, as to take a seat there, on that chair," said Varvara Petrovna, drawing herself up. "I shall hear you as well from there, and it will be more convenient for me to look at you from here."

The captain stopped short, looking blankly before him. He turned, however, and sat down on the seat indicated close to the door. An extreme lack of self-confidence and at the same time insolence, and a sort of incessant irritability, were apparent in the expression of his face. He was horribly scared, that was evident, but his self-conceit was wounded, and it might be surmised that his mortified vanity might on occasion lead him to any effrontery, in spite of his cowardice. He was evidently uneasy at every movement of his clumsy person. We all know that when such gentlemen are brought by some marvellous chance into society, they find their worst ordeal in their own hands, and the impossibility of disposing them becomingly, of which they are conscious at every moment. The captain sat rigid in his chair, with his hat and gloves in his hands and his eyes fixed with a senseless stare on the stern face of Varvara Petrovna. He would have liked, perhaps, to have looked about more freely, but he could not bring himself to do so yet. Marya Timofyevna, apparently thinking his appearance very funny, laughed again, but he did not stir. Varvara Petrovna ruthlessly kept him in this position for a long time, a whole minute, staring at him without mercy.

"In the first place allow me to learn your name from yourself," Varvara Petrovna pronounced in measured and impressive tones.

"Captain Lebyadkin," thundered the captain. "I have come, madam . . . " He made a movement again.

"Allow me!" Varvara Petrovna checked him again. "Is this unfortunate person who interests me so much really your sister?"

"My sister, madam, who has escaped from control, for she is in a certain condition. . . . "

He suddenly faltered and turned crimson.

"Don't misunderstand me, madam," he said, terribly confused. "Her own brother's not going to throw mud at her . . . in a certain condition doesn't mean in such a condition . . . in the sense of an injured reputation . . . in the last stage . . . " he suddenly broke off.

"Sir!" said Varvara Petrovna, raising her head.

"In this condition!" he concluded suddenly, tapping the middle of his forehead with his finger.

A pause followed.

"And has she suffered in this way for long?" asked Varvara Petrovna, with a slight drawl.

"Madam, I have come to thank you for the generosity you showed in the porch, in a Russian, brotherly way."

"Brotherly?"

"I mean, not brotherly, but simply in the sense that I am my sister's brother; and believe me, madam," he went on more hurriedly, turning crimson again, "I am not so uneducated as I may appear at first sight in your drawing-room. My sister and I are nothing, madam, compared with the luxury we observe here. Having enemies who slander us, besides. But on the question of reputation Lebyadkin is proud, madam . . . and . . . and . . . and I've come to repay with thanks. . . . Here is money, madam!"

At this point he pulled out a pocket-book, drew out of it a bundle of notes, and began turning them over with trembling fingers in a perfect fury of impatience. It was evident that he was in haste to explain something, and indeed it was quite necessary to do so. But probably feeling himself that his fluster with the money made him look even more foolish, he lost the last traces of self-possession. The money refused to be counted. His fingers fumbled helplessly, and to complete his shame a green note escaped from the pocket-book, and fluttered in zig-zags on to the carpet.

"Twenty roubles, madam." He leapt up suddenly with the roll of notes in his hand, his face perspiring with discomfort. Noticing the note which had dropped on the floor, he was bending down to pick it up, but for some reason overcome by shame, he dismissed it with a wave.

"For your servants, madam; for the footman who picks it up. Let them remember my sister!"

"I cannot allow that," Varvara Petrovna brought out hurriedly, even with some alarm.

"In that case . . ."

He bent down, picked it up, flushing crimson, and suddenly going up to Varvara Petrovna held out the notes he had counted.

"What's this?" she cried, really alarmed at last, and positively shrinking back in her chair.

Mavriky Nikolaevitch, Stepan Trofimovitch, and I all stepped forward.

"Don't be alarmed, don't be alarmed; I'm not mad, by God, I'm not mad," the captain kept asseverating excitedly.

"Yes, sir, you're out of your senses."

"Madam, she's not at all as you suppose. I am an insignificant link. Oh, madam, wealthy are your mansions, but poor is the dwelling of Marya Anonyma, my sister, whose maiden name was Lebyadkin, but whom we'll call Anonyma for the time, only for *the time*, madam, for God Himself will not suffer it for ever. Madam, you gave her ten roubles and she took it, because it was from *you*, madam! Do you hear, madam? From no one else in the world would this Marya Anonyma take it, or her grandfather, the officer killed in the Caucasus before the very eyes of Yermolov, would turn in his grave. But from you, madam, from you she will take anything. But with one hand she takes it, and with the other she holds out to you twenty roubles by way of subscription to one of the benevolent committees in Petersburg and Moscow, of which you are a member . . . for you published yourself, madam, in the *Moscow News*, that you are ready to receive subscriptions in our town, and that any one may subscribe. . . ."

The captain suddenly broke off; he breathed hard as though after some difficult achievement. All he said about the benevolent society had probably been prepared beforehand, perhaps under Liputin's supervision. He perspired more than ever; drops literally trickled down his temples. Varvara Petrovna looked searchingly at him.

"The subscription list," she said severely, "is always downstairs in charge of my porter. There you can enter your sub-

scriptions if you wish to. And so I beg you to put your notes away and not to wave them in the air. That's right. I beg you also to go back to your seat. That's right. I am very sorry, sir, that I made a mistake about your sister, and gave her something as though she were poor when she is so rich. There's only one thing I don't understand, why she can only take from me, and no one else. You so insisted upon that that I should like a full explanation."

"Madam, that is a secret that may be buried only in the grave!" answered the captain.

"Why?" Varvara Petrovna asked, not quite so firmly.

"Madam, madam . . ."

He relapsed into gloomy silence, looking on the floor, laying his right hand on his heart. Varvara Petrovna waited, not taking her eyes off him.

"Madam!" he roared suddenly. "Will you allow me to ask you one question? Only one, but frankly, directly, like a Russian, from the heart?"

"Kindly do so."

"Have you ever suffered madam, in your life?"

"You simply mean to say that you have been or are being ill-treated by some one."

"Madam, madam!" He jumped up again, probably unconscious of doing so, and struck himself on the breast. "Here in this bosom so much has accumulated, so much that God Himself will be amazed when it is revealed at the Day of Judgment."

"H'm! A strong expression!"

"Madam, I speak perhaps irritably. . . ."

"Don't be uneasy. I know myself when to stop you."

"May I ask you another question, madam?"

"Ask another question."

"Can one die simply from the generosity of one's feelings?"

"I don't know, as I've never asked myself such a question."

"You don't know! You've never asked yourself such a question," he said with pathetic irony. "Well, if that's it, if that's it . . ."

"Be still, despairing heart!"

And he struck himself furiously on the chest. He was by now walking about the room again.

It is typical of such people to be utterly incapable of keeping their desires to themselves; they have, on the contrary, an irresistible impulse to display them in all their unseemliness as soon as they arise. When such a gentleman gets into a circle in which he is not at home he usually begins timidly, but you have only to give him an inch and he will at once rush into impertinence. The captain was already excited. He walked about waving his arms and not listening to questions, talked about himself very, very quickly, so that sometimes his tongue would not obey him, and without finishing one phrase he passed to another. It is true he was probably not quite sober. Moreover, Lizaveta Nikolaevna was sitting there too, and though he did not once glance at her, her presence seemed to over-excite him terribly; that, however, is only my supposition. There must have been some reason which led Varvara Petrovna to resolve to listen to such a man in spite of her repugnance. Praskovya Ivanovna was simply shaking with terror, though I believe she really did not quite understand what it was about. Stepan Trofimovitch was trembling too, but that was, on the contrary, because he was disposed to understand everything, and exaggerate it. Mavriky Nikolaevitch stood in the attitude of one ready to defend all present; Liza was pale, and she gazed fixedly with wide-open eyes at the wild captain. Shatov sat in the same position as before, but, what was strangest of all, Marya Timofyevna had not only ceased laughing, but had become terribly sad. She leaned her right elbow on the table, and with a prolonged, mournful gaze watched her brother declaiming. Darya Pavlovna alone seemed to be calm.

"All that is nonsensical allegory," said Varvara Petrovna, getting angry at last. "You haven't answered my question, why? I insist on an answer."

"I haven't answered, why? You insist on an answer, why?" repeated the captain, winking. "That little word 'why' has run through all the universe from the first day of creation, and all nature cries every minute to it's Creator, 'why?' And for seven thousand years it has had no answer, and must Captain Lebyadkin alone answer? And is that justice, madam?"

"That's all nonsense and not to the point!" cried Varvara

Petrovna, getting angry and losing patience. "That's allegory; besides, you express yourself too sensationally, sir, which I consider impertinence."

"Madam," the captain went on, not hearing, "I should have liked perhaps to be called Ernest, yet I am forced to bear the vulgar name Ignat—why is that do you suppose? I should have liked to be called Prince de Monbart, yet I am only Lebyadkin, derived from a swan.* Why is that? I am a poet, madam, a poet in soul, and might be getting a thousand roubles at a time from a publisher, yet I am forced to live in a pig pail. Why? Why, madam? To my mind Russia is a freak of nature and nothing else."

"Can you really say nothing more definite?"

"I can read you the poem, 'The Cockroach,' madam."

"Wha-a-t?"

"Madam, I'm not mad yet! I shall be mad, no doubt I shall be, but I'm not so yet. Madam, a friend of mine—a most honourable man—has written a Krylov's fable, called 'The Cockroach.' May I read it?"

"You want to read some fable of Krylov's?"

"No, it's not a fable of Krylov's I want to read. It's my fable, my own composition. Believe me, madam, without offence I'm not so uneducated and depraved as not to understand that Russia can boast of a great fable-writer, Krylov, to whom the Minister of Education has raised a monument in the Summer Gardens for the diversion of the young. Here, madam, you ask me why? The answer is at the end of this fable, in letters of fire."

"Read your fable."

*"Lived a cockroach in the world
Such was his condition.
In a glass he chanced to fall
Full of fly-perdition."*

"Heavens! What does it mean!" cried Varvara Petrovna.

"That's when flies get into a glass in the summer-time," the captain explained hurriedly with the irritable impatience of an

*From lebyed, a swan.

author interrupted in reading. "Then it is perdition to the flies, any fool can understand. Don't interrupt, don't interrupt. You'll see, you'll see. . . ."

He kept waving his arms.

*"But he squeezed against the flies,
They woke up and cursed him,
Raised to Jove their angry cries;
'The glass is full to bursting!'
In the middle of the din
Came along Nikifor,
Fine old man, and looking in . . .*

I haven't quite finished it. But no matter, I'll tell it in words," the captain rattled on. "Nikifor takes the glass, and in spite of their outcry empties away the whole stew, flies, and beetles and all, into the pig pail, which ought to have been done long ago. But observe, madam, observe, the cockroach doesn't complain. That's the answer to your question, why?" he cried triumphantly. "The cockroach does not complain." As for Nikifor he typifies nature," he added, speaking rapidly and walking complacently about the room.

Varvara Petrovna was terribly angry.

"And allow me to ask you about that money said to have been received from Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, and not to have been given to you, about which you dared to accuse a person belonging to my household."

"It's a slander!" roared Lebyadkin, flinging up his right hand tragically.

"No, it's not a slander."

"Madam, there are circumstances that force one to endure family disgrace rather than proclaim the truth aloud. Lebyadkin will not blab, madam!"

He seemed dazed; he was carried away; he felt his importance; he certainly had some fancy in his mind. By now he wanted to insult some one, to do something nasty to show his power.

"Ring, please, Stepan Trofimovitch," Varvara Petrovna asked him.

"Lebyadkin's cunning, madam," he said, winking with his

evil smile; "he's cunning, but he too has a weak spot, he too at times is in the portals of passions, and these portals are the old military hussars' bottle, celebrated by Denis Davydov. So when he is in those portals, madam, he may happen to send a letter in verse, a most magnificent letter—but which afterwards he would have wished to take back, with the tears of all his life; for the feeling of the beautiful is destroyed. But the bird has flown, you won't catch it by the tail. In those portals now, madam, Lebyadkin may have spoken about an honourable young lady, in the honourable indignation of a soul revolted by wrongs, and his slanderers have taken advantage of it. But Lebyadkin is cunning, madam! And in vain a malignant wolf sits over him every minute, filling his glass and waiting for the end. Lebyadkin won't blab. And at the bottom of the bottle he always finds instead Lebyadkin's cunning. But enough, oh, enough, madam! Your splendid halls might belong to the noblest in the land, but the cockroach will not complain. Observe that, observe that he does not complain, and recognise his noble spirit!"

At that instant a bell rang downstairs from the porter's room, and almost at the same moment Alexey Yegorytch appeared in response to Stepan Trofimovitch's ring, which he had somewhat delayed answering. The correct old servant was unusually excited.

"Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch has graciously arrived this moment and is coming here," he pronounced, in reply to Varvara Petrovna's questioning glance. I particularly remember her at that moment; at first she turned pale, but suddenly her eyes flashed. She drew herself up in her chair with an air of extraordinary determination. Every one was astounded indeed. The utterly unexpected arrival of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, who was not expected for another month, was not only strange from its unexpectedness but from its fateful coincidence with the present moment. Even the captain remained standing like a post in the middle of the room with his mouth wide open, staring at the door with a fearfully stupid expression.

And, behold, from the next room—a very large and long apartment—came the sound of swiftly approaching footsteps, little, exceedingly rapid steps; some one seemed to be running, and that some one suddenly flew into the drawing-room, not

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, but a young man who was a complete stranger to all.

V

I will permit myself to halt here to sketch in a few hurried strokes this person who had so suddenly arrived on the scene.

He was a young man of twenty-seven or thereabouts, a little above the medium height, with rather long, lank, flaxen hair, and with faintly defined, irregular moustache and beard. He was dressed neatly, and in the fashion, though not like a dandy. At the first glance he looked round-shouldered and awkward, but yet he was not round-shouldered, and his manner was easy. He seemed a queer fish, and yet later on we all thought his manners good, and his conversation always to the point.

No one would have said that he was ugly, and yet no one would have liked his face. His head was elongated at the back, and looked flattened at the sides, so that his face seemed pointed. His forehead was high and narrow, but his features were small; his eyes were keen, his nose was small and sharp, his lips were long and thin. The expression of his face suggested ill-health, but this was misleading. He had a wrinkle on each cheek which gave him the look of a man who had just recovered from a serious illness. Yet he was perfectly well and strong, and had never been ill.

He walked and moved very hurriedly, yet never seemed in a hurry to be off. It seemed as though nothing could disconcert him; in every circumstance and in every sort of society he remained the same. He had a great deal of conceit, but was utterly unaware of it himself.

He talked quickly, hurriedly, but at the same time with assurance, and was never at a loss for a word. In spite of his hurried manner his ideas were in perfect order, distinct and definite—and this was particularly striking. His articulation was wonderfully clear. His words pattered out like smooth, big grains, always well chosen, and at your service. At first this attracted one, but afterwards it became repulsive, just because of this over-distinct articulation, this string of ever-ready words. One somehow began to imagine that he must have a

tongue of special shape, somehow exceptionally long and thin, extremely red with a very sharp everlastingly active little tip.

Well, this was the young man who darted now into the drawing-room, and really, I believe to this day, that he began to talk in the next room, and came in speaking. He was standing before Varvara Petrovna in a trice.

"... Only fancy, Varvara Petrovna," he pattered on, "I came in expecting to find he'd been here for the last quarter of an hour; he arrived an hour and a half ago; we met at Kirillov's: he set off half an hour ago meaning to come straight here, and told me to come here too, a quarter of an hour later. . . ."

"But who? Who told you to come here?" Varvara Petrovna inquired.

"Why, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch! Surely this isn't the first you've heard of it! But his luggage must have been here a long while, anyway. How is it you weren't told? Then I'm the first to bring the news. One might send out to look for him; he's sure to be here himself directly though. And I fancy, at the moment that just fits in with some of his expectations, and as far as I can judge, at least, some of his calculations."

At this point he turned his eyes about the room and fixed them with special attention on the captain.

"Ach, Lizaveta Nikolaevna, how glad I am to meet you at the very first step, delighted to shake hands with you." He flew up to Liza, who was smiling gaily, to take her proffered hand, "and I observe that my honoured friend Praskovya Ivanovna has not forgotten her 'professor,' and actually isn't cross with him, as she always used to be in Switzerland. But how are your legs, here, Praskovya Ivanovna, and were the Swiss doctors right when at consultation they prescribed your native air? What? Fomentations? That ought to do good. But how sorry I was, Varvara Petrovna" (he turned rapidly to her) "that I didn't arrive in time to meet you abroad, and offer my respects to you in person; I had so much to tell you too. I did send word to my old man here, but I fancy that he did as he always does . . ."

"Petrusha!" cried Stepan Trofimovitch, instantly roused from his stupefaction. He clasped his hands and flew to his son.

"Pierre, mon enfant! Why, I didn't know you!"

He pressed him in his arms and the tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Come, be quiet, be quiet, no flourishes, that's enough, that's enough, please," Petrusha muttered hurriedly, trying to extricate himself from his embrace.

"I've always sinned against you, always!"

"Well, that's enough. We can talk of that later. I knew you'd carry on. Come, be a little more sober, please."

"But it's ten years since I've seen you."

"The less reason for demonstrations."

"*Mon enfant!* . . ."

"Come, I believe in your affection, I believe in it, take your arms away. You see, you're disturbing other people. . . . Ah, here's Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch; keep quiet, please."

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was already in the room; he came in very quietly and stood still for an instant in the doorway, quietly scrutinising the company.

I was struck by the first sight of him just as I had been four years before, when I saw him for the first time. I had not forgotten him in the least. But I think there are some countenances which always seem to exhibit something new which one has not noticed before, every time one meets them, though one may have seen them a hundred times already. Apparently he was exactly the same as he had been four years before. He was as elegant, as dignified, he moved with the same air of consequence as before, indeed he looked almost as young. His faint smile had just the same official graciousness and complacency. His eyes had the same stern, thoughtful and, as it were, preoccupied look. In fact, it seemed as though we had only parted the day before. But one thing struck me. In old days, though he had been considered handsome, his face was "like a mask," as some of our sharp-tongued ladies had expressed it. Now—now, I don't know why he impressed me at once as absolutely, uncontestedly beautiful, so that no one could have said that his face was like a mask. Wasn't it perhaps that he was a little paler and seemed rather thinner than before? Or was there, perhaps, the light of some new idea in his eyes?

"Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch!" cried Varvara Petrovna, drawing herself up but not rising from her chair. "Stop a minute!" She checked his advance with a peremptory gesture.

But to explain the awful question which immediately followed that gesture and exclamation—a question which I should have imagined to be impossible even in Varvara Petrovna, I must ask the reader to remember what that lady's temperament had always been, and the extraordinary impulsiveness she showed at some critical moments. I beg him to consider also, that in spite of the exceptional strength of her spirit and the very considerable amount of common sense and practical, so to say business, tact she possessed, there were moments in her life in which she abandoned herself altogether, entirely and, if it's permissible to say so, absolutely without restraint. I beg him to take into consideration also that the present moment might really be for her one of those in which all the essence of life, of all the past and all the present, perhaps, too, all the future, is concentrated, as it were, focused. I must briefly recall, too, the anonymous letter of which she had spoken to Praskovya Ivanovna with so much irritation, though I think she said nothing of the latter part of it. Yet it perhaps contained the explanation of the possibility of the terrible question with which she suddenly addressed her son.

"Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch," she repeated, rapping out her words in a resolute voice in which there was a ring of menacing challenge, "I beg you to tell me at once, without moving from that place; is it true that this unhappy cripple—here she is, here, look at her—is it true that she is . . . your lawful wife?"

I remember that moment only too well; he did not wink an eyelash but looked intently at his mother. Not the faintest change in his face followed. At last he smiled, a sort of indulgent smile, and without answering a word went quietly up to his mother, took her hand, raised it respectfully to his lips and kissed it. And so great was his invariable and irresistible ascendancy over his mother that even now she could not bring herself to pull away her hand. She only gazed at him, her whole figure one concentrated question, seeming to betray that she could not bear the suspense another moment.

But he was still silent. When he had kissed her hand, he scanned the whole room once more, and moving, as before, without haste went towards Marya Timofyevna. It is very difficult to describe people's countenances at certain moments. I remember, for instance, that Marya Timofyevna, breathless

with fear, rose to her feet to meet him and clasped her hands before her, as though beseeching him. And at the same time I remember the frantic ecstasy which almost distorted her face—an ecstasy almost too great for any human being to bear. Perhaps both were there, both the terror and the ecstasy. But I remember moving quickly towards her (I was standing not far off), for I fancied she was going to faint.

"You should not be here," Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch said to her in a caressing and melodious voice; and there was the light of an extraordinary tenderness in his eyes. He stood before her in the most respectful attitude, and every gesture showed sincere respect for her. The poor girl faltered impulsively in a half-whisper.

"But may I . . . kneel down . . . to you now?"

"No, you can't do that."

He smiled at her magnificently, so that she too laughed joyfully at once. In the same melodious voice, coaxing her tenderly as though she were a child, he went on gravely.

"Only think that you are a girl, and that though I'm your devoted friend I'm an outsider, not your husband, nor your father, nor your betrothed. Give me your arm and let us go; I will take you to the carriage, and if you will let me I will see you all the way home."

She listened, and bent her head as though meditating.

"Let's go," she said with a sigh, giving him her hand.

But at that point a slight mischance befell her. She must have turned carelessly, resting on her lame leg, which was shorter than the other. She fell sideways into the chair, and if the chair had not been there would have fallen on to the floor. He instantly seized and supported her, and holding her arm firmly in his, led her carefully and sympathetically to the door. She was evidently mortified at having fallen; she was overwhelmed, blushed, and was terribly abashed. Looking dumbly on the ground, limping painfully, she hobbled after him, almost hanging on his arm. So they went out. Liza, I saw, suddenly jumped up from her chair for some reason as they were going out, and she followed them with intent eyes till they reached the door. Then she sat down again in silence, but there was a nervous twitching in her face, as though she had touched a viper.

While this scene was taking place between Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch and Marya Timofyevna every one was speechless with amazement; one could have heard a fly; but as soon as they had gone out, every one began suddenly talking.

VI

It was very little of it talk, however; it was mostly exclamation. I've forgotten a little the order in which things happened, for a scene of confusion followed. Stepan Trofimovitch uttered some exclamation in French, clasping his hands, but Varvara Petrovna had no thought for him. Even Mavriky Nikolaevitch muttered some rapid, jerky comment. But Pyotr Stepanovitch was the most excited of all. He was trying desperately with bold gesticulations to persuade Varvara Petrovna of something, but it was a long time before I could make out what it was. He appealed to Praskovya Ivanovna, and Lizaveta Nikolaevna too, even, in his excitement, addressed a passing shout to his father—in fact he seemed all over the room at once. Varvara Petrovna, flushing all over, sprang up from her seat and cried to Praskovya Ivanovna:

"Did you hear what he said to her here just now, did you hear it?"

But the latter was incapable of replying. She could only mutter something and wave her hand. The poor woman had troubles of her own to think about. She kept turning her head towards Liza and was watching her with unaccountable terror, but she didn't even dare to think of getting up and going away until her daughter should get up. In the meantime the captain wanted to slip away. That I noticed. There was no doubt that he had been in a great panic from the instant that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had made his appearance; but Pyotr Stepanovitch took him by the arm and would not let him go.

"It is necessary, quite necessary," he pattered on to Varvara Petrovna, still trying to persuade her. He stood facing her, as she was sitting down again in her easy chair, and, I remember, was listening to him eagerly; he had succeeded in securing her attention.

"It is necessary. You can see for yourself, Varvara Petrovna, that there is a misunderstanding here, and much that is strange

on the surface, and yet the thing's as clear as daylight, and as simple as my finger. I quite understand that no one has authorised me to tell the story, and I dare say I look ridiculous putting myself forward. But in the first place, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch attaches no sort of significance to the matter himself, and, besides, there are incidents of which it is difficult for a man to make up his mind to give an explanation himself. And so it's absolutely necessary that it should be undertaken by a third person, for whom it's easier to put some delicate points into words. Believe me, Varvara Petrovna, that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch is not at all to blame for not immediately answering your question just now with a full explanation, it's all a trivial affair. I've known him since his Petersburg days. Besides, the whole story only does honour to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, if one must make use of that vague word 'honour.'"

"You mean to say that you were a witness of some incident which gave rise . . . to this misunderstanding?" asked Varvara Petrovna.

"I witnessed it, and took part in it," Pyotr Stepanovitch hastened to declare.

"If you'll give me your word that this will not wound Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's delicacy in regard to his feeling for me, from whom he ne-e-ver conceals anything . . . and if you are convinced also that your doing this will be agreeable to him . . ."

"Certainly it will be agreeable, and for that reason I consider it a particularly agreeable duty. I am convinced that he would beg me to do it himself."

The intrusive desire of this gentleman, who seemed to have dropped on us from heaven to tell stories about other people's affairs, was rather strange and inconsistent with ordinary usage. But he had caught Varvara Petrovna by touching on too painful a spot. I did not know the man's character at that time, and still less his designs.

"I am listening," Varvara Petrovna announced with a reserved and cautious manner. She was rather painfully aware of her condescension.

"It's a short story; in fact if you like it's not a story at all," he rattled on, "though a novelist might work it up into a novel in an idle hour. It's rather an interesting little incident, Pra-

skovya Ivanovna, and I am sure that Lizaveta Nikolaevna will be interested to hear it, because there are a great many things in it that are odd if not wonderful. Five years ago, in Petersburg, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch made the acquaintance of this gentleman, this very Mr. Lebyadkin who's standing here with his mouth open, anxious, I think, to slip away at once. Excuse me, Varvara Petrovna. I don't advise you to make your escape though, you discharged clerk in the former commissariat department you see; I remember you very well. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch and I know very well what you've been up to here, and, don't forget, you'll have to answer for it. I ask your pardon once more, Varvara Petrovna. In those days Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch used to call this gentleman his Falstaff; that must be," he explained suddenly, "some old burlesque character, at whom every one laughs, and who is willing to let every one laugh at him, if only they'll pay him for it. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was leading at that time in Petersburg a life, so to say, of mockery. I can't find another word to describe it, because he is not a man who falls into disillusionment, and he disdained to be occupied with work at that time. I'm only speaking of that period, Varvara Petrovna. Lebyadkin had a sister, the woman who was sitting here just now. The brother and sister hadn't a corner* of their own, but were always quartering themselves on different people. He used to hang about the arcades in the Gostiny Dvor, always wearing his old uniform, and would stop the more respectable-looking passers-by, and everything he got from them he'd spend in drink. His sister lived like the birds of heaven. She'd help people in their 'corners,' and do jobs for them on occasion. It was a regular Bedlam. I'll pass over the description of this life in 'corners,' a life to which Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had taken, at that time, from eccentricity. I'm only talking of that period, Varvara Petrovna; as for 'eccentricity,' that's his own expression. He does not conceal much from me. Mlle. Lebyadkin, who was thrown in the way of meeting Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch very often, at one time, was fascinated by his appearance. He was, so to say, a diamond set in the dirty background of her life. I am a poor hand at describing feelings, so I'll pass them over;

* In the poorer quarters of Russian towns a single room is often let out to several families, each of which occupies a "corner."

but some of that dirty lot took to jeering at her once, and it made her sad. They always had laughed at her, but she did not seem to notice it before. She wasn't quite right in her head even then, but very different from what she is now. There's reason to believe that in her childhood she received something like an education through the kindness of a benevolent lady. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had never taken the slightest notice of her. He used to spend his time chiefly in playing preference with a greasy old pack of cards for stakes of a quarter-farthing with clerks. But once, when she was being ill-treated, he went up (without inquiring into the cause) and seized one of the clerks by the collar and flung him out of a second-floor window. It was not a case of chivalrous indignation at the sight of injured innocence; the whole operation took place in the midst of roars of laughter, and the one who laughed loudest was Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch himself. As it all ended without harm, they were reconciled and began drinking punch. But the injured innocent herself did not forget it. Of course it ended in her becoming completely crazy. I repeat I'm a poor hand at describing feelings. But a delusion was the chief feature in this case. And Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch aggravated that delusion as though he did it on purpose. Instead of laughing at her he began all at once treating Mlle. Lebyadkin with sudden respect. Kirillov, who was there (a very original man, Varvara Petrovna, and very abrupt, you'll see him perhaps one day, for he's here now), well, this Kirillov who, as a rule, is perfectly silent, suddenly got hot, and said to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, I remember, that he treated the girl as though she were a marquise, and that that was doing for her altogether. I must add that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had rather a respect for this Kirillov. What do you suppose was the answer he gave him: 'You imagine, Mr. Kirillov, that I am laughing at her. Get rid of that idea, I really do respect her, for she's better than any of us.' And, do you know, he said it in such a serious tone. Meanwhile, he hadn't really said a word to her for two or three months, except 'good morning' and 'good-bye.' I remember, for I was there, that she came at last to the point of looking on him almost as her betrothed who dared not 'elope with her,' simply because he had many enemies and family difficulties, or something of the sort. There

was a great deal of laughter about it. It ended in Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's making provision for her when he had to come here, and I believe he arranged to pay a considerable sum, three hundred roubles a year, if not more, as a pension for her. In short it was all a caprice, a fancy of a man prematurely weary on his side, perhaps—it may even have been, as Kirillov says, a new experiment of a blasé man, with the object of finding out what you can bring a crazy cripple to." (You picked out on purpose, he said, the lowest creature, a cripple, for ever covered with disgrace and blows, knowing, too, that this creature was dying of comic love for you, and set to work to mystify her completely on purpose, simply to see what would come of it.) "Though, how is a man so particularly to blame for the fancies of a crazy woman, to whom he had hardly uttered two sentences the whole time. There are things, Varvara Petrovna, of which it is not only impossible to speak sensibly, but it's even nonsensical to begin speaking of them at all. Well, eccentricity then, let it stand at that. Anyway, there's nothing worse to be said than that; and yet now they've made this scandal out of it. . . . I am to some extent aware, Varvara Petrovna, of what is happening here."

The speaker suddenly broke off and was turning to Lebyadkin. But Varvara Petrovna checked him. She was in a state of extreme exaltation.

"Have you finished?" she asked.

"Not yet; to complete my story I should have to ask this gentleman one or two questions if you'll allow me . . . you'll see the point in a minute, Varvara Petrovna."

"Enough, afterwards, leave it for the moment I beg you. Oh, I was quite right to let you speak!"

"And note this, Varvara Petrovna," Pyotr Stepanovitch said hastily. "Could Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch have explained all this just now in answer to your question, which was perhaps too peremptory?"

"Oh, yes, it was."

"And wasn't I right in saying that in some cases it's much easier for a third person to explain things than for the person interested?"

"Yes, yes . . . but in one thing you were mistaken, and, I see with regret, are still mistaken."

"Really, what's that?"

"You see. . . . But won't you sit down, Pyotr Stepanovitch?"

"Oh, as you please. I am tired indeed. Thank you."

He instantly moved up an easy chair and turned it so that he had Varvara Petrovna on one side and Praskovya Ivanovna at the table on the other, while he faced Lebyadkin, from whom he did not take his eyes for one minute.

"You are mistaken in calling this eccentricity. . . ."

"Oh, if it's only that. . . ."

"No, no, no, wait a little," said Varvara Petrovna, who was obviously about to say a good deal and to speak with enthusiasm. As soon as Pyotr Stepanovitch noticed it, he was all attention.

"No, it was something higher than eccentricity, and I assure you, something sacred even! A proud man who has suffered humiliation early in life and reached the stage of 'mockery' as you so subtly called it—Prince Harry, in fact, to use the capital nickname Stepan Trofimovitch gave him then, which would have been perfectly correct if it were not that he is more like Hamlet, to my thinking at least."

"*Et vous avez raison,*" Stepan Trofimovitch pronounced, impressively and with feeling.

"Thank you, Stepan Trofimovitch. I thank you particularly too for your unvarying faith in Nicolas, in the loftiness of his soul and of his destiny. That faith you have even strengthened in me when I was losing heart."

"*Chère, chère.*" Stepan Trofimovitch was stepping forward, when he checked himself, reflecting that it was dangerous to interrupt.

"And if Nicolas had always had at his side" (Varvara Petrovna almost shouted) "a gentle Horatio, great in his humility—another excellent expression of yours, Stepan Trofimovitch—he might long ago have been saved from the sad and 'sudden demon of irony,' which has tormented him all his life. ('The demon of irony' was a wonderful expression of yours again, Stepan Trofimovitch. But Nicolas has never had an Horatio or an Ophelia. He had no one but his mother, and what can a mother do alone, and in such circumstances? Do you know, Pyotr Stepanovitch, it's perfectly comprehensible

Stevanovitch

to me now that a being like Nicolas could be found even in such filthy haunts as you have described. I can so clearly picture now that 'mockery' of life. (A wonderfully subtle expression of yours!) That insatiable thirst of contrast, that gloomy background against which he stands out like a diamond, to use your comparison again, Pyotr Stepanovitch. And then he meets there a creature ill-treated by everyone, crippled, half insane, and at the same time perhaps filled with noble feelings."

"H'm. . . . Yes, perhaps."

"And after that you don't understand that he's not laughing at her like every one. Oh, you people! You can't understand his defending her from insult, treating her with respect 'like a marquise' (this Kirillov must have an exceptionally deep understanding of men, though he didn't understand Nicolas). It was just this contrast, if you like, that led to the trouble. If the unhappy creature had been in different surroundings, perhaps she would never have been brought to entertain such a frantic delusion. Only a woman can understand it, Pyotr Stepanovitch, only a woman. How sorry I am that you . . . not that you're not a woman, but that you can't be one just for the moment so as to understand."

"You mean in the sense that the worse things are the better it is. I understand, I understand, Varvara Petrovna. It's rather as it is in religion; the harder life is for a man or the more crushed and poor the people are, the more obstinately they dream of compensation in heaven; and if a hundred thousand priests are at work at it too, inflaming their delusion, and speculating on it, then . . . I understand you, Varvara Petrovna, I assure you."

"That's not quite it; but tell me, ought Nicolas to have laughed at her and have treated her as the other clerks, in order to extinguish the delusion in this unhappy organism?" (Why Varvara Petrovna used the word organism I couldn't understand.) "Can you really refuse to recognise the lofty compassion, the noble tremor of the whole organism with which Nicolas answered Kirillov: 'I do not laugh at her.' A noble, sacred answer!"

"*Sublime,*" muttered Stepan Trofimovitch.

"And observe, too, that he is by no means so rich as you suppose. The money is mine and not his, and he would take next to nothing from me then."

"I understand, I understand all that, Varvara Petrovna," said Pyotr Stepanovitch, with a movement of some impatience.

"Oh, it's my character! I recognise myself in Nicolas. I recognise that youthfulness, that liability to violent, tempestuous impulses. And if we ever come to be friends, Pyotr Stepanovitch, and, for my part, I sincerely hope we may, especially as I am so deeply indebted to you, then, perhaps you'll understand. . . ."

"Oh, I assure you, I hope for it too," Pyotr Stepanovitch muttered jerkily.

"You'll understand then the impulse which leads one in the blindness of generous feeling to take up a man who is unworthy of one in every respect, a man who utterly fails to understand one, who is ready to torture one at every opportunity and, in contradiction to everything, to exalt such a man into a sort of ideal, into a dream. To concentrate in him all one's hopes, to bow down before him; to love him all one's life, absolutely without knowing why—perhaps just because he was unworthy of it. . . . Oh, how I've suffered all my life, Pyotr Stepanovitch!"

Stepan Trofimovitch, with a look of suffering on his face, began trying to catch my eye, but I turned away in time.

" . . . And only lately, only lately—oh, how unjust I've been to Nicolas! . . . You would not believe how they have been worrying me on all sides, all, all, enemies, and rascals, and friends, friends perhaps more than enemies. When the first contemptible anonymous letter was sent to me, Pyotr Stepanovitch, you'll hardly believe it, but I had not strength enough to treat all this wickedness with contempt. . . . I shall never, never forgive myself for my weakness."

"I had heard something of anonymous letters here already," said Pyotr Stepanovitch, growing suddenly more lively, "and I'll find out the writers of them, you may be sure."

"But you can't imagine the intrigues that have been got up here. They have even been pestering our poor Praskovya Ivanovna, and what reason can they have for worrying her? I was quite unfair to you to-day perhaps, my dear Praskovya Ivanovna," she added in a generous impulse of kindness, though not without a certain triumphant irony.

"Don't say any more, my dear," the other lady muttered

reluctantly. "To my thinking we'd better make an end of all this; too much has been said."

And again she looked timidly towards Liza, but the latter was looking at Pyotr Stepanovitch.

"And I intend now to adopt this poor unhappy creature, this insane woman who has lost everything and kept only her heart," Varvara Petrovna exclaimed suddenly. "It's a sacred duty I intend to carry out. I take her under my protection from this day."

"And that will be a very good thing in one way," Pyotr Stepanovitch cried, growing quite eager again. "Excuse me, I did not finish just now. It's just the care of her I want to speak of. Would you believe it, that as soon as Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had gone (I'm beginning from where I left off, Varvara Petrovna), this gentleman here, this Mr. Lebyadkin, instantly imagined he had the right to dispose of the whole pension that was provided for his sister. And he did dispose of it. I don't know exactly how it had been arranged by Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch at that time. But a year later, when he learned from abroad what had happened, he was obliged to make other arrangements. Again, I don't know the details; he'll tell you them himself. I only know that the interesting young person was placed somewhere in a remote nunnery, in very comfortable surroundings, but under friendly superintendence—you understand? But what do you think Mr. Lebyadkin made up his mind to do? He exerted himself to the utmost, to begin with, to find where his source of income, that is his sister, was hidden. Only lately he attained his object, took her from the nunnery, asserting some claim to her, and brought her straight here. Here he doesn't feed her properly, beats her, and bullies her. As soon as by some means he gets a considerable sum from Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, he does nothing but get drunk, and instead of gratitude ends by impudently defying Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, making senseless demands, threatening him with proceedings if the pension is not paid straight into his hands. So he takes what is a voluntary gift from Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch as a tax—can you imagine it? Mr. Lebyadkin, is that *all* true that I have said just now?"

The captain, who had till that moment stood in silence looking down, took two rapid steps forward and turned crimson.

"Pyotr Stepanovitch, you've treated me cruelly," he brought out abruptly.

"Why cruelly? How? But allow us to discuss the question of cruelty or gentleness later on. Now answer my first question; is it true all that I have said or not? If you consider it's false you are at liberty to give your own version at once."

"I . . . you know yourself, Pyotr Stepanovitch," the captain muttered, but he could not go on and relapsed into silence. It must be observed that Pyotr Stepanovitch was sitting in an easy chair with one leg crossed over the other, while the captain stood before him in the most respectful attitude.

Lebyadkin's hesitation seemed to annoy Pyotr Stepanovitch; a spasm of anger distorted his face.

"Then you have a statement you want to make?" he said, looking subtly at the captain. "Kindly speak. We're waiting for you."

"You know yourself Pyotr Stepanovitch, that I can't say anything."

"No, I don't know it. It's the first time I've heard it. Why can't you speak?"

The captain was silent, with his eyes on the ground.

"Allow me to go, Pyotr Stepanovitch," he brought out resolutely.

"No, not till you answer my question: is it *all* true that I've said?"

"It is true," Lebyadkin brought out in a hollow voice, looking at his tormentor. Drops of perspiration stood out on his forehead.

"Is it *all* true?"

"It's all true."

"Have you nothing to add or to observe? If you think that we've been unjust, say so; protest, state your grievance aloud."

"No, I think nothing."

"Did you threaten Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch lately?"

"It was . . . it was more drink than anything, Pyotr Stepanovitch." He suddenly raised his head. "If family honour and undeserved disgrace cry out among men then—then is a man to blame?" he roared suddenly, forgetting himself as before.

"Are you sober now, Mr. Lebyadkin?"

Pyotr Stepanovitch looked at him penetratingly.

"I am . . . sober."

"What do you mean by family honour and undeserved disgrace?"

"I didn't mean anybody, anybody at all. I meant myself," the captain said, collapsing again.

"You seem to be very much offended by what I've said about you and your conduct? You are very irritable, Mr. Lebyadkin. But let me tell you I've hardly begun yet what I've got to say about your conduct, in its real sense. I'll begin to discuss your conduct in its real sense. I shall begin, that may very well happen, but so far I've not begun, in a *real* sense."

Lebyadkin started and stared wildly at Pyotr Stepanovitch.

"Pyotr Stepanovitch, I am just beginning to wake up."

"H'm! And it's I who have waked you up?"

"Yes, it's you who have waked me, Pyotr Stepanovitch; and I've been asleep for the last four years with a storm-cloud hanging over me. May I withdraw at last, Pyotr Stepanovitch?"

"Now you may, unless Varvara Petrovna thinks it necessary . . ."

But the latter dismissed him with a wave of her hand.

The captain bowed, took two steps towards the door, stopped suddenly, laid his hand on his heart, tried to say something, did not say it, and was moving quickly away. But in the doorway he came face to face with Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch; the latter stood aside. The captain shrank into himself, as it were, before him, and stood as though frozen to the spot, his eyes fixed upon him like a rabbit before a boa-constrictor. After a little pause Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch waved him aside with a slight motion of his hand, and walked into the drawing-room.

VII

He was cheerful and serene. Perhaps something very pleasant had happened to him, of which we knew nothing as yet; but he seemed particularly contented.

"Do you forgive me, Nicolas?" Varvara Petrovna hastened to say, and got up suddenly to meet him.

But Nicolas positively laughed.

"Just as I thought," he said, good-humouredly and jestingly. "I see you know all about it already. When I had gone from here I reflected in the carriage that I ought at least to have told you the story instead of going off like that. But when I remembered that Pyotr Stepanovitch was still here, I thought no more of it."

As he spoke he took a cursory look round.

"Pyotr Stepanovitch told us an old Petersburg episode in the life of a queer fellow," Varvara Petrovna rejoined enthusiastically—"a mad and capricious fellow, though always lofty in his feelings, always chivalrous and noble. . . ."

"Chivalrous? You don't mean to say it's come to that," laughed Nicolas. "However, I'm very grateful to Pyotr Stepanovitch for being in such a hurry this time." He exchanged a rapid glance with the latter. "You must know, maman, that Pyotr Stepanovitch is the universal peacemaker; that's his part in life, his weakness, his hobby, and I particularly recommend him to you from that point of view. I can guess what a yarn he's been spinning. He's a great hand at spinning them; he has a perfect record-office in his head. He's such a realist, you know, that he can't tell a lie, and prefers truthfulness to effect . . . except, of course, in special cases when effect is more important than truth." (As he said this he was still looking about him.) "So, you see clearly, maman, that it's not for you to ask my forgiveness, and if there's any craziness about this affair it's my fault, and it proves that, when all's said and done, I really am mad. . . . I must keep up my character here. . . ."

Then he tenderly embraced his mother.

"In any case the subject has been fully discussed and is done with," he added, and there was a rather dry and resolute note in his voice. Varvara Petrovna understood that note, but her exaltation was not damped, quite the contrary.

"I didn't expect you for another month, Nicolas!"

"I will explain everything to you, maman, of course, but now . . ."

And he went towards Praskovya Ivanovna.

But she scarcely turned her head towards him, though she had been completely overwhelmed by his first appearance. Now

she had fresh anxieties to think of; at the moment the captain had stumbled upon Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch as he was going out, Liza had suddenly begun laughing—at first quietly and intermittently, but her laughter grew more and more violent, louder and more conspicuous. She flushed crimson, in striking contrast with her gloomy expression just before.

While Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was talking to Varvara Petrovna, she had twice beckoned to Mavriky Nikolaevitch as though she wanted to whisper something to him; but as soon as the young man bent down to her, she instantly burst into laughter; so that it seemed as though it was at poor Mavriky Nikolaevitch that she was laughing. She evidently tried to control herself, however, and put her handkerchief to her lips. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch turned to greet her with a most innocent and open-hearted air.

"Please excuse me," she responded, speaking quickly. "You . . . you've seen Mavriky Nikolaevitch of course. . . . My goodness, how inexcusably tall you are, Mavriky Nikolaevitch!"

And laughter again.

Mavriky Nikolaevitch was tall, but by no means inexcusably so.

"Have . . . you been here long?" she muttered, restraining herself again, genuinely embarrassed though her eyes were shining.

"More than two hours," answered Nicolas, looking at her intently. I may remark that he was exceptionally reserved and courteous, but that apart from his courtesy his expression was utterly indifferent, even listless.

"And where are you going to stay?"

"Here."

Varvara Petrovna, too, was watching Liza, but she was suddenly struck by an idea.

"Where have you been all this time, Nicolas, more than two hours?" she said, going up to him. "The train comes in at ten o'clock."

"I first took Pyotr Stepanovitch to Kirillov's. I came across Pyotr Stepanovitch at Matveyev (three stations away), and we travelled together."

"I had been waiting at Matveyev since sunrise," put in Pyotr

Stepanovitch. "The last carriages of our train ran off the rails in the night, and we nearly had our legs broken."

"Your legs broken!" cried Liza. "Maman, maman, you and I meant to go to Matveyev last week, we should have broken our legs too!"

"Heaven have mercy on us!" cried Praskovya Ivanovna, crossing herself.

"Maman, maman, dear maman, you mustn't be frightened if I break both my legs. It may so easily happen to me; you say yourself that I ride so recklessly every day. Mavriky Nikolaevitch, will you go about with me when I'm lame?" She began giggling again. "If it does happen I won't let anyone take me about but you, you can reckon on that. . . . Well, suppose I break only one leg. Come, be polite, say you'll think it a pleasure."

"A pleasure to be crippled?" said Mavriky Nikolaevitch, frowning gravely.

"But then you'll lead me about, only you and no one else."

"Even then it'll be you leading me about, Lizaveta Nikolaevna," murmured Mavriky Nikolaevitch, even more gravely.

"Why, he's trying to make a joke!" cried Liza, almost in dismay. "Mavriky Nikolaevitch, don't you ever dare take to that! But what an egoist you are! I am certain that, to your credit, you're slandering yourself. It will be quite the contrary; from morning till night you'll assure me that I have become more charming for having lost my leg. There's one insurmountable difficulty—you're so fearfully tall, and when I've lost my leg I shall be so very tiny. How will you be able to take me on your arm; we shall look a strange couple!"

And she laughed hysterically. Her jests and insinuations were feeble, but she was not capable of considering the effect she was producing.

"Hysterics!" Pyotr Stepanovitch whispered to me. "A glass of water, make haste!"

He was right. A minute later every one was fussing about, water was brought. Liza embraced her mother, kissed her warmly, wept on her shoulder, then drawing back and looking her in the face she fell to laughing again. The mother too began whimpering. Varvara Petrovna made haste to carry them both off to her own rooms, going out by the same door by

which Darya Pavlovna had come to us. But they were not away long, not more than four minutes.

I am trying to remember now every detail of these last moments of that memorable morning. I remember that when we were left without the ladies (except Darya Pavlovna, who had not moved from her seat), Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch made the round, greeting us all except Shatov, who still sat in his corner, his head more bowed than ever. Stepan Trofimovitch was beginning something very witty to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, but the latter turned away hurriedly to Darya Pavlovna. But before he reached her, Pyotr Stepanovitch caught him and drew him away, almost violently, towards the window, where he whispered something quickly to him, apparently something very important to judge by the expression of his face and the gestures that accompanied the whisper. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch listened inattentively and listlessly with his official smile, and at last even impatiently, and seemed all the time on the point of breaking away. He moved away from the window just as the ladies came back. Varvara Petrovna made Liza sit down in the same seat as before, declaring that she must wait and rest another ten minutes; and that the fresh air would perhaps be too much for her nerves at once. She was looking after Liza with great devotion, and sat down beside her. Pyotr Stepanovitch, now disengaged, skipped up to them at once, and broke into a rapid and lively flow of conversation. At that point Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch at last went up to Darya Pavlovna with his leisurely step. Dasha began stirring uneasily at his approach, and jumped up quickly in evident embarrassment, flushing all over her face.

"I believe one may congratulate you . . . or is it too soon?" he brought out with a peculiar line in his face.

Dasha made him some answer, but it was difficult to catch it.

"Forgive my indiscretion," he added, raising his voice, "but you know I was expressly informed. Did you know about it?"

"Yes, I know that you were expressly informed."

"But I hope I have not done any harm by my congratulations," he laughed. "And if Stepan Trofimovitch . . ."

"What, what's the congratulation about?" Pyotr Stepanovitch suddenly skipped up to them. "What are you being con-

gratulated about, Darya Pavlovna? Bah! Surely that's not it? Your blush proves I've guessed right. And indeed, what else does one congratulate our charming and virtuous young ladies on? And what congratulations make them blush most readily? Well, accept mine too, then, if I've guessed right! And pay up. Do you remember when we were in Switzerland you bet you'd never be married. . . . Oh, yes, apropos of Switzerland—what am I thinking about? Only fancy, that's half what I came about, and I was almost forgetting it. Tell me," he turned quickly to Stepan Trofimovitch, "when are you going to Switzerland?"

"I . . . to Switzerland?" Stepan Trofimovitch replied, wondering and confused.

"What? Aren't you going? Why you're getting married, too, you wrote?"

"*Pierre!*" cried Stepan Trofimovitch.

"Well, why Pierre? . . . You see, if that'll please you, I've flown here to announce that I'm not at all against it, since you were set on having my opinion as quickly as possible; and if, indeed," he pattered on, "you want to 'be saved,' as you wrote, beseeching my help in the same letter, I am at your service again. Is it true that he is going to be married, Varvara Petrovna?" He turned quickly to her. "I hope I'm not being indiscreet; he writes himself that the whole town knows it and every one's congratulating him, so that, to avoid it he only goes out at night. I've got his letters in my pocket. But would you believe it, Varvara Petrovna, I can't make head or tail of it? Just tell me one thing, Stepan Trofimovitch, are you to be congratulated or are you to be 'saved'? You wouldn't believe it; in one line he's despairing and in the next he's most joyful. To begin with he begs my forgiveness; well, of course, that's their way . . . though it must be said; fancy, the man's only seen me twice in his life and then by accident. And suddenly now, when he's going to be married for the third time, he imagines that this is a breach of some sort of parental duty to me, and entreats me a thousand miles away not to be angry and to allow him to. Please don't be hurt, Stepan Trofimovitch. It's characteristic of your generation, I take a broad view of it, and don't blame you. And let's admit it does you honour and all the rest. But the point is again that I don't see the point of it.

There's something about some sort of 'sins in Switzerland.' 'I'm getting married,' he says, 'for my sins or on account of the "sins" of another,' or whatever it is—'sins' anyway. 'The girl,' says he, 'is a pearl and a diamond,' and, well, of course, he's 'unworthy of her'; it's their way of talking; but on account of some sins or circumstances he 'is obliged to lead her to the altar, and go to Switzerland, and therefore abandon everything and fly to save me.' Do you understand anything of all that? However . . . however, I notice from the expression of your faces"—(he turned about with the letter in his hand looking with an innocent smile into the faces of the company)—"that, as usual, I seem to have put my foot in it through my stupid way of being open, or, as Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch says, 'being in a hurry.' I thought, of course, that we were all friends here, that is, your friends, Stepan Trofimovitch, your friends. I am really a stranger, and I see . . . and I see that you all know something, and that just that something I don't know."

He still went on looking about him.

"So Stepan Trofimovitch wrote to you that he was getting married for the 'sins of another committed in Switzerland,' and that you were to fly here 'to save him,' in those very words?" said Varvara Petrovna, addressing him suddenly. Her face was yellow and distorted, and her lips were twitching.

"Well, you see, if there's anything I've not understood," said Pyotr Stepanovitch, as though in alarm, talking more quickly than ever, "it's his fault, of course, for writing like that. Here's the letter. You know, Varvara Petrovna, his letters are endless and incessant, and, you know, for the last two or three months there has been letter upon letter, till, I must own, at last I sometimes didn't read them through. Forgive me, Stepan Trofimovitch, for my foolish confession, but you must admit, please, that, though you addressed them to me, you wrote them more for posterity, so that you really can't mind. . . . Come, come, don't be offended; we're friends, anyway. But this letter, Varvara Petrovna, this letter, I did read through. These 'sins'—these 'sins of another'—are probably some little sins of our own, and I don't mind betting very innocent ones, though they have suddenly made us take a fancy to work up a terrible story, with a glamour of the heroic about it; and it's just for the sake of that glamour we've got it up. You see there's something ?

little lame about our accounts—it must be confessed, in the end. We've a great weakness for cards, you know. . . . But this is unnecessary, quite unnecessary, I'm sorry, I chatter too much. But upon my word, Varvara Petrovna, he gave me a fright, and I really was half prepared to save him. He really made me feel ashamed. Did he expect me to hold a knife to his throat, or what? Am I such a merciless creditor? He writes something here of a dowry. . . . But are you really going to get married, Stepan Trofimovitch? That would be just like you, to say a lot for the sake of talking. Ach, Varvara Petrovna, I'm sure you must be blaming me now, and just for my way of talking too. . . ."

"On the contrary, on the contrary, I see that you are driven out of all patience, and, no doubt you have had good reason," Varvara Petrovna answered spitefully. She had listened with spiteful enjoyment to all the "candid outbursts" of Pyotr Stepanovitch, who was obviously playing a part (what part I did not know then, but it was unmistakable, and over-acted indeed).

"On the contrary," she went on, "I'm only too grateful to you for speaking; but for you I might not have known of it. My eyes are opened for the first time for twenty years. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, you said just now that you had been expressly informed; surely Stepan Trofimovitch hasn't written to you in the same style?"

"I did get a very harmless and . . . and . . . very generous letter from him. . . ."

"You hesitate, you pick out your words. That's enough! Stepan Trofimovitch, I request a great favour from you." She suddenly turned to him with flashing eyes. "Kindly leave us at once, and never set foot in my house again."

I must beg the reader to remember her recent "exaltation," which had not yet passed. It's true that Stepan Trofimovitch was terribly to blame! But what was a complete surprise to me then was the wonderful dignity of his bearing under his son's "accusation," which he had never thought of interrupting, and before Varvara Petrovna's "denunciation." How did he come by such spirit? I only found out one thing, that he had certainly been deeply wounded at his first meeting with Petrusha, by the way he had embraced him. It was a deep and

genuine grief; at least in his eyes and to his heart. He had another grief at the same time, that is the poignant consciousness of having acted contemptibly. He admitted this to me afterwards with perfect openness. And you know real genuine sorrow will sometimes make even a phenomenally frivolous, unstable man solid and stoical; for a short time at any rate; what's more, even fools are by genuine sorrow turned into wise men, also only for a short time of course; it is characteristic of sorrow. And if so, what might not happen with a man like Stepan Trofimovitch? It worked a complete transformation—though also only for a time, of course.

He bowed with dignity to Varvara Petrovna without uttering a word (there was nothing else left for him to do, indeed). He was on the point of going out without a word, but could not refrain from approaching Darya Pavlovna. She seemed to foresee that he would do so, for she began speaking of her own accord herself, in utter dismay, as though in haste to anticipate him.

"Please, Stepan Trofimovitch, for God's sake, don't say anything," she began, speaking with haste and excitement, with a look of pain in her face, hurriedly stretching out her hands to him. "Be sure that I still respect you as much . . . and think just as highly of you, and . . . think well of me too, Stepan Trofimovitch, that will mean a great deal to me, a great deal. . . ."

Stepan Trofimovitch made her a very, very low bow.

"It's for you to decide, Darya Pavlovna; you know that you are perfectly free in the whole matter! You have been, and you are now, and you always will be," Varvara Petrovna concluded impressively.

"Bah! Now I understand it all!" cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, slapping himself on the forehead. "But . . . but what a position I am put in by all this! Darya Pavlovna, please forgive me! . . . What do you call your treatment of me, eh?" he said, addressing his father.

"Pierre, you might speak to me differently, mightn't you, my boy," Stepan Trofimovitch observed quite quietly.

"Don't cry out, please," said Pierre, with a wave of his hand. "Believe me, it's all your sick old nerves, and crying out will do no good at all. You'd better tell me instead, why

didn't you warn me since you might have supposed I should speak out at the first chance?"

Stepan Trofimovitch looked searchingly at him.

"Pierre, you know so much of what goes on here, can you really have known nothing of this business and have heard nothing about it?"

"What? What a set! So it's not enough to be a child in your old age, you must be a spiteful child too! Varvara Petrovna, did you hear what he said?"

There was a general outcry; but then suddenly an incident took place which no one could have anticipated.

VIII

First of all I must mention that, for the last two or three minutes Lizaveta Nikolaevna had seemed to be possessed by a new impulse; she was whispering something hurriedly to her mother, and to Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who bent down to listen. Her face was agitated, but at the same time it had a look of resolution. At last she got up from her seat in evident haste to go away, and hurried her mother whom Mavriky Nikolaevitch began helping up from her low chair. But it seemed they were not destined to get away without seeing everything to the end.

Shatov, who had been forgotten by every one in his corner (not far from Lizaveta Nikolaevna), and who did not seem to know himself why he went on sitting there, got up from his chair, and walked, without haste, with resolute steps right across the room to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, looking him straight in the face. The latter noticed him approaching at some distance, and faintly smiled, but when Shatov was close to him he left off smiling.

When Shatov stood still facing him with his eyes fixed on him, and without uttering a word, every one suddenly noticed it and there was a general hush; Pyotr Stepanovitch was the last to cease speaking. Liza and her mother were standing in the middle of the room. So passed five seconds; the look of haughty astonishment was followed by one of anger on Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's face; he scowled. . . .

Shatov hits Stavrogin

And suddenly Shatov swung his long, heavy arm, and with all his might struck him a blow in the face. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch staggered violently.

Shatov struck the blow in a peculiar way, not at all after the conventional fashion (if one may use such an expression). It was not a slap with the palm of his hand, but a blow with the whole fist, and it was a big, heavy, bony fist covered with red hairs and freckles. If the blow had struck the nose, it would have broken it. But it hit him on the cheek, and struck the left corner of the lip and the upper teeth, from which blood streamed at once.

I believe there was a sudden scream, perhaps Varvara Petrovna screamed—that I don't remember, because there was a dead hush again; the whole scene did not last more than ten seconds, however.

Yet a very great deal happened in those seconds.

I must remind the reader again that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's was one of those natures that know nothing of fear. At a duel he could face the pistol of his opponent with indifference, and could take aim and kill with brutal coolness. If anyone had slapped him in the face, I should have expected him not to challenge his assailant to a duel, but to murder him on the spot. He was just one of those characters, and would have killed the man, knowing very well what he was doing, and without losing his self-control. I fancy, indeed, that he never was liable to those fits of blind rage which deprive a man of all power of reflection. Even when overcome with intense anger, as he sometimes was, he was always able to retain complete self-control, and therefore to realise that he would certainly be sent to penal servitude for murdering a man not in a duel; nevertheless, he'd have killed any one who insulted him, and without the faintest hesitation.

I have been studying Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch of late, and through special circumstances I know a great many facts about him now, at the time I write. I should compare him, perhaps, with some gentlemen of the past of whom legendary traditions are still perceived among us. We are told, for instance, about the Decabrist L—n, that he was always seeking for danger, that he revelled in the sensation, and that it had become a craving of his nature; that in his youth he had

*Stavrogin
not/holding*

rushed into duels for nothing; that in Siberia he used to go to kill bears with nothing but a knife; that in the Siberian forests he liked to meet with runaway convicts, who are, I may observe in passing, more formidable than bears. There is no doubt that these legendary gentlemen were capable of a feeling of fear, and even to an extreme degree, perhaps, or they would have been a great deal quieter, and a sense of danger would never have become a physical craving with them. But the conquest of fear was what fascinated them. The continual ecstasy of vanquishing and the consciousness that no one could vanquish them was what attracted them. The same L—n struggled with hunger for some time before he was sent into exile, and toiled to earn his daily bread simply because he did not care to comply with the requests of his rich father, which he considered unjust. So his conception of struggle was many-sided, and he did not prize stoicism and strength of character only in duels and bear-fights.

But many years have passed since those times, and the nervous, exhausted, complex character of the men of to-day is incompatible with the craving for those direct and unmixed sensations which were so sought after by some restlessly active gentlemen of the good old days. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch would, perhaps, have looked down on L—n, and have called him a boastful cock-a-hoop coward; it's true he wouldn't have expressed himself aloud. Stavrogin would have shot his opponent in a duel, and would have faced a bear if necessary, and would have defended himself from a brigand in the forest as successfully and as fearlessly as L—n, but it would be without the slightest thrill of enjoyment, languidly, listlessly, even with ennui and entirely from unpleasant necessity. In anger, of course, there has been a progress compared with L—n, even compared with Lermontov. There was perhaps more malignant anger in Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch than in both put together. but it was a calm, cold, if one may so say, reasonable anger, and therefore the most revolting and most terrible possible. I repeat again, I considered him then, and I still consider him (now that everything is over), a man who, if he received a slap in the face, or any equivalent insult, would be certain to kill his assailant at once, on the spot, without challenging him.

Yet, in the present case, what happened was something different and amazing.

He had scarcely regained his balance after being almost knocked over in this humiliating way, and the horrible, as it were, sodden, thud of the blow in the face had scarcely died away in the room when he seized Shatov by the shoulders with both hands, but at once, almost at the same instant, pulled both hands away and clasped them behind his back. He did not speak, but looked at Shatov, and turned as white as his shirt. But, strange to say, the light in his eyes seemed to die out. Ten seconds later his eyes looked cold, and I'm sure I'm not lying—calm. Only he was terribly pale. Of course I don't know what was passing within the man, I saw only his exterior. It seems to me that if a man should snatch up a bar of red-hot iron and hold it tight in his hand to test his fortitude, and after struggling for ten seconds with insufferable pain end by overcoming it, such a man would, I fancy, go through something like what Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was enduring during those ten seconds.

Shatov was the first to drop his eyes, and evidently because he was unable to go on facing him; then he turned slowly and walked out of the room, but with a very different step. He withdrew quietly, with peculiar awkwardness, with his shoulders hunched, his head hanging as though he were inwardly pondering something. I believe he was whispering something. He made his way to the door carefully, without stumbling against anything or knocking anything over; he opened the door a very little way, and squeezed through almost sideways. As he went out his shock of hair standing on end at the back of his head was particularly noticeable.

Then first of all one fearful scream was heard. I saw Lizaveta Nikolaevna seize her mother by the shoulder and Mavriky Nikolaevitch by the arm and make two or three violent efforts to draw them out of the room. But she suddenly uttered a shriek, and fell full length on the floor, fainting. I can hear the thud of her head on the carpet to this day.