PART THIRD

I

The water under the bridge ran violent and deep. Its slightly undulating rush seemed capable of scouring out a channel for itself through solid granite while you looked. But had it flowed through Razumov's breast, it could not have washed away the accumulated bitterness the wrecking of his life had deposited there.

"What is the meaning of all this?" he thought, staring downwards at the headlong flow so smooth and clean that only the passage of a faint air-bubble, or a thin vanishing streak of foam like a white hair, disclosed its vertiginous rapidity, its terrible force. "Why has that meddlesome old Englishman blundered against me? And what is this silly tale of a crazy old woman?"

He was trying to think brutally on purpose, but he avoided any mental reference to the young girl. "A crazy old woman," he repeated to himself. "It is a fatality! Or ought I to despise all this as absurd? But no! I am wrong! I can't afford to despise anything. An absurdity may be the starting-point of the most dangerous complications. How is one to guard against it? It puts to rout one's intelligence. The more intelligent one is the less one suspects an absurdity."

A wave of wrath choked his thoughts for a moment. It even made his body leaning over the parapet quiver; then he resumed his silent thinking, like a secret dialogue with himself. And even in that privacy, his thought had some reservations of which he was vaguely conscious.

"After all, this is not absurd. It is insignificant. It is absolutely insignificant—absolutely. The craze of an old woman—the fussy officiousness of a blundering elderly Englishman. What devil put him in the way? Haven't I treated him cavalierly enough? Haven't I just? That's the way to treat these meddlesome persons. Is it possible that he still stands behind my back, waiting?"

Razumov felt a faint chill run down his spine. It was not fear. He was certain that it was not fear—not fear for himself—but it was, all the same, a sort of apprehension as if for another, for some one he knew without being able to put a name on the personality. But the recollection that the officious Englishman had a train to meet tranquillized him for a time. It was too stupid to suppose that he should be wasting his time in waiting. It was unnecessary to look round and make sure.

But what did the man mean by his extraordinary rigmarole about the newspaper, and that crazy old woman? he thought suddenly. It was a damnable presumption, anyhow, something that only an Englishman could be capable of. All this was a sort of sport for him—the sport of revolution—a game to look at

from the height of his superiority. And what on earth did he mean by his exclamation, “Won’t the truth do?”

Razumov pressed his folded arms to the stone coping over which he was leaning with force. “Won’t the truth do? The truth for the crazy old mother of the—”

The young man shuddered again. Yes. The truth would do! Apparently it would do. Exactly. And receive thanks, he thought, formulating the unspoken words cynically. “Fall on my neck in gratitude, no doubt,” he jeered mentally. But this mood abandoned him at once. He felt sad, as if his heart had become empty suddenly. “Well, I must be cautious,” he concluded, coming to himself as though his brain had been awakened from a trance. “There is nothing, no one, too insignificant, too absurd to be disregarded,” he thought wearily. “I must be cautious.”

Razumov pushed himself with his hand away from the balustrade and, retracing his steps along the bridge, walked straight to his lodgings, where, for a few days, he led a solitary and retired existence. He neglected Peter Ivanovitch, to whom he was accredited by the Stuttgart group; he never went near the refugee revolutionists, to whom he had been introduced on his arrival. He kept out of that world altogether. And he felt that such conduct, causing surprise and arousing suspicion, contained an element of danger for himself.

This is not to say that during these few days he never went out. I met him several times in the streets, but he gave me no recognition. Once, going home after an evening call on the ladies Haldin, I saw him crossing the dark roadway of the Boulevard des Philosophes. He had a broad-brimmed soft hat, and the collar of his coat turned up. I watched him make straight for the house, but, instead of going in, he stopped opposite the still lighted windows, and after a time went away down a side-street.

I knew that he had not been to see Mrs. Haldin yet. Miss Haldin told me he was reluctant; moreover, the mental condition of Mrs. Haldin had changed. She seemed to think now that her son was living, and she perhaps awaited his arrival. Her immobility in the great arm-chair in front of the window had an air of expectancy, even when the blind was down and the lamps lighted.

For my part, I was convinced that she had received her death-stroke; Miss Haldin, to whom, of course, I said nothing of my forebodings, thought that no good would come from introducing Mr. Razumov just then, an opinion which I shared fully. I knew that she met the young man on the Bastions. Once or twice I saw them strolling slowly up the main alley. They met every day for weeks. I avoided passing that way during the hour when Miss Haldin took her exercise there. One day, however, in a fit of absent-mindedness, I entered the gates and

came upon her walking alone. I stopped to exchange a few words. Mr. Razumov failed to turn up, and we began to talk about him—naturally.

"Did he tell you anything definite about your brother's activities—his end?" I ventured to ask.

"No," admitted Miss Haldin, with some hesitation. "Nothing definite."

I understood well enough that all their conversations must have been referred mentally to that dead man who had brought them together. That was unavoidable. But it was in the living man that she was interested. That was unavoidable too, I suppose. And as I pushed my inquiries I discovered that he had disclosed himself to her as a by no means conventional revolutionist, contemptuous of catchwords, of theories, of men too. I was rather pleased at that—but I was a little puzzled.

"His mind goes forward, far ahead of the struggle," Miss Haldin explained. "Of course, he is an actual worker too," she added.

"And do you understand him?" I inquired point-blank.

She hesitated again. "Not altogether," she murmured.

I perceived that he had fascinated her by an assumption of mysterious reserve.

"Do you know what I think?" she went on, breaking through her reserved, almost reluctant attitude: "I think that he is observing, studying me, to discover whether I am worthy of his trust...."

"And that pleases you?"

She kept mysteriously silent for a moment. Then with energy, but in a confidential tone—

"I am convinced;" she declared, "that this extraordinary man is meditating some vast plan, some great undertaking; he is possessed by it—he suffers from it—and from being alone in the world."

"And so he's looking for helpers?" I commented, turning away my head.

Again there was a silence.

"Why not?" she said at last.

The dead brother, the dying mother, the foreign friend, had fallen into a distant background. But, at the same time, Peter Ivanovitch was absolutely nowhere now. And this thought consoled me. Yet I saw the gigantic shadow of Russian life deepening around her like the darkness of an advancing night. It would devour her presently. I inquired after Mrs. Haldin—that other victim of the deadly shade.

A remorseful uneasiness appeared in her frank eyes. Mother seemed no worse, but if I only knew what strange fancies she had sometimes! Then Miss Haldin, glancing at her watch, declared that she could not stay a moment longer, and with a hasty hand-shake ran off lightly.

Decidedly, Mr. Razumov was not to turn up that day. Incomprehensible youth!

But less than an hour afterwards, while crossing the Place Mollard, I caught sight of him boarding a South Shore tramcar.

"He's going to the Chateau Borel," I thought.

After depositing Razumov at the gates of the Chateau Borel, some half a mile or so from the town, the car continued its journey between two straight lines of shady trees. Across the roadway in the sunshine a short wooden pier jutted into the shallow pale water, which farther out had an intense blue tint contrasting unpleasantly with the green orderly slopes on the opposite shore. The whole view, with the harbour jetties of white stone underlining lividly the dark front of the town to the left, and the expanding space of water to the right with jutting promontories of no particular character, had the uninspiring, glittering quality of a very fresh oleograph. Razumov turned his back on it with contempt. He thought it odious—oppressively odious—in its unsuggestive finish: the very perfection of mediocrity attained at last after centuries of toil and culture. And turning his back on it, he faced the entrance to the grounds of the Chateau Borel.

The bars of the central way and the wrought-iron arch between the dark weather-stained stone piers were very rusty; and, though fresh tracks of wheels ran under it, the gate looked as if it had not been opened for a very long time. But close against the lodge, built of the same grey stone as the piers (its windows were all boarded up), there was a small side entrance. The bars of that were rusty too; it stood ajar and looked as though it had not been closed for a long time. In fact, Razumov, trying to push it open a little wider, discovered it was immovable.

"Democratic virtue. There are no thieves here, apparently," he muttered to himself, with displeasure. Before advancing into the grounds he looked back sourly at an idle working man lounging on a bench in the clean, broad avenue. The fellow had thrown his feet up; one of his arms hung over the low back of the public seat; he was taking a day off in lordly repose, as if everything in sight belonged to him.

"Elector! Eligible! Enlightened!" Razumov muttered to himself. "A brute, all the same."

Razumov entered the grounds and walked fast up the wide sweep of the drive, trying to think of nothing—to rest his head, to rest his emotions too. But arriving at the foot of the terrace before the house he faltered, affected physically by some invisible interference. The mysteriousness of his quickened heart-beats startled him. He stopped short and looked at the brick wall of the terrace, faced with shallow arches, meagrely clothed by a few unthriving creepers, with an ill-kept narrow flower-bed along its foot.

"It is here!" he thought, with a sort of awe. "It is here—on this very spot...."

He was tempted to flight at the mere recollection of his first meeting with Nathalie Haldin. He confessed it to himself; but he did not move, and that not because he wished to resist an unworthy weakness, but because he knew that he had no place to fly to. Moreover, he could not leave Geneva. He recognized, even without thinking, that it was impossible. It would have been a fatal admission, an act of moral suicide. It would have been also physically dangerous. Slowly he ascended the stairs of the terrace, flanked by two stained greenish stone urns of funereal aspect.

Across the broad platform, where a few blades of grass sprouted on the discoloured gravel, the door of the house, with its ground-floor windows shuttered, faced him, wide open. He believed that his approach had been noted, because, framed in the doorway, without his tall hat, Peter Ivanovitch seemed to be waiting for his approach.

The ceremonious black frock-coat and the bared head of Europe's greatest feminist accentuated the dubiousness of his status in the house rented by Madame de S—, his Egeria. His aspect combined the formality of the caller with the freedom of the proprietor. Florid and bearded and masked by the dark blue glasses, he met the visitor, and at once took him familiarly under the arm.

Razumov suppressed every sign of repugnance by an effort which the constant necessity of prudence had rendered almost mechanical. And this necessity had settled his expression in a cast of austere, almost fanatical, aloofness. The "heroic fugitive," impressed afresh by the severe detachment of this new arrival from revolutionary Russia, took a conciliatory, even a confidential tone. Madame de S— was resting after a bad night. She often had bad nights. He had left his hat upstairs on the landing and had come down to suggest to his young friend a stroll and a good open-hearted talk in one of the shady alleys behind the house. After voicing this proposal, the great man glanced at the unmoved face by his side, and could not restrain himself from exclaiming—

"On my word, young man, you are an extraordinary person."

"I fancy you are mistaken, Peter Ivanovitch. If I were really an extraordinary person, I would not be here, walking with you in a garden in Switzerland, Canton of Geneva, Commune of—what's the name of the Commune this place belongs to?... Never mind—the heart of democracy, anyhow. A fit heart for it; no bigger than a parched pea and about as much value. I am no more extraordinary than the rest of us Russians, wandering abroad."

But Peter Ivanovitch dissented emphatically—

"No! No! You are not ordinary. I have some experience of Russians who are—well—living abroad. You appear to me, and to others too, a marked personality."

“What does he mean by this?” Razumov asked himself, turning his eyes fully on his companion. The face of Peter Ivanovitch expressed a meditative seriousness.

“You don’t suppose, Kirylo Sidorovitch, that I have not heard of you from various points where you made yourself known on your way here? I have had letters.”

“Oh, we are great in talking about each other,” interjected Razumov, who had listened with great attention. “Gossip, tales, suspicions, and all that sort of thing, we know how to deal in to perfection. Calumny, even.”

In indulging in this sally, Razumov managed very well to conceal the feeling of anxiety which had come over him. At the same time he was saying to himself that there could be no earthly reason for anxiety. He was relieved by the evident sincerity of the protesting voice.

“Heavens!” cried Peter Ivanovitch. “What are you talking about? What reason can *you* have to...?”

The great exile flung up his arms as if words had failed him in sober truth. Razumov was satisfied. Yet he was moved to continue in the same vein.

“I am talking of the poisonous plants which flourish in the world of conspirators, like evil mushrooms in a dark cellar.”

“You are casting aspersions,” remonstrated Peter Ivanovitch, “which as far as you are concerned—”

“No!” Razumov interrupted without heat. “Indeed, I don’t want to cast aspersions, but it’s just as well to have no illusions.”

Peter Ivanovitch gave him an inscrutable glance of his dark spectacles, accompanied by a faint smile.

“The man who says that he has no illusions has at least that one,” he said, in a very friendly tone. “But I see how it is, Kirylo Sidorovitch. You aim at stoicism.”

“Stoicism! That’s a pose of the Greeks and the Romans. Let’s leave it to them. We are Russians, that is—children; that is—sincere; that is—cynical, if you like. But that’s not a pose.”

A long silence ensued. They strolled slowly under the lime-trees. Peter Ivanovitch had put his hands behind his back. Razumov felt the ungravelled ground of the deeply shaded walk damp and as if slippery under his feet. He asked himself, with uneasiness, if he were saying the right things. The direction of the conversation ought to have been more under his control, he reflected. The great man appeared to be reflecting on his side too. He cleared his throat slightly, and Razumov felt at once a painful reawakening of scorn and fear.

“I am astonished,” began Peter Ivanovitch gently. “Supposing you are right in your indictment, how can you raise any question of calumny or gossip, in your

case? It is unreasonable. The fact is, Kirylo Sidorovitch, there is not enough known of you to give hold to gossip or even calumny. Just now you are a man associated with a great deed, which had been hoped for, and tried for too, without success. People have perished for attempting that which you and Haldin have done at last. You come to us out of Russia, with that prestige. But you cannot deny that you have not been communicative, Kirylo Sidorovitch. People you have met imparted their impressions to me; one wrote this, another that, but I form my own opinions. I waited to see you first. You are a man out of the common. That's positively so. You are close, very close. This taciturnity, this severe brow, this something inflexible and secret in you, inspires hopes and a little wonder as to what you may mean. There is something of a Brutus...."

"Pray spare me those classical allusions!" burst out Razumov nervously. "What comes Junius Brutus to do here? It is ridiculous! Do you mean to say," he added sarcastically, but lowering his voice, "that the Russian revolutionists are all patricians and that I am an aristocrat?"

Peter Ivanovitch, who had been helping himself with a few gestures, clasped his hands again behind his back, and made a few steps, pondering.

"Not *all* patricians," he muttered at last. "But you, at any rate, are one of *us*."

Razumov smiled bitterly.

"To be sure my name is not Gugenheimer," he said in a sneering tone. "I am not a democratic Jew. How can I help it? Not everybody has such luck. I have no name, I have no...."

The European celebrity showed a great concern. He stepped back a pace and his arms flew in front of his person, extended, deprecatory, almost entreating. His deep bass voice was full of pain.

"But, my dear young friend!" he cried. "My dear Kirylo Sidorovitch...."

Razumov shook his head.

"The very patronymic you are so civil as to use when addressing me I have no legal right to—but what of that? I don't wish to claim it. I have no father. So much the better. But I will tell you what: my mother's grandfather was a peasant—a serf. See how much I am one of *you*. I don't want anyone to claim me. But Russia *can't* disown me. She cannot!"

Razumov struck his breast with his fist.

"I am *it*!"

Peter Ivanovitch walked on slowly, his head lowered. Razumov followed, vexed with himself. That was not the right sort of talk. All sincerity was an imprudence. Yet one could not renounce truth altogether, he thought, with despair. Peter Ivanovitch, meditating behind his dark glasses, became to him suddenly so odious that if he had had a knife, he fancied he could have stabbed

him not only without compunction, but with a horrible, triumphant satisfaction. His imagination dwelt on that atrocity in spite of himself. It was as if he were becoming light-headed. “It is not what is expected of me,” he repeated to himself. “It is not what is—I could get away by breaking the fastening on the little gate I see there in the back wall. It is a flimsy lock. Nobody in the house seems to know he is here with me. Oh yes. The hat! These women would discover presently the hat he has left on the landing. They would come upon him, lying dead in this damp, gloomy shade—but I would be gone and no one could ever...Lord! Am I going mad?” he asked himself in a fright.

The great man was heard—musing in an undertone.

“H’m, yes! That—no doubt—in a certain sense....” He raised his voice. “There is a deal of pride about you....”

The intonation of Peter Ivanovitch took on a homely, familiar ring, acknowledging, in a way, Razumov’s claim to peasant descent.

“A great deal of pride, brother Kirylo. And I don’t say that you have no justification for it. I have admitted you had. I have ventured to allude to the facts of your birth simply because I attach no mean importance to it. You are one of us—*un des notres*. I reflect on that with satisfaction.”

“I attach some importance to it also,” said Razumov quietly. “I won’t even deny that it may have some importance for you too,” he continued, after a slight pause and with a touch of grimness of which he was himself aware, with some annoyance. He hoped it had escaped the perception of Peter Ivanovitch. “But suppose we talk no more about it?”

“Well, we shall not—not after this one time, Kirylo Sidorovitch,” persisted the noble arch-priest of Revolution. “This shall be the last occasion. You cannot believe for a moment that I had the slightest idea of wounding your feelings. You are clearly a superior nature—that’s how I read you. Quite above the common—h’m—susceptibilities. But the fact is, Kirylo Sidorovitch, I don’t know your susceptibilities. Nobody, out of Russia, knows much of you—as yet!”

“You have been watching me?” suggested Razumov.

“Yes.”

The great man had spoken in a tone of perfect frankness, but as they turned their faces to each other Razumov felt baffled by the dark spectacles. Under their cover, Peter Ivanovitch hinted that he had felt for some time the need of meeting a man of energy and character, in view of a certain project. He said nothing more precise, however; and after some critical remarks upon the personalities of the various members of the committee of revolutionary action in Stuttgart, he let the conversation lapse for quite a long while. They paced the alley from end to end. Razumov, silent too, raised his eyes from time to time to cast a glance at the back of the house. It offered no sign of being inhabited. With its grimy, weather-

stained walls and all the windows shuttered from top to bottom, it looked damp and gloomy and deserted. It might very well have been haunted in traditional style by some doleful, groaning, futile ghost of a middle-class order. The shades evoked, as worldly rumour had it, by Madame de S— to meet statesmen, diplomatists, deputies of various European Parliaments, must have been of another sort. Razumov had never seen Madame de S— but in the carriage.

Peter Ivanovitch came out of his abstraction.

"Two things I may say to you at once. I believe, first, that neither a leader nor any decisive action can come out of the dregs of a people. Now, if you ask me what are the dregs of a people—h'm—it would take too long to tell. You would be surprised at the variety of ingredients that for me go to the making up of these dregs—of that which ought, *must* remain at the bottom. Moreover, such a statement might be subject to discussion. But I can tell you what is *not* the dregs. On that it is impossible for us to disagree. The peasantry of a people is not the dregs; neither is its highest class—well—the nobility. Reflect on that, Kirylo Sidorovitch! I believe you are well fitted for reflection. Everything in a people that is not genuine, not its own by origin or development, is—well—dirt! Intelligence in the wrong place is that. Foreign-bred doctrines are that. Dirt! Dregs! The second thing I would offer to your meditation is this: that for us at this moment there yawns a chasm between the past and the future. It can never be bridged by foreign liberalism. All attempts at it are either folly or cheating. Bridged it can never be! It has to be filled up."

A sort of sinister jocularity had crept into the tones of the burly feminist. He seized Razumov's arm above the elbow, and gave it a slight shake.

"Do you understand, enigmatical young man? It has got to be just filled up."

Razumov kept an unmoved countenance.

"Don't you think that I have already gone beyond meditation on that subject?" he said, freeing his arm by a quiet movement which increased the distance a little between himself and Peter Ivanovitch, as they went on strolling abreast. And he added that surely whole cartloads of words and theories could never fill that chasm. No meditation was necessary. A sacrifice of many lives could alone—He fell silent without finishing the phrase.

Peter Ivanovitch inclined his big hairy head slowly. After a moment he proposed that they should go and see if Madame de S— was now visible.

"We shall get some tea," he said, turning out of the shaded gloomy walk with a brisker step.

The lady companion had been on the look out. Her dark skirt whisked into the doorway as the two men came in sight round the corner. She ran off somewhere altogether, and had disappeared when they entered the hall. In the crude light falling from the dusty glass skylight upon the black and white tessellated floor,

covered with muddy tracks, their footsteps echoed faintly. The great feminist led the way up the stairs. On the balustrade of the first-floor landing a shiny tall hat reposed, rim upwards, opposite the double door of the drawing-room, haunted, it was said, by evoked ghosts, and frequented, it was to be supposed, by fugitive revolutionists. The cracked white paint of the panels, the tarnished gilt of the mouldings, permitted one to imagine nothing but dust and emptiness within. Before turning the massive brass handle, Peter Ivanovitch gave his young companion a sharp, partly critical, partly preparatory glance.

"No one is perfect," he murmured discreetly. Thus, the possessor of a rare jewel might, before opening the casket, warn the profane that no gem perhaps is flawless.

He remained with his hand on the door-handle so long that Razumov assented by a moody "No."

"Perfection itself would not produce that effect," pursued Peter Ivanovitch, "in a world not meant for it. But you shall find there a mind—no!—the quintessence of feminine intuition which will understand any perplexity you may be suffering from by the irresistible, enlightening force of sympathy. Nothing can remain obscure before that—that—inspired, yes, inspired penetration, this true light of femininity."

The gaze of the dark spectacles in its glossy steadfastness gave his face an air of absolute conviction. Razumov felt a momentary shrinking before that closed door.

"Penetration? Light," he stammered out. "Do you mean some sort of thought-reading?"

Peter Ivanovitch seemed shocked.

"I mean something utterly different," he retorted, with a faint, pitying smile.

Razumov began to feel angry, very much against his wish.

"This is very mysterious," he muttered through his teeth.

"You don't object to being understood, to being guided?" queried the great feminist. Razumov exploded in a fierce whisper.

"In what sense? Be pleased to understand that I am a serious person. Who do you take me for?"

They looked at each other very closely. Razumov's temper was cooled by the impenetrable earnestness of the blue glasses meeting his stare. Peter Ivanovitch turned the handle at last.

"You shall know directly," he said, pushing the door open.

A low-pitched grating voice was heard within the room.

"*Enfin*."

In the doorway, his black-coated bulk blocking the view, Peter Ivanovitch boomed in a hearty tone with something boastful in it.

"Yes. Here I am!"

He glanced over his shoulder at Razumov, who waited for him to move on.

"And I am bringing you a proved conspirator—a real one this time. *Un vrai celui la*."

This pause in the doorway gave the "proved conspirator" time to make sure that his face did not betray his angry curiosity and his mental disgust.

These sentiments stand confessed in Mr. Razumov's memorandum of his first interview with Madame de S—. The very words I use in my narrative are written where their sincerity cannot be suspected. The record, which could not have been meant for anyone's eyes but his own, was not, I think, the outcome of that strange impulse of indiscretion common to men who lead secret lives, and accounting for the invariable existence of "compromising documents" in all the plots and conspiracies of history. Mr. Razumov looked at it, I suppose, as a man looks at himself in a mirror, with wonder, perhaps with anguish, with anger or despair. Yes, as a threatened man may look fearfully at his own face in the glass, formulating to himself reassuring excuses for his appearance marked by the taint of some insidious hereditary disease.

II

The Egeria of the "Russian Mazzini" produced, at first view, a strong effect by the death-like immobility of an obviously painted face. The eyes appeared extraordinarily brilliant. The figure, in a close-fitting dress, admirably made, but by no means fresh, had an elegant stiffness. The rasping voice inviting him to sit down; the rigidity of the upright attitude with one arm extended along the back of the sofa, the white gleam of the big eyeballs setting off the black, fathomless stare of the enlarged pupils, impressed Razumov more than anything he had seen since his hasty and secret departure from St. Petersburg. A witch in Parisian clothes, he thought. A portent! He actually hesitated in his advance, and did not even comprehend, at first, what the rasping voice was saying.

"Sit down. Draw your chair nearer me. There—"

He sat down. At close quarters the rouged cheekbones, the wrinkles, the fine lines on each side of the vivid lips, astounded him. He was being received graciously, with a smile which made him think of a grinning skull.

"We have been hearing about you for some time."

He did not know what to say, and murmured some disconnected words. The grinning skull effect vanished.

"And do you know that the general complaint is that you have shown yourself very reserved everywhere?"

Razumov remained silent for a time, thinking of his answer.

"I, don't you see, am a man of action," he said huskily, glancing upwards.

Peter Ivanovitch stood in portentous expectant silence by the side of his chair. A slight feeling of nausea came over Razumov. What could be the relations of these two people to each other? She like a galvanized corpse out of some Hoffman's Tale—he the preacher of feminist gospel for all the world, and a super-revolutionist besides! This ancient, painted mummy with unfathomable eyes, and this burly, bull-necked, deferential...what was it? Witchcraft, fascination.... "It's for her money," he thought. "She has millions!"

The walls, the floor of the room were bare like a barn. The few pieces of furniture had been discovered in the garrets and dragged down into service without having been properly dusted, even. It was the refuse the banker's widow had left behind her. The windows without curtains had an indigent, sleepless look. In two of them the dirty yellowy-white blinds had been pulled down. All this spoke, not of poverty, but of sordid penuriousness.

The hoarse voice on the sofa uttered angrily—

"You are looking round, Kirylo Sidorovitch. I have been shamefully robbed, positively ruined."

A rattling laugh, which seemed beyond her control, interrupted her for a moment.

"A slavish nature would find consolation in the fact that the principal robber was an exalted and almost a sacrosanct person—a Grand Duke, in fact. Do you understand, Mr. Razumov? A Grand Duke—No! You have no idea what thieves those people are! Downright thieves!"

Her bosom heaved, but her left arm remained rigidly extended along the back of the couch.

"You will only upset yourself," breathed out a deep voice, which, to Razumov's startled glance, seemed to proceed from under the steady spectacles of Peter Ivanovitch, rather than from his lips, which had hardly moved.

"What of hat? I say thieves! *Voleurs! Voleurs!*"

Razumov was quite confounded by this unexpected clamour, which had in it something of wailing and croaking, and more than a suspicion of hysteria.

"*Voleurs! Voleurs! Vol*...."

"No power on earth can rob you of your genius," shouted Peter Ivanovitch in an overpowering bass, but without stirring, without a gesture of any kind. A profound silence fell.

Razumov remained outwardly impassive. "What is the meaning of this performance?" he was asking himself. But with a preliminary sound of bumping outside some door behind him, the lady companion, in a threadbare black skirt

and frayed blouse, came in rapidly, walking on her heels, and carrying in both hands a big Russian samovar, obviously too heavy for her. Razumov made an instinctive movement to help, which startled her so much that she nearly dropped her hissing burden. She managed, however, to land it on the table, and looked so frightened that Razumov hastened to sit down. She produced then, from an adjacent room, four glass tumblers, a teapot, and a sugar-basin, on a black iron tray.

The rasping voice asked from the sofa abruptly—

"*Les gateaux*? Have you remembered to bring the cakes?"

Peter Ivanovitch, without a word, marched out on to the landing, and returned instantly with a parcel wrapped up in white glazed paper, which he must have extracted from the interior of his hat. With imperturbable gravity he undid the string and smoothed the paper open on a part of the table within reach of Madame de S—'s hand. The lady companion poured out the tea, then retired into a distant corner out of everybody's sight. From time to time Madame de S— extended a claw-like hand, glittering with costly rings, towards the paper of cakes, took up one and devoured it, displaying her big false teeth ghoulishly. Meantime she talked in a hoarse tone of the political situation in the Balkans. She built great hopes on some complication in the peninsula for arousing a great movement of national indignation in Russia against "these thieves—thieves thieves."

"You will only upset yourself," Peter Ivanovitch interposed, raising his glassy gaze. He smoked cigarettes and drank tea in silence, continuously. When he had finished a glass, he flourished his hand above his shoulder. At that signal the lady companion, ensconced in her corner, with round eyes like a watchful animal, would dart out to the table and pour him out another tumblerful.

Razumov looked at her once or twice. She was anxious, tremulous, though neither Madame de S— nor Peter Ivanovitch paid the slightest attention to her. "What have they done between them to that forlorn creature?" Razumov asked himself. "Have they terrified her out of her senses with ghosts, or simply have they only been beating her?" When she gave him his second glass of tea, he noticed that her lips trembled in the manner of a scared person about to burst into speech. But of course she said nothing, and retired into her corner, as if hugging to herself the smile of thanks he gave her.

"She may be worth cultivating," thought Razumov suddenly.

He was calming down, getting hold of the actuality into which he had been thrown—for the first time perhaps since Victor Haldin had entered his room...and had gone out again. He was distinctly aware of being the object of the famous—or notorious—Madame de S—'s ghastly graciousness.

Madame de S— was pleased to discover that this young man was different from the other types of revolutionist members of committees, secret emissaries, vulgar and unmannerly fugitive professors, rough students, ex-cobblers with apostolic faces, consumptive and ragged enthusiasts, Hebrew youths, common fellows of all sorts that used to come and go around Peter Ivanovitch—fanatics, pedants, proletarians all. It was pleasant to talk to this young man of notably good appearance—for Madame de S— was not always in a mystical state of mind. Razumov's taciturnity only excited her to a quicker, more voluble utterance. It still dealt with the Balkans. She knew all the statesmen of that region, Turks, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, Roumanians, Greeks, Armenians, and nondescripts, young and old, the living and the dead. With some money an intrigue could be started which would set the Peninsula in a blaze and outrage the sentiment of the Russian people. A cry of abandoned brothers could be raised, and then, with the nation seething with indignation, a couple of regiments or so would be enough to begin a military revolution in St. Petersburg and make an end of these thieves....

"Apparently I've got only to sit still and listen," the silent Razumov thought to himself. "As to that hairy and obscene brute" (in such terms did Mr. Razumov refer mentally to the popular expounder of a feministic conception of social state), "as to him, for all his cunning he too shall speak out some day."

Razumov ceased to think for a moment. Then a sombre-toned reflection formulated itself in his mind, ironical and bitter. "I have the gift of inspiring confidence." He heard himself laughing aloud. It was like a goad to the painted, shiny-eyed harridan on the sofa.

"You may well laugh!" she cried hoarsely. "What else can one do! Perfect swindlers—and what base swindlers at that! Cheap Germans—Holstein-Gottorps! Though, indeed, it's hardly safe to say who and what they are. A family that counts a creature like Catherine the Great in its ancestry—you understand!"

"You are only upsetting yourself," said Peter Ivanovitch, patiently but in a firm tone. This admonition had its usual effect on the Egeria. She dropped her thick, discoloured eyelids and changed her position on the sofa. All her angular and lifeless movements seemed completely automatic now that her eyes were closed. Presently she opened them very full. Peter Ivanovitch drank tea steadily, without haste.

"Well, I declare!" She addressed Razumov directly. "The people who have seen you on your way here are right. You are very reserved. You haven't said twenty words altogether since you came in. You let nothing of your thoughts be seen in your face either."

“I have been listening, Madame,” said Razumov, using French for the first time, hesitatingly, not being certain of his accent. But it seemed to produce an excellent impression. Madame de S— looked meaningly into Peter Ivanovitch’s spectacles, as if to convey her conviction of this young man’s merit. She even nodded the least bit in his direction, and Razumov heard her murmur under her breath the words, “Later on in the diplomatic service,” which could not but refer to the favourable impression he had made. The fantastic absurdity of it revolted him because it seemed to outrage his ruined hopes with the vision of a mock-career. Peter Ivanovitch, impassive as though he were deaf, drank some more tea. Razumov felt that he must say something.

“Yes,” he began deliberately, as if uttering a meditated opinion. “Clearly. Even in planning a purely military revolution the temper of the people should be taken into account.”

“You have understood me perfectly. The discontent should be spiritualized. That is what the ordinary heads of revolutionary committees will not understand. They aren’t capable of it. For instance, Mordatiev was in Geneva last month. Peter Ivanovitch brought him here. You know Mordatiev? Well, yes—you have heard of him. They call him an eagle—a hero! He has never done half as much as you have. Never attempted—not half....”

Madame de S— agitated herself angularly on the sofa.

“We, of course, talked to him. And do you know what he said to me? ‘What have we to do with Balkan intrigues? We must simply extirpate the scoundrels.’ Extirpate is all very well—but what then? The imbecile! I screamed at him, ‘But you must spiritualize—don’t you understand?—spiritualize the discontent.’...”

She felt nervously in her pocket for a handkerchief; she pressed it to her lips.

“Spiritualize?” said Razumov interrogatively, watching her heaving breast. The long ends of an old black lace scarf she wore over her head slipped off her shoulders and hung down on each side of her ghastly rosy cheeks.

“An odious creature,” she burst out again. “Imagine a man who takes five lumps of sugar in his tea.... Yes, I said spiritualize! How else can you make discontent effective and universal?”

“Listen to this, young man.” Peter Ivanovitch made himself heard solemnly. “Effective and universal.”

Razumov looked at him suspiciously.

“Some say hunger will do that,” he remarked.

“Yes. I know. Our people are starving in heaps. But you can’t make famine universal. And it is not despair that we want to create. There is no moral support to be got out of that. It is indignation....”

Madame de S— let her thin, extended arm sink on her knees.

“I am not a Mordatiev,” began Razumov.

“Bien sur!” murmured Madame de S—.

“Though I too am ready to say extirpate, extirpate! But in my ignorance of political work, permit me to ask: A Balkan—well—intrigue, wouldn’t that take a very long time?”

Peter Ivanovitch got up and moved off quietly, to stand with his face to the window. Razumov heard a door close; he turned his head and perceived that the lady companion had scuttled out of the room.

“In matters of politics I am a supernaturalist.” Madame de S— broke the silence harshly.

Peter Ivanovitch moved away from the window and struck Razumov lightly on the shoulder. This was a signal for leaving, but at the same time he addressed Madame de S— in a peculiar reminding tone—-

“Eleanor!”

Whatever it meant, she did not seem to hear him. She leaned back in the corner of the sofa like a wooden figure. The immovable peevishness of the face, framed in the limp, rusty lace, had a character of cruelty.

“As to extirpating,” she croaked at the attentive Razumov, “there is only one class in Russia which must be extirpated. Only one. And that class consists of only one family. You understand me? That one family must be extirpated.”

Her rigidity was frightful, like the rigor of a corpse galvanized into harsh speech and glittering stare by the force of murderous hate. The sight fascinated Razumov—yet he felt more self-possessed than at any other time since he had entered this weirdly bare room. He was interested. But the great feminist by his side again uttered his appeal—

“Eleanor!”

She disregarded it. Her carmine lips vaticinated with an extraordinary rapidity. The liberating spirit would use arms before which rivers would part like Jordan, and ramparts fall down like the walls of Jericho. The deliverance from bondage would be effected by plagues and by signs, by wonders and by war. The women....

“Eleanor!”

She ceased; she had heard him at last. She pressed her hand to her forehead.

“What is it? Ah yes! That girl—the sister of....”

It was Miss Haldin that she meant. That young girl and her mother had been leading a very retired life. They were provincial ladies—were they not? The mother had been very beautiful—traces were left yet. Peter Ivanovitch, when he called there for the first time, was greatly struck....But the cold way they received him was really surprising.

"He is one of our national glories," Madams de S— cried out, with sudden vehemence. "All the world listens to him."

"I don't know these ladies," said Razumov loudly rising from his chair.

"What are you saying, Kirylo Sidorovitch? I understand that she was talking to you here, in the garden, the other day."

"Yes, in the garden," said Razumov gloomily. Then, with an effort, "She made herself known to me."

"And then ran away from us all," Madame de S— continued, with ghastly vivacity. "After coming to the very door! What a peculiar proceeding! Well, I have been a shy little provincial girl at one time. Yes, Razumov" (she fell into this familiarity intentionally, with an appalling grimace of graciousness. Razumov gave a perceptible start), "yes, that's my origin. A simple provincial family.

"You are a marvel," Peter Ivanovich uttered.

But it was to Razumov that she gave her death's-head smile. Her tone was quite imperious.

"You must bring the wild young thing here. She is wanted. I reckon upon your success—mind!"

"She is not a wild young thing," muttered Razumov, in a surly voice.

"Well, then—that's all the same. She may be one of these young conceited democrats. Do you know what I think? I think she is very much like you in character. There is a smouldering fire of scorn in you. You are darkly self-sufficient, but I can see your very soul."

Her shiny eyes had a dry, intense stare, which, missing Razumov, gave him an absurd notion that she was looking at something which was visible to her behind him. He cursed himself for an impressionable fool, and asked with forced calmness—

"What is it you see? Anything resembling me?"

She moved her rigidly set face from left to right, negatively.

"Some sort of phantom in my image?" pursued Razumov slowly. "For, I suppose, a soul when it is seen is just that. A vain thing. There are phantoms of the living as well as of the dead."

The tenseness of Madame de S—‘s stare had relaxed, and now she looked at Razumov in a silence that became disconcerting.

“I myself have had an experience,” he stammered out, as if compelled. “I’ve seen a phantom once.” The unnaturally red lips moved to frame a question harshly.

“Of a dead person?”

“No. Living.”

“A friend?”

“No.”

“An enemy?”

“I hated him.”

“Ah! It was not a woman, then?”

“A woman!” repeated Razumov, his eyes looking straight into the eyes of Madame de S—. “Why should it have been a woman? And why this conclusion? Why should I not have been able to hate a woman?”

As a matter of fact, the idea of hating a woman was new to him. At that moment he hated Madame de S—. But it was not exactly hate. It was more like the abhorrence that may be caused by a wooden or plaster figure of a repulsive kind. She moved no more than if she were such a figure; even her eyes, whose unwinking stare plunged into his own, though shining, were lifeless, as though they were as artificial as her teeth. For the first time Razumov became aware of a faint perfume, but faint as it was it nauseated him exceedingly. Again Peter Ivanovitch tapped him slightly on the shoulder. Thereupon he bowed, and was about to turn away when he received the unexpected favour of a bony, inanimate hand extended to him, with the two words in hoarse French—

“*Au revoir!*”

He bowed over the skeleton hand and left the room, escorted by the great man, who made him go out first. The voice from the sofa cried after them—

“You remain here, *Pierre*.”

“Certainly, *ma chere amie*.”

But he left the room with Razumov, shutting the door behind him. The landing was prolonged into a bare corridor, right and left, desolate perspectives of white and gold decoration without a strip of carpet. The very light, pouring through a large window at the end, seemed dusty; and a solitary speck reposing on the balustrade of white marble—the silk top-hat of the great feminist—asserted itself extremely, black and glossy in all that crude whiteness.

Peter Ivanovitch escorted the visitor without opening his lips. Even when they had reached the head of the stairs Peter Ivanovitch did not break the silence.

Razumov's impulse to continue down the flight and out of the house without as much as a nod abandoned him suddenly. He stopped on the first step and leaned his back against the wall. Below him the great hall with its chequered floor of black and white seemed absurdly large and like some public place where a great power of resonance awaits the provocation of footfalls and voices. As if afraid of awakening the loud echoes of that empty house, Razumov adopted a low tone.

"I really have no mind to turn into a dilettante spiritualist."

Peter Ivanovitch shook his head slightly, very serious.

"Or spend my time in spiritual ecstasies or sublime meditations upon the gospel of feminism," continued Razumov. "I made my way here for my share of action—action, most respected Peter Ivanovitch! It was not the great European writer who attracted me, here, to this odious town of liberty. It was somebody much greater. It was the idea of the chief which attracted me. There are starving young men in Russia who believe in you so much that it seems the only thing that keeps them alive in their misery. Think of that, Peter Ivanovitch! No! But only think of that!"

The great man, thus entreated, perfectly motionless and silent, was the very image of patient, placid respectability.

"Of course I don't speak of the people. They are brutes," added Razumov, in the same subdued but forcible tone. At this, a protesting murmur issued from the "heroic fugitive's" beard. A murmur of authority.

"Say—children."

"No! Brutes!" Razumov insisted bluntly.

"But they are sound, they are innocent," the great man pleaded in a whisper.

"As far as that goes, a brute is sound enough." Razumov raised his voice at last. "And you can't deny the natural innocence of a brute. But what's the use of disputing about names? You just try to give these children the power and stature of men and see what they will be like. You just give it to them and see.... But never mind. I tell you, Peter Ivanovitch, that half a dozen young men do not come together nowadays in a shabby student's room without your name being whispered, not as a leader of thought, but as a centre of revolutionary energies—the centre of action. What else has drawn me near you, do you think? It is not what all the world knows of you, surely. It's precisely what the world at large does not know. I was irresistibly drawn-let us say impelled, yes, impelled; or, rather, compelled, driven—driven," repented Razumov loudly, and ceased, as if startled by the hollow reverberation of the word "driven" along two bare corridors and in the great empty hall.

Peter Ivanovitch did not seem startled in the least. The young man could not control a dry, uneasy laugh. The great revolutionist remained unmoved with an effect of commonplace, homely superiority.

"Curse him," said Razumov to himself, "he is waiting behind his spectacles for me to give myself away." Then aloud, with a satanic enjoyment of the scorn prompting him to play with the greatness of the great man—

"Ah, Peter Ivanovitch, if you only knew the force which drew—no, which *drove* me towards you! The irresistible force."

He did not feel any desire to laugh now. This time Peter Ivanovitch moved his head sideways, knowingly, as much as to say, "Don't I?" This expressive movement was almost imperceptible. Razumov went on in secret derision—

"All these days you have been trying to read me, Peter Ivanovitch. That is natural. I have perceived it and I have been frank. Perhaps you may think I have not been very expansive? But with a man like you it was not needed; it would have looked like an impertinence, perhaps. And besides, we Russians are prone to talk too much as a rule. I have always felt that. And yet, as a nation, we are dumb. I assure you that I am not likely to talk to you so much again—ha! ha!—"

Razumov, still keeping on the lower step, came a little nearer to the great man.

"You have been condescending enough. I quite understood it was to lead me on. You must render me the justice that I have not tried to please. I have been impelled, compelled, or rather sent—let us say sent—towards you for a work that no one but myself can do. You would call it a harmless delusion: a ridiculous delusion at which you don't even smile. It is absurd of me to talk like this, yet some day you shall remember these words, I hope. Enough of this. Here I stand before you-confessed! But one thing more I must add to complete it: a mere blind tool I can never consent to be."

Whatever acknowledgment Razumov was prepared for, he was not prepared to have both his hands seized in the great man's grasp. The swiftness of the movement was aggressive enough to startle. The burly feminist could not have been quicker had his purpose been to jerk Razumov treacherously up on the landing and bundle him behind one of the numerous closed doors near by. This idea actually occurred to Razumov; his hands being released after a darkly eloquent squeeze, he smiled, with a beating heart, straight at the beard and the spectacles hiding that impenetrable man.

He thought to himself (it stands confessed in his handwriting), "I won't move from here till he either speaks or turns away. This is a duel." Many seconds passed without a sign or sound.

"Yes, yes," the great man said hurriedly, in subdued tones, as if the whole thing had been a stolen, breathless interview. "Exactly. Come to see us here in a few days. This must be gone into deeply—deeply, between you and me. Quite to

the bottom. To the...And, by the by, you must bring along Natalia Victorovna—you know, the Haldin girl....

"Am I to take this as my first instruction from you?" inquired Razumov stiffly.

Peter Ivanovitch seemed perplexed by this new attitude.

"Ah! h'm! You are naturally the proper person—*la personne indiquee*. Every one shall be wanted presently. Every one."

He bent down from the landing over Razumov, who had lowered his eyes.

"The moment of action approaches," he murmured.

Razumov did not look up. He did not move till he heard the door of the drawing-room close behind the greatest of feminists returning to his painted Egeria. Then he walked down slowly into the hall. The door stood open, and the shadow of the house was lying aslant over the greatest part of the terrace. While crossing it slowly, he lifted his hat and wiped his damp forehead, expelling his breath with force to get rid of the last vestiges of the air he had been breathing inside. He looked at the palms of his hands, and rubbed them gently against his thighs.

He felt, bizarre as it may seem, as though another self, an independent sharer of his mind, had been able to view his whole person very distinctly indeed. "This is curious," he thought. After a while he formulated his opinion of it in the mental ejaculation: "Beastly!" This disgust vanished before a marked uneasiness. "This is an effect of nervous exhaustion," he reflected with weary sagacity. "How am I to go on day after day if I have no more power of resistance—moral resistance?"

He followed the path at the foot of the terrace. "Moral resistance, moral resistance;" he kept on repeating these words mentally. Moral endurance. Yes, that was the necessity of the situation. An immense longing to make his way out of these grounds and to the other end of the town, of throwing himself on his bed and going to sleep for hours, swept everything clean out of his mind for a moment. "Is it possible that I am but a weak creature after all?" he asked himself, in sudden alarm. "Eh! What's that?"

He gave a start as if awakened from a dream. He even swayed a little before recovering himself.

"Ah! You stole away from us quietly to walk about here," he said.

The lady companion stood before him, but how she came there he had not the slightest idea. Her folded arms were closely cherishing the cat.

"I have been unconscious as I walked, it's a positive fact," said Razumov to himself in wonder. He raised his hat with marked civility.

The sallow woman blushed duskily. She had her invariably scared expression, as if somebody had just disclosed to her some terrible news. But she held her

ground, Razumov noticed, without timidity. “She is incredibly shabby,” he thought. In the sunlight her black costume looked greenish, with here and there threadbare patches where the stuff seemed decomposed by age into a velvety, black, furry state. Her very hair and eyebrows looked shabby. Razumov wondered whether she were sixty years old. Her figure, though, was young enough. He observed that she did not appear starved, but rather as if she had been fed on unwholesome scraps and leavings of plates.

Razumov smiled amiably and moved out of her way. She turned her head to keep her scared eyes on him.

“I know what you have been told in there,” she affirmed, without preliminaries. Her tone, in contrast with her manner, had an unexpectedly assured character which put Razumov at his ease.

“Do you? You must have heard all sorts of talk on many occasions in there.”

She varied her phrase, with the same incongruous effect of positiveness.

“I know to a certainty what you have been told to do.”

“Really?” Razumov shrugged his shoulders a little. He was about to pass on with a bow, when a sudden thought struck him. “Yes. To be sure! In your confidential position you are aware of many things,” he murmured, looking at the cat.

That animal got a momentary convulsive hug from the lady companion.

“Everything was disclosed to me a long time ago,” she said.

“Everything,” Razumov repeated absently.

“Peter Ivanovitch is an awful despot,” she jerked out.

Razumov went on studying the stripes on the grey fur of the cat.

“An iron will is an integral part of such a temperament. How else could he be a leader? And I think that you are mistaken in—”

“There!” she cried. “You tell me that I am mistaken. But I tell you all the same that he cares for no one.” She jerked her head up. “Don’t you bring that girl here. That’s what you have been told to do—to bring that girl here. Listen to me; you had better tie a stone round her neck and throw her into the lake.”

Razumov had a sensation of chill and gloom, as if a heavy cloud had passed over the sun.

“The girl?” he said. “What have I to do with her?”

“But you have been told to bring Nathalie Haldin here. Am I not right? Of course I am right. I was not in the room, but I know. I know Peter Ivanovitch sufficiently well. He is a great man. Great men are horrible. Well, that’s it. Have nothing to do with her. That’s the best you can do, unless you want her to become like me—disillusioned! Disillusioned!”

“Like you,” repeated Razumov, glaring at her face, as devoid of all comeliness of feature and complexion as the most miserable beggar is of money. He smiled, still feeling chilly: a peculiar sensation which annoyed him. “Disillusioned as to Peter Ivanovitch! Is that all you have lost?”

She declared, looking frightened, but with immense conviction, “Peter Ivanovitch stands for everything.” Then she added, in another tone, “Keep the girl away from this house.”

“And are you absolutely inciting me to disobey Peter Ivanovitch just because—because you are disillusioned?”

She began to blink.

“Directly I saw you for the first time I was comforted. You took your hat off to me. You looked as if one could trust you. Oh!”

She shrank before Razumov’s savage snarl of, “I have heard something like this before.”

She was so confounded that she could do nothing but blink for a long time.

“It was your humane manner,” she explained plaintively. “I have been starving for, I won’t say kindness, but just for a little civility, for I don’t know how long. And now you are angry....”

“But no, on the contrary,” he protested. “I am very glad you trust me. It’s possible that later on I may...”

“Yes, if you were to get ill,” she interrupted eagerly, “or meet some bitter trouble, you would find I am not a useless fool. You have only to let me know. I will come to you. I will indeed. And I will stick to you. Misery and I are old acquaintances—but this life here is worse than starving.”

She paused anxiously, then in a voice for the first time sounding really timid, she added—

“Or if you were engaged in some dangerous work. Sometimes a humble companion—I would not want to know anything. I would follow you with joy. I could carry out orders. I have the courage.”

Razumov looked attentively at the scared round eyes, at the withered, sallow, round cheeks. They were quivering about the corners of the mouth.

“She wants to escape from here,” he thought.

“Suppose I were to tell you that I am engaged in dangerous work?” he uttered slowly.

She pressed the cat to her threadbare bosom with a breathless exclamation. “Ah!” Then not much above a whisper: “Under Peter Ivanovitch?”

“No, not under Peter Ivanovitch.”

He read admiration in her eyes, and made an effort to smile.

“Then—alone?”

He held up his closed hand with the index raised. “Like this finger,” he said.

She was trembling slightly. But it occurred to Razumov that they might have been observed from the house, and he became anxious to be gone. She blinked, raising up to him her puckered face, and seemed to beg mutely to be told something more, to be given a word of encouragement for her starving, grotesque, and pathetic devotion.

“Can we be seen from the house?” asked Razumov confidentially.

She answered, without showing the slightest surprise at the question—

“No, we can’t, on account of this end of the stables.” And she added, with an acuteness which surprised Razumov, “But anybody looking out of an upstairs window would know that you have not passed through the gates yet.”

“Who’s likely to spy out of the window?” queried Razumov. “Peter Ivanovitch?”

She nodded.

“Why should he trouble his head?”

“He expects somebody this afternoon.”

“You know the person?”

“There’s more than one.”

She had lowered her eyelids. Razumov looked at her curiously.

“Of course. You hear everything they say.”

She murmured without any animosity—

“So do the tables and chairs.”

He understood that the bitterness accumulated in the heart of that helpless creature had got into her veins, and, like some subtle poison, had decomposed her fidelity to that hateful pair. It was a great piece of luck for him, he reflected; because women are seldom venal after the manner of men, who can be bought for material considerations. She would be a good ally, though it was not likely that she was allowed to hear as much as the tables and chairs of the Chateau Borel. That could not be expected. But still.... And, at any rate, she could be made to talk.

When she looked up her eyes met the fixed stare of Razumov, who began to speak at once.

“Well, well, dear...but upon my word, I haven’t the pleasure of knowing your name yet. Isn’t it strange?”

For the first time she made a movement of the shoulders.

“Is it strange? No one is told my name. No one cares. No one talks to me, no one writes to me. My parents don’t even know if I’m alive. I have no use for a name, and I have almost forgotten it myself.”

Razumov murmured gravely, “Yes, but still...”

She went on much slower, with indifference—

“You may call me Tekla, then. My poor Andrei called me so. I was devoted to him. He lived in wretchedness and suffering, and died in misery. That is the lot of all us Russians, nameless Russians. There is nothing else for us, and no hope anywhere, unless...”

“Unless what?”

“Unless all these people with names are done away with,” she finished, blinking and pursing up her lips.

“It will be easier to call you Tekla, as you direct me,” said Razumov, “if you consent to call me Kirylo, when we are talking like this—quietly—only you and me.”

And he said to himself, “Here’s a being who must be terribly afraid of the world, else she would have run away from this situation before.” Then he reflected that the mere fact of leaving the great man abruptly would make her a suspect. She could expect no support or countenance from anyone. This revolutionist was not fit for an independent existence.

She moved with him a few steps, blinking and nursing the cat with a small balancing movement of her arms.

“Yes—only you and I. That’s how I was with my poor Andrei, only he was dying, killed by these official brutes—while you! You are strong. You kill the monsters. You have done a great deed. Peter Ivanovitch himself must consider you. Well—don’t forget me—especially if you are going back to work in Russia. I could follow you, carrying anything that was wanted—at a distance, you know. Or I could watch for hours at the corner of a street if necessary,—in wet or snow—yes, I could—all day long. Or I could write for you dangerous documents, lists of names or instructions, so that in case of mischance the handwriting could not compromise you. And you need not be afraid if they were to catch me. I would know how to keep dumb. We women are not so easily daunted by pain. I heard Peter Ivanovitch say it is our blunt nerves or something. We can stand it better. And it’s true; I would just as soon bite my tongue out and throw it at them as not. What’s the good of speech to me? Who would ever want to hear what I could say? Ever since I closed the eyes of my poor Andrei I haven’t met a man who seemed to care for the sound of my voice. I should never have spoken to you if the very first time you appeared here you had not taken notice of me so nicely. I could not help speaking of you to that charming dear

girl. Oh, the sweet creature! And strong! One can see that at once. If you have a heart don't let her set her foot in here. Good-bye!"

Razumov caught her by the arm. Her emotion at being thus seized manifested itself by a short struggle, after which she stood still, not looking at him.

"But you can tell me," he spoke in her ear, "why they—these people in that house there—are so anxious to get hold of her?"

She freed herself to turn upon him, as if made angry by the question.

"Don't you understand that Peter Ivanovitch must direct, inspire, influence? It is the breath of his life. There can never be too many disciples. He can't bear thinking of anyone escaping him. And a woman, too! There is nothing to be done without women, he says. He has written it. He—"

The young man was staring at her passion when she broke off suddenly and ran away behind the stable.

III

Razumov, thus left to himself, took the direction of the gate. But on this day of many conversations, he discovered that very probably he could not leave the grounds without having to hold another one.

Stepping in view from beyond the lodge appeared the expected visitors of Peter Ivanovitch: a small party composed of two men and a woman. They noticed him too, immediately, and stopped short as if to consult. But in a moment the woman, moving aside, motioned with her arm to the two men, who, leaving the drive at once, struck across the large neglected lawn, or rather grass-plot, and made directly for the house. The woman remained on the path waiting for Razumov's approach. She had recognized him. He, too, had recognized her at the first glance. He had been made known to her at Zurich, where he had broken his journey while on his way from Dresden. They had been much together for the three days of his stay.

She was wearing the very same costume in which he had seen her first. A blouse of crimson silk made her noticeable at a distance. With that she wore a short brown skirt and a leather belt. Her complexion was the colour of coffee and milk, but very clear; her eyes black and glittering, her figure erect. A lot of thick hair, nearly white, was done up loosely under a dusty Tyrolese hat of dark cloth, which seemed to have lost some of its trimmings.

The expression of her face was grave, intent; so grave that Razumov, after approaching her close, felt obliged to smile. She greeted him with a manly hand-grasp.

"What! Are you going away?" she exclaimed. "How is that, Razumov?"

"I am going away because I haven't been asked to stay," Razumov answered, returning the pressure of her hand with much less force than she had put into it.

She jerked her head sideways like one who understands. Meantime Razumov's eyes had strayed after the two men. They were crossing the grass-plot obliquely, without haste. The shorter of the two was buttoned up in a narrow overcoat of some thin grey material, which came nearly to his heels. His companion, much taller and broader, wore a short, close-fitting jacket and tight trousers tucked into shabby top-boots.

The woman, who had sent them out of Razumov's way apparently, spoke in a businesslike voice.

"I had to come rushing from Zurich on purpose to meet the train and take these two along here to see Peter Ivanovitch. I've just managed it."

"Ah! indeed," Razumov said perfunctorily, and very vexed at her staying behind to talk to him "From Zurich—yes, of course. And these two, they come from...."

She interrupted, without emphasis—

"From quite another direction. From a distance, too. A considerable distance."

Razumov shrugged his shoulders. The two men from a distance, after having reached the wall of the terrace, disappeared suddenly at its foot as if the earth had opened to swallow them up.

"Oh, well, they have just come from America." The woman in the crimson blouse shrugged her shoulders too a little before making that statement. "The time is drawing near," she interjected, as if speaking to herself. "I did not tell them who you were. Yakovlitch would have wanted to embrace you."

"Is that he with the wisp of hair hanging from his chin, in the long coat?"

"You've guessed aright. That's Yakovlitch."

"And they could not find their way here from the station without you coming on purpose from Zurich to show it to them? Verily, without women we can do nothing. So it stands written, and apparently so it is."

He was conscious of an immense lassitude under his effort to be sarcastic. And he could see that she had detected it with those steady, brilliant black eyes.

"What is the matter with you?"

"I don't know. Nothing. I've had a devil of a day."

She waited, with her black eyes fixed on his face. Then—

"What of that? You men are so impressionable and self-conscious. One day is like another, hard, hard—and there's an end of it, till the great day comes. I came over for a very good reason. They wrote to warn Peter Ivanovitch of their arrival. But where from? Only from Cherbourg on a bit of ship's notepaper. Anybody could have done that. Yakovlitch has lived for years and years in America. I am the only one at hand who had known him well in the old days. I knew him very

well indeed. So Peter Ivanovitch telegraphed, asking me to come. It's natural enough, is it not?"

"You came to vouch for his identity?" inquired Razumov.

"Yes. Something of the kind. Fifteen years of a life like his make changes in a man. Lonely, like a crow in a strange country. When I think of Yakovlitch before he went to America—"

The softness of the low tone caused Razumov to glance at her sideways. She sighed; her black eyes were looking away; she had plunged the fingers of her right hand deep into the mass of nearly white hair, and stirred them there absently. When she withdrew her hand the little hat perched on the top of her head remained slightly tilted, with a queer inquisitive effect, contrasting strongly with the reminiscent murmur that escaped her.

"We were not in our first youth even then. But a man is a child always."

Razumov thought suddenly, "They have been living together." Then aloud—

"Why didn't you follow him to America?" he asked point-blank.

She looked up at him with a perturbed air.

"Don't you remember what was going on fifteen years ago? It was a time of activity. The Revolution has its history by this time. You are in it and yet you don't seem to know it. Yakovlitch went away then on a mission; I went back to Russia. It had to be so. Afterwards there was nothing for him to come back to."

"Ah! indeed," muttered Razumov, with affected surprise. "Nothing!"

"What are you trying to insinuate" she exclaimed quickly. "Well, and what then if he did get discouraged a little...."

"He looks like a Yankee, with that goatee hanging from his chin. A regular Uncle Sam," growled Razumov. "Well, and you? You who went to Russia? You did not get discouraged."

"Never mind. Yakovlitch is a man who cannot be doubted. He, at any rate, is the right sort."

Her black, penetrating gaze remained fixed upon Razumov while she spoke, and for a moment afterwards.

"Pardon me," Razumov inquired coldly, "but does it mean that you, for instance, think that I am not the right sort?"

She made no protest, gave no sign of having heard the question; she continued looking at him in a manner which he judged not to be absolutely unfriendly. In Zurich when he passed through she had taken him under her charge, in a way, and was with him from morning till night during his stay of two days. She took him round to see several people. At first she talked to him a great deal and rather unreservedly, but always avoiding all reference to herself; towards the middle of

the second day she fell silent, attending him zealously as before, and even seeing him off at the railway station, where she pressed his hand firmly through the lowered carriage window, and, stepping back without a word, waited till the train moved. He had noticed that she was treated with quiet regard. He knew nothing of her parentage, nothing of her private history or political record; he judged her from his own private point of view, as being a distinct danger in his path. "Judged" is not perhaps the right word. It was more of a feeling, the summing up of slight impressions aided by the discovery that he could not despise her as he despised all the others. He had not expected to see her again so soon.

No, decidedly; her expression was not unfriendly. Yet he perceived an acceleration in the beat of his heart. The conversation could not be abandoned at that point. He went on in accents of scrupulous inquiry—

"Is it perhaps because I don't seem to accept blindly every development of the general doctrine—such for instance as the feminism of our great Peter Ivanovitch? If that is what makes me suspect, then I can only say I would scorn to be a slave even to an idea."

She had been looking at him all the time, not as a listener looks at one, but as if the words he chose to say were only of secondary interest. When he finished she slipped her hand, by a sudden and decided movement, under his arm and impelled him gently towards the gate of the grounds. He felt her firmness and obeyed the impulsion at once, just as the other two men had, a moment before, obeyed unquestioningly the wave of her hand.

They made a few steps like this.

"No, Razumov, your ideas are probably all right," she said. "You may be valuable—very valuable. What's the matter with you is that you don't like us."

She released him. He met her with a frosty smile.

"Am I expected then to have love as well as convictions?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"You know very well what I mean. People have been thinking you not quite whole-hearted. I have heard that opinion from one side and another. But I have understood you at the end of the first day...."

Razumov interrupted her, speaking steadily.

"I assure you that your perspicacity is at fault here."

"What phrases he uses!" she exclaimed parenthetically. "Ah! Kirylo Sidorovitch, you like other men are fastidious, full of self-love and afraid of trifles. Moreover, you had no training. What you want is to be taken in hand by some woman. I am sorry I am not staying here a few days. I am going back to Zurich to-morrow, and shall take Yakovlitch with me most likely."

This information relieved Razumov.

“I am sorry too,” he said. “But, all the same, I don’t think you understand me.”

He breathed more freely; she did not protest, but asked, “And how did you get on with Peter Ivanovitch? You have seen a good deal of each other. How is it between you two?”

Not knowing what answer to make, the young man inclined his head slowly.

Her lips had been parted in expectation. She pressed them together, and seemed to reflect.

“That’s all right.”

This had a sound of finality, but she did not leave him. It was impossible to guess what she had in her mind. Razumov muttered—

“It is not of me that you should have asked that question. In a moment you shall see Peter Ivanovitch himself, and the subject will come up naturally. He will be curious to know what has delayed you so long in this garden.”

“No doubt Peter Ivanovitch will have something to say to me. Several things. He may even speak of you—question me. Peter Ivanovitch is inclined to trust me generally.”

“Question you? That’s very likely.”

She smiled, half serious.

“Well—and what shall I say to him?”

“I don’t know. You may tell him of your discovery.”

“What’s that?”

“Why—my lack of love for....”

“Oh! That’s between ourselves,” she interrupted, it was hard to say whether in jest or earnest.

“I see that you want to tell Peter Ivanovitch something in my favour,” said Razumov, with grim playfulness. “Well, then, you can tell him that I am very much in earnest about my mission. I mean to succeed.”

“You have been given a mission!” she exclaimed quickly.

“It amounts to that. I have been told to bring about a certain event.”

She looked at him searchingly.

“A mission,” she repeated, very grave and interested all at once. “What sort of mission?”

“Something in the nature of propaganda work.”

“Ah! Far away from here?”

“No. Not very far,” said Razumov, restraining a sudden desire to laugh, although he did not feel joyous in the least.

“So!” she said thoughtfully. “Well, I am not asking questions. It’s sufficient that Peter Ivanovitch should know what each of us is doing. Everything is bound to come right in the end.”

“You think so?”

“I don’t think, young man. I just simply believe it.”

“And is it to Peter Ivanovitch that you owe that faith?”

She did not answer the question, and they stood idle, silent, as if reluctant to part with each other.

“That’s just like a man,” she murmured at last. “As if it were possible to tell how a belief comes to one.” Her thin Mephistophelian eyebrows moved a little. “Truly there are millions of people in Russia who would envy the life of dogs in this country. It is a horror and a shame to confess this even between ourselves. One must believe for very pity. This can’t go on. No! It can’t go on. For twenty years I have been coming and going, looking neither to the left nor to the right.... What are you smiling to yourself for? You are only at the beginning. You have begun well, but you just wait till you have trodden every particle of yourself under your feet in your comings and goings. For that is what it comes to. You’ve got to trample down every particle of your own feelings; for stop you cannot, you must not. I have been young, too—but perhaps you think that I am complaining-eh?”

“I don’t think anything of the sort,” protested Razumov indifferently.

“I dare say you don’t, you dear superior creature. You don’t care.”

She plunged her fingers into the bunch of hair on the left side, and that brusque movement had the effect of setting the Tyrolese hat straight on her head. She frowned under it without animosity, in the manner of an investigator. Razumov averted his face carelessly.

“You men are all alike. You mistake luck for merit. You do it in good faith too! I would not be too hard on you. It’s masculine nature. You men are ridiculously pitiful in your aptitude to cherish childish illusions down to the very grave. There are a lot of us who have been at work for fifteen years—I mean constantly—trying one way after another, underground and above ground, looking neither to the right nor to the left! I can talk about it. I have been one of these that never rested.... There! What’s the use of talking.... Look at my grey hairs! And here two babies come along—I mean you and Haldin—you come along and manage to strike a blow at the very first try.”

At the name of Haldin falling from the rapid and energetic lips of the woman revolutionist, Razumov had the usual brusque consciousness of the irrevocable. But in all the months which had passed over his head he had become hardened to the experience. The consciousness was no longer accompanied by the blank

dismay and the blind anger of the early days. He had argued himself into new beliefs; and he had made for himself a mental atmosphere of gloomy and sardonic reverie, a sort of murky medium through which the event appeared like a featureless shadow having vaguely the shape of a man; a shape extremely familiar, yet utterly inexpressive, except for its air of discreet waiting in the dusk. It was not alarming.

"What was he like?" the woman revolutionist asked unexpectedly.

"What was he like?" echoed Razumov, making a painful effort not to turn upon her savagely. But he relieved himself by laughing a little while he stole a glance at her out of the corners of his eyes. This reception of her inquiry disturbed her.

"How like a woman," he went on. "What is the good of concerning yourself with his appearance? Whatever it was, he is removed beyond all feminine influences now."

A frown, making three folds at the root of her nose, accentuated the Mephistophelian slant of her eyebrows.

"You suffer, Razumov," she suggested, in her low, confident voice.

"What nonsense!" Razumov faced the woman fairly. "But now I think of it, I am not sure that he is beyond the influence of one woman at least; the one over there—Madame de S—, you know. Formerly the dead were allowed to rest, but now it seems they are at the beck and call of a crazy old harridan. We revolutionists make wonderful discoveries. It is true that they are not exactly our own. We have nothing of our own. But couldn't the friend of Peter Ivanovitch satisfy your feminine curiosity? Couldn't she conjure him up for you?"—he jested like a man in pain.

Her concentrated frowning expression relaxed, and she said, a little wearily, "Let us hope she will make an effort and conjure up some tea for us. But that is by no means certain. I am tired, Razumov."

"You tired! What a confession! Well, there has been tea up there. I had some. If you hurry on after Yakovlitch, instead of wasting your time with such an unsatisfactory sceptical person as myself, you may find the ghost of it—the cold ghost of it—still lingering in the temple. But as to you being tired I can hardly believe it. We are not supposed to be. We mustn't, We can't. The other day I read in some paper or other an alarmist article on the tireless activity of the revolutionary parties. It impresses the world. It's our prestige."

"He flings out continually these flouts and sneers;" the woman in the crimson blouse spoke as if appealing quietly to a third person, but her black eyes never left Razumov's face. "And what for, pray? Simply because some of his conventional notions are shocked, some of his petty masculine standards. You might think he was one of these nervous sensitives that come to a bad end. And yet," she went on, after a short, reflective pause and changing the mode of her

address, “and yet I have just learned something which makes me think that you are a man of character, Kirylo Sidorovitch. Yes! indeed—you are.”

The mysterious positiveness of this assertion startled Razumov. Their eyes met. He looked away and, through the bars of the rusty gate, stared at the clean, wide road shaded by the leafy trees. An electric tramcar, quite empty, ran along the avenue with a metallic rustle. It seemed to him he would have given anything to be sitting inside all alone. He was inexpressibly weary, weary in every fibre of his body, but he had a reason for not being the first to break off the conversation. At any instant, in the visionary and criminal babble of revolutionists, some momentous words might fall on his ear; from her lips, from anybody’s lips. As long as he managed to preserve a clear mind and to keep down his irritability there was nothing to fear. The only condition of success and safety was indomitable will-power, he reminded himself.

He longed to be on the other side of the bars, as though he were actually a prisoner within the grounds of this centre of revolutionary plots, of this house of folly, of blindness, of villainy and crime. Silently he indulged his wounded spirit in a feeling of immense moral and mental remoteness. He did not even smile when he heard her repeat the words—

“Yes! A strong character.”

He continued to gaze through the bars like a moody prisoner, not thinking of escape, but merely pondering upon the faded memories of freedom.

“If you don’t look out,” he mumbled, still looking away, “you shall certainly miss seeing as much as the mere ghost of that tea.”

She was not to be shaken off in such a way. As a matter of fact he had not expected to succeed.

“Never mind, it will be no great loss. I mean the missing of her tea and only the ghost of it at that. As to the lady, you must understand that she has her positive uses. See *that*, Razumov.”

He turned his head at this imperative appeal and saw the woman revolutionist making the motions of counting money into the palm of her hand.

“That’s what it is. You see?”

Razumov uttered a slow “I see,” and returned to his prisoner-like gazing upon the neat and shady road.

“Material means must be obtained in some way, and this is easier than breaking into banks. More certain too. There! I am joking.... What is he muttering to himself now?” she cried under her breath.

“My admiration of Peter Ivanovitch’s devoted self-sacrifice, that’s all. It’s enough to make one sick.”

“Oh, you squeamish, masculine creature. Sick! Makes him sick! And what do you know of the truth of it? There’s no looking into the secrets of the heart. Peter Ivanovitch knew her years ago, in his worldly days, when he was a young officer in the Guards. It is not for us to judge an inspired person. That’s where you men have an advantage. You are inspired sometimes both in thought and action. I have always admitted that when you *are* inspired, when you manage to throw off your masculine cowardice and prudishness you are not to be equalled by us. Only, how seldom.... Whereas the silliest woman can always be made of use. And why? Because we have passion, unappeasable passion.... I should like to know what he is smiling at?”

“I am not smiling,” protested Razumov gloomily.

“Well! How is one to call it? You made some sort of face. Yes, I know! You men can love here and hate there and desire something or other—and you make a great to-do about it, and you call it passion! Yes! While it lasts. But we women are in love with love, and with hate, with these very things I tell you, and with desire itself. That’s why we can’t be bribed off so easily as you men. In life, you see, there is not much choice. You have either to rot or to burn. And there is not one of us, painted or unpainted, that would not rather burn than rot.”

She spoke with energy, but in a matter-of-fact tone. Razumov’s attention had wandered away on a track of its own—outside the bars of the gate—but not out of earshot. He stuck his hands into the pockets of his coat.

“Rot or burn! Powerfully stated. Painted or unpainted. Very vigorous. Painted or...Do tell me—she would be infernally jealous of him, wouldn’t she?”

“Who? What? The Baroness? Eleanor Maximovna? Jealous of Peter Ivanovitch? Heavens! Are these the questions the man’s mind is running on? Such a thing is not to be thought of.”

“Why? Can’t a wealthy old woman be jealous? Or, are they all pure spirits together?”

“But what put it into your head to ask such a question?” she wondered.

“Nothing. I just asked. Masculine frivolity, if you like.”

“I don’t like,” she retorted at once. “It is not the time to be frivolous. What are you flinging your very heart against? Or, perhaps, you are only playing a part.”

Razumov had felt that woman’s observation of him like a physical contact, like a hand resting lightly on his shoulder. At that moment he received the mysterious impression of her having made up her mind for a closer grip. He stiffened himself inwardly to bear it without betraying himself.

“Playing a Part,” he repeated, presenting to her an unmoved profile. “It must be done very badly since you see through the assumption.”

She watched him, her forehead drawn into perpendicular folds, the thin black eyebrows diverging upwards like the antennae of an insect. He added hardly audibly—

"You are mistaken. I am doing it no more than the rest of us."

"Who is doing it?" she snapped out.

"Who? Everybody," he said impatiently. "You are a materialist, aren't you?"

"Eh! My dear soul, I have outlived all that nonsense."

"But you must remember the definition of Cabanis: 'Man is a digestive tube.' I imagine now...."

"I spit on him."

"What? On Cabanis? All right. But you can't ignore the importance of a good digestion. The joy of life—you know the joy of life?—depends on a sound stomach, whereas a bad digestion inclines one to scepticism, breeds black fancies and thoughts of death. These are facts ascertained by physiologists. Well, I assure you that ever since I came over from Russia I have been stuffed with indigestible foreign concoctions of the most nauseating kind—pah!"

"You are joking," she murmured incredulously. He assented in a detached way.

"Yes. It is all a joke. It's hardly worth while talking to a man like me. Yet for that very reason men have been known to take their own life."

"On the contrary, I think it is worth while talking to you."

He kept her in the corner of his eye. She seemed to be thinking out some scathing retort, but ended by only shrugging her shoulders slightly.

"Shallow talk! I suppose one must pardon this weakness in you," she said, putting a special accent on the last word. There was something anxious in her indulgent conclusion.

Razumov noted the slightest shades in this conversation, which he had not expected, for which he was not prepared. That was it. "I was not prepared," he said to himself. "It has taken me unawares." It seemed to him that if he only could allow himself to pant openly like a dog for a time this oppression would pass away. "I shall never be found prepared," he thought, with despair. He laughed a little, saying as lightly as he could—

"Thanks. I don't ask for mercy." Then affecting a playful uneasiness, "But aren't you afraid Peter Ivanovitch might suspect us of plotting something unauthorized together by the gate here?"

"No, I am not afraid. You are quite safe from suspicions while you are with me, my dear young man." The humorous gleam in her black eyes went out. "Peter Ivanovitch trusts me," she went on, quite austerely. "He takes my advice. I

am his right hand, as it were, in certain most important things.... That amuses you what? Do you think I am boasting?"

"God forbid. I was just only saying to myself that Peter Ivanovitch seems to have solved the woman question pretty completely."

Even as he spoke he reproached himself for his words, for his tone. All day long he had been saying the wrong things. It was folly, worse than folly. It was weakness; it was this disease of perversity overcoming his will. Was this the way to meet speeches which certainly contained the promise of future confidences from that woman who apparently had a great store of secret knowledge and so much influence? Why give her this puzzling impression? But she did not seem inimical. There was no anger in her voice. It was strangely speculative.

"One does not know what to think, Razumov. You must have bitten something bitter in your cradle." Razumov gave her a sidelong glance.

"H'm! Something bitter? That's an explanation," he muttered. "Only it was much later. And don't you think, Sophia Antonovna, that you and I come from the same cradle?"

The woman, whose name he had forced himself at last to pronounce (he had experienced a strong repugnance in letting it pass his lips), the woman revolutionist murmured, after a pause—

"You mean—Russia?"

He disdained even to nod. She seemed softened, her black eyes very still, as though she were pursuing the simile in her thoughts to all its tender associations. But suddenly she knitted her brows in a Mephistophelian frown.

"Yes. Perhaps no wonder, then. Yes. One lies there lapped up in evils, watched over by beings that are worse than ogres, ghouls, and vampires. They must be driven away, destroyed utterly. In regard of that task nothing else matters if men and women are determined and faithful. That's how I came to feel in the end. The great thing is not to quarrel amongst ourselves about all sorts of conventional trifles. Remember that, Razumov."

Razumov was not listening. He had even lost the sense of being watched in a sort of heavy tranquillity. His uneasiness, his exasperation, his scorn were blunted at last by all these trying hours. It seemed to him that now they were blunted for ever. "I am a match for them all," he thought, with a conviction too firm to be exulting. The woman revolutionist had ceased speaking; he was not looking at her; there was no one passing along the road. He almost forgot that he was not alone. He heard her voice again, curt, businesslike, and yet betraying the hesitation which had been the real reason of her prolonged silence.

"I say, Razumov!"

Razumov, whose face was turned away from her, made a grimace like a man who hears a false note.

"Tell me: is it true that on the very morning of the deed you actually attended the lectures at the University?"

An appreciable fraction of a second elapsed before the real import of the question reached him, like a bullet which strikes some time after the flash of the fired shot. Luckily his disengaged hand was ready to grip a bar of the gate. He held it with a terrible force, but his presence of mind was gone. He could make only a sort of gurgling, grumpy sound.

"Come, Kirylo Sidorovitch!" she urged him. "I know you are not a boastful man. *That* one must say for you. You are a silent man. Too silent, perhaps. You are feeding on some bitterness of your own. You are not an enthusiast. You are, perhaps, all the stronger for that. But you might tell me. One would like to understand you a little more. I was so immensely struck.... Have you really done it?"

He got his voice back. The shot had missed him. It had been fired at random, altogether, more like a signal for coming to close quarters. It was to be a plain struggle for self-preservation. And she was a dangerous adversary too. But he was ready for battle; he was so ready that when he turned towards her not a muscle of his face moved.

"Certainly," he said, without animation, secretly strung up but perfectly sure of himself. "Lectures—certainly, But what makes you ask?"

It was she who was animated.

"I had it in a letter, written by a young man in Petersburg; one of us, of course. You were seen—you were observed with your notebook, impassible, taking notes...."

He enveloped her with his fixed stare.

"What of that?"

"I call such coolness superb—that's all. It is a proof of uncommon strength of character. The young man writes that nobody could have guessed from your face and manner the part you had played only some two hours before—the great, momentous, glorious part...."

"Oh no. Nobody could have guessed," assented Razumov gravely, "because, don't you see, nobody at that time...."

"Yes, yes. But all the same you are a man of exceptional fortitude, it seems. You looked exactly as usual. It was remembered afterwards with wonder...."

"It cost me no effort," Razumov declared, with the same staring gravity.

“Then it’s almost more wonderful still!” she exclaimed, and fell silent while Razumov asked himself whether he had not said there something utterly unnecessary—or even worse.

She raised her head eagerly.

“Your intention was to stay in Russia? You had planned....”

“No,” interrupted Razumov without haste. “I had made no plans of any sort.”

“You just simply walked away?” she struck in.

He bowed his head in slow assent. “Simply—yes.” He had gradually released his hold on the bar of the gate, as though he had acquired the conviction that no random shot could knock him over now. And suddenly he was inspired to add, “The snow was coming down very thick, you know.”

She had a slight appreciative movement of the head, like an expert in such enterprises, very interested, capable of taking every point professionally. Razumov remembered something he had heard.

“I turned into a narrow side street, you understand,” he went on negligently, and paused as if it were not worth talking about. Then he remembered another detail and dropped it before her, like a disdainful dole to her curiosity.

“I felt inclined to lie down and go to sleep there.”

She clicked her tongue at that symptom, very struck indeed. Then—

“But the notebook! The amazing notebook, man. You don’t mean to say you had put it in your pocket beforehand!” she cried.

Razumov gave a start. It might have been a sign of impatience.

“I went home. Straight home to my rooms,” he said distinctly.

“The coolness of the man! You dared?”

“Why not? I assure you I was perfectly calm. Ha! Calmer than I am now perhaps.”

“I like you much better as you are now than when you indulge that bitter vein of yours, Razumov. And nobody in the house saw you return—eh? That might have appeared queer.”

“No one,” Razumov said firmly. “Dvornik, landlady, girl, all out of the way. I went up like a shadow. It was a murky morning. The stairs were dark. I glided up like a phantom. Fate? Luck? What do you think?”

“I just see it!” The eyes of the woman revolutionist snapped darkly. “Well—and then you considered....”

Razumov had it all ready in his head.

“No. I looked at my watch, since you want to know. There was just time. I took that notebook, and ran down the stairs on tiptoe. Have you ever listened to the pit-pat of a man running round and round the shaft of a deep staircase? They

have a gaslight at the bottom burning night and day. I suppose it's gleaming down there now.... The sound dies out—the flame winks....”

He noticed the vacillation of surprise passing over the steady curiosity of the black eyes fastened on his face as if the woman revolutionist received the sound of his voice into her pupils instead of her ears. He checked himself, passed his hand over his forehead, confused, like a man who has been dreaming aloud.

“Where could a student be running if not to his lectures in the morning? At night it's another matter. I did not care if all the house had been there to look at me. But I don't suppose there was anyone. It's best not to be seen or heard. Aha! The people that are neither seen nor heard are the lucky ones—in Russia. Don't you admire my luck?”

“Astonishing,” she said. “If you have luck as well as determination, then indeed you are likely to turn out an invaluable acquisition for the work in hand.”

Her tone was earnest; and it seemed to Razumov that it was speculative, even as though she were already apportioning him, in her mind, his share of the work. Her eyes were cast down. He waited, not very alert now, but with the grip of the ever-present danger giving him an air of attentive gravity. Who could have written about him in that letter from Petersburg? A fellow student, surely—some imbecile victim of revolutionary propaganda, some foolish slave of foreign, subversive ideals. A long, famine-stricken, red-nosed figure presented itself to his mental search. That must have been the fellow!

He smiled inwardly at the absolute wrong-headedness of the whole thing, the self-deception of a criminal idealist shattering his existence like a thunder-clap out of a clear sky, and re-echoing amongst the wreckage in the false assumptions of those other fools. Fancy that hungry and piteous imbecile furnishing to the curiosity of the revolutionist refugees this utterly fantastic detail! He appreciated it as by no means constituting a danger. On the contrary. As things stood it was for his advantage rather, a piece of sinister luck which had only to be accepted with proper caution.

“And yet, Razumov,” he heard the musing voice of the woman, “you have not the face of a lucky man.” She raised her eyes with renewed interest. “And so that was the way of it. After doing your work you simply walked off and made for your rooms. That sort of thing succeeds sometimes. I suppose it was agreed beforehand that, once the business over, each of you would go his own way?”

Razumov preserved the seriousness of his expression and the deliberate, if cautious, manner of speaking.

“Was not that the best thing to do?” he asked, in a dispassionate tone. “And anyway,” he added, after waiting a moment, “we did not give much thought to what would come after. We never discussed formally any line of conduct. It was understood, I think.”

She approved his statement with slight nods.

"You, of course, wished to remain in Russia?"

"In St. Petersburg itself," emphasized Razumov. "It was the only safe course for me. And, moreover, I had nowhere else to go."

"Yes! Yes! I know. Clearly. And the other—this wonderful Haldin appearing only to be regretted—you don't know what he intended?"

Razumov had foreseen that such a question would certainly come to meet him sooner or later. He raised his hands a little and let them fall helplessly by his side—nothing more.

It was the white-haired woman conspirator who was the first to break the silence.

"Very curious," she pronounced slowly. "And you did not think, Kirylo Sidorovitch, that he might perhaps wish to get in touch with you again?"

Razumov discovered that he could not suppress the trembling of his lips. But he thought that he owed it to himself to speak. A negative sign would not do again. Speak he must, if only to get at the bottom of what that St. Petersburg letter might have contained.

"I stayed at home next day," he said, bending down a little and plunging his glance into the black eyes of the woman so that she should not observe the trembling of his lips. "Yes, I stayed at home. As my actions are remembered and written about, then perhaps you are aware that I was *not* seen at the lectures next day. Eh? You didn't know? Well, I stopped at home-the live-long day."

As if moved by his agitated tone, she murmured a sympathetic "I see! It must have been trying enough."

"You seem to understand one's feelings," said Razumov steadily. "It was trying. It was horrible; it was an atrocious day. It was not the last."

"Yes, I understand. Afterwards, when you heard they had got him. Don't I know how one feels after losing a comrade in the good fight? One's ashamed of being left. And I can remember so many. Never mind. They shall be avenged before long. And what is death? At any rate, it is not a shameful thing like some kinds of life."

Razumov felt something stir in his breast, a sort of feeble and unpleasant tremor.

"Some kinds of life?" he repeated, looking at her searchingly.

"The subservient, submissive life. Life? No! Vegetation on the filthy heap of iniquity which the world is. Life, Razumov, not to be vile must be a revolt—a pitiless protest—all the time."

She calmed down, the gleam of suffused tears in her eyes dried out instantly by the heat of her passion, and it was in her capable, businesslike manner that she went on—

"You understand me, Razumov. You are not an enthusiast, but there is an immense force of revolt in you. I felt it from the first, directly I set my eyes on you—you remember—in Zurich. Oh! You are full of bitter revolt. That is good. Indignation flags sometimes, revenge itself may become a weariness, but that uncompromising sense of necessity and justice which armed your and Haldin's hands to strike down that fanatical brute...for it was that—nothing but that! I have been thinking it out. It could have been nothing else but that."

Razumov made a slight bow, the irony of which was concealed by an almost sinister immobility of feature.

"I can't speak for the dead. As for myself, I can assure you that my conduct was dictated by necessity and by the sense of—well—retributive justice."

"Good, that," he said to himself, while her eyes rested upon him, black and impenetrable like the mental caverns where revolutionary thought should sit plotting the violent way of its dream of changes. As if anything could be changed! In this world of men nothing can be changed—neither happiness nor misery. They can only be displaced at the cost of corrupted consciences and broken lives—a futile game for arrogant philosophers and sanguinary triflers. Those thoughts darted through Razumov's head while he stood facing the old revolutionary hand, the respected, trusted, and influential Sophia Antonovna, whose word had such a weight in the "active" section of every party. She was much more representative than the great Peter Ivanovitch. Stripped of rhetoric, mysticism, and theories, she was the true spirit of destructive revolution. And she was the personal adversary he had to meet. It gave him a feeling of triumphant pleasure to deceive her out of her own mouth. The epigrammatic saying that speech has been given to us for the purpose of concealing our thoughts came into his mind. Of that cynical theory this was a very subtle and a very scornful application, flouting in its own words the very spirit of ruthless revolution, embodied in that woman with her white hair and black eyebrows, like slightly sinuous lines of Indian ink, drawn together by the perpendicular folds of a thoughtful frown.

"That's it. Retributive. No pity!" was the conclusion of her silence. And this once broken, she went on impulsively in short, vibrating sentences—

"Listen to my story, Razumov!..." Her father was a clever but unlucky artisan. No joy had lighted up his laborious days. He died at fifty; all the years of his life he had panted under the thumb of masters whose rapacity exacted from him the price of the water, of the salt, of the very air he breathed; taxed the sweat of his brow and claimed the blood of his sons. No protection, no guidance! What had

society to say to him? Be submissive and be honest. If you rebel I shall kill you. If you steal I shall imprison you. But if you suffer I have nothing for you—nothing except perhaps a beggarly dole of bread—but no consolation for your trouble, no respect for your manhood, no pity for the sorrows of your miserable life.

And so he laboured, he suffered, and he died. He died in the hospital. Standing by the common grave she thought of his tormented existence—she saw it whole. She reckoned the simple joys of life, the birthright of the humblest, of which his gentle heart had been robbed by the crime of a society which nothing can absolve.

"Yes, Razumov," she continued, in an impressive, lowered voice, "it was like a lurid light in which I stood, still almost a child, and cursed not the toil, not the misery which had been his lot, but the great social iniquity of the system resting on unrequited toil and unpitied sufferings. From that moment I was a revolutionist."

Razumov, trying to raise himself above the dangerous weaknesses of contempt or compassion, had preserved an impassive countenance. She, with an unaffected touch of mere bitterness, the first he could notice since he had come in contact with the woman, went on—

"As I could not go to the Church where the priests of the system exhorted such unconsidered vermin as I to resignation, I went to the secret societies as soon as I knew how to find my way. I was sixteen years old—no more, Razumov! And—look at my white hair."

In these last words there was neither pride nor sadness. The bitterness too was gone.

"There is a lot of it. I had always magnificent hair, even as a chit of a girl. Only, at that time we were cutting it short and thinking that there was the first step towards crushing the social infamy. Crush the Infamy! A fine watchword! I would placard it on the walls of prisons and palaces, carve it on hard rocks, hang it out in letters of fire on that empty sky for a sign of hope and terror—a portent of the end...."

"You are eloquent, Sophia Antonovna," Razumov interrupted suddenly. "Only, so far you seem to have been writing it in water...."

She was checked but not offended. "Who knows? Very soon it may become a fact written all over that great land of ours," she hinted meaningly. "And then one would have lived long enough. White hair won't matter."

Razumov looked at her white hair: and this mark of so many uneasy years seemed nothing but a testimony to the invincible vigour of revolt. It threw out into an astonishing relief the unwrinkled face, the brilliant black glance, the upright compact figure, the simple, brisk self-possession of the mature

personality—as though in her revolutionary pilgrimage she had discovered the secret, not of everlasting youth, but of everlasting endurance.

How un-Russian she looked, thought Razumov. Her mother might have been a Jewess or an Armenian or devil knew what. He reflected that a revolutionist is seldom true to the settled type. All revolt is the expression of strong individualism—ran his thought vaguely. One can tell them a mile off in any society, in any surroundings. It was astonishing that the police....

"We shall not meet again very soon, I think," she was saying. "I am leaving to-morrow."

"For Zurich?" Razumov asked casually, but feeling relieved, not from any distinct apprehension, but from a feeling of stress as if after a wrestling match.

"Yes, Zurich—and farther on, perhaps, much farther. Another journey. When I think of all my journeys! The last must come some day. Never mind, Razumov. We had to have a good long talk. I would have certainly tried to see you if we had not met. Peter Ivanovitch knows where you live? Yes. I meant to have asked him—but it's better like this. You see, we expect two more men; and I had much rather wait here talking with you than up there at the house with...."

Having cast a glance beyond the gate, she interrupted herself. "Here they are," she said rapidly. "Well, Kirylo Sidorovitch, we shall have to say good-bye, presently."

IV

In his incertitude of the ground on which he stood Razumov felt perturbed. Turning his head quickly, he saw two men on the opposite side of the road. Seeing themselves noticed by Sophia Antonovna, they crossed over at once, and passed one after another through the little gate by the side of the empty lodge. They looked hard at the stranger, but without mistrust, the crimson blouse being a flaring safety signal. The first, great white hairless face, double chin, prominent stomach, which he seemed to carry forward consciously within a strongly distended overcoat, only nodded and averted his eyes peevishly; his companion—lean, flushed cheekbones, a military red moustache below a sharp, salient nose—approached at once Sophia Antonovna, greeting her warmly. His voice was very strong but inarticulate. It sounded like a deep buzzing. The woman revolutionist was quietly cordial.

"This is Razumov," she announced in a clear voice.

The lean new-comer made an eager half-turn. "He will want to embrace me," thought our young man with a deep recoil of all his being, while his limbs seemed too heavy to move. But it was a groundless alarm. He had to do now with a generation of conspirators who did not kiss each other on both cheeks; and raising an arm that felt like lead he dropped his hand into a largely-outstretched palm, fleshless and hot as if dried up by fever, giving a bony pressure,

expressive, seeming to say, “Between us there’s no need of words.” The man had big, wide-open eyes. Razumov fancied he could see a smile behind their sadness.

“This is Razumov,” Sophia Antonovna repeated loudly for the benefit of the fat man, who at some distance displayed the profile of his stomach.

No one moved. Everything, sounds, attitudes, movements, and immobility seemed to be part of an experiment, the result of which was a thin voice piping with comic peevishness—

“Oh yes! Razumov. We have been hearing of nothing but Mr. Razumov for months. For my part, I confess I would rather have seen Haldin on this spot instead of Mr. Razumov.”

The squeaky stress put on the name “Razumov—Mr. Razumov” pierced the ear ridiculously, like the falsetto of a circus clown beginning an elaborate joke. Astonishment was Razumov’s first response, followed by sudden indignation.

“What’s the meaning of this?” he asked in a stern tone.

“Tut! Silliness. He’s always like that.” Sophia Antonovna was obviously vexed. But she dropped the information, “Necator,” from her lips just loud enough to be heard by Razumov. The abrupt squeaks of the fat man seemed to proceed from that thing like a balloon he carried under his overcoat. The stolidity of his attitude, the big feet, the lifeless, hanging hands, the enormous bloodless cheek, the thin wisps of hair straggling down the fat nape of the neck, fascinated Razumov into a stare on the verge of horror and laughter.

Nikita, surnamed Necator, with a sinister aptness of alliteration! Razumov had heard of him. He had heard so much since crossing the frontier of these celebrities of the militant revolution; the legends, the stories, the authentic chronicle, which now and then peeps out before a half-incredulous world. Razumov had heard of him. He was supposed to have killed more, gendarmes and police agents than any revolutionist living. He had been entrusted with executions.

The paper with the letters N.N., the very pseudonym of murder, found pinned on the stabbed breast of a certain notorious spy (this picturesque detail of a sensational murder case had got into the newspapers), was the mark of his handiwork. “By order of the Committee.—N.N.” A corner of the curtain lifted to strike the imagination of the gaping world. He was said to have been innumerable times in and out of Russia, the Necator of bureaucrats, of provincial governors, of obscure informers. He lived between whiles, Razumov had heard, on the shores of the Lake of Como, with a charming wife, devoted to the cause, and two young children. But how could that creature, so grotesque as to set town dogs barking at its mere sight, go about on those deadly errands and slip through the meshes of the police?

“What now? what now?” the voice squeaked. “I am only sincere. It’s not denied that the other was the leading spirit. Well, it would have been better if he had been the one spared to us. More useful. I am not a sentimentalist. Say what I think...only natural.”

Squeak, squeak, squeak, without a gesture, without a stir—the horrible squeaky burlesque of professional jealousy—this man of a sinister alliterative nickname, this executioner of revolutionary verdicts, the terrifying N.N. exasperated like a fashionable tenor by the attention attracted to the performance of an obscure amateur. Sophia Antonovna shrugged her shoulders. The comrade with the martial red moustache hurried towards Razumov full of conciliatory intentions in his strong buzzing voice.

“Devil take it! And in this place, too, in the public street, so to speak. But you can see yourself how it is. One of his fantastic sallies. Absolutely of no consequence.”

“Pray don’t concern yourself,” cried Razumov, going off into a long fit of laughter. “Don’t mention it.”

The other, his hectic flush like a pair of burns on his cheek-bones, stared for a moment and burst out laughing too. Razumov, whose hilarity died out all at once, made a step forward.

“Enough of this,” he began in a clear, incisive voice, though he could hardly control the trembling of his legs. “I will have no more of it. I shall not permit anyone.... I can see very well what you are at with those allusions.... Inquire, investigate! I defy you, but I will not be played with.”

He had spoken such words before. He had been driven to cry them out in the face of other suspicions. It was an infernal cycle bringing round that protest like a fatal necessity of his existence. But it was no use. He would be always played with. Luckily life does not last for ever.

“I won’t have it!” he shouted, striking his fist into the palm of his other hand.

“Kirylo Sidorovitch—what has come to you?” The woman revolutionist interfered with authority. They were all looking at Razumov now; the slayer of spies and gendarmes had turned about, presenting his enormous stomach in full, like a shield.

“Don’t shout. There are people passing.” Sophia Antonovna was apprehensive of another outburst. A steam-launch from Monrepos had come to the landing-stage opposite the gate, its hoarse whistle and the churning noise alongside all unnoticed, had landed a small bunch of local passengers who were dispersing their several ways. Only a specimen of early tourist in knickerbockers, conspicuous by a brand-new yellow leather glass-case, hung about for a moment, scenting something unusual about these four people within the rusty iron gates of what looked the grounds run wild of an unoccupied private house. Ah! If he had

only known what the chance of commonplace travelling had suddenly put in his way! But he was a well-bred person; he averted his gaze and moved off with short steps along the avenue, on the watch for a tramcar.

A gesture from Sophia Antonovna, “Leave him to me,” had sent the two men away—the buzzing of the inarticulate voice growing fainter and fainter, and the thin pipe of “What now? what’s the matter?” reduced to the proportions of a squeaking toy by the distance. They had left him to her. So many things could be left safely to the experience of Sophia Antonovna. And at once, her black eyes turned to Razumov, her mind tried to get at the heart of that outburst. It had some meaning. No one is born an active revolutionist. The change comes disturbingly, with the force of a sudden vocation, bringing in its train agonizing doubts, assertive violences, an unstable state of the soul, till the final appeasement of the convert in the perfect fierceness of conviction. She had seen—often had only divined—scores of these young men and young women going through an emotional crisis. This young man looked like a moody egotist. And besides, it was a special—a unique case. She had never met an individuality which interested and puzzled her so much.

“Take care, Razumov, my good friend. If you carry on like this you will go mad. You are angry with everybody and bitter with yourself, and on the look out for something to torment yourself with.”

“It’s intolerable!” Razumov could only speak in gasps. “You must admit that I can have no illusions on the attitude which...it isn’t clear...or rather only too clear.”

He made a gesture of despair. It was not his courage that failed him. The choking fumes of falsehood had taken him by the throat—the thought of being condemned to struggle on and on in that tainted atmosphere without the hope of ever renewing his strength by a breath of fresh air.

“A glass of cold water is what you want.” Sophia Antonovna glanced up the grounds at the house and shook her head, then out of the gate at the brimful placidity of the lake. With a half-comical shrug of the shoulders, she gave the remedy up in the face of that abundance.

“It is you, my dear soul, who are flinging yourself at something which does not exist. What is it? Self-reproach, or what? It’s absurd. You couldn’t have gone and given yourself up because your comrade was taken.”

She remonstrated with him reasonably, at some length too. He had nothing to complain of in his reception. Every new-comer was discussed more or less. Everybody had to be thoroughly understood before being accepted. No one that she could remember had been shown from the first so much confidence. Soon, very soon, perhaps sooner than he expected, he would be given an opportunity of showing his devotion to the sacred task of crushing the Infamy.

Razumov, listening quietly, thought: “It may be that she is trying to lull my suspicions to sleep. On the other hand, it is obvious that most of them are fools.” He moved aside a couple of paces and, folding his arms on his breast, leaned back against the stone pillar of the gate.

“As to what remains obscure in the fate of that poor Haldin,” Sophia Antonovna dropped into a slowness of utterance which was to Razumov like the falling of molten lead drop by drop; “as to that—though no one ever hinted that either from fear or neglect your conduct has not been what it should have been—well, I have a bit of intelligence....”

Razumov could not prevent himself from raising his head, and Sophia Antonovna nodded slightly.

“I have. You remember that letter from St. Petersburg I mentioned to you a moment ago?”

“The letter? Perfectly. Some busybody has been reporting my conduct on a certain day. It’s rather sickening. I suppose our police are greatly edified when they open these interesting and—and—superfluous letters.”

“Oh dear no! The police do not get hold of our letters as easily as you imagine. The letter in question did not leave St. Petersburg till the ice broke up. It went by the first English steamer which left the Neva this spring. They have a fireman on board—one of us, in fact. It has reached me from Hull....”

She paused as if she were surprised at the sullen fixity of Razumov’s gaze, but went on at once, and much faster.

“We have some of our people there who...but never mind. The writer of the letter relates an incident which he thinks may possibly be connected with Haldin’s arrest. I was just going to tell you when those two men came along.”

“That also was an incident,” muttered Razumov, “of a very charming kind—for me.”

“Leave off that!” cried Sophia Antonovna. “Nobody cares for Nikita’s barking. There’s no malice in him. Listen to what I have to say. You may be able to throw a light. There was in St. Petersburg a sort of town peasant—a man who owned horses. He came to town years ago to work for some relation as a driver and ended by owning a cab or two.”

She might well have spared herself the slight effort of the gesture: “Wait!” Razumov did not mean to speak; he could not have interrupted her now, not to save his life. The contraction of his facial muscles had been involuntary, a mere surface stir, leaving him sullenly attentive as before.

“He was not a quite ordinary man of his class—it seems,” she went on. “The people of the house—my informant talked with many of them—you know, one of those enormous houses of shame and misery....”

Sophia Antonovna need not have enlarged on the character of the house. Razumov saw clearly, towering at her back, a dark mass of masonry veiled in snowflakes, with the long row of windows of the eating-shop shining greasily very near the ground. The ghost of that night pursued him. He stood up to it with rage and with weariness.

"Did the late Haldin ever by chance speak to you of that house?" Sophia Antonovna was anxious to know.

"Yes." Razumov, making that answer, wondered whether he were falling into a trap. It was so humiliating to lie to these people that he probably could not have said no. "He mentioned to me once," he added, as if making an effort of memory, "a house of that sort. He used to visit some workmen there."

"Exactly."

Sophia Antonovna triumphed. Her correspondent had discovered that fact quite accidentally from the talk of the people of the house, having made friends with a workman who occupied a room there. They described Haldin's appearance perfectly. He brought comforting words of hope into their misery. He came irregularly, but he came very often, and—her correspondent wrote—sometimes he spent a night in the house, sleeping, they thought, in a stable which opened upon the inner yard.

"Note that, Razumov! In a stable."

Razumov had listened with a sort of ferocious but amused acquiescence.

"Yes. In the straw. It was probably the cleanest spot in the whole house."

"No doubt," assented the woman with that deep frown which seemed to draw closer together her black eyes in a sinister fashion. No four-footed beast could stand the filth and wretchedness so many human beings were condemned to suffer from in Russia. The point of this discovery was that it proved Haldin to have been familiar with that horse-owning peasant—a reckless, independent, free-living fellow not much liked by the other inhabitants of the house. He was believed to have been the associate of a band of housebreakers. Some of these got captured. Not while he was driving them, however; but still there was a suspicion against the fellow of having given a hint to the police and...

The woman revolutionist checked herself suddenly.

"And you? Have you ever heard your friend refer to a certain Ziemianitch?"

Razumov was ready for the name. He had been looking out for the question. "When it comes I shall own up," he had said to himself. But he took his time.

"To be sure!" he began slowly. "Ziemianitch, a peasant owning a team of horses. Yes. On one occasion. Ziemianitch! Certainly! Ziemianitch of the horses.... How could it have slipped my memory like this? One of the last conversations we had together."

“That means,”—Sophia Antonovna looked very grave,—“that means, Razumov, it was very shortly before—eh?”

“Before what?” shouted Razumov, advancing at the woman, who looked astonished but stood her ground. “Before.... Oh! Of course, it was before! How could it have been after? Only a few hours before.”

“And he spoke of him favourably?”

“With enthusiasm! The horses of Ziemianitch! The free soul of Ziemianitch!”

Razumov took a savage delight in the loud utterance of that name, which had never before crossed his lips audibly. He fixed his blazing eyes on the woman till at last her fascinated expression recalled him to himself.

“The late Haldin,” he said, holding himself in, with downcast eyes, “was inclined to take sudden fancies to people, on—on—what shall I say—insufficient grounds.”

“There!” Sophia Antonovna clapped her hands. “That, to my mind, settles it. The suspicions of my correspondent were aroused....”

“Aha! Your correspondent,” Razumov said in an almost openly mocking tone. “What suspicions? How aroused? By this Ziemianitch? Probably some drunken, gabbling, plausible...”

“You talk as if you had known him.”

Razumov looked up.

“No. But I knew Haldin.”

Sophia Antonovna nodded gravely.

“I see. Every word you say confirms to my mind the suspicion communicated to me in that very interesting letter. This Ziemianitch was found one morning hanging from a hook in the stable—dead.”

Razumov felt a profound trouble. It was visible, because Sophia Antonovna was moved to observe vivaciously—

“Aha! You begin to see.”

He saw it clearly enough—in the light of a lantern casting spokes of shadow in a cellar-like stable, the body in a sheepskin coat and long boots hanging against the wall. A pointed hood, with the ends wound about up to the eyes, hid the face. “But that does not concern me,” he reflected. “It does not affect my position at all. He never knew who had thrashed him. He could not have known.” Razumov felt sorry for the old lover of the bottle and women.

“Yes. Some of them end like that,” he muttered. “What is your idea, Sophia Antonovna?”

It was really the idea of her correspondent, but Sophia Antonovna had adopted it fully. She stated it in one word—“Remorse.” Razumov opened his eyes very

wide at that. Sophia Antonovna's informant, by listening to the talk of the house, by putting this and that together, had managed to come very near to the truth of Haldin's relation to Ziemianitch.

"It is I who can tell you what you were not certain of—that your friend had some plan for saving himself afterwards, for getting out of St. Petersburg, at any rate. Perhaps that and no more, trusting to luck for the rest. And that fellow's horses were part of the plan."

"They have actually got at the truth," Razumov marvelled to himself, while he nodded judicially. "Yes, that's possible, very possible." But the woman revolutionist was very positive that it was so. First of all, a conversation about horses between Haldin and Ziemianitch had been partly overheard. Then there were the suspicions of the people in the house when their "young gentleman" (they did not know Haldin by his name) ceased to call at the house. Some of them used to charge Ziemianitch with knowing something of this absence. He denied it with exasperation; but the fact was that ever since Haldin's disappearance he was not himself, growing moody and thin. Finally, during a quarrel with some woman (to whom he was making up), in which most of the inmates of the house took part apparently, he was openly abused by his chief enemy, an athletic pedlar, for an informer, and for having driven "our young gentleman to Siberia, the same as you did those young fellows who broke into houses." In consequence of this there was a fight, and Ziemianitch got flung down a flight of stairs. Thereupon he drank and moped for a week, and then hanged himself.

Sophia Antonovna drew her conclusions from the tale. She charged Ziemianitch either with drunken indiscretion as to a driving job on a certain date, overheard by some spy in some low grog-shop—perhaps in the very eating-shop on the ground floor of the house—or, maybe, a downright denunciation, followed by remorse. A man like that would be capable of anything. People said he was a flighty old chap. And if he had been once before mixed up with the police—as seemed certain, though he always denied it—in connexion with these thieves, he would be sure to be acquainted with some police underlings, always on the look out for something to report. Possibly at first his tale was not made anything of till the day that scoundrel de P—- got his deserts. Ah! But then every bit and scrap of hint and information would be acted on, and fatally they were bound to get Haldin.

Sophia Antonovna spread out her hands—"Fatally."

Fatality—chance! Razumov meditated in silent astonishment upon the queer verisimilitude of these inferences. They were obviously to his advantage.

"It is right now to make this conclusive evidence known generally." Sophia Antonovna was very calm and deliberate again. She had received the letter three

days ago, but did not write at once to Peter Ivanovitch. She knew then that she would have the opportunity presently of meeting several men of action assembled for an important purpose.

"I thought it would be more effective if I could show the letter itself at large. I have it in my pocket now. You understand how pleased I was to come upon you."

Razumov was saying to himself, "She won't offer to show the letter to me. Not likely. Has she told me everything that correspondent of hers has found out?" He longed to see the letter, but he felt he must not ask.

"Tell me, please, was this an investigation ordered, as it were?"

"No, no," she protested. "There you are again with your sensitiveness. It makes you stupid. Don't you see, there was no starting-point for an investigation even if any one had thought of it. A perfect blank! That's exactly what some people were pointing out as the reason for receiving you cautiously. It was all perfectly accidental, arising from my informant striking an acquaintance with an intelligent skindresser lodging in that particular slum-house. A wonderful coincidence!"

"A pious person," suggested Razumov, with a pale smile, "would say that the hand of God has done it all."

"My poor father would have said that." Sophia Antonovna did not smile. She dropped her eyes. "Not that his God ever helped him. It's a long time since God has done anything for the people. Anyway, it's done."

"All this would be quite final," said Razumov, with every appearance of reflective impartiality, "if there was any certitude that the 'our young gentleman' of these people was Victor Haldin. Have we got that?"

"Yes. There's no mistake. My correspondent was as familiar with Haldin's personal appearance as with your own," the woman affirmed decisively.

"It's the red-nosed fellow beyond a doubt," Razumov said to himself, with reawakened uneasiness. Had his own visit to that accursed house passed unnoticed? It was barely possible. Yet it was hardly probable. It was just the right sort of food for the popular gossip that gaunt busybody had been picking up. But the letter did not seem to contain any allusion to that. Unless she had suppressed it. And, if so, why? If it had really escaped the prying of that hunger-stricken democrat with a confounded genius for recognizing people from description, it could only be for a time. He would come upon it presently and hasten to write another letter—and then!

For all the envenomed recklessness of his temper, fed on hate and disdain, Razumov shuddered inwardly. It guarded him from common fear, but it could not defend him from disgust at being dealt with in any way by these people. It was a sort of superstitious dread. Now, since his position had been made more secure

by their own folly at the cost of Ziemianitch, he felt the need of perfect safety, with its freedom from direct lying, with its power of moving amongst them silent, unquestioning, listening, impenetrable, like the very fate of their crimes and their folly. Was this advantage his already? Or not yet? Or never would be?

"Well, Sophia Antonovna," his air of reluctant concession was genuine in so far that he was really loath to part with her without testing her sincerity by a question it was impossible to bring about in any way; "well, Sophia Antonovna, if that is so, then—"

"The creature has done justice to himself," the woman observed, as if thinking aloud.

"What? Ah yes! Remorse," Razumov muttered, with equivocal contempt.

"Don't be harsh, Kirylo Sidorovitch, if you have lost a friend." There was no hint of softness in her tone, only the black glitter of her eyes seemed detached for an instant from vengeful visions. "He was a man of the people. The simple Russian soul is never wholly impenitent. It's something to know that."

"Consoling?" insinuated Razumov, in a tone of inquiry.

"Leave off railing," she checked him explosively. "Remember, Razumov, that women, children, and revolutionists hate irony, which is the negation of all saving instincts, of all faith, of all devotion, of all action. Don't rail! Leave off.... I don't know how it is, but there are moments when you are abhorrent to me...."

She averted her face. A languid silence, as if all the electricity of the situation had been discharged in this flash of passion, lasted for some time. Razumov had not flinched. Suddenly she laid the tips of her fingers on his sleeve.

"Don't mind."

"I don't mind," he said very quietly.

He was proud to feel that she could read nothing on his face. He was really mollified, relieved, if only for a moment, from an obscure oppression. And suddenly he asked himself, "Why the devil did I go to that house? It was an imbecile thing to do."

A profound disgust came over him. Sophia Antonovna lingered, talking in a friendly manner with an evident conciliatory intention. And it was still about the famous letter, referring to various minute details given by her informant, who had never seen Ziemianitch. The "victim of remorse" had been buried several weeks before her correspondent began frequenting the house. It—the house—contained very good revolutionary material. The spirit of the heroic Haldin had passed through these dens of black wretchedness with a promise of universal redemption from all the miseries that oppress mankind. Razumov listened without hearing, gnawed by the newborn desire of safety with its independence from that

degrading method of direct lying which at times he found it almost impossible to practice.

No. The point he wanted to hear about could never come into this conversation. There was no way of bringing it forward. He regretted not having composed a perfect story for use abroad, in which his fatal connexion with the house might have been owned up to. But when he left Russia he did not know that Ziemianitch had hanged himself. And, anyway, who could have foreseen this woman's "informant" stumbling upon that particular slum, of all the slums awaiting destruction in the purifying flame of social revolution? Who could have foreseen? Nobody! "It's a perfect, diabolic surprise," thought Razumov, calm-faced in his attitude of inscrutable superiority, nodding assent to Sophia Antonovna's remarks upon the psychology of "the people," "Oh yes—certainly," rather coldly, but with a nervous longing in his fingers to tear some sort of confession out of her throat.

Then, at the very last, on the point of separating, the feeling of relaxed tension already upon him, he heard Sophia Antonovna allude to the subject of his uneasiness. How it came about he could only guess, his mind being absent at the moment, but it must have sprung from Sophia Antonovna's complaints of the illogical absurdity of the people. For instance—that Ziemianitch was notoriously irreligious, and yet, in the last weeks of his life, he suffered from the notion that he had been beaten by the devil.

"The devil," repeated Razumov, as though he had not heard aright.

"The actual devil. The devil in person. You may well look astonished, Kirylo Sidorovitch. Early on the very night poor Haldin was taken, a complete stranger turned up and gave Ziemianitch a most fearful thrashing while he was lying dead-drunk in the stable. The wretched creature's body was one mass of bruises. He showed them to the people in the house."

"But you, Sophia Antonovna, you don't believe in the actual devil?"

"Do you?" retorted the woman curtly. "Not but that there are plenty of men worse than devils to make a hell of this earth," she muttered to herself.

Razumov watched her, vigorous and white-haired, with the deep fold between her thin eyebrows, and her black glance turned idly away. It was obvious that she did not make much of the story—unless, indeed, this was the perfection of duplicity. "A dark young man," she explained further. "Never seen there before, never seen afterwards. Why are you smiling, Razumov?"

"At the devil being still young after all these ages," he answered composedly. "But who was able to describe him, since the victim, you say, was dead-drunk at the time?"

"Oh! The eating-house keeper has described him. An overbearing, swarthy young man in a student's cloak, who came rushing in, demanded Ziemianitch,

beat him furiously, and rushed away without a word, leaving the eating-house keeper paralysed with astonishment."

"Does he, too, believe it was the devil?"

"That I can't say. I am told he's very reserved on the matter. Those sellers of spirits are great scoundrels generally. I should think he knows more of it than anybody."

"Well, and you, Sophia Antonovna, what's your theory?" asked Razumov in a tone of great interest. "Yours and your informant's, who is on the spot."

"I agree with him. Some police-hound in disguise. Who else could beat a helpless man so unmercifully? As for the rest, if they were out that day on every trail, old and new, it is probable enough that they might have thought it just as well to have Ziemianitch at hand for more information, or for identification, or what not. Some scoundrelly detective was sent to fetch him along, and being vexed at finding him so drunk broke a stable fork over his ribs. Later on, after they had the big game safe in the net, they troubled their heads no more about that peasant."

Such were the last words of the woman revolutionist in this conversation, keeping so close to the truth, departing from it so far in the verisimilitude of thoughts and conclusions as to give one the notion of the invincible nature of human error, a glimpse into the utmost depths of self-deception. Razumov, after shaking hands with Sophia Antonovna, left the grounds, crossed the road, and walking out on the little steamboat pier leaned over the rail.

His mind was at ease; ease such as he had not known for many days, ever since that night...the night. The conversation with the woman revolutionist had given him the view of his danger at the very moment this danger vanished, characteristically enough. "I ought to have foreseen the doubts that would arise in those people's minds," he thought. Then his attention being attracted by a stone of peculiar shape, which he could see clearly lying at the bottom, he began to speculate as to the depth of water in that spot. But very soon, with a start of wonder at this extraordinary instance of ill-timed detachment, he returned to his train of thought. "I ought to have told very circumstantial lies from the first," he said to himself, with a mortal distaste of the mere idea which silenced his mental utterance for quite a perceptible interval. "Luckily, that's all right now," he reflected, and after a time spoke to himself, half aloud, "Thanks to the devil," and laughed a little.

The end of Ziemianitch then arrested his wandering thoughts. He was not exactly amused at the interpretation, but he could not help detecting in it a certain piquancy. He owned to himself that, had he known of that suicide before leaving Russia, he would have been incapable of making such excellent use of it for his own purposes. He ought to be infinitely obliged to the fellow with the red nose

for his patience and ingenuity, “A wonderful psychologist apparently,” he said to himself sarcastically. Remorse, indeed! It was a striking example of your true conspirator’s blindness, of the stupid subtlety of people with one idea. This was a drama of love, not of conscience, Razumov continued to himself mockingly. A woman the old fellow was making up to! A robust pedlar, clearly a rival, throwing him down a flight of stairs.... And at sixty, for a lifelong lover, it was not an easy matter to get over. That was a feminist of a different stamp from Peter Ivanovitch. Even the comfort of the bottle might conceivably fail him in this supreme crisis. At such an age nothing but a halter could cure the pangs of an unquenchable passion. And, besides, there was the wild exasperation aroused by the unjust aspersions and the contumely of the house, with the maddening impossibility to account for that mysterious thrashing, added to these simple and bitter sorrows. “Devil, eh?” Razumov exclaimed, with mental excitement, as if he had made an interesting discovery. “Ziemianitch ended by falling into mysticism. So many of our true Russian souls end in that way! Very characteristic.” He felt pity for Ziemianitch, a large neutral pity, such as one may feel for an unconscious multitude, a great people seen from above—like a community of crawling ants working out its destiny. It was as if this Ziemianitch could not possibly have done anything else. And Sophia Antonovna’s cocksure and contemptuous “some police-hound” was characteristically Russian in another way. But there was no tragedy there. This was a comedy of errors. It was as if the devil himself were playing a game with all of them in turn. First with him, then with Ziemianitch, then with those revolutionists. The devil’s own game this.... He interrupted his earnest mental soliloquy with a jocular thought at his own expense. “Hallo! I am falling into mysticism too.”

His mind was more at ease than ever. Turning about he put his back against the rail comfortably. “All this fits with marvellous aptness,” he continued to think. “The brilliance of my reputed exploit is no longer darkened by the fate of my supposed colleague. The mystic Ziemianitch accounts for that. An incredible chance has served me. No more need of lies. I shall have only to listen and to keep my scorn from getting the upper hand of my caution.”

He sighed, folded his arms, his chin dropped on his breast, and it was a long time before he started forward from that pose, with the recollection that he had made up his mind to do something important that day. What it was he could not immediately recall, yet he made no effort of memory, for he was uneasily certain that he would remember presently.

He had not gone more than a hundred yards towards the town when he slowed down, almost faltered in his walk, at the sight of a figure walking in the contrary direction, draped in a cloak, under a soft, broad-brimmed hat, picturesque but diminutive, as if seen through the big end of an opera-glass. It was impossible to avoid that tiny man, for there was no issue for retreat.

“Another one going to that mysterious meeting,” thought Razumov. He was right in his surmise, only *this* one, unlike the others who came from a distance, was known to him personally. Still, he hoped to pass on with a mere bow, but it was impossible to ignore the little thin hand with hairy wrist and knuckles protruded in a friendly wave from under the folds of the cloak, worn Spanish-wise, in disregard of a fairly warm day, a corner flung over the shoulder.

“And how is Herr Razumov?” sounded the greeting in German, by that alone made more odious to the object of the affable recognition. At closer quarters the diminutive personage looked like a reduction of an ordinary-sized man, with a lofty brow bared for a moment by the raising of the hat, the great pepper-and salt full beard spread over the proportionally broad chest. A fine bold nose jutted over a thin mouth hidden in the mass of fine hair. All this, accented features, strong limbs in their relative smallness, appeared delicate without the slightest sign of debility. The eyes alone, almond-shaped and brown, were too big, with the whites slightly bloodshot by much pen labour under a lamp. The obscure celebrity of the tiny man was well known to Razumov. Polyglot, of unknown parentage, of indefinite nationality, anarchist, with a pedantic and ferocious temperament, and an amazingly inflammatory capacity for invective, he was a power in the background, this violent pamphleteer clamouring for revolutionary justice, this Julius Laspara, editor of the *Living Word*, confidant of conspirators, inditer of sanguinary menaces and manifestos, suspected of being in the secret of every plot. Laspara lived in the old town in a sombre, narrow house presented to him by a naive middle-class admirer of his humanitarian eloquence. With him lived his two daughters, who overtopped him head and shoulders, and a pasty-faced, lean boy of six, languishing in the dark rooms in blue cotton overalls and clumsy boots, who might have belonged to either one of them or to neither. No stranger could tell. Julius Laspara no doubt knew which of his girls it was who, after casually vanishing for a few years, had as casually returned to him possessed of that child; but, with admirable pedantry, he had refrained from asking her for details—no, not so much as the name of the father, because maternity should be an anarchist function. Razumov had been admitted twice to that suite of several small dark rooms on the top floor: dusty window-panes, litter of all sorts of sweepings all over the place, half-full glasses of tea forgotten on every table, the two Laspara daughters prowling about enigmatically silent, sleepy-eyed, corsetless, and generally, in their want of shape and the disorder of their rumpled attire, resembling old dolls; the great but obscure Julius, his feet twisted round his three-legged stool, always ready to receive the visitors, the pen instantly dropped, the body screwed round with a striking display of the lofty brow and of the great austere beard. When he got down from his stool it was as though he had descended from the heights of Olympus. He was dwarfed by his

daughters, by the furniture, by any caller of ordinary stature. But he very seldom left it, and still more rarely was seen walking in broad daylight.

It must have been some matter of serious importance which had driven him out in that direction that afternoon. Evidently he wished to be amiable to that young man whose arrival had made some sensation in the world of political refugees. In Russian now, which he spoke, as he spoke and wrote four or five other European languages, without distinction and without force (other than that of invective), he inquired if Razumov had taken his inscriptions at the University as yet. And the young man, shaking his head negatively—

"There's plenty of time for that. But, meantime, are you not going to write something for us?"

He could not understand how any one could refrain from writing on anything, social, economic, historical—anything. Any subject could be treated in the right spirit, and for the ends of social revolution. And, as it happened, a friend of his in London had got in touch with a review of advanced ideas. "We must educate, educate everybody—develop the great thought of absolute liberty and of revolutionary justice."

Razumov muttered rather surlily that he did not even know English.

"Write in Russian. We'll have it translated There can be no difficulty. Why, without seeking further, there is Miss Haldin. My daughters go to see her sometimes." He nodded significantly. "She does nothing, has never done anything in her life. She would be quite competent, with a little assistance. Only write. You know you must. And so good-bye for the present."

He raised his arm and went on. Razumov backed against the low wall, looked after him, spat violently, and went on his way with an angry mutter—

"Cursed Jew!"

He did not know anything about it. Julius Laspara might have been a Transylvanian, a Turk, an Andalusian, or a citizen of one of the Hanse towns for anything he could tell to the contrary. But this is not a story of the West, and this exclamation must be recorded, accompanied by the comment that it was merely an expression of hate and contempt, best adapted to the nature of the feelings Razumov suffered from at the time. He was boiling with rage, as though he had been grossly insulted. He walked as if blind, following instinctively the shore of the diminutive harbour along the quay, through a pretty, dull garden, where dull people sat on chairs under the trees, till, his fury abandoning him, he discovered himself in the middle of a long, broad bridge. He slowed down at once. To his right, beyond the toy-like jetties, he saw the green slopes framing the Petit Lac in all the marvellous banality of the picturesque made of painted cardboard, with the more distant stretch of water inanimate and shining like a piece of tin.

He turned his head away from that view for the tourists, and walked on slowly, his eyes fixed on the ground. One or two persons had to get out of his way, and then turned round to give a surprised stare to his profound absorption. The insistence of the celebrated subversive journalist rankled in his mind strangely. Write. Must write! He! Write! A sudden light flashed upon him. To write was the very thing he had made up his mind to do that day. He had made up his mind irrevocably to that step and then had forgotten all about it. That incorrigible tendency to escape from the grip of the situation was fraught with serious danger. He was ready to despise himself for it. What was it? Levity, or deep-seated weakness? Or an unconscious dread?

"Is it that I am shrinking? It can't be! It's impossible. To shrink now would be worse than moral suicide; it would be nothing less than moral damnation," he thought. "Is it possible that I have a conventional conscience?"

He rejected that hypothesis with scorn, and, checked on the edge of the pavement, made ready to cross the road and proceed up the wide street facing the head of the bridge; and that for no other reason except that it was there before him. But at the moment a couple of carriages and a slow-moving cart interposed, and suddenly he turned sharp to the left, following the quay again, but now away from the lake.

"It may be just my health," he thought, allowing himself a very unusual doubt of his soundness; for, with the exception of a childish ailment or two, he had never been ill in his life. But that was a danger, too. Only, it seemed as though he were being looked after in a specially remarkable way. "If I believed in an active Providence," Razumov said to himself, amused grimly, "I would see here the working of an ironical finger. To have a Julius Laspara put in my way as if expressly to remind me of my purpose is—Write, he had said. I must write—I must, indeed! I shall write—never fear. Certainly. That's why I am here. And for the future I shall have something to write about."

He was exciting himself by this mental soliloquy. But the idea of writing evoked the thought of a place to write in, of shelter, of privacy, and naturally of his lodgings, mingled with a distaste for the necessary exertion of getting there, with a mistrust as of some hostile influence awaiting him within those odious four walls.

"Suppose one of these revolutionists," he asked himself, "were to take a fancy to call on me while I am writing?" The mere prospect of such an interruption made him shudder. One could lock one's door, or ask the tobacconist downstairs (some sort of a refugee himself) to tell inquirers that one was not in. Not very good precautions those. The manner of his life, he felt, must be kept clear of every cause for suspicion or even occasion for wonder, down to such trifling

occurrences as a delay in opening a locked door. “I wish I were in the middle of some field miles away from everywhere,” he thought.

He had unconsciously turned to the left once more and now was aware of being on a bridge again. This one was much narrower than the other, and instead of being straight, made a sort of elbow or angle. At the point of that angle a short arm joined it to a hexagonal islet with a soil of gravel and its shores faced with dressed stone, a perfection of puerile neatness. A couple of tall poplars and a few other trees stood grouped on the clean, dark gravel, and under them a few garden benches and a bronze effigy of Jean Jacques Rousseau seated on its pedestal.

On setting his foot on it Razumov became aware that, except for the woman in charge of the refreshment chalet, he would be alone on the island. There was something of naive, odious, and inane simplicity about that unfrequented tiny crumb of earth named after Jean Jacques Rousseau. Something pretentious and shabby, too. He asked for a glass of milk, which he drank standing, at one draught (nothing but tea had passed his lips since the morning), and was going away with a weary, lagging step when a thought stopped him short. He had found precisely what he needed. If solitude could ever be secured in the open air in the middle of a town, he would have it there on this absurd island, together with the faculty of watching the only approach.

He went back heavily to a garden seat, dropped into it. This was the place for making a beginning of that writing which had to be done. The materials he had on him. “I shall always come here,” he said to himself, and afterwards sat for quite a long time motionless, without thought and sight and hearing, almost without life. He sat long enough for the declining sun to dip behind the roofs of the town at his back, and throw the shadow of the houses on the lake front over the islet, before he pulled out of his pocket a fountain pen, opened a small notebook on his knee, and began to write quickly, raising his eyes now and then at the connecting arm of the bridge. These glances were needless; the people crossing over in the distance seemed unwilling even to look at the islet where the exiled effigy of the author of the *Social Contract* sat enthroned above the bowed head of Razumov in the sombre immobility of bronze. After finishing his scribbling, Razumov, with a sort of feverish haste, put away the pen, then rammed the notebook into his pocket, first tearing out the written pages with an almost convulsive brusqueness. But the folding of the flimsy batch on his knee was executed with thoughtful nicety. That done, he leaned back in his seat and remained motionless, the papers holding in his left hand. The twilight had deepened. He got up and began to pace to and fro slowly under the trees.

“There can be no doubt that now I am safe,” he thought. His fine ear could detect the faintly accentuated murmurs of the current breaking against the point of the island, and he forgot himself in listening to them with interest. But even to his acute sense of hearing the sound was too elusive.

“Extraordinary occupation I am giving myself up to,” he murmured. And it occurred to him that this was about the only sound he could listen to innocently, and for his own pleasure, as it were. Yes, the sound of water, the voice of the wind—completely foreign to human passions. All the other sounds of this earth brought contamination to the solitude of a soul.

This was Mr. Razumov’s feeling, the soul, of course, being his own, and the word being used not in the theological sense, but standing, as far as I can understand it, for that part of Mr. Razumov which was not his body, and more specially in danger from the fires of this earth. And it must be admitted that in Mr. Razumov’s case the bitterness of solitude from which he suffered was not an altogether morbid phenomenon.