

“Then what did you mean, when you said straight out to her that she was not really ‘like that’? You guessed right, I fancy. It is quite possible she was not herself at the moment, though I cannot fathom her meaning. Evidently she meant to hurt and insult us. I have heard curious tales about her before now, but if she came to invite us to her house, why did she behave so to my mother? Ptitsin knows her very well; he says he could not understand her today. With Rogojin, too! No one with a spark of self-respect could have talked like that in the house of her... Mother is extremely vexed on your account, too...

“That is nothing!” said the prince, waving his hand.

“But how meek she was when you spoke to her!”

“Meek! What do you mean?”

“You told her it was a shame for her to behave so, and her manner changed at once; she was like another person. You have some influence over her, prince,” added Varia, smiling a little.

The door opened at this point, and in came Gania most unexpectedly.

He was not in the least disconcerted to see Varia there, but he stood a moment at the door, and then approached the prince quietly.

“Prince,” he said, with feeling, “I was a blackguard. Forgive me!” His face gave evidence of suffering. The prince was considerably amazed, and did not reply at once. “Oh, come, forgive me, forgive me!” Gania insisted, rather impatiently. “If you like, I’ll kiss your hand. There!”

The prince was touched; he took Gania’s hands, and embraced him heartily, while each kissed the other.

“I never, never thought you were like that,” said Muishkin, drawing a deep breath. “I thought you—you weren’t capable of—”

“Of what? Apologizing, eh? And where on earth did I get the idea that you were an idiot? You always observe what other people pass by unnoticed; one could talk sense to you, but—”

“Here is another to whom you should apologize,” said the prince, pointing to Varia.

“No, no! they are all enemies! I’ve tried them often enough, believe me,” and Gania turned his back on Varia with these words.

“But if I beg you to make it up?” said Varia.

“And you’ll go to Nastasia Philipovna’s this evening—”

“If you insist: but, judge for yourself, can I go, ought I to go?”

“But she is not that sort of woman, I tell you!” said Gania, angrily. “She was only acting.”

“I know that—I know that; but what a part to play! And think what she must take *you* for, Gania! I know she kissed mother’s hand, and all that, but she laughed at you, all the same. All this is not good enough for seventy-five thousand roubles, my dear boy. You are capable of honourable feelings still, and that’s why I am talking to you so. Oh! *do* take care what you are doing! Don’t you know yourself that it will end badly, Gania?”

So saying, and in a state of violent agitation, Varia left the room.

“There, they are all like that,” said Gania, laughing, “just as if I do not know all about it much better than they do.”

He sat down with these words, evidently intending to prolong his visit.

“If you know it so well,” said the prince a little timidly, “why do you choose all this worry for the sake of the seventy-five thousand, which, you confess, does not cover it?”

“I didn’t mean that,” said Gania; “but while we are upon the subject, let me hear your opinion. Is all this worry worth seventy-five thousand or not?”

“Certainly not.”

“Of course! And it would be a disgrace to marry so, eh?”

“A great disgrace.”

“Oh, well, then you may know that I shall certainly do it, now. I shall certainly marry her. I was not quite sure of myself before, but now I am. Don’t say a word: I know what you want to tell me—”

“No. I was only going to say that what surprises me most of all is your extraordinary confidence.”

“How so? What in?”

“That Nastasia Philipovna will accept you, and that the question is as good as settled; and secondly, that even if she did, you would be able to pocket the money. Of course, I

know very little about it, but that's my view. When a man marries for money it often happens that the wife keeps the money in her own hands."

"Of course, you don't know all; but, I assure you, you needn't be afraid, it won't be like that in our case. There are circumstances," said Gania, rather excitedly. "And as to her answer to me, there's no doubt about that. Why should you suppose she will refuse me?"

"Oh, I only judge by what I see. Varvara Ardalionovna said just now—"

"Oh she—they don't know anything about it! Nastasia was only chaffing Rogojin. I was alarmed at first, but I have thought better of it now; she was simply laughing at him. She looks on me as a fool because I show that I meant her money, and doesn't realize that there are other men who would deceive her in far worse fashion. I'm not going to pretend anything, and you'll see she'll marry me, all right. If she likes to live quietly, so she shall; but if she gives me any of her nonsense, I shall leave her at once, but I shall keep the money. I'm not going to look a fool; that's the first thing, not to look a fool."

"But Nastasia Philipovna seems to me to be such a *sensible* woman, and, as such, why should she run blindly into this business? That's what puzzles me so," said the prince.

"You don't know all, you see; I tell you there are things—and besides, I'm sure that she is persuaded that I love her to distraction, and I give you my word I have a strong suspicion that she loves me, too—in her own way, of course. She thinks she will be able to make a sort of slave of me all my life; but I shall prepare a little surprise for her. I don't know whether I ought to be confidential with you, prince; but, I assure you, you are the only decent fellow I have come across. I have not spoken so sincerely as I am doing at this moment for years. There are uncommonly few honest people about, prince; there isn't one honester than Ptitsin, he's the best of the lot. Are you laughing? You don't know, perhaps, that blackguards like honest people, and being one myself I like you. *Why* am I a blackguard? Tell me honestly, now. They all call me a blackguard because of her, and I have got into the way of thinking myself one. That's what is so bad about the business."

"I for one shall never think you a blackguard again," said the prince. "I confess I had a poor opinion of you at first, but I have been so joyfully surprised about you just now; it's a good lesson for me. I shall never judge again without a thorough trial. I see now that you are not only not a blackguard, but are not even quite spoiled. I see that you are quite an ordinary man, not original in the least degree, but rather weak."

Gania laughed sarcastically, but said nothing. The prince, seeing that he did not quite like the last remark, blushed, and was silent too.

“Has my father asked you for money?” asked Gania, suddenly.

“No.”

“Don’t give it to him if he does. Fancy, he was a decent, respectable man once! He was received in the best society; he was not always the liar he is now. Of course, wine is at the bottom of it all; but he is a good deal worse than an innocent liar now. Do you know that he keeps a mistress? I can’t understand how mother is so long-suffering. Did he tell you the story of the siege of Kars? Or perhaps the one about his grey horse that talked? He loves to enlarge on these absurd histories.” And Gania burst into a fit of laughter. Suddenly he turned to the prince and asked: “Why are you looking at me like that?”

“I am surprised to see you laugh in that way, like a child. You came to make friends with me again just now, and you said, ‘I will kiss your hand, if you like,’ just as a child would have said it. And then, all at once you are talking of this mad project—of these seventy-five thousand roubles! It all seems so absurd and impossible.”

“Well, what conclusion have you reached?”

“That you are rushing madly into the undertaking, and that you would do well to think it over again. It is more than possible that Varvara Ardalionovna is right.”

“Ah! now you begin to moralize! I know that I am only a child, very well,” replied Gania impatiently. “That is proved by my having this conversation with you. It is not for money only, prince, that I am rushing into this affair,” he continued, hardly master of his words, so closely had his vanity been touched. “If I reckoned on that I should certainly be deceived, for I am still too weak in mind and character. I am obeying a passion, an impulse perhaps, because I have but one aim, one that overmasters all else. You imagine that once I am in possession of these seventy-five thousand roubles, I shall rush to buy a carriage... No, I shall go on wearing the old overcoat I have worn for three years, and I shall give up my club. I shall follow the example of men who have made their fortunes. When Ptitsin was seventeen he slept in the street, he sold pen-knives, and began with a copeck; now he has sixty thousand roubles, but to get them, what has he not done? Well, I shall be spared such a hard beginning, and shall start with a little capital. In fifteen years people will say, ‘Look, that’s Ivolgin, the king of the Jews!’ You say that I have no originality. Now mark this, prince—there is nothing so offensive to a man of our time and race than to be told that he is wanting in originality, that he is weak in character, has no particular talent, and is, in short, an

ordinary person. You have not even done me the honour of looking upon me as a rogue. Do you know, I could have knocked you down for that just now! You wounded me more cruelly than Epanchin, who thinks me capable of selling him my wife! Observe, it was a perfectly gratuitous idea on his part, seeing there has never been any discussion of it between us! This has exasperated me, and I am determined to make a fortune! I will do it! Once I am rich, I shall be a genius, an extremely original man. One of the vilest and most hateful things connected with money is that it can buy even talent; and will do so as long as the world lasts. You will say that this is childish—or romantic. Well, that will be all the better for me, but the thing shall be done. I will carry it through. He laughs most, who laughs last. Why does Epanchin insult me? Simply because, socially, I am a nobody. However, enough for the present. Colia has put his nose in to tell us dinner is ready, twice. I'm dining out. I shall come and talk to you now and then; you shall be comfortable enough with us. They are sure to make you one of the family. I think you and I will either be great friends or enemies. Look here now, supposing I had kissed your hand just now, as I offered to do in all sincerity, should I have hated you for it afterwards?"

"Certainly, but not always. You would not have been able to keep it up, and would have ended by forgiving me," said the prince, after a pause for reflection, and with a pleasant smile.

"Oho, how careful one has to be with you, prince! Haven't you put a drop of poison in that remark now, eh? By the way—ha, ha, ha!—I forgot to ask, was I right in believing that you were a good deal struck yourself with Nastasia Philipovna."

"Ye-yes."

"Are you in love with her?"

"N-no."

"And yet you flush up as red as a rosebud! Come—it's all right. I'm not going to laugh at you. Do you know she is a very virtuous woman? Believe it or not, as you like. You think she and Totski—not a bit of it, not a bit of it! Not for ever so long! *Au revoir!*"

Gania left the room in great good humour. The prince stayed behind, and meditated alone for a few minutes. At length, Colia popped his head in once more.

"I don't want any dinner, thanks, Colia. I had too good a lunch at General Epanchin's."

Colia came into the room and gave the prince a note; it was from the general and was carefully sealed up. It was clear from Colia's face how painful it was to him to deliver the missive. The prince read it, rose, and took his hat.

“It’s only a couple of yards,” said Colia, blushing.

“He’s sitting there over his bottle—and how they can give him credit, I cannot understand. Don’t tell mother I brought you the note, prince; I have sworn not to do it a thousand times, but I’m always so sorry for him. Don’t stand on ceremony, give him some trifle, and let that end it.”

“Come along, Colia, I want to see your father. I have an idea,” said the prince.

XII.

Colia took the prince to a public-house in the Litaynaya, not far off. In one of the side rooms there sat at a table—looking like one of the regular guests of the establishment—Ardalion Alexandrovitch, with a bottle before him, and a newspaper on his knee. He was waiting for the prince, and no sooner did the latter appear than he began a long harangue about something or other; but so far gone was he that the prince could hardly understand a word.

“I have not got a ten-rouble note,” said the prince; “but here is a twenty-five. Change it and give me back the fifteen, or I shall be left without a farthing myself.”

“Oh, of course, of course; and you quite understand that I—”

“Yes; and I have another request to make, general. Have you ever been at Nastasia Philipovna’s?”

“I? I? Do you mean me? Often, my friend, often! I only pretended I had not in order to avoid a painful subject. You saw today, you were a witness, that I did all that a kind, an indulgent father could do. Now a father of altogether another type shall step into the scene. You shall see; the old soldier shall lay bare this intrigue, or a shameless woman will force her way into a respectable and noble family.”

“Yes, quite so. I wished to ask you whether you could show me the way to Nastasia Philipovna’s tonight. I must go; I have business with her; I was not invited but I was introduced. Anyhow I am ready to trespass the laws of propriety if only I can get in somehow or other.”

“My dear young friend, you have hit on my very idea. It was not for this rubbish I asked you to come over here” (he pocketed the money, however, at this point), “it was to invite your alliance in the campaign against Nastasia Philipovna tonight. How well it sounds, ‘General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin.’ That’ll fetch her, I think, eh? Capital! We’ll go at nine; there’s time yet.”

“Where does she live?”

“Oh, a long way off, near the Great Theatre, just in the square there—It won’t be a large party.”

The general sat on and on. He had ordered a fresh bottle when the prince arrived; this took him an hour to drink, and then he had another, and another, during the consumption of which he told pretty nearly the whole story of his life. The prince was in despair. He felt that though he had but applied to this miserable old drunkard because he saw no other way of getting to Nastasia Philipovna’s, yet he had been very wrong to put the slightest confidence in such a man.

At last he rose and declared that he would wait no longer. The general rose too, drank the last drops that he could squeeze out of the bottle, and staggered into the street.

Muishkin began to despair. He could not imagine how he had been so foolish as to trust this man. He only wanted one thing, and that was to get to Nastasia Philipovna’s, even at the cost of a certain amount of impropriety. But now the scandal threatened to be more than he had bargained for. By this time Ardalion Alexandrovitch was quite intoxicated, and he kept his companion listening while he discoursed eloquently and pathetically on subjects of all kinds, interspersed with torrents of recrimination against the members of his family. He insisted that all his troubles were caused by their bad conduct, and time alone would put an end to them.

At last they reached the Litaynaya. The thaw increased steadily, a warm, unhealthy wind blew through the streets, vehicles splashed through the mud, and the iron shoes of horses and mules rang on the paving stones. Crowds of melancholy people plodded wearily along the footpaths, with here and there a drunken man among them.

“Do you see those brightly-lighted windows?” said the general. “Many of my old comrades-in-arms live about here, and I, who served longer, and suffered more than any of them, am walking on foot to the house of a woman of rather questionable reputation! A man, look you, who has thirteen bullets on his breast!... You don’t believe it? Well, I can assure you it was entirely on my account that Pirogoff telegraphed to Paris, and left Sebastopol at the greatest risk during the siege. Nelaton, the Tuileries surgeon, demanded a safe conduct, in the name of science, into the besieged city in order to attend my wounds. The government knows all about it. ‘That’s the Ivolgin with thirteen bullets in him!’ That’s how they speak of me.... Do you see that house, prince? One of my old friends lives on the first floor, with his large family. In this and five other houses, three overlooking Nevsky, two in the Morskaya, are all that remain of my personal friends. Nina Alexandrovna gave them up long ago, but I keep in touch with them still... I may say I find refreshment in this little coterie, in thus meeting my old acquaintances and subordinates, who worship me still, in spite of all. General

Sokolovitch (by the way, I have not called on him lately, or seen Anna Fedorovna)... You know, my dear prince, when a person does not receive company himself, he gives up going to other people's houses involuntarily. And yet... well... you look as if you didn't believe me.... Well now, why should I not present the son of my old friend and companion to this delightful family—General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin? You will see a lovely girl—what am I saying—a lovely girl? No, indeed, two, three! Ornaments of this city and of society: beauty, education, culture—the woman question—poetry—everything! Added to which is the fact that each one will have a dot of at least eighty thousand roubles. No bad thing, eh?... In a word I absolutely must introduce you to them: it is a duty, an obligation. General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin. Tableau!”

“At once? Now? You must have forgotten...” began the prince.

“No, I have forgotten nothing. Come! This is the house—up this magnificent staircase. I am surprised not to see the porter, but it is a holiday... and the man has gone off... Drunken fool! Why have they not got rid of him? Sokolovitch owes all the happiness he has had in the service and in his private life to me, and me alone, but... here we are.”

The prince followed quietly, making no further objection for fear of irritating the old man. At the same time he fervently hoped that General Sokolovitch and his family would fade away like a mirage in the desert, so that the visitors could escape, by merely returning downstairs. But to his horror he saw that General Ivolgin was quite familiar with the house, and really seemed to have friends there. At every step he named some topographical or biographical detail that left nothing to be desired on the score of accuracy. When they arrived at last, on the first floor, and the general turned to ring the bell to the right, the prince decided to run away, but a curious incident stopped him momentarily.

“You have made a mistake, general,” said he. “The name on the door is Koulakoff, and you were going to see General Sokolovitch.”

“Koulakoff... Koulakoff means nothing. This is Sokolovitch's flat, and I am ringing at his door.... What do I care for Koulakoff?... Here comes someone to open.”

In fact, the door opened directly, and the footman informed the visitors that the family were all away.

“What a pity! What a pity! It's just my luck!” repeated Ardalion Alexandrovitch over and over again, in regretful tones. “When your master and mistress return, my man, tell them that General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin desired to present themselves, and that they were extremely sorry, excessively grieved...”

Just then another person belonging to the household was seen at the back of the hall. It was a woman of some forty years, dressed in sombre colours, probably a housekeeper or a governess. Hearing the names she came forward with a look of suspicion on her face.

“Marie Alexandrovna is not at home,” said she, staring hard at the general. “She has gone to her mother’s, with Alexandra Michailovna.”

“Alexandra Michailovna out, too! How disappointing! Would you believe it, I am always so unfortunate! May I most respectfully ask you to present my compliments to Alexandra Michailovna, and remind her... tell her, that with my whole heart I wish for her what she wished for herself on Thursday evening, while she was listening to Chopin’s Ballade. She will remember. I wish it with all sincerity. General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin!”

The woman’s face changed; she lost her suspicious expression.

“I will not fail to deliver your message,” she replied, and bowed them out.

As they went downstairs the general regretted repeatedly that he had failed to introduce the prince to his friends.

“You know I am a bit of a poet,” said he. “Have you noticed it? The poetic soul, you know.” Then he added suddenly—“But after all... after all I believe we made a mistake this time! I remember that the Sokolovitch’s live in another house, and what is more, they are just now in Moscow. Yes, I certainly was at fault. However, it is of no consequence.”

“Just tell me,” said the prince in reply, “may I count still on your assistance? Or shall I go on alone to see Nastasia Philipovna?”

“Count on my assistance? Go alone? How can you ask me that question, when it is a matter on which the fate of my family so largely depends? You don’t know Ivolgin, my friend. To trust Ivolgin is to trust a rock; that’s how the first squadron I commanded spoke of me. ‘Depend upon Ivolgin,’ said they all, ‘he is as steady as a rock.’ But, excuse me, I must just call at a house on our way, a house where I have found consolation and help in all my trials for years.”

“You are going home?”

“No... I wish... to visit Madame Terentieff, the widow of Captain Terentieff, my old subordinate and friend. She helps me to keep up my courage, and to bear the trials of my domestic life, and as I have an extra burden on my mind today...”

"It seems to me," interrupted the prince, "that I was foolish to trouble you just now. However, at present you... Good-bye!"

"Indeed, you must not go away like that, young man, you must not!" cried the general. "My friend here is a widow, the mother of a family; her words come straight from her heart, and find an echo in mine. A visit to her is merely an affair of a few minutes; I am quite at home in her house. I will have a wash, and dress, and then we can drive to the Grand Theatre. Make up your mind to spend the evening with me.... We are just there—that's the house... Why, Colia! you here! Well, is Marfa Borisovna at home or have you only just come?"

"Oh no! I have been here a long while," replied Colia, who was at the front door when the general met him. "I am keeping Hippolyte company. He is worse, and has been in bed all day. I came down to buy some cards. Marfa Borisovna expects you. But what a state you are in, father!" added the boy, noticing his father's unsteady gait. "Well, let us go in."

On meeting Colia the prince determined to accompany the general, though he made up his mind to stay as short a time as possible. He wanted Colia, but firmly resolved to leave the general behind. He could not forgive himself for being so simple as to imagine that Ivolgin would be of any use. The three climbed up the long staircase until they reached the fourth floor where Madame Terentieff lived.

"You intend to introduce the prince?" asked Colia, as they went up.

"Yes, my boy. I wish to present him: General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin! But what's the matter?... what?... How is Marfa Borisovna?"

"You know, father, you would have done much better not to come at all! She is ready to eat you up! You have not shown yourself since the day before yesterday and she is expecting the money. Why did you promise her any? You are always the same! Well, now you will have to get out of it as best you can."

They stopped before a somewhat low doorway on the fourth floor. Ardalion Alexandrovitch, evidently much out of countenance, pushed Muishkin in front.

"I will wait here," he stammered. "I should like to surprise her."

Colia entered first, and as the door stood open, the mistress of the house peeped out. The surprise of the general's imagination fell very flat, for she at once began to address him in terms of reproach.

Marfa Borisovna was about forty years of age. She wore a dressing-jacket, her feet were in slippers, her face painted, and her hair was in dozens of small plaits. No sooner did she catch sight of Ardalion Alexandrovitch than she screamed:

“There he is, that wicked, mean wretch! I knew it was he! My heart misgave me!”

The old man tried to put a good face on the affair.

“Come, let us go in—it’s all right,” he whispered in the prince’s ear.

But it was more serious than he wished to think. As soon as the visitors had crossed the low dark hall, and entered the narrow reception-room, furnished with half a dozen cane chairs, and two small card-tables, Madame Terentieff, in the shrill tones habitual to her, continued her stream of invectives.

“Are you not ashamed? Are you not ashamed? You barbarian! You tyrant! You have robbed me of all I possessed—you have sucked my bones to the marrow. How long shall I be your victim? Shameless, dishonourable man!”

“Marfa Borisovna! Marfa Borisovna! Here is... the Prince Muishkin! General Ivolgin and Prince Muishkin,” stammered the disconcerted old man.

“Would you believe,” said the mistress of the house, suddenly addressing the prince, “would you believe that that man has not even spared my orphan children? He has stolen everything I possessed, sold everything, pawned everything; he has left me nothing—nothing! What am I to do with your IOU’s, you cunning, unscrupulous rogue? Answer, devourer! answer, heart of stone! How shall I feed my orphans? with what shall I nourish them? And now he has come, he is drunk! He can scarcely stand. How, oh how, have I offended the Almighty, that He should bring this curse upon me! Answer, you worthless villain, answer!”

But this was too much for the general.

“Here are twenty-five roubles, Marfa Borisovna... it is all that I can give... and I owe even these to the prince’s generosity—my noble friend. I have been cruelly deceived. Such is... life... Now... Excuse me, I am very weak,” he continued, standing in the centre of the room, and bowing to all sides. “I am faint; excuse me! Lenotchka... a cushion... my dear!”

Lenotchka, a little girl of eight, ran to fetch the cushion at once, and placed it on the rickety old sofa. The general meant to have said much more, but as soon as he had stretched himself out, he turned his face to the wall, and slept the sleep of the just.

With a grave and ceremonious air, Marfa Borisovna motioned the prince to a chair at one of the card-tables. She seated herself opposite, leaned her right cheek on her hand, and sat in silence, her eyes fixed on Muishkin, now and again sighing deeply. The three children, two little girls and a boy, Lenotchka being the eldest, came and leant on the table and also stared steadily at him. Presently Colia appeared from the adjoining room.

“I am very glad indeed to have met you here, Colia,” said the prince. “Can you do something for me? I must see Nastasia Philipovna, and I asked Ardalion Alexandrovitch just now to take me to her house, but he has gone to sleep, as you see. Will you show me the way, for I do not know the street? I have the address, though; it is close to the Grand Theatre.”

“Nastasia Philipovna? She does not live there, and to tell you the truth my father has never been to her house! It is strange that you should have depended on him! She lives near Wladimir Street, at the Five Corners, and it is quite close by. Will you go directly? It is just half-past nine. I will show you the way with pleasure.”

Colia and the prince went off together. Alas! the latter had no money to pay for a cab, so they were obliged to walk.

“I should have liked to have taken you to see Hippolyte,” said Colia. “He is the eldest son of the lady you met just now, and was in the next room. He is ill, and has been in bed all day. But he is rather strange, and extremely sensitive, and I thought he might be upset considering the circumstances in which you came... Somehow it touches me less, as it concerns my father, while it is *his* mother. That, of course, makes a great difference. What is a terrible disgrace to a woman, does not disgrace a man, at least not in the same way. Perhaps public opinion is wrong in condemning one sex, and excusing the other. Hippolyte is an extremely clever boy, but so prejudiced. He is really a slave to his opinions.”

“Do you say he is consumptive?”

“Yes. It really would be happier for him to die young. If I were in his place I should certainly long for death. He is unhappy about his brother and sisters, the children you saw. If it were possible, if we only had a little money, we should leave our respective families, and live together in a little apartment of our own. It is our dream. But, do you know, when I was talking over your affair with him, he was angry, and said that anyone who did not call out a man who had given him a blow was a coward. He is very irritable to-day, and I left off arguing the matter with him. So Nastasia Philipovna has invited you to go and see her?”

“To tell the truth, she has not.”

“Then how do you come to be going there?” cried Colia, so much astonished that he stopped short in the middle of the pavement. “And... and are you going to her ‘At Home’ in that costume?”

“I don’t know, really, whether I shall be allowed in at all. If she will receive me, so much the better. If not, the matter is ended. As to my clothes—what can I do?”

“Are you going there for some particular reason, or only as a way of getting into her society, and that of her friends?”

“No, I have really an object in going... That is, I am going on business it is difficult to explain, but...”

“Well, whether you go on business or not is your affair, I do not want to know. The only important thing, in my eyes, is that you should not be going there simply for the pleasure of spending your evening in such company—cocottes, generals, usurers! If that were the case I should despise and laugh at you. There are terribly few honest people here, and hardly any whom one can respect, although people put on airs—Varia especially! Have you noticed, prince, how many adventurers there are nowadays? Especially here, in our dear Russia. How it has happened I never can understand. There used to be a certain amount of solidity in all things, but now what happens? Everything is exposed to the public gaze, veils are thrown back, every wound is probed by careless fingers. We are for ever present at an orgy of scandalous revelations. Parents blush when they remember their old-fashioned morality. At Moscow lately a father was heard urging his son to stop at nothing—at nothing, mind you!—to get money! The press seized upon the story, of course, and now it is public property. Look at my father, the general! See what he is, and yet, I assure you, he is an honest man! Only... he drinks too much, and his morals are not all we could desire. Yes, that’s true! I pity him, to tell the truth, but I dare not say so, because everybody would laugh at me—but I do pity him! And who are the really clever men, after all? Money-grubbers, every one of them, from the first to the last. Hippolyte finds excuses for money-lending, and says it is a necessity. He talks about the economic movement, and the ebb and flow of capital; the devil knows what he means. It makes me angry to hear him talk so, but he is soured by his troubles. Just imagine—the general keeps his mother—but she lends him money! She lends it for a week or ten days at very high interest! Isn’t it disgusting? And then, you would hardly believe it, but my mother—Nina Alexandrovna—helps Hippolyte in all sorts of ways, sends him money and clothes. She even goes as far as helping the children, through Hippolyte, because their mother cares nothing about them, and Varia does the same.”

“Well, just now you said there were no honest nor good people about, that there were only money-grubbers—and here they are quite close at hand, these honest and good people, your mother and Varia! I think there is a good deal of moral strength in helping people in such circumstances.”

“Varia does it from pride, and likes showing off, and giving herself airs. As to my mother, I really do admire her—yes, and honour her. Hippolyte, hardened as he is, feels it. He laughed at first, and thought it vulgar of her—but now, he is sometimes quite touched and overcome by her kindness. H’m! You call that being strong and good? I will remember that! Gania knows nothing about it. He would say that it was encouraging vice.”

“Ah, Gania knows nothing about it? It seems there are many things that Gania does not know,” exclaimed the prince, as he considered Colia’s last words.

“Do you know, I like you very much indeed, prince? I shall never forget about this afternoon.”

“I like you too, Colia.”

“Listen to me! You are going to live here, are you not?” said Colia. “I mean to get something to do directly, and earn money. Then shall we three live together? You, and I, and Hippolyte? We will hire a flat, and let the general come and visit us. What do you say?”

“It would be very pleasant,” returned the prince. “But we must see. I am really rather worried just now. What! are we there already? Is that the house? What a long flight of steps! And there’s a porter! Well, Colia I don’t know what will come of it all.”

The prince seemed quite distracted for the moment.

“You must tell me all about it tomorrow! Don’t be afraid. I wish you success; we agree so entirely that I can do so, although I do not understand why you are here. Good-bye!” cried Colia excitedly. “Now I will rush back and tell Hippolyte all about our plans and proposals! But as to your getting in—don’t be in the least afraid. You will see her. She is so original about everything. It’s the first floor. The porter will show you.”

XIII.

The prince was very nervous as he reached the outer door; but he did his best to encourage himself with the reflection that the worst thing that could happen to him would be that he would not be received, or, perhaps, received, then laughed at for coming.

But there was another question, which terrified him considerably, and that was: what was he going to do when he *did* get in? And to this question he could fashion no satisfactory reply.

If only he could find an opportunity of coming close up to Nastasia Philipovna and saying to her: “Don’t ruin yourself by marrying this man. He does not love you, he only loves your money. He told me so himself, and so did Aglaya Ivanovna, and I have come on purpose to warn you”—but even that did not seem quite a legitimate or practicable thing to do. Then, again, there was another delicate question, to which he could not find an answer; dared not, in fact, think of it; but at the very idea of which he trembled and blushed. However, in spite of all his fears and heart-quakings he went in, and asked for Nastasia Philipovna.

Nastasia occupied a medium-sized, but distinctly tasteful, flat, beautifully furnished and arranged. At one period of these five years of Petersburg life, Totski had certainly not spared his expenditure upon her. He had calculated upon her eventual love, and tried to tempt her with a lavish outlay upon comforts and luxuries, knowing too well how easily the heart accustoms itself to comforts, and how difficult it is to tear one’s self away from luxuries which have become habitual and, little by little, indispensable.

Nastasia did not reject all this, she even loved her comforts and luxuries, but, strangely enough, never became, in the least degree, dependent upon them, and always gave the impression that she could do just as well without them. In fact, she went so far as to inform Totski on several occasions that such was the case, which the latter gentleman considered a very unpleasant communication indeed.

But, of late, Totski had observed many strange and original features and characteristics in Nastasia, which he had neither known nor reckoned upon in former times, and some of these fascinated him, even now, in spite of the fact that all his old calculations with regard to her were long ago cast to the winds.

A maid opened the door for the prince (Nastasia’s servants were all females) and, to his surprise, received his request to announce him to her mistress without any astonishment. Neither his dirty boots, nor his wide-brimmed hat, nor his sleeveless cloak, nor his evident confusion of manner, produced the least impression upon her. She helped him off with his cloak, and begged him to wait a moment in the ante-room while she announced him.

The company assembled at Nastasia Philipovna’s consisted of none but her most intimate friends, and formed a very small party in comparison with her usual gatherings on this anniversary.

In the first place there were present Totski, and General Epanchin. They were both highly amiable, but both appeared to be labouring under a half-hidden feeling of anxiety as to the result of Nastasia's deliberations with regard to Gania, which result was to be made public this evening.

Then, of course, there was Gania who was by no means so amiable as his elders, but stood apart, gloomy, and miserable, and silent. He had determined not to bring Varia with him; but Nastasia had not even asked after her, though no sooner had he arrived than she had reminded him of the episode between himself and the prince. The general, who had heard nothing of it before, began to listen with some interest, while Gania, drily, but with perfect candour, went through the whole history, including the fact of his apology to the prince. He finished by declaring that the prince was a most extraordinary man, and goodness knows why he had been considered an idiot hitherto, for he was very far from being one.

Nastasia listened to all this with great interest; but the conversation soon turned to Rogojin and his visit, and this theme proved of the greatest attraction to both Totski and the general.

Ptitsin was able to afford some particulars as to Rogojin's conduct since the afternoon. He declared that he had been busy finding money for the latter ever since, and up to nine o'clock, Rogojin having declared that he must absolutely have a hundred thousand roubles by the evening. He added that Rogojin was drunk, of course; but that he thought the money would be forthcoming, for the excited and intoxicated rapture of the fellow impelled him to give any interest or premium that was asked of him, and there were several others engaged in beating up the money, also.

All this news was received by the company with somewhat gloomy interest. Nastasia was silent, and would not say what she thought about it. Gania was equally uncommunicative. The general seemed the most anxious of all, and decidedly uneasy. The present of pearls which he had prepared with so much joy in the morning had been accepted but coldly, and Nastasia had smiled rather disagreeably as she took it from him. Ferdishenko was the only person present in good spirits.

Totski himself, who had the reputation of being a capital talker, and was usually the life and soul of these entertainments, was as silent as any on this occasion, and sat in a state of, for him, most uncommon perturbation.

The rest of the guests (an old tutor or schoolmaster, goodness knows why invited; a young man, very timid, and shy and silent; a rather loud woman of about forty, apparently an actress; and a very pretty, well-dressed German lady who hardly said a

word all the evening) not only had no gift for enlivening the proceedings, but hardly knew what to say for themselves when addressed. Under these circumstances the arrival of the prince came almost as a godsend.

The announcement of his name gave rise to some surprise and to some smiles, especially when it became evident, from Nastasia's astonished look, that she had not thought of inviting him. But her astonishment once over, Nastasia showed such satisfaction that all prepared to greet the prince with cordial smiles of welcome.

"Of course," remarked General Epanchin, "he does this out of pure innocence. It's a little dangerous, perhaps, to encourage this sort of freedom; but it is rather a good thing that he has arrived just at this moment. He may enliven us a little with his originalities."

"Especially as he asked himself," said Ferdishenko.

"What's that got to do with it?" asked the general, who loathed Ferdishenko.

"Why, he must pay toll for his entrance," explained the latter.

"H'm! Prince Muishkin is not Ferdishenko," said the general, impatiently. This worthy gentleman could never quite reconcile himself to the idea of meeting Ferdishenko in society, and on an equal footing.

"Oh general, spare Ferdishenko!" replied the other, smiling. "I have special privileges."

"What do you mean by special privileges?"

"Once before I had the honour of stating them to the company. I will repeat the explanation to-day for your excellency's benefit. You see, excellency, all the world is witty and clever except myself. I am neither. As a kind of compensation I am allowed to tell the truth, for it is a well-known fact that only stupid people tell 'the truth.' Added to this, I am a spiteful man, just because I am not clever. If I am offended or injured I bear it quite patiently until the man injuring me meets with some misfortune. Then I remember, and take my revenge. I return the injury sevenfold, as Ivan Petrovitch Ptitsin says. (Of course he never does so himself.) Excellency, no doubt you recollect Kryloff's fable, 'The Lion and the Ass'? Well now, that's you and I. That fable was written precisely for us."

"You seem to be talking nonsense again, Ferdishenko," growled the general.

"What is the matter, excellency? I know how to keep my place. When I said just now that we, you and I, were the lion and the ass of Kryloff's fable, of course it is

understood that I take the role of the ass. Your excellency is the lion of which the fable remarks:

‘A mighty lion, terror of the woods,
Was shorn of his great prowess by old age.’

And I, your excellency, am the ass.”

“I am of your opinion on that last point,” said Ivan Fedorovitch, with ill-concealed irritation.

All this was no doubt extremely coarse, and moreover it was premeditated, but after all Ferdishenko had persuaded everyone to accept him as a buffoon.

“If I am admitted and tolerated here,” he had said one day, “it is simply because I talk in this way. How can anyone possibly receive such a man as I am? I quite understand. Now, could I, a Ferdishenko, be allowed to sit shoulder to shoulder with a clever man like Afanasy Ivanovitch? There is one explanation, only one. I am given the position because it is so entirely inconceivable!”

But these vulgarities seemed to please Nastasia Philipovna, although too often they were both rude and offensive. Those who wished to go to her house were forced to put up with Ferdishenko. Possibly the latter was not mistaken in imagining that he was received simply in order to annoy Totski, who disliked him extremely. Gania also was often made the butt of the jester’s sarcasms, who used this method of keeping in Nastasia Philipovna’s good graces.

“The prince will begin by singing us a fashionable ditty,” remarked Ferdishenko, and looked at the mistress of the house, to see what she would say.

“I don’t think so, Ferdishenko; please be quiet,” answered Nastasia Philipovna dryly.

“A-ah! if he is to be under special patronage, I withdraw my claws.”

But Nastasia Philipovna had now risen and advanced to meet the prince.

“I was so sorry to have forgotten to ask you to come, when I saw you,” she said, “and I am delighted to be able to thank you personally now, and to express my pleasure at your resolution.”

So saying she gazed into his eyes, longing to see whether she could make any guess as to the explanation of his motive in coming to her house. The prince would very likely have made some reply to her kind words, but he was so dazzled by her appearance that he could not speak.

Nastasia noticed this with satisfaction. She was in full dress this evening; and her appearance was certainly calculated to impress all beholders. She took his hand and led him towards her other guests. But just before they reached the drawing-room door, the prince stopped her, and hurriedly and in great agitation whispered to her:

“You are altogether perfection; even your pallor and thinness are perfect; one could not wish you otherwise. I did so wish to come and see you. I—forgive me, please—”

“Don’t apologize,” said Nastasia, laughing; “you spoil the whole originality of the thing. I think what they say about you must be true, that you are so original. —So you think me perfection, do you?”

“Yes.”

“H’m! Well, you may be a good reader of riddles but you are wrong *there*, at all events. I’ll remind you of this, tonight.”

Nastasia introduced the prince to her guests, to most of whom he was already known.

Totski immediately made some amiable remark. All seemed to brighten up at once, and the conversation became general. Nastasia made the prince sit down next to herself.

“Dear me, there’s nothing so very curious about the prince dropping in, after all,” remarked Ferdishenko.

“It’s quite a clear case,” said the hitherto silent Gania. “I have watched the prince almost all day, ever since the moment when he first saw Nastasia Philipovna’s portrait, at General Epanchin’s. I remember thinking at the time what I am now pretty sure of; and what, I may say in passing, the prince confessed to myself.”

Gania said all this perfectly seriously, and without the slightest appearance of joking; indeed, he seemed strangely gloomy.

“I did not confess anything to you,” said the prince, blushing. “I only answered your question.”

“Bravo! That’s frank, at any rate!” shouted Ferdishenko, and there was general laughter.

“Oh prince, prince! I never should have thought it of you;” said General Epanchin.

“And I imagined you a philosopher! Oh, you silent fellows!”

“Judging from the fact that the prince blushed at this innocent joke, like a young girl, I should think that he must, as an honourable man, harbour the noblest intentions,”

said the old toothless schoolmaster, most unexpectedly; he had not so much as opened his mouth before. This remark provoked general mirth, and the old fellow himself laughed loudest of the lot, but ended with a stupendous fit of coughing.

Nastasia Philipovna, who loved originality and drollery of all kinds, was apparently very fond of this old man, and rang the bell for more tea to stop his coughing. It was now half-past ten o'clock.

"Gentlemen, wouldn't you like a little champagne now?" she asked. "I have it all ready; it will cheer us up—do now—no ceremony!"

This invitation to drink, couched, as it was, in such informal terms, came very strangely from Nastasia Philipovna. Her usual entertainments were not quite like this; there was more style about them. However, the wine was not refused; each guest took a glass excepting Gania, who drank nothing.

It was extremely difficult to account for Nastasia's strange condition of mind, which became more evident each moment, and which none could avoid noticing.

She took her glass, and vowed she would empty it three times that evening. She was hysterical, and laughed aloud every other minute with no apparent reason—the next moment relapsing into gloom and thoughtfulness.

Some of her guests suspected that she must be ill; but concluded at last that she was expecting something, for she continued to look at her watch impatiently and unceasingly; she was most absent and strange.

"You seem to be a little feverish tonight," said the actress.

"Yes; I feel quite ill. I have been obliged to put on this shawl—I feel so cold," replied Nastasia. She certainly had grown very pale, and every now and then she tried to suppress a trembling in her limbs.

"Had we not better allow our hostess to retire?" asked Totski of the general.

"Not at all, gentlemen, not at all! Your presence is absolutely necessary to me tonight," said Nastasia, significantly.

As most of those present were aware that this evening a certain very important decision was to be taken, these words of Nastasia Philipovna's appeared to be fraught with much hidden interest. The general and Totski exchanged looks; Gania fidgeted convulsively in his chair.

"Let's play at some game!" suggested the actress.

"I know a new and most delightful game, added Ferdishenko.

"What is it?" asked the actress.

"Well, when we tried it we were a party of people, like this, for instance; and somebody proposed that each of us, without leaving his place at the table, should relate something about himself. It had to be something that he really and honestly considered the very worst action he had ever committed in his life. But he was to be honest—that was the chief point! He wasn't to be allowed to lie."

"What an extraordinary idea!" said the general.

"That's the beauty of it, general!"

"It's a funny notion," said Totski, "and yet quite natural—it's only a new way of boasting."

"Perhaps that is just what was so fascinating about it."

"Why, it would be a game to cry over—not to laugh at!" said the actress.

"Did it succeed?" asked Nastasia Philipovna. "Come, let's try it, let's try it; we really are not quite so jolly as we might be—let's try it! We may like it; it's original, at all events!"

"Yes," said Ferdishenko; "it's a good idea—come along—the men begin. Of course no one need tell a story if he prefers to be disobliging. We must draw lots! Throw your slips of paper, gentlemen, into this hat, and the prince shall draw for turns. It's a very simple game; all you have to do is to tell the story of the worst action of your life. It's as simple as anything. I'll prompt anyone who forgets the rules!"

No one liked the idea much. Some smiled, some frowned; some objected, but faintly, not wishing to oppose Nastasia's wishes; for this new idea seemed to be rather well received by her. She was still in an excited, hysterical state, laughing convulsively at nothing and everything. Her eyes were blazing, and her cheeks showed two bright red spots against the white. The melancholy appearance of some of her guests seemed to add to her sarcastic humour, and perhaps the very cynicism and cruelty of the game proposed by Ferdishenko pleased her. At all events she was attracted by the idea, and gradually her guests came round to her side; the thing was original, at least, and might turn out to be amusing. "And supposing it's something that one—one can't speak about before ladies?" asked the timid and silent young man.

"Why, then of course, you won't say anything about it. As if there are not plenty of sins to your score without the need of those!" said Ferdishenko.

“But I really don’t know which of my actions is the worst,” said the lively actress.

“Ladies are exempted if they like.”

“And how are you to know that one isn’t lying? And if one lies the whole point of the game is lost,” said Gania.

“Oh, but think how delightful to hear how one’s friends lie! Besides you needn’t be afraid, Gania; everybody knows what your worst action is without the need of any lying on your part. Only think, gentlemen,”—and Ferdishenko here grew quite enthusiastic, “only think with what eyes we shall observe one another tomorrow, after our tales have been told!”

“But surely this is a joke, Nastasia Philipovna?” asked Totski. “You don’t really mean us to play this game.”

“Whoever is afraid of wolves had better not go into the wood,” said Nastasia, smiling.

“But, pardon me, Mr. Ferdishenko, is it possible to make a game out of this kind of thing?” persisted Totski, growing more and more uneasy. “I assure you it can’t be a success.”

“And why not? Why, the last time I simply told straight off about how I stole three roubles.”

“Perhaps so; but it is hardly possible that you told it so that it seemed like truth, or so that you were believed. And, as Gavrila Ardalionovitch has said, the least suggestion of a falsehood takes all point out of the game. It seems to me that sincerity, on the other hand, is only possible if combined with a kind of bad taste that would be utterly out of place here.”

“How subtle you are, Afanasy Ivanovitch! You astonish me,” cried Ferdishenko. “You will remark, gentlemen, that in saying that I could not recount the story of my theft so as to be believed, Afanasy Ivanovitch has very ingeniously implied that I am not capable of thieving—(it would have been bad taste to say so openly); and all the time he is probably firmly convinced, in his own mind, that I am very well capable of it! But now, gentlemen, to business! Put in your slips, ladies and gentlemen—is yours in, Mr. Totski? So—then we are all ready; now prince, draw, please.” The prince silently put his hand into the hat, and drew the names. Ferdishenko was first, then Ptitsin, then the general, Totski next, his own fifth, then Gania, and so on; the ladies did not draw.

“Oh, dear! oh, dear!” cried Ferdishenko. “I did so hope the prince would come out first, and then the general. Well, gentlemen, I suppose I must set a good example!

What vexes me much is that I am such an insignificant creature that it matters nothing to anybody whether I have done bad actions or not! Besides, which am I to choose? It's an *embarras de richesse*. Shall I tell how I became a thief on one occasion only, to convince Afanasy Ivanovitch that it is possible to steal without being a thief?"

"Do go on, Ferdishenko, and don't make unnecessary preface, or you'll never finish," said Nastasia Philipovna. All observed how irritable and cross she had become since her last burst of laughter; but none the less obstinately did she stick to her absurd whim about this new game. Totski sat looking miserable enough. The general lingered over his champagne, and seemed to be thinking of some story for the time when his turn should come.

XIV.

"I have no wit, Nastasia Philipovna," began Ferdishenko, "and therefore I talk too much, perhaps. Were I as witty, now, as Mr. Totski or the general, I should probably have sat silent all the evening, as they have. Now, prince, what do you think?—are there not far more thieves than honest men in this world? Don't you think we may say there does not exist a single person so honest that he has never stolen anything whatever in his life?"

"What a silly idea," said the actress. "Of course it is not the case. I have never stolen anything, for one."

"H'm! very well, Daria Alexeyevna; you have not stolen anything—agreed. But how about the prince, now—look how he is blushing!"

"I think you are partially right, but you exaggerate," said the prince, who had certainly blushed up, of a sudden, for some reason or other.

"Ferdishenko—either tell us your story, or be quiet, and mind your own business. You exhaust all patience," cuttingly and irritably remarked Nastasia Philipovna.

"Immediately, immediately! As for my story, gentlemen, it is too stupid and absurd to tell you.

"I assure you I am not a thief, and yet I have stolen; I cannot explain why. It was at Semeon Ivanovitch Ishenka's country house, one Sunday. He had a dinner party. After dinner the men stayed at the table over their wine. It struck me to ask the daughter of the house to play something on the piano; so I passed through the corner room to join the ladies. In that room, on Maria Ivanovna's writing-table, I observed a three-rouble note. She must have taken it out for some purpose, and left it lying there. There was no one about. I took up the note and put it in my pocket; why, I can't say. I don't know

what possessed me to do it, but it was done, and I went quickly back to the dining-room and reseated myself at the dinner-table. I sat and waited there in a great state of excitement. I talked hard, and told lots of stories, and laughed like mad; then I joined the ladies.

“In half an hour or so the loss was discovered, and the servants were being put under examination. Daria, the housemaid was suspected. I exhibited the greatest interest and sympathy, and I remember that poor Daria quite lost her head, and that I began assuring her, before everyone, that I would guarantee her forgiveness on the part of her mistress, if she would confess her guilt. They all stared at the girl, and I remember a wonderful attraction in the reflection that here was I sermonizing away, with the money in my own pocket all the while. I went and spent the three roubles that very evening at a restaurant. I went in and asked for a bottle of Lafite, and drank it up; I wanted to be rid of the money.

“I did not feel much remorse either then or afterwards; but I would not repeat the performance—believe it or not as you please. There—that’s all.”

“Only, of course that’s not nearly your worst action,” said the actress, with evident dislike in her face.

“That was a psychological phenomenon, not an action,” remarked Totski.

“And what about the maid?” asked Nastasia Philipovna, with undisguised contempt.

“Oh, she was turned out next day, of course. It’s a very strict household, there!”

“And you allowed it?”

“I should think so, rather! I was not going to return and confess next day,” laughed Ferdishenko, who seemed a little surprised at the disagreeable impression which his story had made on all parties.

“How mean you were!” said Nastasia.

“Bah! you wish to hear a man tell of his worst actions, and you expect the story to come out goody-goody! One’s worst actions always are mean. We shall see what the general has to say for himself now. All is not gold that glitters, you know; and because a man keeps his carriage he need not be specially virtuous, I assure you, all sorts of people keep carriages. And by what means?”

In a word, Ferdishenko was very angry and rapidly forgetting himself; his whole face was drawn with passion. Strange as it may appear, he had expected much better success for his story. These little errors of taste on Ferdishenko’s part occurred very

frequently. Nastasia trembled with rage, and looked fixedly at him, whereupon he relapsed into alarmed silence. He realized that he had gone a little too far.

“Had we not better end this game?” asked Totski.

“It’s my turn, but I plead exemption,” said Ptitsin.

“You don’t care to oblige us?” asked Nastasia.

“I cannot, I assure you. I confess I do not understand how anyone can play this game.”

“Then, general, it’s your turn,” continued Nastasia Philipovna, “and if you refuse, the whole game will fall through, which will disappoint me very much, for I was looking forward to relating a certain ‘page of my own life.’ I am only waiting for you and Afanasy Ivanovitch to have your turns, for I require the support of your example,” she added, smiling.

“Oh, if you put it in that way,” cried the general, excitedly, “I’m ready to tell the whole story of my life, but I must confess that I prepared a little story in anticipation of my turn.”

Nastasia smiled amiably at him; but evidently her depression and irritability were increasing with every moment. Totski was dreadfully alarmed to hear her promise a revelation out of her own life.

“I, like everyone else,” began the general, “have committed certain not altogether graceful actions, so to speak, during the course of my life. But the strangest thing of all in my case is, that I should consider the little anecdote which I am now about to give you as a confession of the worst of my ‘bad actions.’ It is thirty-five years since it all happened, and yet I cannot to this very day recall the circumstances without, as it were, a sudden pang at the heart.

“It was a silly affair—I was an ensign at the time. You know ensigns—their blood is boiling water, their circumstances generally penurious. Well, I had a servant Nikifor who used to do everything for me in my quarters, economized and managed for me, and even laid hands on anything he could find (belonging to other people), in order to augment our household goods; but a faithful, honest fellow all the same.

“I was strict, but just by nature. At that time we were stationed in a small town. I was quartered at an old widow’s house, a lieutenant’s widow of eighty years of age. She lived in a wretched little wooden house, and had not even a servant, so poor was she.

“Her relations had all died off—her husband was dead and buried forty years since; and a niece, who had lived with her and bullied her up to three years ago, was dead too; so that she was quite alone.

“Well, I was precious dull with her, especially as she was so childish that there was nothing to be got out of her. Eventually, she stole a fowl of mine; the business is a mystery to this day; but it could have been no one but herself. I requested to be quartered somewhere else, and was shifted to the other end of the town, to the house of a merchant with a large family, and a long beard, as I remember him. Nikifor and I were delighted to go; but the old lady was not pleased at our departure.

“Well, a day or two afterwards, when I returned from drill, Nikifor says to me: ‘We oughtn’t to have left our tureen with the old lady, I’ve nothing to serve the soup in.’

“I asked how it came about that the tureen had been left. Nikifor explained that the old lady refused to give it up, because, she said, we had broken her bowl, and she must have our tureen in place of it; she had declared that I had so arranged the matter with herself.

“This baseness on her part of course aroused my young blood to fever heat; I jumped up, and away I flew.

“I arrived at the old woman’s house beside myself. She was sitting in a corner all alone, leaning her face on her hand. I fell on her like a clap of thunder. ‘You old wretch!’ I yelled and all that sort of thing, in real Russian style. Well, when I began cursing at her, a strange thing happened. I looked at her, and she stared back with her eyes starting out of her head, but she did not say a word. She seemed to sway about as she sat, and looked and looked at me in the strangest way. Well, I soon stopped swearing and looked closer at her, asked her questions, but not a word could I get out of her. The flies were buzzing about the room and only this sound broke the silence; the sun was setting outside; I didn’t know what to make of it, so I went away.

“Before I reached home I was met and summoned to the major’s, so that it was some while before I actually got there. When I came in, Nikifor met me. ‘Have you heard, sir, that our old lady is dead?’ ‘*dead*, when?’ ‘Oh, an hour and a half ago.’ That meant nothing more nor less than that she was dying at the moment when I pounced on her and began abusing her.

“This produced a great effect upon me. I used to dream of the poor old woman at nights. I really am not superstitious, but two days after, I went to her funeral, and as time went on I thought more and more about her. I said to myself, ‘This woman, this human being, lived to a great age. She had children, a husband and family, friends and

relations; her household was busy and cheerful; she was surrounded by smiling faces; and then suddenly they are gone, and she is left alone like a solitary fly... like a fly, cursed with the burden of her age. At last, God calls her to Himself. At sunset, on a lovely summer's evening, my little old woman passes away—a thought, you will notice, which offers much food for reflection—and behold! instead of tears and prayers to start her on her last journey, she has insults and jeers from a young ensign, who stands before her with his hands in his pockets, making a terrible row about a soup tureen! Of course I was to blame, and even now that I have time to look back at it calmly, I pity the poor old thing no less. I repeat that I wonder at myself, for after all I was not really responsible. Why did she take it into her head to die at that moment? But the more I thought of it, the more I felt the weight of it upon my mind; and I never got quite rid of the impression until I put a couple of old women into an almshouse and kept them there at my own expense. There, that's all. I repeat I dare say I have committed many a grievous sin in my day; but I cannot help always looking back upon this as the worst action I have ever perpetrated.”

“H'm! and instead of a bad action, your excellency has detailed one of your noblest deeds,” said Ferdishenko. “Ferdishenko is ‘done.’”

“Dear me, general,” said Nastasia Philipovna, absently, “I really never imagined you had such a good heart.”

The general laughed with great satisfaction, and applied himself once more to the champagne.

It was now Totski's turn, and his story was awaited with great curiosity—while all eyes turned on Nastasia Philipovna, as though anticipating that his revelation must be connected somehow with her. Nastasia, during the whole of his story, pulled at the lace trimming of her sleeve, and never once glanced at the speaker. Totski was a handsome man, rather stout, with a very polite and dignified manner. He was always well dressed, and his linen was exquisite. He had plump white hands, and wore a magnificent diamond ring on one finger.

“What simplifies the duty before me considerably, in my opinion,” he began, “is that I am bound to recall and relate the very worst action of my life. In such circumstances there can, of course, be no doubt. One's conscience very soon informs one what is the proper narrative to tell. I admit, that among the many silly and thoughtless actions of my life, the memory of one comes prominently forward and reminds me that it lay long like a stone on my heart. Some twenty years since, I paid a visit to Platon Ordintzeff at his country-house. He had just been elected marshal of the nobility, and had come there with his young wife for the winter holidays. Anfisa Alexeyevna's

birthday came off just then, too, and there were two balls arranged. At that time Dumas-fils' beautiful work, *La Dame aux Camélias*—a novel which I consider imperishable—had just come into fashion. In the provinces all the ladies were in raptures over it, those who had read it, at least. Camellias were all the fashion. Everyone inquired for them, everybody wanted them; and a grand lot of camellias are to be got in a country town—as you all know—and two balls to provide for!

“Poor Peter Volhofskoi was desperately in love with Anfisa Alexeyevna. I don't know whether there was anything—I mean I don't know whether he could possibly have indulged in any hope. The poor fellow was beside himself to get her a bouquet of camellias. Countess Sotski and Sophia Besspalova, as everyone knew, were coming with white camellia bouquets. Anfisa wished for red ones, for effect. Well, her husband Platon was driven desperate to find some. And the day before the ball, Anfisa's rival snapped up the only red camellias to be had in the place, from under Platon's nose, and Platon—wretched man—was done for. Now if Peter had only been able to step in at this moment with a red bouquet, his little hopes might have made gigantic strides. A woman's gratitude under such circumstances would have been boundless—but it was practically an impossibility.

“The night before the ball I met Peter, looking radiant. ‘What is it?’ I ask. ‘I've found them, Eureka!’ ‘No! where, where?’ ‘At Ekshaisk (a little town fifteen miles off) there's a rich old merchant, who keeps a lot of canaries, has no children, and he and his wife are devoted to flowers. He's got some camellias.’ ‘And what if he won't let you have them?’ ‘I'll go on my knees and implore till I get them. I won't go away.’ ‘When shall you start?’ ‘Tomorrow morning at five o'clock.’ ‘Go on,’ I said, ‘and good luck to you.’

“I was glad for the poor fellow, and went home. But an idea got hold of me somehow. I don't know how. It was nearly two in the morning. I rang the bell and ordered the coachman to be waked up and sent to me. He came. I gave him a tip of fifteen roubles, and told him to get the carriage ready at once. In half an hour it was at the door. I got in and off we went.

“By five I drew up at the Ekshaisky inn. I waited there till dawn, and soon after six I was off, and at the old merchant Trepalaf's.

“‘Camellias!’ I said, ‘father, save me, save me, let me have some camellias!’ He was a tall, grey old man—a terrible-looking old gentleman. ‘Not a bit of it,’ he says. ‘I won't.’ Down I went on my knees. ‘Don't say so, don't—think what you're doing!’ I cried; ‘it's a matter of life and death!’ ‘If that's the case, take them,’ says he. So up I get, and cut such a bouquet of red camellias! He had a whole greenhouse full of them—lovely ones. The old fellow sighs. I pull out a hundred roubles. ‘No, no!’ says he, ‘don't insult

me that way.' 'Oh, if that's the case, give it to the village hospital,' I say. 'Ah,' he says, 'that's quite a different matter; that's good of you and generous. I'll pay it in there for you with pleasure.' I liked that old fellow, Russian to the core, *de la vraie souche*. I went home in raptures, but took another road in order to avoid Peter. Immediately on arriving I sent up the bouquet for Anfisa to see when she awoke.

"You may imagine her ecstasy, her gratitude. The wretched Platon, who had almost died since yesterday of the reproaches showered upon him, wept on my shoulder. Of course poor Peter had no chance after this.

"I thought he would cut my throat at first, and went about armed ready to meet him. But he took it differently; he fainted, and had brain fever and convulsions. A month after, when he had hardly recovered, he went off to the Crimea, and there he was shot.

"I assure you this business left me no peace for many a long year. Why did I do it? I was not in love with her myself; I'm afraid it was simply mischief—pure 'cussedness' on my part.

"If I hadn't seized that bouquet from under his nose he might have been alive now, and a happy man. He might have been successful in life, and never have gone to fight the Turks."

Totski ended his tale with the same dignity that had characterized its commencement.

Nastasia Philipovna's eyes were flashing in a most unmistakable way, now; and her lips were all a-quiver by the time Totski finished his story.

All present watched both of them with curiosity.

"You were right, Totski," said Nastasia, "it is a dull game and a stupid one. I'll just tell my story, as I promised, and then we'll play cards."

"Yes, but let's have the story first!" cried the general.

"Prince," said Nastasia Philipovna, unexpectedly turning to Muishkin, "here are my old friends, Totski and General Epanchin, who wish to marry me off. Tell me what you think. Shall I marry or not? As you decide, so shall it be."

Totski grew white as a sheet. The general was struck dumb. All present started and listened intently. Gania sat rooted to his chair.

"Marry whom?" asked the prince, faintly.

"Gavrila Ardalionovitch Ivogin," said Nastasia, firmly and evenly.

There were a few seconds of dead silence.

The prince tried to speak, but could not form his words; a great weight seemed to lie upon his breast and suffocate him.

“N-no! don’t marry him!” he whispered at last, drawing his breath with an effort.

“So be it, then. Gavril Ardalionovitch,” she spoke solemnly and forcibly, “you hear the prince’s decision? Take it as my decision; and let that be the end of the matter for good and all.”

“Nastasia Philipovna!” cried Totski, in a quaking voice.

“Nastasia Philipovna!” said the general, in persuasive but agitated tones.

Everyone in the room fidgeted in their places, and waited to see what was coming next.

“Well, gentlemen!” she continued, gazing around in apparent astonishment; “what do you all look so alarmed about? Why are you so upset?”

“But—recollect, Nastasia Philipovna,” stammered Totski, “you gave a promise, quite a free one, and—and you might have spared us this. I am confused and bewildered, I know; but, in a word, at such a moment, and before company, and all so-so-irregular, finishing off a game with a serious matter like this, a matter of honour, and of heart, and—”

“I don’t follow you, Afanasy Ivanovitch; you are losing your head. In the first place, what do you mean by ‘before company’? Isn’t the company good enough for you? And what’s all that about ‘a game’? I wished to tell my little story, and I told it! Don’t you like it? You heard what I said to the prince? ‘As you decide, so it shall be!’ If he had said ‘yes,’ I should have given my consent! But he said ‘no,’ so I refused. Here was my whole life hanging on his one word! Surely I was serious enough?”

“The prince! What on earth has the prince got to do with it? Who the deuce is the prince?” cried the general, who could conceal his wrath no longer.

“The prince has this to do with it—that I see in him for the first time in all my life, a man endowed with real truthfulness of spirit, and I trust him. He trusted me at first sight, and I trust him!”

“It only remains for me, then, to thank Nastasia Philipovna for the great delicacy with which she has treated me,” said Gania, as pale as death, and with quivering lips. “That is my plain duty, of course; but the prince—what has he to do in the matter?”

“I see what you are driving at,” said Nastasia Philipovna. “You imply that the prince is after the seventy-five thousand roubles—I quite understand you. Mr. Totski, I forgot to say, ‘Take your seventy-five thousand roubles’—I don’t want them. I let you go free for nothing—take your freedom! You must need it. Nine years and three months’ captivity is enough for anybody. Tomorrow I shall start afresh—today I am a free agent for the first time in my life.

“General, you must take your pearls back, too—give them to your wife—here they are! Tomorrow I shall leave this flat altogether, and then there’ll be no more of these pleasant little social gatherings, ladies and gentlemen.”

So saying, she scornfully rose from her seat as though to depart.

“Nastasia Philipovna! Nastasia Philipovna!”

The words burst involuntarily from every mouth. All present started up in bewildered excitement; all surrounded her; all had listened uneasily to her wild, disconnected sentences. All felt that something had happened, something had gone very far wrong indeed, but no one could make head or tail of the matter.

At this moment there was a furious ring at the bell, and a great knock at the door—exactly similar to the one which had startled the company at Gania’s house in the afternoon.

“Ah, ah! here’s the climax at last, at half-past twelve!” cried Nastasia Philipovna. “Sit down, gentlemen, I beg you. Something is about to happen.”

So saying, she reseated herself; a strange smile played on her lips. She sat quite still, but watched the door in a fever of impatience.

“Rogojin and his hundred thousand roubles, no doubt of it,” muttered Ptitsin to himself.

XV.

Katia, the maid-servant, made her appearance, terribly frightened.

“Goodness knows what it means, ma’am,” she said. “There is a whole collection of men come—all tipsy—and want to see you. They say that ‘it’s Rogojin, and she knows all about it.’”

“It’s all right, Katia, let them all in at once.”

“Surely not *all*, ma’am? They seem so disorderly—it’s dreadful to see them.”

“Yes *all*, Katia, all—every one of them. Let them in, or they’ll come in whether you like or no. Listen! what a noise they are making! Perhaps you are offended, gentlemen, that I should receive such guests in your presence? I am very sorry, and ask your forgiveness, but it cannot be helped—and I should be very grateful if you could all stay and witness this climax. However, just as you please, of course.”

The guests exchanged glances; they were annoyed and bewildered by the episode; but it was clear enough that all this had been pre-arranged and expected by Nastasia Philipovna, and that there was no use in trying to stop her now—for she was little short of insane.

Besides, they were naturally inquisitive to see what was to happen. There was nobody who would be likely to feel much alarm. There were but two ladies present; one of whom was the lively actress, who was not easily frightened, and the other the silent German beauty who, it turned out, did not understand a word of Russian, and seemed to be as stupid as she was lovely.

Her acquaintances invited her to their “At Homes” because she was so decorative. She was exhibited to their guests like a valuable picture, or vase, or statue, or firescreen. As for the men, Ptitsin was one of Rogojin’s friends; Ferdishenko was as much at home as a fish in the sea, Gania, not yet recovered from his amazement, appeared to be chained to a pillory. The old professor did not in the least understand what was happening; but when he noticed how extremely agitated the mistress of the house, and her friends, seemed, he nearly wept, and trembled with fright: but he would rather have died than leave Nastasia Philipovna at such a crisis, for he loved her as if she were his own granddaughter. Afanasy Ivanovitch greatly disliked having anything to do with the affair, but he was too much interested to leave, in spite of the mad turn things had taken; and a few words that had dropped from the lips of Nastasia puzzled him so much, that he felt he could not go without an explanation. He resolved therefore, to see it out, and to adopt the attitude of silent spectator, as most suited to his dignity. General Epanchin alone determined to depart. He was annoyed at the manner in which his gift had been returned, as though he had condescended, under the influence of passion, to place himself on a level with Ptitsin and Ferdishenko, his self-respect and sense of duty now returned together with a consciousness of what was due to his social rank and official importance. In short, he plainly showed his conviction that a man in his position could have nothing to do with Rogojin and his companions. But Nastasia interrupted him at his first words.

“Ah, general!” she cried, “I was forgetting! If I had only foreseen this unpleasantness! I won’t insist on keeping you against your will, although I should have liked you to be

beside me now. In any case, I am most grateful to you for your visit, and flattering attention... but if you are afraid..."

"Excuse me, Nastasia Philipovna," interrupted the general, with chivalric generosity.

"To whom are you speaking? I have remained until now simply because of my devotion to you, and as for danger, I am only afraid that the carpets may be ruined, and the furniture smashed!... You should shut the door on the lot, in my opinion. But I confess that I am extremely curious to see how it ends."

"Rogojin!" announced Ferdishenko.

"What do you think about it?" said the general in a low voice to Totski. "Is she mad? I mean mad in the medical sense of the word eh?"

"I've always said she was predisposed to it," whispered Afanasy Ivanovitch slyly.

"Perhaps it is a fever!"

Since their visit to Gania's home, Rogojin's followers had been increased by two new recruits—a dissolute old man, the hero of some ancient scandal, and a retired sub-lieutenant. A laughable story was told of the former. He possessed, it was said, a set of false teeth, and one day when he wanted money for a drinking orgy, he pawned them, and was never able to reclaim them! The officer appeared to be a rival of the gentleman who was so proud of his fists. He was known to none of Rogojin's followers, but as they passed by the Nevsky, where he stood begging, he had joined their ranks. His claim for the charity he desired seemed based on the fact that in the days of his prosperity he had given away as much as fifteen roubles at a time. The rivals seemed more than a little jealous of one another. The athlete appeared injured at the admission of the "beggar" into the company. By nature taciturn, he now merely growled occasionally like a bear, and glared contemptuously upon the "beggar," who, being somewhat of a man of the world, and a diplomatist, tried to insinuate himself into the bear's good graces. He was a much smaller man than the athlete, and doubtless was conscious that he must tread warily. Gently and without argument he alluded to the advantages of the English style in boxing, and showed himself a firm believer in Western institutions. The athlete's lips curled disdainfully, and without honouring his adversary with a formal denial, he exhibited, as if by accident, that peculiarly Russian object—an enormous fist, clenched, muscular, and covered with red hairs! The sight of this pre-eminently national attribute was enough to convince anybody, without words, that it was a serious matter for those who should happen to come into contact with it.

None of the band were very drunk, for the leader had kept his intended visit to Nastasia in view all day, and had done his best to prevent his followers from drinking too much. He was sober himself, but the excitement of this chaotic day—the strangest day of his life—had affected him so that he was in a dazed, wild condition, which almost resembled drunkenness.

He had kept but one idea before him all day, and for that he had worked in an agony of anxiety and a fever of suspense. His lieutenants had worked so hard from five o'clock until eleven, that they actually had collected a hundred thousand roubles for him, but at such terrific expense, that the rate of interest was only mentioned among them in whispers and with bated breath.

As before, Rogojin walked in advance of his troop, who followed him with mingled self-assertion and timidity. They were specially frightened of Nastasia Philipovna herself, for some reason.

Many of them expected to be thrown downstairs at once, without further ceremony, the elegant and irresistible Zaleshoff among them. But the party led by the athlete, without openly showing their hostile intentions, silently nursed contempt and even hatred for Nastasia Philipovna, and marched into her house as they would have marched into an enemy's fortress. Arrived there, the luxury of the rooms seemed to inspire them with a kind of respect, not unmixed with alarm. So many things were entirely new to their experience—the choice furniture, the pictures, the great statue of Venus. They followed their chief into the salon, however, with a kind of impudent curiosity. There, the sight of General Epanchin among the guests, caused many of them to beat a hasty retreat into the adjoining room, the “boxer” and “beggar” being among the first to go. A few only, of whom Lebedeff made one, stood their ground; he had contrived to walk side by side with Rogojin, for he quite understood the importance of a man who had a fortune of a million odd roubles, and who at this moment carried a hundred thousand in his hand. It may be added that the whole company, not excepting Lebedeff, had the vaguest idea of the extent of their powers, and of how far they could safely go. At some moments Lebedeff was sure that right was on their side; at others he tried uneasily to remember various cheering and reassuring articles of the Civil Code.

Rogojin, when he stepped into the room, and his eyes fell upon Nastasia, stopped short, grew white as a sheet, and stood staring; it was clear that his heart was beating painfully. So he stood, gazing intently, but timidly, for a few seconds. Suddenly, as though bereft of his senses, he moved forward, staggering helplessly, towards the

table. On his way he collided against Ptitsin's chair, and put his dirty foot on the lace skirt of the silent lady's dress; but he neither apologized for this, nor even noticed it.

On reaching the table, he placed upon it a strange-looking object, which he had carried with him into the drawing-room. This was a paper packet, some six or seven inches thick, and eight or nine in length, wrapped in an old newspaper, and tied round three or four times with string.

Having placed this before her, he stood with drooped arms and head, as though awaiting his sentence.

His costume was the same as it had been in the morning, except for a new silk handkerchief round his neck, bright green and red, fastened with a huge diamond pin, and an enormous diamond ring on his dirty forefinger.

Lebedeff stood two or three paces behind his chief; and the rest of the band waited about near the door.

The two maid-servants were both peeping in, frightened and amazed at this unusual and disorderly scene.

"What is that?" asked Nastasia Philipovna, gazing intently at Rogojin, and indicating the paper packet.

"A hundred thousand," replied the latter, almost in a whisper.

"Oh! so he kept his word—there's a man for you! Well, sit down, please—take that chair. I shall have something to say to you presently. Who are all these with you? The same party? Let them come in and sit down. There's room on that sofa, there are some chairs and there's another sofa! Well, why don't they sit down?"

Sure enough, some of the brave fellows entirely lost their heads at this point, and retreated into the next room. Others, however, took the hint and sat down, as far as they could from the table, however; feeling braver in proportion to their distance from Nastasia.

Rogojin took the chair offered him, but he did not sit long; he soon stood up again, and did not reseat himself. Little by little he began to look around him and discern the other guests. Seeing Gania, he smiled venomously and muttered to himself, "Look at that!"

He gazed at Totski and the general with no apparent confusion, and with very little curiosity. But when he observed that the prince was seated beside Nastasia Philipovna, he could not take his eyes off him for a long while, and was clearly

amazed. He could not account for the prince's presence there. It was not in the least surprising that Rogojin should be, at this time, in a more or less delirious condition; for not to speak of the excitements of the day, he had spent the night before in the train, and had not slept more than a wink for forty-eight hours.

"This, gentlemen, is a hundred thousand roubles," said Nastasia Philipovna, addressing the company in general, "here, in this dirty parcel. This afternoon Rogojin yelled, like a madman, that he would bring me a hundred thousand in the evening, and I have been waiting for him all the while. He was bargaining for me, you know; first he offered me eighteen thousand; then he rose to forty, and then to a hundred thousand. And he has kept his word, see! My goodness, how white he is! All this happened this afternoon, at Gania's. I had gone to pay his mother a visit—my future family, you know! And his sister said to my very face, surely somebody will turn this shameless creature out. After which she spat in her brother Gania's face—a girl of character, that!"

"Nastasia Philipovna!" began the general, reproachfully. He was beginning to put his own interpretation on the affair.

"Well, what, general? Not quite good form, eh? Oh, nonsense! Here have I been sitting in my box at the French theatre for the last five years like a statue of inaccessible virtue, and kept out of the way of all admirers, like a silly little idiot! Now, there's this man, who comes and pays down his hundred thousand on the table, before you all, in spite of my five years of innocence and proud virtue, and I dare be sworn he has his sledge outside waiting to carry me off. He values me at a hundred thousand! I see you are still angry with me, Gania! Why, surely you never really wished to take *me* into your family? *me*, Rogojin's mistress! What did the prince say just now?"

"I never said you were Rogojin's mistress—you are *not*!" said the prince, in trembling accents.

"Nastasia Philipovna, dear soul!" cried the actress, impatiently, "do be calm, dear! If it annoys you so—all this—do go away and rest! Of course you would never go with this wretched fellow, in spite of his hundred thousand roubles! Take his money and kick him out of the house; that's the way to treat him and the likes of him! Upon my word, if it were my business, I'd soon clear them all out!"

The actress was a kind-hearted woman, and highly impressionable. She was very angry now.

"Don't be cross, Daria Alexeyevna!" laughed Nastasia. "I was not angry when I spoke; I wasn't reproaching Gania. I don't know how it was that I ever could have indulged the whim of entering an honest family like his. I saw his mother—and kissed her hand, too.

I came and stirred up all that fuss, Gania, this afternoon, on purpose to see how much you could swallow—you surprised me, my friend—you did, indeed. Surely you could not marry a woman who accepts pearls like those you knew the general was going to give me, on the very eve of her marriage? And Rogojin! Why, in your own house and before your own brother and sister, he bargained with me! Yet you could come here and expect to be betrothed to me before you left the house! You almost brought your sister, too. Surely what Rogojin said about you is not really true: that you would crawl all the way to the other end of the town, on hands and knees, for three roubles?”

“Yes, he would!” said Rogojin, quietly, but with an air of absolute conviction.

“H’m! and he receives a good salary, I’m told. Well, what should you get but disgrace and misery if you took a wife you hated into your family (for I know very well that you do hate me)? No, no! I believe now that a man like you would murder anyone for money—sharpen a razor and come up behind his best friend and cut his throat like a sheep—I’ve read of such people. Everyone seems money-mad nowadays. No, no! I may be shameless, but you are far worse. I don’t say a word about that other—”

“Nastasia Philipovna, is this really you? You, once so refined and delicate of speech. Oh, what a tongue! What dreadful things you are saying,” cried the general, wringing his hands in real grief.

“I am intoxicated, general. I am having a day out, you know—it’s my birthday! I have long looked forward to this happy occasion. Daria Alexeyevna, you see that nosegay-man, that Monsieur aux Camelias, sitting there laughing at us?”

“I am not laughing, Nastasia Philipovna; I am only listening with all my attention,” said Totski, with dignity.

“Well, why have I worried him, for five years, and never let him go free? Is he worth it? He is only just what he ought to be—nothing particular. He thinks I am to blame, too. He gave me my education, kept me like a countess. Money—my word! What a lot of money he spent over me! And he tried to find me an honest husband first, and then this Gania, here. And what do you think? All these five years I did not live with him, and yet I took his money, and considered I was quite justified.

“You say, take the hundred thousand and kick that man out. It is true, it is an abominable business, as you say. I might have married long ago, not Gania—Oh, no!—but that would have been abominable too.

“Would you believe it, I had some thoughts of marrying Totski, four years ago! I meant mischief, I confess—but I could have had him, I give you my word; he asked me

himself. But I thought, no! it's not worthwhile to take such advantage of him. No! I had better go on to the streets, or accept Rogojin, or become a washerwoman or something—for I have nothing of my own, you know. I shall go away and leave everything behind, to the last rag—he shall have it all back. And who would take me without anything? Ask Gania, there, whether he would. Why, even Ferdishenko wouldn't have me!"

"No, Ferdishenko would not; he is a candid fellow, Nastasia Philipovna," said that worthy. "But the prince would. You sit here making complaints, but just look at the prince. I've been observing him for a long while."

Nastasia Philipovna looked keenly round at the prince.

"Is that true?" she asked.

"Quite true," whispered the prince.

"You'll take me as I am, with nothing?"

"I will, Nastasia Philipovna."

"Here's a pretty business!" cried the general. "However, it might have been expected of him."

The prince continued to regard Nastasia with a sorrowful, but intent and piercing, gaze.

"Here's another alternative for me," said Nastasia, turning once more to the actress; "and he does it out of pure kindness of heart. I know him. I've found a benefactor. Perhaps, though, what they say about him may be true—that he's an—we know what. And what shall you live on, if you are really so madly in love with Rogojin's mistress, that you are ready to marry her—eh?"

"I take you as a good, honest woman, Nastasia Philipovna—not as Rogojin's mistress."

"Who? I?—good and honest?"

"Yes, you."

"Oh, you get those ideas out of novels, you know. Times are changed now, dear prince; the world sees things as they really are. That's all nonsense. Besides, how can you marry? You need a nurse, not a wife."

The prince rose and began to speak in a trembling, timid tone, but with the air of a man absolutely sure of the truth of his words.

“I know nothing, Nastasia Philipovna. I have seen nothing. You are right so far; but I consider that you would be honouring me, and not I you. I am a nobody. You have suffered, you have passed through hell and emerged pure, and that is very much. Why do you shame yourself by desiring to go with Rogojin? You are delirious. You have returned to Mr. Totski his seventy-five thousand roubles, and declared that you will leave this house and all that is in it, which is a line of conduct that not one person here would imitate. Nastasia Philipovna, I love you! I would die for you. I shall never let any man say one word against you, Nastasia Philipovna! and if we are poor, I can work for both.”

As the prince spoke these last words a titter was heard from Ferdishenko; Lebedeff laughed too. The general grunted with irritation; Ptitsin and Totski barely restrained their smiles. The rest all sat listening, open-mouthed with wonder.

“But perhaps we shall not be poor; we may be very rich, Nastasia Philipovna,” continued the prince, in the same timid, quivering tones. “I don’t know for certain, and I’m sorry to say I haven’t had an opportunity of finding out all day; but I received a letter from Moscow, while I was in Switzerland, from a Mr. Salaskin, and he acquaints me with the fact that I am entitled to a very large inheritance. This letter—”

The prince pulled a letter out of his pocket.

“Is he raving?” said the general. “Are we really in a mad-house?”

There was silence for a moment. Then Ptitsin spoke.

“I think you said, prince, that your letter was from Salaskin? Salaskin is a very eminent man, indeed, in his own world; he is a wonderfully clever solicitor, and if he really tells you this, I think you may be pretty sure that he is right. It so happens, luckily, that I know his handwriting, for I have lately had business with him. If you would allow me to see it, I should perhaps be able to tell you.”

The prince held out the letter silently, but with a shaking hand.

“What, what?” said the general, much agitated.

“What’s all this? Is he really heir to anything?”

All present concentrated their attention upon Ptitsin, reading the prince’s letter. The general curiosity had received a new fillip. Ferdishenko could not sit still. Rogojin fixed his eyes first on the prince, and then on Ptitsin, and then back again; he was extremely

agitated. Lebedeff could not stand it. He crept up and read over Ptitsin's shoulder, with the air of a naughty boy who expects a box on the ear every moment for his indiscretion.

XVI.

"It's good business," said Ptitsin, at last, folding the letter and handing it back to the prince. "You will receive, without the slightest trouble, by the last will and testament of your aunt, a very large sum of money indeed."

"Impossible!" cried the general, starting up as if he had been shot.

Ptitsin explained, for the benefit of the company, that the prince's aunt had died five months since. He had never known her, but she was his mother's own sister, the daughter of a Moscow merchant, one Paparchin, who had died a bankrupt. But the elder brother of this same Paparchin, had been an eminent and very rich merchant. A year since it had so happened that his only two sons had both died within the same month. This sad event had so affected the old man that he, too, had died very shortly after. He was a widower, and had no relations left, excepting the prince's aunt, a poor woman living on charity, who was herself at the point of death from dropsy; but who had time, before she died, to set Salaskin to work to find her nephew, and to make her will bequeathing her newly-acquired fortune to him.

It appeared that neither the prince, nor the doctor with whom he lived in Switzerland, had thought of waiting for further communications; but the prince had started straight away with Salaskin's letter in his pocket.

"One thing I may tell you, for certain," concluded Ptitsin, addressing the prince, "that there is no question about the authenticity of this matter. Anything that Salaskin writes you as regards your unquestionable right to this inheritance, you may look upon as so much money in your pocket. I congratulate you, prince; you may receive a million and a half of roubles, perhaps more; I don't know. All I *do* know is that Paparchin was a very rich merchant indeed."

"Hurrah!" cried Lebedeff, in a drunken voice. "Hurrah for the last of the Muishkins!"

"My goodness me! and I gave him twenty-five roubles this morning as though he were a beggar," blurted out the general, half senseless with amazement. "Well, I congratulate you, I congratulate you!" And the general rose from his seat and solemnly embraced the prince. All came forward with congratulations; even those of Rogojin's party who had retreated into the next room, now crept softly back to look on. For the moment even Nastasia Philipovna was forgotten.

But gradually the consciousness crept back into the minds of each one present that the prince had just made her an offer of marriage. The situation had, therefore, become three times as fantastic as before.

Totski sat and shrugged his shoulders, bewildered. He was the only guest left sitting at this time; the others had thronged round the table in disorder, and were all talking at once.

It was generally agreed, afterwards, in recalling that evening, that from this moment Nastasia Philipovna seemed entirely to lose her senses. She continued to sit still in her place, looking around at her guests with a strange, bewildered expression, as though she were trying to collect her thoughts, and could not. Then she suddenly turned to the prince, and glared at him with frowning brows; but this only lasted one moment. Perhaps it suddenly struck her that all this was a jest, but his face seemed to reassure her. She reflected, and smiled again, vaguely.

“So I am really a princess,” she whispered to herself, ironically, and glancing accidentally at Daria Alexeyevna’s face, she burst out laughing.

“Ha, ha, ha!” she cried, “this is an unexpected climax, after all. I didn’t expect this. What are you all standing up for, gentlemen? Sit down; congratulate me and the prince! Ferdishenko, just step out and order some more champagne, will you? Katia, Pasha,” she added suddenly, seeing the servants at the door, “come here! I’m going to be married, did you hear? To the prince. He has a million and a half of roubles; he is Prince Muishkin, and has asked me to marry him. Here, prince, come and sit by me; and here comes the wine. Now then, ladies and gentlemen, where are your congratulations?”

“Hurrah!” cried a number of voices. A rush was made for the wine by Rogojin’s followers, though, even among them, there seemed some sort of realization that the situation had changed. Rogojin stood and looked on, with an incredulous smile, screwing up one side of his mouth.

“Prince, my dear fellow, do remember what you are about,” said the general, approaching Muishkin, and pulling him by the coat sleeve.

Nastasia Philipovna overheard the remark, and burst out laughing.

“No, no, general!” she cried. “You had better look out! I am the princess now, you know. The prince won’t let you insult me. Afanasy Ivanovitch, why don’t you congratulate me? I shall be able to sit at table with your new wife, now. Aha! you see what I gain by marrying a prince! A million and a half, and a prince, and an idiot into

the bargain, they say. What better could I wish for? Life is only just about to commence for me in earnest. Rogojin, you are a little too late. Away with your paper parcel! I'm going to marry the prince; I'm richer than you are now."

But Rogojin understood how things were tending, at last. An inexpressibly painful expression came over his face. He wrung his hands; a groan made its way up from the depths of his soul.

"Surrender her, for God's sake!" he said to the prince.

All around burst out laughing.

"What? Surrender her to *you*?" cried Daria Alexeyevna. "To a fellow who comes and bargains for a wife like a moujik! The prince wishes to marry her, and you—"

"So do I, so do I! This moment, if I could! I'd give every farthing I have to do it."

"You drunken moujik," said Daria Alexeyevna, once more. "You ought to be kicked out of the place."

The laughter became louder than ever.

"Do you hear, prince?" said Nastasia Philipovna. "Do you hear how this moujik of a fellow goes on bargaining for your bride?"

"He is drunk," said the prince, quietly, "and he loves you very much."

"Won't you be ashamed, afterwards, to reflect that your wife very nearly ran away with Rogojin?"

"Oh, you were raving, you were in a fever; you are still half delirious."

"And won't you be ashamed when they tell you, afterwards, that your wife lived at Totski's expense so many years?"

"No; I shall not be ashamed of that. You did not so live by your own will."

"And you'll never reproach me with it?"

"Never."

"Take care, don't commit yourself for a whole lifetime."

"Nastasia Philipovna," said the prince, quietly, and with deep emotion, "I said before that I shall esteem your consent to be my wife as a great honour to myself, and shall consider that it is you who will honour me, not I you, by our marriage. You laughed at these words, and others around us laughed as well; I heard them. Very likely I

expressed myself funnily, and I may have looked funny, but, for all that, I believe I understand where honour lies, and what I said was but the literal truth. You were about to ruin yourself just now, irrevocably; you would never have forgiven yourself for so doing afterwards; and yet, you are absolutely blameless. It is impossible that your life should be altogether ruined at your age. What matter that Rogojin came bargaining here, and that Gavril Ardalionovitch would have deceived you if he could? Why do you continually remind us of these facts? I assure you once more that very few could find it in them to act as you have acted this day. As for your wish to go with Rogojin, that was simply the idea of a delirious and suffering brain. You are still quite feverish; you ought to be in bed, not here. You know quite well that if you had gone with Rogojin, you would have become a washer-woman next day, rather than stay with him. You are proud, Nastasia Philipovna, and perhaps you have really suffered so much that you imagine yourself to be a desperately guilty woman. You require a great deal of petting and looking after, Nastasia Philipovna, and I will do this. I saw your portrait this morning, and it seemed quite a familiar face to me; it seemed to me that the portrait-face was calling to me for help. I—I shall respect you all my life, Nastasia Philipovna,” concluded the prince, as though suddenly recollecting himself, and blushing to think of the sort of company before whom he had said all this.

Ptitsin bowed his head and looked at the ground, overcome by a mixture of feelings. Totski muttered to himself: “He may be an idiot, but he knows that flattery is the best road to success here.”

The prince observed Gania’s eyes flashing at him, as though they would gladly annihilate him then and there.

“That’s a kind-hearted man, if you like,” said Daria Alexeyevna, whose wrath was quickly evaporating.

“A refined man, but—lost,” murmured the general.

Totski took his hat and rose to go. He and the general exchanged glances, making a private arrangement, thereby, to leave the house together.

“Thank you, prince; no one has ever spoken to me like that before,” began Nastasia Philipovna. “Men have always bargained for me, before this; and not a single respectable man has ever proposed to marry me. Do you hear, Afanasy Ivanovitch? What do *you* think of what the prince has just been saying? It was almost immodest, wasn’t it? You, Rogojin, wait a moment, don’t go yet! I see you don’t intend to move however. Perhaps I may go with you yet. Where did you mean to take me to?”

“To Ekaterinhof,” replied Lebedeff. Rogojin simply stood staring, with trembling lips, not daring to believe his ears. He was stunned, as though from a blow on the head.

“What are you thinking of, my dear Nastasia?” said Daria Alexeyevna in alarm. “What are you saying?” “You are not going mad, are you?”

Nastasia Philipovna burst out laughing and jumped up from the sofa.

“You thought I should accept this good child’s invitation to ruin him, did you?” she cried. “That’s Totski’s way, not mine. He’s fond of children. Come along, Rogojin, get your money ready! We won’t talk about marrying just at this moment, but let’s see the money at all events. Come! I may not marry you, either. I don’t know. I suppose you thought you’d keep the money, if I did! Ha, ha, ha! nonsense! I have no sense of shame left. I tell you I have been Totski’s concubine. Prince, you must marry Aglaya Ivanovna, not Nastasia Philipovna, or this fellow Ferdishenko will always be pointing the finger of scorn at you. You aren’t afraid, I know; but I should always be afraid that I had ruined you, and that you would reproach me for it. As for what you say about my doing you honour by marrying you—well, Totski can tell you all about that. You had your eye on Aglaya, Gania, you know you had; and you might have married her if you had not come bargaining. You are all like this. You should choose, once for all, between disreputable women, and respectable ones, or you are sure to get mixed. Look at the general, how he’s staring at me!”

“This is too horrible,” said the general, starting to his feet. All were standing up now. Nastasia was absolutely beside herself.

“I am very proud, in spite of what I am,” she continued. “You called me ‘perfection’ just now, prince. A nice sort of perfection to throw up a prince and a million and a half of roubles in order to be able to boast of the fact afterwards! What sort of a wife should I make for you, after all I have said? Afanasy Ivanovitch, do you observe I have really and truly thrown away a million of roubles? And you thought that I should consider your wretched seventy-five thousand, with Gania thrown in for a husband, a paradise of bliss! Take your seventy-five thousand back, sir; you did not reach the hundred thousand. Rogojin cut a better dash than you did. I’ll console Gania myself; I have an idea about that. But now I must be off! I’ve been in prison for ten years. I’m free at last! Well, Rogojin, what are you waiting for? Let’s get ready and go.”

“Come along!” shouted Rogojin, beside himself with joy. “Hey! all of you fellows! Wine! Round with it! Fill the glasses!”

“Get away!” he shouted frantically, observing that Daria Alexeyevna was approaching to protest against Nastasia’s conduct. “Get away, she’s mine, everything’s mine! She’s a queen, get away!”

He was panting with ecstasy. He walked round and round Nastasia Philipovna and told everybody to “keep their distance.”

All the Rogojin company were now collected in the drawing-room; some were drinking, some laughed and talked: all were in the highest and wildest spirits. Ferdishenko was doing his best to unite himself to them; the general and Totski again made an attempt to go. Gania, too stood hat in hand ready to go; but seemed to be unable to tear his eyes away from the scene before him.

“Get out, keep your distance!” shouted Rogojin.

“What are you shouting about there!” cried Nastasia “I’m not yours yet. I may kick you out for all you know I haven’t taken your money yet; there it all is on the table. Here, give me over that packet! Is there a hundred thousand roubles in that one packet? Pfu! what abominable stuff it looks! Oh! nonsense, Daria Alexeyevna; you surely did not expect me to ruin *him*?” (indicating the prince). “Fancy him nursing me! Why, he needs a nurse himself! The general, there, will be his nurse now, you’ll see. Here, prince, look here! Your bride is accepting money. What a disreputable woman she must be! And you wished to marry her! What are you crying about? Is it a bitter dose? Never mind, you shall laugh yet. Trust to time.” (In spite of these words there were two large tears rolling down Nastasia’s own cheeks.) “It’s far better to think twice of it now than afterwards. Oh! you mustn’t cry like that! There’s Katia crying, too. What is it, Katia, dear? I shall leave you and Pasha a lot of things, I’ve laid them out for you already; but good-bye, now. I made an honest girl like you serve a low woman like myself. It’s better so, prince, it is indeed. You’d begin to despise me afterwards—we should never be happy. Oh! you needn’t swear, prince, I shan’t believe you, you know. How foolish it would be, too! No, no; we’d better say good-bye and part friends. I am a bit of a dreamer myself, and I used to dream of you once. Very often during those five years down at his estate I used to dream and think, and I always imagined just such a good, honest, foolish fellow as you, one who should come and say to me: ‘You are an innocent woman, Nastasia Philipovna, and I adore you.’ I dreamt of you often. I used to think so much down there that I nearly went mad; and then this fellow here would come down. He would stay a couple of months out of the twelve, and disgrace and insult and deprave me, and then go; so that I longed to drown myself in the pond a thousand times over; but I did not dare do it. I hadn’t the heart, and now—well, are you ready, Rogojin?”

“Ready—keep your distance, all of you!”

“We’re all ready,” said several of his friends. “The troikas [Sledges drawn by three horses abreast.] are at the door, bells and all.”

Nastasia Philipovna seized the packet of bank-notes.

“Gania, I have an idea. I wish to recompense you—why should you lose all? Rogojin, would he crawl for three roubles as far as the Vassiliostrof?”

“Oh, wouldn’t he just!”

“Well, look here, Gania. I wish to look into your heart once more, for the last time. You’ve worried me for the last three months—now it’s my turn. Do you see this packet? It contains a hundred thousand roubles. Now, I’m going to throw it into the fire, here—before all these witnesses. As soon as the fire catches hold of it, you put your hands into the fire and pick it out—without gloves, you know. You must have bare hands, and you must turn your sleeves up. Pull it out, I say, and it’s all yours. You may burn your fingers a little, of course; but then it’s a hundred thousand roubles, remember—it won’t take you long to lay hold of it and snatch it out. I shall so much admire you if you put your hands into the fire for my money. All here present may be witnesses that the whole packet of money is yours if you get it out. If you don’t get it out, it shall burn. I will let no one else come; away—get away, all of you—it’s my money! Rogojin has bought me with it. Is it my money, Rogojin?”

“Yes, my queen; it’s your own money, my joy.”

“Get away then, all of you. I shall do as I like with my own—don’t meddle! Ferdishenko, make up the fire, quick!”

“Nastasia Philipovna, I can’t; my hands won’t obey me,” said Ferdishenko, astounded and helpless with bewilderment.

“Nonsense,” cried Nastasia Philipovna, seizing the poker and raking a couple of logs together. No sooner did a tongue of flame burst out than she threw the packet of notes upon it.

Everyone gasped; some even crossed themselves.

“She’s mad—she’s mad!” was the cry.

“Oughtn’t-oughtn’t we to secure her?” asked the general of Ptitsin, in a whisper; “or shall we send for the authorities? Why, she’s mad, isn’t she— isn’t she, eh?”

“N-no, I hardly think she is actually mad,” whispered Ptitsin, who was as white as his handkerchief, and trembling like a leaf. He could not take his eyes off the smouldering packet.

“She’s mad surely, isn’t she?” the general appealed to Totski.

“I told you she wasn’t an ordinary woman,” replied the latter, who was as pale as anyone.

“Oh, but, positively, you know—a hundred thousand roubles!”

“Goodness gracious! good heavens!” came from all quarters of the room.

All now crowded round the fire and thronged to see what was going on; everyone lamented and gave vent to exclamations of horror and woe. Some jumped up on chairs in order to get a better view. Daria Alexeyevna ran into the next room and whispered excitedly to Katia and Pasha. The beautiful German disappeared altogether.

“My lady! my sovereign!” lamented Lebedeff, falling on his knees before Nastasia Philipovna, and stretching out his hands towards the fire; “it’s a hundred thousand roubles, it is indeed, I packed it up myself, I saw the money! My queen, let me get into the fire after it—say the word—I’ll put my whole grey head into the fire for it! I have a poor lame wife and thirteen children. My father died of starvation last week. Nastasia Philipovna, Nastasia Philipovna!” The wretched little man wept, and groaned, and crawled towards the fire.

“Away, out of the way!” cried Nastasia. “Make room, all of you! Gania, what are you standing there for? Don’t stand on ceremony. Put in your hand! There’s your whole happiness smouldering away, look! Quick!”

But Gania had borne too much that day, and especially this evening, and he was not prepared for this last, quite unexpected trial.

The crowd parted on each side of him and he was left face to face with Nastasia Philipovna, three paces from her. She stood by the fire and waited, with her intent gaze fixed upon him.

Gania stood before her, in his evening clothes, holding his white gloves and hat in his hand, speechless and motionless, with arms folded and eyes fixed on the fire.

A silly, meaningless smile played on his white, death-like lips. He could not take his eyes off the smouldering packet; but it appeared that something new had come to birth in his soul—as though he were vowing to himself that he would bear this trial. He

did not move from his place. In a few seconds it became evident to all that he did not intend to rescue the money.

“Hey! look at it, it’ll burn in another minute or two!” cried Nastasia Philipovna. “You’ll hang yourself afterwards, you know, if it does! I’m not joking.”

The fire, choked between a couple of smouldering pieces of wood, had died down for the first few moments after the packet was thrown upon it. But a little tongue of fire now began to lick the paper from below, and soon, gathering courage, mounted the sides of the parcel, and crept around it. In another moment, the whole of it burst into flames, and the exclamations of woe and horror were redoubled.

“Nastasia Philipovna!” lamented Lebedeff again, straining towards the fireplace; but Rogojin dragged him away, and pushed him to the rear once more.

The whole of Rogojin’s being was concentrated in one rapturous gaze of ecstasy. He could not take his eyes off Nastasia. He stood drinking her in, as it were. He was in the seventh heaven of delight.

“Oh, what a queen she is!” he ejaculated, every other minute, throwing out the remark for anyone who liked to catch it. “That’s the sort of woman for me! Which of you would think of doing a thing like that, you blackguards, eh?” he yelled. He was hopelessly and wildly beside himself with ecstasy.

The prince watched the whole scene, silent and dejected.

“I’ll pull it out with my teeth for one thousand,” said Ferdishenko.

“So would I,” said another, from behind, “with pleasure. Devil take the thing!” he added, in a tempest of despair, “it will all be burnt up in a minute—It’s burning, it’s burning!”

“It’s burning, it’s burning!” cried all, thronging nearer and nearer to the fire in their excitement.

“Gania, don’t be a fool! I tell you for the last time.”

“Get on, quick!” shrieked Ferdishenko, rushing wildly up to Gania, and trying to drag him to the fire by the sleeve of his coat. “Get it, you dummy, it’s burning away fast! Oh—*damn* the thing!”

Gania hurled Ferdishenko from him; then he turned sharp round and made for the door. But he had not gone a couple of steps when he tottered and fell to the ground.

“He’s fainted!” the cry went round.

“And the money’s burning still,” Lebedeff lamented.

“Burning for nothing,” shouted others.

“Katia-Pasha! Bring him some water!” cried Nastasia Philipovna. Then she took the tongs and fished out the packet.

Nearly the whole of the outer covering was burned away, but it was soon evident that the contents were hardly touched. The packet had been wrapped in a threefold covering of newspaper, and the notes were safe. All breathed more freely.

“Some dirty little thousand or so may be touched,” said Lebedeff, immensely relieved, “but there’s very little harm done, after all.”

“It’s all his—the whole packet is for him, do you hear—all of you?” cried Nastasia Philipovna, placing the packet by the side of Gania. “He restrained himself, and didn’t go after it; so his self-respect is greater than his thirst for money. All right—he’ll come to directly—he must have the packet or he’ll cut his throat afterwards. There! He’s coming to himself. General, Totski, all of you, did you hear me? The money is all Gania’s. I give it to him, fully conscious of my action, as recompense for—well, for anything he thinks best. Tell him so. Let it lie here beside him. Off we go, Rogojin! Goodbye, prince. I have seen a man for the first time in my life. Goodbye, Afanasy Ivanovitch—and thanks!”

The Rogojin gang followed their leader and Nastasia Philipovna to the entrance-hall, laughing and shouting and whistling.

In the hall the servants were waiting, and handed her her fur cloak. Martha, the cook, ran in from the kitchen. Nastasia kissed them all round.

“Are you really throwing us all over, little mother? Where, where are you going to? And on your birthday, too!” cried the four girls, crying over her and kissing her hands.

“I am going out into the world, Katia; perhaps I shall be a laundress. I don’t know. No more of Afanasy Ivanovitch, anyhow. Give him my respects. Don’t think badly of me, girls.”

The prince hurried down to the front gate where the party were settling into the troikas, all the bells tinkling a merry accompaniment the while. The general caught him up on the stairs:

“Prince, prince!” he cried, seizing hold of his arm, “recollect yourself! Drop her, prince! You see what sort of a woman she is. I am speaking to you like a father.”

The prince glanced at him, but said nothing. He shook himself free, and rushed on downstairs.

The general was just in time to see the prince take the first sledge he could get, and, giving the order to Ekaterinhof, start off in pursuit of the troikas. Then the general's fine grey horse dragged that worthy home, with some new thoughts, and some new hopes and calculations developing in his brain, and with the pearls in his pocket, for he had not forgotten to bring them along with him, being a man of business. Amid his new thoughts and ideas there came, once or twice, the image of Nastasia Philipovna. The general sighed.

"I'm sorry, really sorry," he muttered. "She's a ruined woman. Mad! mad! However, the prince is not for Nastasia Philipovna now,—perhaps it's as well."

Two more of Nastasia's guests, who walked a short distance together, indulged in high moral sentiments of a similar nature.

"Do you know, Totski, this is all very like what they say goes on among the Japanese?" said Ptitsin. "The offended party there, they say, marches off to his insulter and says to him, 'You insulted me, so I have come to rip myself open before your eyes;' and with these words he does actually rip his stomach open before his enemy, and considers, doubtless, that he is having all possible and necessary satisfaction and revenge. There are strange characters in the world, sir!"

"H'm! and you think there was something of this sort here, do you? Dear me—a very remarkable comparison, you know! But you must have observed, my dear Ptitsin, that I did all I possibly could. I could do no more than I did. And you must admit that there are some rare qualities in this woman. I felt I could not speak in that Bedlam, or I should have been tempted to cry out, when she reproached me, that she herself was my best justification. Such a woman could make anyone forget all reason—everything! Even that moujik, Rogojin, you saw, brought her a hundred thousand roubles! Of course, all that happened tonight was ephemeral, fantastic, unseemly—yet it lacked neither colour nor originality. My God! What might not have been made of such a character combined with such beauty! Yet in spite of all efforts—in spite of all education, even—all those gifts are wasted! She is an uncut diamond.... I have often said so."

And Afanasy Ivanovitch heaved a deep sigh.

PART II

I.

Two days after the strange conclusion to Nastasia Philipovna's birthday party, with the record of which we concluded the first part of this story, Prince Muishkin hurriedly left St. Petersburg for Moscow, in order to see after some business connected with the receipt of his unexpected fortune.

It was said that there were other reasons for his hurried departure; but as to this, and as to his movements in Moscow, and as to his prolonged absence from St. Petersburg, we are able to give very little information.

The prince was away for six months, and even those who were most interested in his destiny were able to pick up very little news about him all that while. True, certain rumours did reach his friends, but these were both strange and rare, and each one contradicted the last.

Of course the Epanchin family was much interested in his movements, though he had not had time to bid them farewell before his departure. The general, however, had had an opportunity of seeing him once or twice since the eventful evening, and had spoken very seriously with him; but though he had seen the prince, as I say, he told his family nothing about the circumstance. In fact, for a month or so after his departure it was considered not the thing to mention the prince's name in the Epanchin household. Only Mrs. Epanchin, at the commencement of this period, had announced that she had been "cruelly mistaken in the prince!" and a day or two after, she had added, evidently alluding to him, but not mentioning his name, that it was an unalterable characteristic of hers to be mistaken in people. Then once more, ten days later, after some passage of arms with one of her daughters, she had remarked sententiously. "We have had enough of mistakes. I shall be more careful in future!" However, it was impossible to avoid remarking that there was some sense of oppression in the household—something unspoken, but felt; something strained. All the members of the family wore frowning looks. The general was unusually busy; his family hardly ever saw him.

As to the girls, nothing was said openly, at all events; and probably very little in private. They were proud damsels, and were not always perfectly confidential even among themselves. But they understood each other thoroughly at the first word on all occasions; very often at the first glance, so that there was no need of much talking as a rule.

One fact, at least, would have been perfectly plain to an outsider, had any such person been on the spot; and that was, that the prince had made a very considerable impression upon the family, in spite of the fact that he had but once been inside the house, and then only for a short time. Of course, if analyzed, this impression might

have proved to be nothing more than a feeling of curiosity; but be it what it might, there it undoubtedly was.

Little by little, the rumours spread about town became lost in a maze of uncertainty. It was said that some foolish young prince, name unknown, had suddenly come into possession of a gigantic fortune, and had married a French ballet dancer. This was contradicted, and the rumour circulated that it was a young merchant who had come into the enormous fortune and married the great ballet dancer, and that at the wedding the drunken young fool had burned seventy thousand roubles at a candle out of pure bravado.

However, all these rumours soon died down, to which circumstance certain facts largely contributed. For instance, the whole of the Rogojin troop had departed, with him at their head, for Moscow. This was exactly a week after a dreadful orgy at the Ekaterinhof gardens, where Nastasia Philipovna had been present. It became known that after this orgy Nastasia Philipovna had entirely disappeared, and that she had since been traced to Moscow; so that the exodus of the Rogojin band was found consistent with this report.

There were rumours current as to Gania, too; but circumstances soon contradicted these. He had fallen seriously ill, and his illness precluded his appearance in society, and even at business, for over a month. As soon as he had recovered, however, he threw up his situation in the public company under General Epanchin's direction, for some unknown reason, and the post was given to another. He never went near the Epanchins' house at all, and was exceedingly irritable and depressed.

Varvara Ardalionovna married Ptitsin this winter, and it was said that the fact of Gania's retirement from business was the ultimate cause of the marriage, since Gania was now not only unable to support his family, but even required help himself.

We may mention that Gania was no longer mentioned in the Epanchin household any more than the prince was; but that a certain circumstance in connection with the fatal evening at Nastasia's house became known to the general, and, in fact, to all the family the very next day. This fact was that Gania had come home that night, but had refused to go to bed. He had awaited the prince's return from Ekaterinhof with feverish impatience.

On the latter's arrival, at six in the morning, Gania had gone to him in his room, bringing with him the singed packet of money, which he had insisted that the prince should return to Nastasia Philipovna without delay. It was said that when Gania entered the prince's room, he came with anything but friendly feelings, and in a

condition of despair and misery; but that after a short conversation, he had stayed on for a couple of hours with him, sobbing continuously and bitterly the whole time. They had parted upon terms of cordial friendship.

The Epanchins heard about this, as well as about the episode at Nastasia Philipovna's. It was strange, perhaps, that the facts should become so quickly, and fairly accurately, known. As far as Gania was concerned, it might have been supposed that the news had come through Varvara Ardalionovna, who had suddenly become a frequent visitor of the Epanchin girls, greatly to their mother's surprise. But though Varvara had seen fit, for some reason, to make friends with them, it was not likely that she would have talked to them about her brother. She had plenty of pride, in spite of the fact that in thus acting she was seeking intimacy with people who had practically shown her brother the door. She and the Epanchin girls had been acquainted in childhood, although of late they had met but rarely. Even now Varvara hardly ever appeared in the drawing-room, but would slip in by a back way. Lizabetha Prokofievna, who disliked Varvara, although she had a great respect for her mother, was much annoyed by this sudden intimacy, and put it down to the general "contrariness" of her daughters, who were "always on the lookout for some new way of opposing her." Nevertheless, Varvara continued her visits.

A month after Muishkin's departure, Mrs. Epanchin received a letter from her old friend Princess Bielokonski (who had lately left for Moscow), which letter put her into the greatest good humour. She did not divulge its contents either to her daughters or the general, but her conduct towards the former became affectionate in the extreme. She even made some sort of confession to them, but they were unable to understand what it was about. She actually relaxed towards the general a little—he had been long disgraced—and though she managed to quarrel with them all the next day, yet she soon came round, and from her general behaviour it was to be concluded that she had had good news of some sort, which she would like, but could not make up her mind, to disclose.

However, a week later she received another letter from the same source, and at last resolved to speak.

She solemnly announced that she had heard from old Princess Bielokonski, who had given her most comforting news about "that queer young prince." Her friend had hunted him up, and found that all was going well with him. He had since called in person upon her, making an extremely favourable impression, for the princess had received him each day since, and had introduced him into several good houses.

The girls could see that their mother concealed a great deal from them, and left out large pieces of the letter in reading it to them.

However, the ice was broken, and it suddenly became possible to mention the prince's name again. And again it became evident how very strong was the impression the young man had made in the household by his one visit there. Mrs. Epanchin was surprised at the effect which the news from Moscow had upon the girls, and they were no less surprised that after solemnly remarking that her most striking characteristic was "being mistaken in people" she should have troubled to obtain for the prince the favour and protection of so powerful an old lady as the Princess Bielokonski. As soon as the ice was thus broken, the general lost no time in showing that he, too, took the greatest interest in the subject. He admitted that he was interested, but said that it was merely in the business side of the question. It appeared that, in the interests of the prince, he had made arrangements in Moscow for a careful watch to be kept upon the prince's business affairs, and especially upon Salaskin. All that had been said as to the prince being an undoubted heir to a fortune turned out to be perfectly true; but the fortune proved to be much smaller than was at first reported. The estate was considerably encumbered with debts; creditors turned up on all sides, and the prince, in spite of all advice and entreaty, insisted upon managing all matters of claim himself—which, of course, meant satisfying everybody all round, although half the claims were absolutely fraudulent.

Mrs. Epanchin confirmed all this. She said the princess had written to much the same effect, and added that there was no curing a fool. But it was plain, from her expression of face, how strongly she approved of this particular young fool's doings. In conclusion, the general observed that his wife took as great an interest in the prince as though he were her own son; and that she had commenced to be especially affectionate towards Aglaya was a self-evident fact.

All this caused the general to look grave and important. But, alas! this agreeable state of affairs very soon changed once more.

A couple of weeks went by, and suddenly the general and his wife were once more gloomy and silent, and the ice was as firm as ever. The fact was, the general, who had heard first, how Nastasia Philipovna had fled to Moscow and had been discovered there by Rogojin; that she had then disappeared once more, and been found again by Rogojin, and how after that she had almost promised to marry him, now received news that she had once more disappeared, almost on the very day fixed for her wedding, flying somewhere into the interior of Russia this time, and that Prince

Muishkin had left all his affairs in the hands of Salaskin and disappeared also—but whether he was with Nastasia, or had only set off in search of her, was unknown.

Lizabetha Prokofievna received confirmatory news from the princess—and alas, two months after the prince's first departure from St. Petersburg, darkness and mystery once more enveloped his whereabouts and actions, and in the Epanchin family the ice of silence once more formed over the subject. Varia, however, informed the girls of what had happened, she having received the news from Ptitsin, who generally knew more than most people.

To make an end, we may say that there were many changes in the Epanchin household in the spring, so that it was not difficult to forget the prince, who sent no news of himself.

The Epanchin family had at last made up their minds to spend the summer abroad, all except the general, who could not waste time in “travelling for enjoyment,” of course. This arrangement was brought about by the persistence of the girls, who insisted that they were never allowed to go abroad because their parents were too anxious to marry them off. Perhaps their parents had at last come to the conclusion that husbands might be found abroad, and that a summer's travel might bear fruit. The marriage between Alexandra and Totski had been broken off. Since the prince's departure from St. Petersburg no more had been said about it; the subject had been dropped without ceremony, much to the joy of Mrs. General, who, announced that she was “ready to cross herself with both hands” in gratitude for the escape. The general, however, regretted Totski for a long while. “Such a fortune!” he sighed, “and such a good, easy-going fellow!”

After a time it became known that Totski had married a French marquise, and was to be carried off by her to Paris, and then to Brittany.

“Oh, well,” thought the general, “he's lost to us for good, now.”

So the Epanchins prepared to depart for the summer.

But now another circumstance occurred, which changed all the plans once more, and again the intended journey was put off, much to the delight of the general and his spouse.

A certain Prince S—— arrived in St. Petersburg from Moscow, an eminent and honourable young man. He was one of those active persons who always find some good work with which to employ themselves. Without forcing himself upon the public

notice, modest and unobtrusive, this young prince was concerned with much that happened in the world in general.

He had served, at first, in one of the civil departments, had then attended to matters connected with the local government of provincial towns, and had of late been a corresponding member of several important scientific societies. He was a man of excellent family and solid means, about thirty-five years of age.

Prince S—— made the acquaintance of the general's family, and Adelaida, the second girl, made a great impression upon him. Towards the spring he proposed to her, and she accepted him. The general and his wife were delighted. The journey abroad was put off, and the wedding was fixed for a day not very distant.

The trip abroad might have been enjoyed later on by Mrs. Epanchin and her two remaining daughters, but for another circumstance.

It so happened that Prince S—— introduced a distant relation of his own into the Epanchin family—one Evgenie Pavlovitch, a young officer of about twenty-eight years of age, whose conquests among the ladies in Moscow had been proverbial. This young gentleman no sooner set eyes on Aglaya than he became a frequent visitor at the house. He was witty, well-educated, and extremely wealthy, as the general very soon discovered. His past reputation was the only thing against him.

Nothing was said; there were not even any hints dropped; but still, it seemed better to the parents to say nothing more about going abroad this season, at all events. Aglaya herself perhaps was of a different opinion.

All this happened just before the second appearance of our hero upon the scene.

By this time, to judge from appearances, poor Prince Muishkin had been quite forgotten in St. Petersburg. If he had appeared suddenly among his acquaintances, he would have been received as one from the skies; but we must just glance at one more fact before we conclude this preface.

Colia Ivolgin, for some time after the prince's departure, continued his old life. That is, he went to school, looked after his father, helped Varia in the house, and ran her errands, and went frequently to see his friend, Hippolyte.

The lodgers had disappeared very quickly—Ferdishenko soon after the events at Nastasia Philipovna's, while the prince went to Moscow, as we know. Gania and his mother went to live with Varia and Ptitsin immediately after the latter's wedding, while the general was housed in a debtor's prison by reason of certain IOU's given to the captain's widow under the impression that they would never be formally used against

him. This unkind action much surprised poor Ardalion Alexandrovitch, the victim, as he called himself, of an “unbounded trust in the nobility of the human heart.”

When he signed those notes of hand he never dreamt that they would be a source of future trouble. The event showed that he was mistaken. “Trust in anyone after this! Have the least confidence in man or woman!” he cried in bitter tones, as he sat with his new friends in prison, and recounted to them his favourite stories of the siege of Kars, and the resuscitated soldier. On the whole, he accommodated himself very well to his new position. Ptitsin and Varia declared that he was in the right place, and Gania was of the same opinion. The only person who deplored his fate was poor Nina Alexandrovna, who wept bitter tears over him, to the great surprise of her household, and, though always in feeble health, made a point of going to see him as often as possible.

Since the general’s “mishap,” as Colia called it, and the marriage of his sister, the boy had quietly possessed himself of far more freedom. His relations saw little of him, for he rarely slept at home. He made many new friends; and was moreover, a frequent visitor at the debtor’s prison, to which he invariably accompanied his mother. Varia, who used to be always correcting him, never spoke to him now on the subject of his frequent absences, and the whole household was surprised to see Gania, in spite of his depression, on quite friendly terms with his brother. This was something new, for Gania had been wont to look upon Colia as a kind of errand-boy, treating him with contempt, threatening to “pull his ears,” and in general driving him almost wild with irritation. It seemed now that Gania really needed his brother, and the latter, for his part, felt as if he could forgive Gania much since he had returned the hundred thousand roubles offered to him by Nastasia Philipovna. Three months after the departure of the prince, the Ivolgin family discovered that Colia had made acquaintance with the Epanchins, and was on very friendly terms with the daughters. Varia heard of it first, though Colia had not asked her to introduce him. Little by little the family grew quite fond of him. Madame Epanchin at first looked on him with disdain, and received him coldly, but in a short time he grew to please her, because, as she said, he “was candid and no flatterer”—a very true description. From the first he put himself on an equality with his new friends, and though he sometimes read newspapers and books to the mistress of the house, it was simply because he liked to be useful.

One day, however, he and Lizabetha Prokofievna quarrelled seriously about the “woman question,” in the course of a lively discussion on that burning subject. He told her that she was a tyrant, and that he would never set foot in her house again. It may

seem incredible, but a day or two after, Madame Epanchin sent a servant with a note begging him to return, and Colia, without standing on his dignity, did so at once.

Aglaya was the only one of the family whose good graces he could not gain, and who always spoke to him haughtily, but it so happened that the boy one day succeeded in giving the proud maiden a surprise.

It was about Easter, when, taking advantage of a momentary tête-à-tête Colia handed Aglaya a letter, remarking that he “had orders to deliver it to her privately.” She stared at him in amazement, but he did not wait to hear what she had to say, and went out. Aglaya broke the seal, and read as follows:

“Once you did me the honour of giving me your confidence. Perhaps you have quite forgotten me now! How is it that I am writing to you? I do not know; but I am conscious of an irresistible desire to remind you of my existence, especially you. How many times I have needed all three of you; but only you have dwelt always in my mind’s eye. I need you—I need you very much. I will not write about myself. I have nothing to tell you. But I long for you to be happy. *Are you happy?* That is all I wished to say to you—
Your brother,

“Pr. L. Muishkin.”

On reading this short and disconnected note, Aglaya suddenly blushed all over, and became very thoughtful.

It would be difficult to describe her thoughts at that moment. One of them was, “Shall I show it to anyone?” But she was ashamed to show it. So she ended by hiding it in her table drawer, with a very strange, ironical smile upon her lips.

Next day, she took it out, and put it into a large book, as she usually did with papers which she wanted to be able to find easily. She laughed when, about a week later, she happened to notice the name of the book, and saw that it was Don Quixote, but it would be difficult to say exactly why.

I cannot say, either, whether she showed the letter to her sisters.

But when she had read it herself once more, it suddenly struck her that surely that conceited boy, Colia, had not been the one chosen correspondent of the prince all this while. She determined to ask him, and did so with an exaggerated show of carelessness. He informed her haughtily that though he had given the prince his permanent address when the latter left town, and had offered his services, the prince had never before given him any commission to perform, nor had he written until the following lines arrived, with Aglaya’s letter. Aglaya took the note, and read it.

“DEAR COLIA,—Please be so kind as to give the enclosed sealed letter to Aglaya Ivanovna. Keep well—Ever your loving,

“Pr. L. Muishkin.”

“It seems absurd to trust a little pepper-box like you,” said Aglaya, as she returned the note, and walked past the “pepper-box” with an expression of great contempt.

This was more than Colia could bear. He had actually borrowed Gania’s new green tie for the occasion, without saying why he wanted it, in order to impress her. He was very deeply mortified.

II.

It was the beginning of June, and for a whole week the weather in St. Petersburg had been magnificent. The Epanchins had a luxurious country-house at Pavlofsk, [One of the fashionable summer resorts near St. Petersburg.] and to this spot Mrs. Epanchin determined to proceed without further delay. In a couple of days all was ready, and the family had left town. A day or two after this removal to Pavlofsk, Prince Muishkin arrived in St. Petersburg by the morning train from Moscow. No one met him; but, as he stepped out of the carriage, he suddenly became aware of two strangely glowing eyes fixed upon him from among the crowd that met the train. On endeavouring to re-discover the eyes, and see to whom they belonged, he could find nothing to guide him. It must have been a hallucination. But the disagreeable impression remained, and without this, the prince was sad and thoughtful already, and seemed to be much preoccupied.

His cab took him to a small and bad hotel near the Litaynaya. Here he engaged a couple of rooms, dark and badly furnished. He washed and changed, and hurriedly left the hotel again, as though anxious to waste no time. Anyone who now saw him for the first time since he left Petersburg would judge that he had improved vastly so far as his exterior was concerned. His clothes certainly were very different; they were more fashionable, perhaps even too much so, and anyone inclined to mockery might have found something to smile at in his appearance. But what is there that people will not smile at?

The prince took a cab and drove to a street near the Nativity, where he soon discovered the house he was seeking. It was a small wooden villa, and he was struck by its attractive and clean appearance; it stood in a pleasant little garden, full of flowers. The windows looking on the street were open, and the sound of a voice, reading aloud or making a speech, came through them. It rose at times to a shout, and was interrupted occasionally by bursts of laughter.

Prince Muishkin entered the court-yard, and ascended the steps. A cook with her sleeves turned up to the elbows opened the door. The visitor asked if Mr. Lebedeff were at home.

“He is in there,” said she, pointing to the salon.

The room had a blue wall-paper, and was well, almost pretentiously, furnished, with its round table, its divan, and its bronze clock under a glass shade. There was a narrow pier-glass against the wall, and a chandelier adorned with lustres hung by a bronze chain from the ceiling.

When the prince entered, Lebedeff was standing in the middle of the room, his back to the door. He was in his shirt-sleeves, on account of the extreme heat, and he seemed to have just reached the peroration of his speech, and was impressively beating his breast.

His audience consisted of a youth of about fifteen years of age with a clever face, who had a book in his hand, though he was not reading; a young lady of twenty, in deep mourning, stood near him with an infant in her arms; another girl of thirteen, also in black, was laughing loudly, her mouth wide open; and on the sofa lay a handsome young man, with black hair and eyes, and a suspicion of beard and whiskers. He frequently interrupted the speaker and argued with him, to the great delight of the others.

“Lukian Timofeyovitch! Lukian Timofeyovitch! Here’s someone to see you! Look here!... a gentleman to speak to you!... Well, it’s not my fault!” and the cook turned and went away red with anger.

Lebedeff started, and at sight of the prince stood like a statue for a moment. Then he moved up to him with an ingratiating smile, but stopped short again.

“Prince! ex-ex-excellency!” he stammered. Then suddenly he ran towards the girl with the infant, a movement so unexpected by her that she staggered and fell back, but next moment he was threatening the other child, who was standing, still laughing, in the doorway. She screamed, and ran towards the kitchen. Lebedeff stamped his foot angrily; then, seeing the prince regarding him with amazement, he murmured apologetically—“Pardon to show respect!... he-he!”

“You are quite wrong...” began the prince.

“At once... at once... in one moment!”

He rushed like a whirlwind from the room, and Muishkin looked inquiringly at the others.

They were all laughing, and the guest joined in the chorus.

“He has gone to get his coat,” said the boy.

“How annoying!” exclaimed the prince. “I thought... Tell me, is he...”

“You think he is drunk?” cried the young man on the sofa. “Not in the least. He’s only had three or four small glasses, perhaps five; but what is that? The usual thing!”

As the prince opened his mouth to answer, he was interrupted by the girl, whose sweet face wore an expression of absolute frankness.

“He never drinks much in the morning; if you have come to talk business with him, do it now. It is the best time. He sometimes comes back drunk in the evening; but just now he passes the greater part of the evening in tears, and reads passages of Holy Scripture aloud, because our mother died five weeks ago.”

“No doubt he ran off because he did not know what to say to you,” said the youth on the divan. “I bet he is trying to cheat you, and is thinking how best to do it.”

Just then Lebedeff returned, having put on his coat.

“Five weeks!” said he, wiping his eyes. “Only five weeks! Poor orphans!”

“But why wear a coat in holes,” asked the girl, “when your new one is hanging behind the door? Did you not see it?”

“Hold your tongue, dragon-fly!” he scolded. “What a plague you are!” He stamped his foot irritably, but she only laughed, and answered:

“Are you trying to frighten me? I am not Tania, you know, and I don’t intend to run away. Look, you are waking Lubotchka, and she will have convulsions again. Why do you shout like that?”

“Well, well! I won’t again,” said the master of the house, his anxiety getting the better of his temper. He went up to his daughter, and looked at the child in her arms, anxiously making the sign of the cross over her three times. “God bless her! God bless her!” he cried with emotion. “This little creature is my daughter Luboff,” addressing the prince. “My wife, Helena, died—at her birth; and this is my big daughter Vera, in mourning, as you see; and this, this, oh, this,” pointing to the young man on the divan...

“Well, go on! never mind me!” mocked the other. “Don’t be afraid!”

“Excellency! Have you read that account of the murder of the Zemarin family, in the newspaper?” cried Lebedeff, all of a sudden.

“Yes,” said Muishkin, with some surprise.

“Well, that is the murderer! It is he—in fact—”

“What do you mean?” asked the visitor.

“I am speaking allegorically, of course; but he will be the murderer of a Zemarin family in the future. He is getting ready. ...”

They all laughed, and the thought crossed the prince’s mind that perhaps Lebedeff was really trifling in this way because he foresaw inconvenient questions, and wanted to gain time.

“He is a traitor! a conspirator!” shouted Lebedeff, who seemed to have lost all control over himself. “A monster! a slanderer! Ought I to treat him as a nephew, the son of my sister Anisia?”

“Oh! do be quiet! You must be drunk! He has taken it into his head to play the lawyer, prince, and he practices speechifying, and is always repeating his eloquent pleadings to his children. And who do you think was his last client? An old woman who had been robbed of five hundred roubles, her all, by some rogue of a usurer, besought him to take up her case, instead of which he defended the usurer himself, a Jew named Zeidler, because this Jew promised to give him fifty roubles....”

“It was to be fifty if I won the case, only five if I lost,” interrupted Lebedeff, speaking in a low tone, a great contrast to his earlier manner.

“Well! naturally he came to grief: the law is not administered as it used to be, and he only got laughed at for his pains. But he was much pleased with himself in spite of that. ‘Most learned judge!’ said he, ‘picture this unhappy man, crippled by age and infirmities, who gains his living by honourable toil—picture him, I repeat, robbed of his all, of his last mouthful; remember, I entreat you, the words of that learned legislator, “Let mercy and justice alike rule the courts of law.”’ Now, would you believe it, excellency, every morning he recites this speech to us from beginning to end, exactly as he spoke it before the magistrate. To-day we have heard it for the fifth time. He was just starting again when you arrived, so much does he admire it. He is now preparing to undertake another case. I think, by the way, that you are Prince Muishkin? Colia tells me you are the cleverest man he has ever known....”

"The cleverest in the world," interrupted his uncle hastily.

"I do not pay much attention to that opinion," continued the young man calmly. "Colia is very fond of you, but he," pointing to Lebedeff, "is flattering you. I can assure you I have no intention of flattering you, or anyone else, but at least you have some common-sense. Well, will you judge between us? Shall we ask the prince to act as arbitrator?" he went on, addressing his uncle.

"I am so glad you chanced to come here, prince."

"I agree," said Lebedeff, firmly, looking round involuntarily at his daughter, who had come nearer, and was listening attentively to the conversation.

"What is it all about?" asked the prince, frowning. His head ached, and he felt sure that Lebedeff was trying to cheat him in some way, and only talking to put off the explanation that he had come for.

"I will tell you all the story. I am his nephew; he did speak the truth there, although he is generally telling lies. I am at the University, and have not yet finished my course. I mean to do so, and I shall, for I have a determined character. I must, however, find something to do for the present, and therefore I have got employment on the railway at twenty-four roubles a month. I admit that my uncle has helped me once or twice before. Well, I had twenty roubles in my pocket, and I gambled them away. Can you believe that I should be so low, so base, as to lose money in that way?"

"And the man who won it is a rogue, a rogue whom you ought not to have paid!" cried Lebedeff.

"Yes, he is a rogue, but I was obliged to pay him," said the young man. "As to his being a rogue, he is assuredly that, and I am not saying it because he beat you. He is an ex-lieutenant, prince, dismissed from the service, a teacher of boxing, and one of Rogojin's followers. They are all lounging about the pavements now that Rogojin has turned them off. Of course, the worst of it is that, knowing he was a rascal, and a card-sharper, I none the less played palki with him, and risked my last rouble. To tell the truth, I thought to myself, 'If I lose, I will go to my uncle, and I am sure he will not refuse to help me.' Now that was base—cowardly and base!"

"That is so," observed Lebedeff quietly; "cowardly and base."

"Well, wait a bit, before you begin to triumph," said the nephew viciously; for the words seemed to irritate him. "He is delighted! I came to him here and told him everything: I acted honourably, for I did not excuse myself. I spoke most severely of my conduct, as everyone here can witness. But I must smarten myself up before I take up

my new post, for I am really like a tramp. Just look at my boots! I cannot possibly appear like this, and if I am not at the bureau at the time appointed, the job will be given to someone else; and I shall have to try for another. Now I only beg for fifteen roubles, and I give my word that I will never ask him for anything again. I am also ready to promise to repay my debt in three months' time, and I will keep my word, even if I have to live on bread and water. My salary will amount to seventy-five roubles in three months. The sum I now ask, added to what I have borrowed already, will make a total of about thirty-five roubles, so you see I shall have enough to pay him and confound him! if he wants interest, he shall have that, too! Haven't I always paid back the money he lent me before? Why should he be so mean now? He grudges my having paid that lieutenant; there can be no other reason! That's the kind he is—a dog in the manger!"

"And he won't go away!" cried Lebedeff. "He has installed himself here, and here he remains!"

"I have told you already, that I will not go away until I have got what I ask. Why are you smiling, prince? You look as if you disapproved of me."

"I am not smiling, but I really think you are in the wrong, somewhat," replied Muishkin, reluctantly.

"Don't shuffle! Say plainly that you think that I am quite wrong, without any 'somewhat'! Why 'somewhat'?"

"I will say you are quite wrong, if you wish."

"If I wish! That's good, I must say! Do you think I am deceived as to the flagrant impropriety of my conduct? I am quite aware that his money is his own, and that my action—is much like an attempt at extortion. But you—you don't know what life is! If people don't learn by experience, they never understand. They must be taught. My intentions are perfectly honest; on my conscience he will lose nothing, and I will pay back the money with interest. Added to which he has had the moral satisfaction of seeing me disgraced. What does he want more? and what is he good for if he never helps anyone? Look what he does himself! just ask him about his dealings with others, how he deceives people! How did he manage to buy this house? You may cut off my head if he has not let you in for something—and if he is not trying to cheat you again. You are smiling. You don't believe me?"

"It seems to me that all this has nothing to do with your affairs," remarked the prince.

"I have lain here now for three days," cried the young man without noticing, "and I have seen a lot! Fancy! he suspects his daughter, that angel, that orphan, my cousin—he

suspects her, and every evening he searches her room, to see if she has a lover hidden in it! He comes here too on tiptoe, creeping softly—oh, so softly—and looks under the sofa—my bed, you know. He is mad with suspicion, and sees a thief in every corner. He runs about all night long; he was up at least seven times last night, to satisfy himself that the windows and doors were barred, and to peep into the oven. That man who appears in court for scoundrels, rushes in here in the night and prays, lying prostrate, banging his head on the ground by the half-hour—and for whom do you think he prays? Who are the sinners figuring in his drunken petitions? I have heard him with my own ears praying for the repose of the soul of the Countess du Barry! Colia heard it too. He is as mad as a March hare!”

“You hear how he slanders me, prince,” said Lebedeff, almost beside himself with rage. “I may be a drunkard, an evil-doer, a thief, but at least I can say one thing for myself. He does not know—how should he, mocker that he is?—that when he came into the world it was I who washed him, and dressed him in his swathing-bands, for my sister Anisia had lost her husband, and was in great poverty. I was very little better off than she, but I sat up night after night with her, and nursed both mother and child; I used to go downstairs and steal wood for them from the house-porter. How often did I sing him to sleep when I was half dead with hunger! In short, I was more than a father to him, and now—now he jeers at me! Even if I did cross myself, and pray for the repose of the soul of the Comtesse du Barry, what does it matter? Three days ago, for the first time in my life, I read her biography in an historical dictionary. Do you know who she was? You there!” addressing his nephew. “Speak! do you know?”

“Of course no one knows anything about her but you,” muttered the young man in a would-be jeering tone.

“She was a Countess who rose from shame to reign like a Queen. An Empress wrote to her, with her own hand, as ‘*Ma chère cousine*.’ At a *lever-du-roi* one morning (do you know what a *lever-du-roi* was?)—a Cardinal, a Papal legate, offered to put on her stockings; a high and holy person like that looked on it as an honour! Did you know this? I see by your expression that you did not! Well, how did she die? Answer!”

“Oh! do stop—you are too absurd!”

“This is how she died. After all this honour and glory, after having been almost a Queen, she was guillotined by that butcher, Samson. She was quite innocent, but it had to be done, for the satisfaction of the fishwives of Paris. She was so terrified, that she did not understand what was happening. But when Samson seized her head, and pushed her under the knife with his foot, she cried out: ‘Wait a moment! wait a moment, monsieur!’ Well, because of that moment of bitter suffering, perhaps the

Saviour will pardon her other faults, for one cannot imagine a greater agony. As I read the story my heart bled for her. And what does it matter to you, little worm, if I implored the Divine mercy for her, great sinner as she was, as I said my evening prayer? I might have done it because I doubted if anyone had ever crossed himself for her sake before. It may be that in the other world she will rejoice to think that a sinner like herself has cried to heaven for the salvation of her soul. Why are you laughing? You believe nothing, atheist! And your story was not even correct! If you had listened to what I was saying, you would have heard that I did not only pray for the Comtesse du Barry. I said, 'Oh Lord! give rest to the soul of that great sinner, the Comtesse du Barry, and to all unhappy ones like her.' You see that is quite a different thing, for how many sinners there are, how many women, who have passed through the trials of this life, are now suffering and groaning in purgatory! I prayed for you, too, in spite of your insolence and impudence, also for your fellows, as it seems that you claim to know how I pray..."

"Oh! that's enough in all conscience! Pray for whom you choose, and the devil take them and you! We have a scholar here; you did not know that, prince?" he continued, with a sneer. "He reads all sorts of books and memoirs now."

"At any rate, your uncle has a kind heart," remarked the prince, who really had to force himself to speak to the nephew, so much did he dislike him.

"Oh, now you are going to praise him! He will be set up! He puts his hand on his heart, and he is delighted! I never said he was a man without heart, but he is a rascal—that's the pity of it. And then, he is addicted to drink, and his mind is unhinged, like that of most people who have taken more than is good for them for years. He loves his children—oh, I know that well enough! He respected my aunt, his late wife... and he even has a sort of affection for me. He has remembered me in his will."

"I shall leave you nothing!" exclaimed his uncle angrily.

"Listen to me, Lebedeff," said the prince in a decided voice, turning his back on the young man. "I know by experience that when you choose, you can be business-like... I have very little time to spare, and if you... By the way—excuse me—what is your Christian name? I have forgotten it."

"Ti-Ti-Timofey."

"And?"

"Lukianovitch."

Everyone in the room began to laugh.

“He is telling lies!” cried the nephew. “Even now he cannot speak the truth. He is not called Timofey Lukianovitch, prince, but Lukian Timofeyovitch. Now do tell us why you must needs lie about it? Lukian or Timofey, it is all the same to you, and what difference can it make to the prince? He tells lies without the least necessity, simply by force of habit, I assure you.”

“Is that true?” said the prince impatiently.

“My name really is Lukian Timofeyovitch,” acknowledged Lebedeff, lowering his eyes, and putting his hand on his heart.

“Well, for God’s sake, what made you say the other?”

“To humble myself,” murmured Lebedeff.

“What on earth do you mean? Oh I if only I knew where Colia was at this moment!” cried the prince, standing up, as if to go.

“I can tell you all about Colia,” said the young man

“Oh! no, no!” said Lebedeff, hurriedly.

“Colia spent the night here, and this morning went after his father, whom you let out of prison by paying his debts—Heaven only knows why! Yesterday the general promised to come and lodge here, but he did not appear. Most probably he slept at the hotel close by. No doubt Colia is there, unless he has gone to Pavlofsk to see the Epanchins. He had a little money, and was intending to go there yesterday. He must be either at the hotel or at Pavlofsk.”

“At Pavlofsk! He is at Pavlofsk, undoubtedly!” interrupted Lebedeff.... “But come—let us go into the garden—we will have coffee there....” And Lebedeff seized the prince’s arm, and led him from the room. They went across the yard, and found themselves in a delightful little garden with the trees already in their summer dress of green, thanks to the unusually fine weather. Lebedeff invited his guest to sit down on a green seat before a table of the same colour fixed in the earth, and took a seat facing him. In a few minutes the coffee appeared, and the prince did not refuse it. The host kept his eyes fixed on Muishkin, with an expression of passionate servility.

“I knew nothing about your home before,” said the prince absently, as if he were thinking of something else.

“Poor orphans,” began Lebedeff, his face assuming a mournful air, but he stopped short, for the other looked at him inattentively, as if he had already forgotten his own

remark. They waited a few minutes in silence, while Lebedeff sat with his eyes fixed mournfully on the young man's face.

"Well!" said the latter, at last rousing himself. "Ah! yes! You know why I came, Lebedeff. Your letter brought me. Speak! Tell me all about it."

The clerk, rather confused, tried to say something, hesitated, began to speak, and again stopped. The prince looked at him gravely.

"I think I understand, Lukian Timofeyovitch: you were not sure that I should come. You did not think I should start at the first word from you, and you merely wrote to relieve your conscience. However, you see now that I have come, and I have had enough of trickery. Give up serving, or trying to serve, two masters. Rogojin has been here these three weeks. Have you managed to sell her to him as you did before? Tell me the truth."

"He discovered everything, the monster... himself....."

"Don't abuse him; though I dare say you have something to complain of..."

"He beat me, he thrashed me unmercifully!" replied Lebedeff vehemently. "He set a dog on me in Moscow, a bloodhound, a terrible beast that chased me all down the street."

"You seem to take me for a child, Lebedeff. Tell me, is it a fact that she left him while they were in Moscow?"

"Yes, it is a fact, and this time, let me tell you, on the very eve of their marriage! It was a question of minutes when she slipped off to Petersburg. She came to me directly she arrived—'Save me, Lukian! find me some refuge, and say nothing to the prince!' She is afraid of you, even more than she is of him, and in that she shows her wisdom!" And Lebedeff slyly put his finger to his brow as he said the last words.

"And now it is you who have brought them together again?"

"Excellency, how could I, how could I prevent it?"

"That will do. I can find out for myself. Only tell me, where is she now? At his house? With him?"

"Oh no! Certainly not! 'I am free,' she says; you know how she insists on that point. 'I am entirely free.' She repeats it over and over again. She is living in Petersburgskaia, with my sister-in-law, as I told you in my letter."

"She is there at this moment?"

“Yes, unless she has gone to Pavlofsk: the fine weather may have tempted her, perhaps, into the country, with Daria Alexeyevna. ‘I am quite free,’ she says. Only yesterday she boasted of her freedom to Nicolai Ardalionovitch—a bad sign,” added Lebedeff, smiling.

“Colia goes to see her often, does he not?”

“He is a strange boy, thoughtless, and inclined to be indiscreet.”

“Is it long since you saw her?”

“I go to see her every day, every day.”

“Then you were there yesterday?”

“N-no: I have not been these three last days.”

“It is a pity you have taken too much wine, Lebedeff I want to ask you something... but...”

“All right! all right! I am not drunk,” replied the clerk, preparing to listen.

“Tell me, how was she when you left her?”

“She is a woman who is seeking...”

“Seeking?”

“She seems always to be searching about, as if she had lost something. The mere idea of her coming marriage disgusts her; she looks on it as an insult. She cares as much for *him* as for a piece of orange-peel—not more. Yet I am much mistaken if she does not look on him with fear and trembling. She forbids his name to be mentioned before her, and they only meet when unavoidable. He understands, well enough! But it must be gone through. She is restless, mocking, deceitful, violent...”

“Deceitful and violent?”

“Yes, violent. I can give you a proof of it. A few days ago she tried to pull my hair because I said something that annoyed her. I tried to soothe her by reading the Apocalypse aloud.”

“What?” exclaimed the prince, thinking he had not heard aright.

“By reading the Apocalypse. The lady has a restless imagination, he-he! She has a liking for conversation on serious subjects, of any kind; in fact they please her so much, that it flatters her to discuss them. Now for fifteen years at least I have studied

the Apocalypse, and she agrees with me in thinking that the present is the epoch represented by the third horse, the black one whose rider holds a measure in his hand. It seems to me that everything is ruled by measure in our century; all men are clamouring for their rights; 'a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny.' But, added to this, men desire freedom of mind and body, a pure heart, a healthy life, and all God's good gifts. Now by pleading their rights alone, they will never attain all this, so the white horse, with his rider Death, comes next, and is followed by Hell. We talked about this matter when we met, and it impressed her very much."

"Do you believe all this?" asked Muishkin, looking curiously at his companion.

"I both believe it and explain it. I am but a poor creature, a beggar, an atom in the scale of humanity. Who has the least respect for Lebedeff? He is a target for all the world, the butt of any fool who chooses to kick him. But in interpreting revelation I am the equal of anyone, great as he may be! Such is the power of the mind and the spirit. I have made a lordly personage tremble, as he sat in his armchair... only by talking to him of things concerning the spirit. Two years ago, on Easter Eve, His Excellency Nil Alexeyovitch, whose subordinate I was then, wished to hear what I had to say, and sent a message by Peter Zakkaritch to ask me to go to his private room. 'They tell me you expound the prophecies relating to Antichrist,' said he, when we were alone. 'Is that so?' 'Yes,' I answered unhesitatingly, and I began to give some comments on the Apostle's allegorical vision. At first he smiled, but when we reached the numerical computations and correspondences, he trembled, and turned pale. Then he begged me to close the book, and sent me away, promising to put my name on the reward list. That took place as I said on the eve of Easter, and eight days later his soul returned to God."

"What?"

"It is the truth. One evening after dinner he stumbled as he stepped out of his carriage. He fell, and struck his head on the curb, and died immediately. He was seventy-three years of age, and had a red face, and white hair; he deluged himself with scent, and was always smiling like a child. Peter Zakkaritch recalled my interview with him, and said, '*you foretold his death.*'"

The prince rose from his seat, and Lebedeff, surprised to see his guest preparing to go so soon, remarked: "You are not interested?" in a respectful tone.

"I am not very well, and my head aches. Doubtless the effect of the journey," replied the prince, frowning.

“You should go into the country,” said Lebedeff timidly.

The prince seemed to be considering the suggestion.

“You see, I am going into the country myself in three days, with my children and belongings. The little one is delicate; she needs change of air; and during our absence this house will be done up. I am going to Pavlofsk.”

“You are going to Pavlofsk too?” asked the prince sharply. “Everybody seems to be going there. Have you a house in that neighbourhood?”

“I don’t know of many people going to Pavlofsk, and as for the house, Ivan Ptitsin has let me one of his villas rather cheaply. It is a pleasant place, lying on a hill surrounded by trees, and one can live there for a mere song. There is good music to be heard, so no wonder it is popular. I shall stay in the lodge. As to the villa itself...”

“Have you let it?”

“N-no—not exactly.”

“Let it to me,” said the prince.

Now this was precisely what Lebedeff had made up his mind to do in the last three minutes. Not that he had any difficulty in finding a tenant; in fact the house was occupied at present by a chance visitor, who had told Lebedeff that he would perhaps take it for the summer months. The clerk knew very well that this “*perhaps*” meant “*certainly*,” but as he thought he could make more out of a tenant like the prince, he felt justified in speaking vaguely about the present inhabitant’s intentions. “This is quite a coincidence,” thought he, and when the subject of price was mentioned, he made a gesture with his hand, as if to waive away a question of so little importance.

“Oh well, as you like!” said Muishkin. “I will think it over. You shall lose nothing!”

They were walking slowly across the garden.

“But if you... I could...” stammered Lebedeff, “if... if you please, prince, tell you something on the subject which would interest you, I am sure.” He spoke in wheedling tones, and wriggled as he walked along.

Muishkin stopped short.

“Daria Alexeyevna also has a villa at Pavlofsk.”

“Well?”

“A certain person is very friendly with her, and intends to visit her pretty often.”

“Well?”

“Aglaya Ivanovna...”

“Oh stop, Lebedeff!” interposed Muishkin, feeling as if he had been touched on an open wound. “That... that has nothing to do with me. I should like to know when you are going to start. The sooner the better as far as I am concerned, for I am at an hotel.”

They had left the garden now, and were crossing the yard on their way to the gate.

“Well, leave your hotel at once and come here; then we can all go together to Pavlofsk the day after tomorrow.”

“I will think about it,” said the prince dreamily, and went off.

The clerk stood looking after his guest, struck by his sudden absent-mindedness. He had not even remembered to say goodbye, and Lebedeff was the more surprised at the omission, as he knew by experience how courteous the prince usually was.

III.

It was now close on twelve o'clock.

The prince knew that if he called at the Epanchins' now he would only find the general, and that the latter might probably carry him straight off to Pavlofsk with him; whereas there was one visit he was most anxious to make without delay.

So at the risk of missing General Epanchin altogether, and thus postponing his visit to Pavlofsk for a day, at least, the prince decided to go and look for the house he desired to find.

The visit he was about to pay was, in some respects, a risky one. He was in two minds about it, but knowing that the house was in the Gorohovaya, not far from the Sadovaya, he determined to go in that direction, and to try to make up his mind on the way.

Arrived at the point where the Gorohovaya crosses the Sadovaya, he was surprised to find how excessively agitated he was. He had no idea that his heart could beat so painfully.

One house in the Gorohovaya began to attract his attention long before he reached it, and the prince remembered afterwards that he had said to himself: “That is the house, I'm sure of it.” He came up to it quite curious to discover whether he had guessed right, and felt that he would be disagreeably impressed to find that he had actually done so. The house was a large gloomy-looking structure, without the slightest claim

to architectural beauty, in colour a dirty green. There are a few of these old houses, built towards the end of the last century, still standing in that part of St. Petersburg, and showing little change from their original form and colour. They are solidly built, and are remarkable for the thickness of their walls, and for the fewness of their windows, many of which are covered by gratings. On the ground-floor there is usually a money-changer's shop, and the owner lives over it. Without as well as within, the houses seem inhospitable and mysterious—an impression which is difficult to explain, unless it has something to do with the actual architectural style. These houses are almost exclusively inhabited by the merchant class.

Arrived at the gate, the prince looked up at the legend over it, which ran:

“House of Rogojin, hereditary and honourable citizen.”

He hesitated no longer; but opened the glazed door at the bottom of the outer stairs and made his way up to the second storey. The place was dark and gloomy-looking; the walls of the stone staircase were painted a dull red. Rogojin and his mother and brother occupied the whole of the second floor. The servant who opened the door to Muishkin led him, without taking his name, through several rooms and up and down many steps until they arrived at a door, where he knocked.

Parfen Rogojin opened the door himself.

On seeing the prince he became deadly white, and apparently fixed to the ground, so that he was more like a marble statue than a human being. The prince had expected some surprise, but Rogojin evidently considered his visit an impossible and miraculous event. He stared with an expression almost of terror, and his lips twisted into a bewildered smile.

“Parfen! perhaps my visit is ill-timed. I—I can go away again if you like,” said Muishkin at last, rather embarrassed.

“No, no; it's all right, come in,” said Parfen, recollecting himself.

They were evidently on quite familiar terms. In Moscow they had had many occasions of meeting; indeed, some few of those meetings were but too vividly impressed upon their memories. They had not met now, however, for three months.

The deathlike pallor, and a sort of slight convulsion about the lips, had not left Rogojin's face. Though he welcomed his guest, he was still obviously much disturbed. As he invited the prince to sit down near the table, the latter happened to turn towards him, and was startled by the strange expression on his face. A painful recollection flashed into his mind. He stood for a time, looking straight at Rogojin, whose eyes

seemed to blaze like fire. At last Rogojin smiled, though he still looked agitated and shaken.

“What are you staring at me like that for?” he muttered. “Sit down.”

The prince took a chair.

“Parfen,” he said, “tell me honestly, did you know that I was coming to Petersburg or no?”

“Oh, I supposed you were coming,” the other replied, smiling sarcastically, “and I was right in my supposition, you see; but how was I to know that you would come *today*?”

A certain strangeness and impatience in his manner impressed the prince very forcibly.

“And if you had known that I was coming today, why be so irritated about it?” he asked, in quiet surprise.

“Why did you ask me?”

“Because when I jumped out of the train this morning, two eyes glared at me just as yours did a moment since.”

“Ha! and whose eyes may they have been?” said Rogojin, suspiciously. It seemed to the prince that he was trembling.

“I don’t know; I thought it was a hallucination. I often have hallucinations nowadays. I feel just as I did five years ago when my fits were about to come on.”

“Well, perhaps it was a hallucination, I don’t know,” said Parfen.

He tried to give the prince an affectionate smile, and it seemed to the latter as though in this smile of his something had broken, and that he could not mend it, try as he would.

“Shall you go abroad again then?” he asked, and suddenly added, “Do you remember how we came up in the train from Pskoff together? You and your cloak and leggings, eh?”

And Rogojin burst out laughing, this time with unconcealed malice, as though he were glad that he had been able to find an opportunity for giving vent to it.

“Have you quite taken up your quarters here?” asked the prince

“Yes, I’m at home. Where else should I go to?”

“We haven’t met for some time. Meanwhile I have heard things about you which I should not have believed to be possible.”

“What of that? People will say anything,” said Rogojin drily.

“At all events, you’ve disbanded your troop—and you are living in your own house instead of being fast and loose about the place; that’s all very good. Is this house all yours, or joint property?”

“It is my mother’s. You get to her apartments by that passage.”

“Where’s your brother?”

“In the other wing.”

“Is he married?”

“Widower. Why do you want to know all this?”

The prince looked at him, but said nothing. He had suddenly relapsed into musing, and had probably not heard the question at all. Rogojin did not insist upon an answer, and there was silence for a few moments.

“I guessed which was your house from a hundred yards off,” said the prince at last.

“Why so?”

“I don’t quite know. Your house has the aspect of yourself and all your family; it bears the stamp of the Rogojin life; but ask me why I think so, and I can tell you nothing. It is nonsense, of course. I am nervous about this kind of thing troubling me so much. I had never before imagined what sort of a house you would live in, and yet no sooner did I set eyes on this one than I said to myself that it must be yours.”

“Really!” said Rogojin vaguely, not taking in what the prince meant by his rather obscure remarks.

The room they were now sitting in was a large one, lofty but dark, well furnished, principally with writing-tables and desks covered with papers and books. A wide sofa covered with red morocco evidently served Rogojin for a bed. On the table beside which the prince had been invited to seat himself lay some books; one containing a marker where the reader had left off, was a volume of Solovieff’s History. Some oil-paintings in worn gilded frames hung on the walls, but it was impossible to make out what subjects they represented, so blackened were they by smoke and age. One, a life-sized portrait, attracted the prince’s attention. It showed a man of about fifty, wearing a long riding-coat of German cut. He had two medals on his breast; his beard

was white, short and thin; his face yellow and wrinkled, with a sly, suspicious expression in the eyes.

“That is your father, is it not?” asked the prince.

“Yes, it is,” replied Rogojin with an unpleasant smile, as if he had expected his guest to ask the question, and then to make some disagreeable remark.

“Was he one of the Old Believers?”

“No, he went to church, but to tell the truth he really preferred the old religion. This was his study and is now mine. Why did you ask if he were an Old Believer?”

“Are you going to be married here?”

“Ye-yes!” replied Rogojin, starting at the unexpected question.

“Soon?”

“You know yourself it does not depend on me.”

“Parfen, I am not your enemy, and I do not intend to oppose your intentions in any way. I repeat this to you now just as I said it to you once before on a very similar occasion. When you were arranging for your projected marriage in Moscow, I did not interfere with you—you know I did not. That first time she fled to me from you, from the very altar almost, and begged me to ‘save her from you.’ Afterwards she ran away from me again, and you found her and arranged your marriage with her once more; and now, I hear, she has run away from you and come to Petersburg. Is it true? Lebedeff wrote me to this effect, and that’s why I came here. That you had once more arranged matters with Nastasia Philipovna I only learned last night in the train from a friend of yours, Zaleshoff—if you wish to know.

“I confess I came here with an object. I wished to persuade Nastasia to go abroad for her health; she requires it. Both mind and body need a change badly. I did not intend to take her abroad myself. I was going to arrange for her to go without me. Now I tell you honestly, Parfen, if it is true that all is made up between you, I will not so much as set eyes upon her, and I will never even come to see you again.

“You know quite well that I am telling the truth, because I have always been frank with you. I have never concealed my own opinion from you. I have always told you that I consider a marriage between you and her would be ruin to her. You would also be ruined, and perhaps even more hopelessly. If this marriage were to be broken off again, I admit I should be greatly pleased; but at the same time I have not the slightest intention of trying to part you. You may be quite easy in your mind, and you need not

suspect me. You know yourself whether I was ever really your rival or not, even when she ran away and came to me.

“There, you are laughing at me—I know why you laugh. It is perfectly true that we lived apart from one another all the time, in different towns. I told you before that I did not love her with love, but with pity! You said then that you understood me; did you really understand me or not? What hatred there is in your eyes at this moment! I came to relieve your mind, because you are dear to me also. I love you very much, Parfen; and now I shall go away and never come back again. Goodbye.”

The prince rose.

“Stay a little,” said Parfen, not leaving his chair and resting his head on his right hand. “I haven’t seen you for a long time.”

The prince sat down again. Both were silent for a few moments.

“When you are not with me I hate you, Lef Nicolaievitch. I have loathed you every day of these three months since I last saw you. By heaven I have!” said Rogojin. “I could have poisoned you at any minute. Now, you have been with me but a quarter of an hour, and all my malice seems to have melted away, and you are as dear to me as ever. Stay here a little longer.”

“When I am with you you trust me; but as soon as my back is turned you suspect me,” said the prince, smiling, and trying to hide his emotion.

“I trust your voice, when I hear you speak. I quite understand that you and I cannot be put on a level, of course.”

“Why did you add that?—There! Now you are cross again,” said the prince, wondering.

“We were not asked, you see. We were made different, with different tastes and feelings, without being consulted. You say you love her with pity. I have no pity for her. She hates me—that’s the plain truth of the matter. I dream of her every night, and always that she is laughing at me with another man. And so she does laugh at me. She thinks no more of marrying me than if she were changing her shoe. Would you believe it, I haven’t seen her for five days, and I daren’t go near her. She asks me what I come for, as if she were not content with having disgraced me—”

“Disgraced you! How?”

“Just as though you didn’t know! Why, she ran away from me, and went to you. You admitted it yourself, just now.”

“But surely you do not believe that she...”

“That she did not disgrace me at Moscow with that officer, Zemtuznikoff? I know for certain she did, after having fixed our marriage-day herself!”

“Impossible!” cried the prince.

“I know it for a fact,” replied Rogojin, with conviction.

“It is not like her, you say? My friend, that’s absurd. Perhaps such an act would horrify her, if she were with you, but it is quite different where I am concerned. She looks on me as vermin. Her affair with Keller was simply to make a laughing-stock of me. You don’t know what a fool she made of me in Moscow; and the money I spent over her! The money! the money!”

“And you can marry her now, Parfen! What will come of it all?” said the prince, with dread in his voice.

Rogojin gazed back gloomily, and with a terrible expression in his eyes, but said nothing.

“I haven’t been to see her for five days,” he repeated, after a slight pause. “I’m afraid of being turned out. She says she’s still her own mistress, and may turn me off altogether, and go abroad. She told me this herself,” he said, with a peculiar glance at Muishkin. “I think she often does it merely to frighten me. She is always laughing at me, for some reason or other; but at other times she’s angry, and won’t say a word, and that’s what I’m afraid of. I took her a shawl one day, the like of which she might never have seen, although she did live in luxury and she gave it away to her maid, Katia. Sometimes when I can keep away no longer, I steal past the house on the sly, and once I watched at the gate till dawn—I thought something was going on—and she saw me from the window. She asked me what I should do if I found she had deceived me. I said, ‘You know well enough.’”

“What did she know?” cried the prince.

“How was I to tell?” replied Rogojin, with an angry laugh. “I did my best to catch her tripping in Moscow, but did not succeed. However, I caught hold of her one day, and said: ‘You are engaged to be married into a respectable family, and do you know what sort of a woman you are? *That’s* the sort of woman you are,’ I said.”

“You told her that?”

“Yes.”

“Well, go on.”

“She said, ‘I wouldn’t even have you for a footman now, much less for a husband.’ ‘I shan’t leave the house,’ I said, ‘so it doesn’t matter.’ ‘Then I shall call somebody and have you kicked out,’ she cried. So then I rushed at her, and beat her till she was bruised all over.”

“Impossible!” cried the prince, aghast.

“I tell you it’s true,” said Rogojin quietly, but with eyes ablaze with passion.

“Then for a day and a half I neither slept, nor ate, nor drank, and would not leave her. I knelt at her feet: ‘I shall die here,’ I said, ‘if you don’t forgive me; and if you have me turned out, I shall drown myself; because, what should I be without you now?’ She was like a madwoman all that day; now she would cry; now she would threaten me with a knife; now she would abuse me. She called in Zaleshoff and Keller, and showed me to them, shamed me in their presence. ‘Let’s all go to the theatre,’ she says, ‘and leave him here if he won’t go—it’s not my business. They’ll give you some tea, Parfen Semeonovitch, while I am away, for you must be hungry.’ She came back from the theatre alone. ‘Those cowards wouldn’t come,’ she said. ‘They are afraid of you, and tried to frighten me, too. “He won’t go away as he came,” they said, “he’ll cut your throat—see if he doesn’t.” Now, I shall go to my bedroom, and I shall not even lock my door, just to show you how much I am afraid of you. You must be shown that once for all. Did you have tea?’ ‘No,’ I said, ‘and I don’t intend to.’ ‘Ha, ha! you are playing off your pride against your stomach! That sort of heroism doesn’t sit well on you,’ she said.

“With that she did as she had said she would; she went to bed, and did not lock her door. In the morning she came out. ‘Are you quite mad?’ she said, sharply. ‘Why, you’ll die of hunger like this.’ ‘Forgive me,’ I said. ‘No, I won’t, and I won’t marry you. I’ve said it. Surely you haven’t sat in this chair all night without sleeping?’ ‘I didn’t sleep,’ I said. ‘H’m! how sensible of you. And are you going to have no breakfast or dinner today?’ ‘I told you I wouldn’t. Forgive me!’ ‘You’ve no idea how unbecoming this sort of thing is to you,’ she said, ‘it’s like putting a saddle on a cow’s back. Do you think you are frightening me? My word, what a dreadful thing that you should sit here and eat no food! How terribly frightened I am!’ She wasn’t angry long, and didn’t seem to remember my offence at all. I was surprised, for she is a vindictive, resentful woman—but then I thought that perhaps she despised me too much to feel any resentment against me. And that’s the truth.

“She came up to me and said, ‘Do you know who the Pope of Rome is?’ ‘I’ve heard of him,’ I said. ‘I suppose you’ve read the Universal History, Parfen Semeonovitch, haven’t you?’ she asked. ‘I’ve learned nothing at all,’ I said. ‘Then I’ll lend it to you to read. You must know there was a Roman Pope once, and he was very angry with a certain Emperor; so the Emperor came and neither ate nor drank, but knelt before the Pope’s palace till he should be forgiven. And what sort of vows do you think that Emperor was making during all those days on his knees? Stop, I’ll read it to you!’ Then she read me a lot of verses, where it said that the Emperor spent all the time vowing vengeance against the Pope. ‘You don’t mean to say you don’t approve of the poem, Parfen Semeonovitch,’ she says. ‘All you have read out is perfectly true,’ say I. ‘Aha!’ says she, ‘you admit it’s true, do you? And you are making vows to yourself that if I marry you, you will remind me of all this, and take it out of me.’ ‘I don’t know,’ I say, ‘perhaps I was thinking like that, and perhaps I was not. I’m not thinking of anything just now.’ ‘What are your thoughts, then?’ ‘I’m thinking that when you rise from your chair and go past me, I watch you, and follow you with my eyes; if your dress does but rustle, my heart sinks; if you leave the room, I remember every little word and action, and what your voice sounded like, and what you said. I thought of nothing all last night, but sat here listening to your sleeping breath, and heard you move a little, twice.’ ‘And as for your attack upon me,’ she says, ‘I suppose you never once thought of *that*?’ ‘Perhaps I did think of it, and perhaps not,’ I say. ‘And what if I don’t either forgive you or marry, you?’ ‘I tell you I shall go and drown myself.’ ‘H’m!’ she said, and then relapsed into silence. Then she got angry, and went out. ‘I suppose you’d murder me before you drowned yourself, though!’ she cried as she left the room.

“An hour later, she came to me again, looking melancholy. ‘I will marry you, Parfen Semeonovitch,’ she says, not because I’m frightened of you, but because it’s all the same to me how I ruin myself. And how can I do it better? Sit down; they’ll bring you some dinner directly. And if I do marry you, I’ll be a faithful wife to you—you need not doubt that.’ Then she thought a bit, and said, ‘At all events, you are not a flunkey; at first, I thought you were no better than a flunkey.’ And she arranged the wedding and fixed the day straight away on the spot.

“Then, in another week, she had run away again, and came here to Lebedeff’s; and when I found her here, she said to me, ‘I’m not going to renounce you altogether, but I wish to put off the wedding a bit longer yet—just as long as I like—for I am still my own mistress; so you may wait, if you like.’ That’s how the matter stands between us now. What do you think of all this, Lef Nicolaievitch?”

““What do you think of it yourself?” replied the prince, looking sadly at Rogojin.

“As if I can think anything about it! I—” He was about to say more, but stopped in despair.

The prince rose again, as if he would leave.

“At all events, I shall not interfere with you!” he murmured, as though making answer to some secret thought of his own.

“I’ll tell you what!” cried Rogojin, and his eyes flashed fire. “I can’t understand your yielding her to me like this; I don’t understand it. Have you given up loving her altogether? At first you suffered badly—I know it—I saw it. Besides, why did you come post-haste after us? Out of pity, eh? He, he, he!” His mouth curved in a mocking smile.

“Do you think I am deceiving you?” asked the prince.

“No! I trust you—but I can’t understand. It seems to me that your pity is greater than my love.” A hungry longing to speak his mind out seemed to flash in the man’s eyes, combined with an intense anger.

“Your love is mingled with hatred, and therefore, when your love passes, there will be the greater misery,” said the prince. “I tell you this, Parfen—”

“What! that I’ll cut her throat, you mean?”

The prince shuddered.

“You’ll hate her afterwards for all your present love, and for all the torment you are suffering on her account now. What seems to me the most extraordinary thing is, that she can again consent to marry you, after all that has passed between you. When I heard the news yesterday, I could hardly bring myself to believe it. Why, she has run twice from you, from the very altar rails, as it were. She must have some presentiment of evil. What can she want with you now? Your money? Nonsense! Besides, I should think you must have made a fairly large hole in your fortune already. Surely it is not because she is so very anxious to find a husband? She could find many a one besides yourself. Anyone would be better than you, because you will murder her, and I feel sure she must know that but too well by now. Is it because you love her so passionately? Indeed, that may be it. I have heard that there are women who want just that kind of love... but still...” The prince paused, reflectively.

“What are you grinning at my father’s portrait again for?” asked Rogojin, suddenly. He was carefully observing every change in the expression of the prince’s face.

“I smiled because the idea came into my head that if it were not for this unhappy passion of yours you might have, and would have, become just such a man as your

father, and that very quickly, too. You'd have settled down in this house of yours with some silent and obedient wife. You would have spoken rarely, trusted no one, heeded no one, and thought of nothing but making money."

"Laugh away! She said exactly the same, almost word for word, when she saw my father's portrait. It's remarkable how entirely you and she are at one now-a-days."

"What, has she been here?" asked the prince with curiosity.

"Yes! She looked long at the portrait and asked all about my father. 'You'd be just such another,' she said at last, and laughed. 'You have such strong passions, Parfen,' she said, 'that they'd have taken you to Siberia in no time if you had not, luckily, intelligence as well. For you have a good deal of intelligence.' (She said this—believe it or not. The first time I ever heard anything of that sort from her.) 'You'd soon have thrown up all this rowdyism that you indulge in now, and you'd have settled down to quiet, steady money-making, because you have little education; and here you'd have stayed just like your father before you. And you'd have loved your money so that you'd amass not two million, like him, but ten million; and you'd have died of hunger on your money bags to finish up with, for you carry everything to extremes.' There, that's exactly word for word as she said it to me. She never talked to me like that before. She always talks nonsense and laughs when she's with me. We went all over this old house together. 'I shall change all this,' I said, 'or else I'll buy a new house for the wedding.' 'No, no!' she said, 'don't touch anything; leave it all as it is; I shall live with your mother when I marry you.'

"I took her to see my mother, and she was as respectful and kind as though she were her own daughter. Mother has been almost demented ever since father died—she's an old woman. She sits and bows from her chair to everyone she sees. If you left her alone and didn't feed her for three days, I don't believe she would notice it. Well, I took her hand, and I said, 'Give your blessing to this lady, mother, she's going to be my wife.' So Nastasia kissed mother's hand with great feeling. 'She must have suffered terribly, hasn't she?' she said. She saw this book here lying before me. 'What! have you begun to read Russian history?' she asked. She told me once in Moscow, you know, that I had better get Solovieff's Russian History and read it, because I knew nothing. 'That's good,' she said, 'you go on like that, reading books. I'll make you a list myself of the books you ought to read first—shall I?' She had never once spoken to me like this before; it was the first time I felt I could breathe before her like a living creature."

"I'm very, very glad to hear of this, Parfen," said the prince, with real feeling. "Who knows? Maybe God will yet bring you near to one another."

“Never, never!” cried Rogojin, excitedly.

“Look here, Parfen; if you love her so much, surely you must be anxious to earn her respect? And if you do so wish, surely you may hope to? I said just now that I considered it extraordinary that she could still be ready to marry you. Well, though I cannot yet understand it, I feel sure she must have some good reason, or she wouldn’t do it. She is sure of your love; but besides that, she must attribute *something* else to you—some good qualities, otherwise the thing would not be. What you have just said confirms my words. You say yourself that she found it possible to speak to you quite differently from her usual manner. You are suspicious, you know, and jealous, therefore when anything annoying happens to you, you exaggerate its significance. Of course, of course, she does not think so ill of you as you say. Why, if she did, she would simply be walking to death by drowning or by the knife, with her eyes wide open, when she married you. It is impossible! As if anybody would go to their death deliberately!”

Rogojin listened to the prince’s excited words with a bitter smile. His conviction was, apparently, unalterable.

“How dreadfully you look at me, Parfen!” said the prince, with a feeling of dread.

“Water or the knife?” said the latter, at last. “Ha, ha—that’s exactly why she is going to marry me, because she knows for certain that the knife awaits her. Prince, can it be that you don’t even yet see what’s at the root of it all?”

“I don’t understand you.”

“Perhaps he really doesn’t understand me! They do say that you are a—you know what! She loves another—there, you can understand that much! Just as I love her, exactly so she loves another man. And that other man is—do you know who? It’s you. There—you didn’t know that, eh?”

“I?”

“You, you! She has loved you ever since that day, her birthday! Only she thinks she cannot marry you, because it would be the ruin of you. ‘Everybody knows what sort of a woman I am,’ she says. She told me all this herself, to my very face! She’s afraid of disgracing and ruining you, she says, but it doesn’t matter about me. She can marry me all right! Notice how much consideration she shows for me!”

“But why did she run away to me, and then again from me to—”

“From you to me? Ha, ha! that’s nothing! Why, she always acts as though she were in a delirium now-a-days! Either she says, ‘Come on, I’ll marry you! Let’s have the wedding quickly!’ and fixes the day, and seems in a hurry for it, and when it begins to come near she feels frightened; or else some other idea gets into her head—goodness knows! you’ve seen her—you know how she goes on—laughing and crying and raving! There’s nothing extraordinary about her having run away from you! She ran away because she found out how dearly she loved you. She could not bear to be near you. You said just now that I had found her at Moscow, when she ran away from you. I didn’t do anything of the sort; she came to me herself, straight from you. ‘Name the day—I’m ready!’ she said. ‘Let’s have some champagne, and go and hear the gipsies sing!’ I tell you she’d have thrown herself into the water long ago if it were not for me! She doesn’t do it because I am, perhaps, even more dreadful to her than the water! She’s marrying me out of spite; if she marries me, I tell you, it will be for spite!”

“But how do you, how can you—” began the prince, gazing with dread and horror at Rogojin.

“Why don’t you finish your sentence? Shall I tell you what you were thinking to yourself just then? You were thinking, ‘How can she marry him after this? How can it possibly be permitted?’ Oh, I know what you were thinking about!”

“I didn’t come here for that purpose, Parfen. That was not in my mind—”

“That may be! Perhaps you didn’t *come* with the idea, but the idea is certainly there *now*! Ha, ha! well, that’s enough! What are you upset about? Didn’t you really know it all before? You astonish me!”

“All this is mere jealousy—it is some malady of yours, Parfen! You exaggerate everything,” said the prince, excessively agitated. “What are you doing?”

“Let go of it!” said Parfen, seizing from the prince’s hand a knife which the latter had at that moment taken up from the table, where it lay beside the history. Parfen replaced it where it had been.

“I seemed to know it—I felt it, when I was coming back to Petersburg,” continued the prince, “I did not want to come, I wished to forget all this, to uproot it from my memory altogether! Well, good-bye—what is the matter?”

He had absently taken up the knife a second time, and again Rogojin snatched it from his hand, and threw it down on the table. It was a plain looking knife, with a bone handle, a blade about eight inches long, and broad in proportion, it did not clasp.

Seeing that the prince was considerably struck by the fact that he had twice seized this knife out of his hand, Rogojin caught it up with some irritation, put it inside the book, and threw the latter across to another table.

“Do you cut your pages with it, or what?” asked Muishkin, still rather absently, as though unable to throw off a deep preoccupation into which the conversation had thrown him.

“Yes.”

“It’s a garden knife, isn’t it?”

“Yes. Can’t one cut pages with a garden knife?”

“It’s quite new.”

“Well, what of that? Can’t I buy a new knife if I like?” shouted Rogojin furiously, his irritation growing with every word.

The prince shuddered, and gazed fixedly at Parfen. Suddenly he burst out laughing.

“Why, what an idea!” he said. “I didn’t mean to ask you any of these questions; I was thinking of something quite different! But my head is heavy, and I seem so absent-minded nowadays! Well, good-bye—I can’t remember what I wanted to say—good-bye!”

“Not that way,” said Rogojin.

“There, I’ve forgotten that too!”

“This way—come along—I’ll show you.”

IV.

They passed through the same rooms which the prince had traversed on his arrival. In the largest there were pictures on the walls, portraits and landscapes of little interest. Over the door, however, there was one of strange and rather striking shape; it was six or seven feet in length, and not more than a foot in height. It represented the Saviour just taken from the cross.

The prince glanced at it, but took no further notice. He moved on hastily, as though anxious to get out of the house. But Rogojin suddenly stopped underneath the picture.

“My father picked up all these pictures very cheap at auctions, and so on,” he said; “they are all rubbish, except the one over the door, and that is valuable. A man offered five hundred roubles for it last week.”

“Yes—that’s a copy of a Holbein,” said the prince, looking at it again, “and a good copy, too, so far as I am able to judge. I saw the picture abroad, and could not forget it—what’s the matter?”

Rogojin had dropped the subject of the picture and walked on. Of course his strange frame of mind was sufficient to account for his conduct; but, still, it seemed queer to the prince that he should so abruptly drop a conversation commenced by himself. Rogojin did not take any notice of his question.

“Lef Nicolaievitch,” said Rogojin, after a pause, during which the two walked along a little further, “I have long wished to ask you, do you believe in God?”

“How strangely you speak, and how odd you look!” said the other, involuntarily.

“I like looking at that picture,” muttered Rogojin, not noticing, apparently, that the prince had not answered his question.

“That picture! That picture!” cried Muishkin, struck by a sudden idea. “Why, a man’s faith might be ruined by looking at that picture!”

“So it is!” said Rogojin, unexpectedly. They had now reached the front door.

The prince stopped.

“How?” he said. “What do you mean? I was half joking, and you took me up quite seriously! Why do you ask me whether I believe in God?”

“Oh, no particular reason. I meant to ask you before—many people are unbelievers nowadays, especially Russians, I have been told. You ought to know—you’ve lived abroad.”

Rogojin laughed bitterly as he said these words, and opening the door, held it for the prince to pass out. Muishkin looked surprised, but went out. The other followed him as far as the landing of the outer stairs, and shut the door behind him. They both now stood facing one another, as though oblivious of where they were, or what they had to do next.

“Well, good-bye!” said the prince, holding out his hand.

“Good-bye,” said Rogojin, pressing it hard, but quite mechanically.

The prince made one step forward, and then turned round.

“As to faith,” he said, smiling, and evidently unwilling to leave Rogojin in this state—
“as to faith, I had four curious conversations in two days, a week or so ago. One

morning I met a man in the train, and made acquaintance with him at once. I had often heard of him as a very learned man, but an atheist; and I was very glad of the opportunity of conversing with so eminent and clever a person. He doesn't believe in God, and he talked a good deal about it, but all the while it appeared to me that he was speaking *outside the subject*. And it has always struck me, both in speaking to such men and in reading their books, that they do not seem really to be touching on that at all, though on the surface they may appear to do so. I told him this, but I dare say I did not clearly express what I meant, for he could not understand me.

"That same evening I stopped at a small provincial hotel, and it so happened that a dreadful murder had been committed there the night before, and everybody was talking about it. Two peasants—elderly men and old friends—had had tea together there the night before, and were to occupy the same bedroom. They were not drunk but one of them had noticed for the first time that his friend possessed a silver watch which he was wearing on a chain. He was by no means a thief, and was, as peasants go, a rich man; but this watch so fascinated him that he could not restrain himself. He took a knife, and when his friend turned his back, he came up softly behind, raised his eyes to heaven, crossed himself, and saying earnestly—'God forgive me, for Christ's sake!' he cut his friend's throat like a sheep, and took the watch."

Rogojin roared with laughter. He laughed as though he were in a sort of fit. It was strange to see him laughing so after the sombre mood he had been in just before.

"Oh, I like that! That beats anything!" he cried convulsively, panting for breath. "One is an absolute unbeliever; the other is such a thorough-going believer that he murders his friend to the tune of a prayer! Oh, prince, prince, that's too good for anything! You can't have invented it. It's the best thing I've heard!"

"Next morning I went out for a stroll through the town," continued the prince, so soon as Rogojin was a little quieter, though his laughter still burst out at intervals, "and soon observed a drunken-looking soldier staggering about the pavement. He came up to me and said, 'Buy my silver cross, sir! You shall have it for fourpence—it's real silver.' I looked, and there he held a cross, just taken off his own neck, evidently, a large tin one, made after the Byzantine pattern. I fished out fourpence, and put his cross on my own neck, and I could see by his face that he was as pleased as he could be at the thought that he had succeeded in cheating a foolish gentleman, and away he went to drink the value of his cross. At that time everything that I saw made a tremendous impression upon me. I had understood nothing about Russia before, and had only vague and fantastic memories of it. So I thought, 'I will wait awhile before I condemn this Judas. Only God knows what may be hidden in the hearts of drunkards.'

“Well, I went homewards, and near the hotel I came across a poor woman, carrying a child—a baby of some six weeks old. The mother was quite a girl herself. The baby was smiling up at her, for the first time in its life, just at that moment; and while I watched the woman she suddenly crossed herself, oh, so devoutly! ‘What is it, my good woman?’ I asked her. (I was never but asking questions then!) ‘Exactly as is a mother’s joy when her baby smiles for the first time into her eyes, so is God’s joy when one of His children turns and prays to Him for the first time, with all his heart!’ This is what that poor woman said to me, almost word for word; and such a deep, refined, truly religious thought it was—a thought in which the whole essence of Christianity was expressed in one flash—that is, the recognition of God as our Father, and of God’s joy in men as His own children, which is the chief idea of Christ. She was a simple country-woman—a mother, it’s true—and perhaps, who knows, she may have been the wife of the drunken soldier!

“Listen, Parfen; you put a question to me just now. This is my reply. The essence of religious feeling has nothing to do with reason, or atheism, or crime, or acts of any kind—it has nothing to do with these things—and never had. There is something besides all this, something which the arguments of the atheists can never touch. But the principal thing, and the conclusion of my argument, is that this is most clearly seen in the heart of a Russian. This is a conviction which I have gained while I have been in this Russia of ours. Yes, Parfen! there is work to be done; there is work to be done in this Russian world! Remember what talks we used to have in Moscow! And I never wished to come here at all; and I never thought to meet you like this, Parfen! Well, well—good-bye—good-bye! God be with you!”

He turned and went downstairs.

“Lef Nicolaievitch!” cried Parfen, before he had reached the next landing. “Have you got that cross you bought from the soldier with you?”

“Yes, I have,” and the prince stopped again.

“Show it me, will you?”

A new fancy! The prince reflected, and then mounted the stairs once more. He pulled out the cross without taking it off his neck.

“Give it to me,” said Parfen.

“Why? do you—”

The prince would rather have kept this particular cross.

“I’ll wear it; and you shall have mine. I’ll take it off at once.”

“You wish to exchange crosses? Very well, Parfen, if that’s the case, I’m glad enough—that makes us brothers, you know.”

The prince took off his tin cross, Parfen his gold one, and the exchange was made.

Parfen was silent. With sad surprise the prince observed that the look of distrust, the bitter, ironical smile, had still not altogether left his newly-adopted brother’s face. At moments, at all events, it showed itself but too plainly,

At last Rogojin took the prince’s hand, and stood so for some moments, as though he could not make up his mind. Then he drew him along, murmuring almost inaudibly,

“Come!”

They stopped on the landing, and rang the bell at a door opposite to Parfen’s own lodging.

An old woman opened to them and bowed low to Parfen, who asked her some questions hurriedly, but did not wait to hear her answer. He led the prince on through several dark, cold-looking rooms, spotlessly clean, with white covers over all the furniture.

Without the ceremony of knocking, Parfen entered a small apartment, furnished like a drawing-room, but with a polished mahogany partition dividing one half of it from what was probably a bedroom. In one corner of this room sat an old woman in an arm-chair, close to the stove. She did not look very old, and her face was a pleasant, round one; but she was white-haired and, as one could detect at the first glance, quite in her second childhood. She wore a black woollen dress, with a black handkerchief round her neck and shoulders, and a white cap with black ribbons. Her feet were raised on a footstool. Beside her sat another old woman, also dressed in mourning, and silently knitting a stocking; this was evidently a companion. They both looked as though they never broke the silence. The first old woman, so soon as she saw Rogojin and the prince, smiled and bowed courteously several times, in token of her gratification at their visit.

“Mother,” said Rogojin, kissing her hand, “here is my great friend, Prince Muishkin; we have exchanged crosses; he was like a real brother to me at Moscow at one time, and did a great deal for me. Bless him, mother, as you would bless your own son. Wait a moment, let me arrange your hands for you.”

But the old lady, before Parfen had time to touch her, raised her right hand, and, with three fingers held up, devoutly made the sign of the cross three times over the prince. She then nodded her head kindly at him once more.

“There, come along, Lef Nicolaievitch; that’s all I brought you here for,” said Rogojin.

When they reached the stairs again he added:

“She understood nothing of what I said to her, and did not know what I wanted her to do, and yet she blessed you; that shows she wished to do so herself. Well, goodbye; it’s time you went, and I must go too.”

He opened his own door.

“Well, let me at least embrace you and say goodbye, you strange fellow!” cried the prince, looking with gentle reproach at Rogojin, and advancing towards him. But the latter had hardly raised his arms when he dropped them again. He could not make up his mind to it; he turned away from the prince in order to avoid looking at him. He could not embrace him.

“Don’t be afraid,” he muttered, indistinctly, “though I have taken your cross, I shall not murder you for your watch.” So saying, he laughed suddenly, and strangely. Then in a moment his face became transfigured; he grew deadly white, his lips trembled, his eyes burned like fire. He stretched out his arms and held the prince tightly to him, and said in a strangled voice:

“Well, take her! It’s Fate! She’s yours. I surrender her.... Remember Rogojin!” And pushing the prince from him, without looking back at him, he hurriedly entered his own flat, and banged the door.

V.

It was late now, nearly half-past two, and the prince did not find General Epanchin at home. He left a card, and determined to look up Colia, who had a room at a small hotel near. Colia was not in, but he was informed that he might be back shortly, and had left word that if he were not in by half-past three it was to be understood that he had gone to Pavlofsk to General Epanchin’s, and would dine there. The prince decided to wait till half-past three, and ordered some dinner. At half-past three there was no sign of Colia. The prince waited until four o’clock, and then strolled off mechanically wherever his feet should carry him.

In early summer there are often magnificent days in St. Petersburg—bright, hot and still. This happened to be such a day.

For some time the prince wandered about without aim or object. He did not know the town well. He stopped to look about him on bridges, at street corners. He entered a confectioner's shop to rest, once. He was in a state of nervous excitement and perturbation; he noticed nothing and no one; and he felt a craving for solitude, to be alone with his thoughts and his emotions, and to give himself up to them passively. He loathed the idea of trying to answer the questions that would rise up in his heart and mind. "I am not to blame for all this," he thought to himself, half unconsciously.

Towards six o'clock he found himself at the station of the Tsarsko-Selski railway.

He was tired of solitude now; a new rush of feeling took hold of him, and a flood of light chased away the gloom, for a moment, from his soul. He took a ticket to Pavlofsk, and determined to get there as fast as he could, but something stopped him; a reality, and not a fantasy, as he was inclined to think it. He was about to take his place in a carriage, when he suddenly threw away his ticket and came out again, disturbed and thoughtful. A few moments later, in the street, he recalled something that had bothered him all the afternoon. He caught himself engaged in a strange occupation which he now recollected he had taken up at odd moments for the last few hours—it was looking about all around him for something, he did not know what. He had forgotten it for a while, half an hour or so, and now, suddenly, the uneasy search had recommenced.

But he had hardly become conscious of this curious phenomenon, when another recollection suddenly swam through his brain, interesting him for the moment, exceedingly. He remembered that the last time he had been engaged in looking around him for the unknown something, he was standing before a cutler's shop, in the window of which were exposed certain goods for sale. He was extremely anxious now to discover whether this shop and these goods really existed, or whether the whole thing had been a hallucination.

He felt in a very curious condition today, a condition similar to that which had preceded his fits in bygone years.

He remembered that at such times he had been particularly absentminded, and could not discriminate between objects and persons unless he concentrated special attention upon them.

He remembered seeing something in the window marked at sixty copecks. Therefore, if the shop existed and if this object were really in the window, it would prove that he had been able to concentrate his attention on this article at a moment when, as a general rule, his absence of mind would have been too great to admit of any such

concentration; in fact, very shortly after he had left the railway station in such a state of agitation.

So he walked back looking about him for the shop, and his heart beat with intolerable impatience. Ah! here was the very shop, and there was the article marked “60 cop.” Of course, it’s sixty copecks, he thought, and certainly worth no more. This idea amused him and he laughed.

But it was a hysterical laugh; he was feeling terribly oppressed. He remembered clearly that just here, standing before this window, he had suddenly turned round, just as earlier in the day he had turned and found the dreadful eyes of Rogojin fixed upon him. Convinced, therefore, that in this respect at all events he had been under no delusion, he left the shop and went on.

This must be thought out; it was clear that there had been no hallucination at the station then, either; something had actually happened to him, on both occasions; there was no doubt of it. But again a loathing for all mental exertion overmastered him; he would not think it out now, he would put it off and think of something else. He remembered that during his epileptic fits, or rather immediately preceding them, he had always experienced a moment or two when his whole heart, and mind, and body seemed to wake up to vigour and light; when he became filled with joy and hope, and all his anxieties seemed to be swept away for ever; these moments were but presentiments, as it were, of the one final second (it was never more than a second) in which the fit came upon him. That second, of course, was inexpressible. When his attack was over, and the prince reflected on his symptoms, he used to say to himself: “These moments, short as they are, when I feel such extreme consciousness of myself, and consequently more of life than at other times, are due only to the disease—to the sudden rupture of normal conditions. Therefore they are not really a higher kind of life, but a lower.” This reasoning, however, seemed to end in a paradox, and lead to the further consideration:—“What matter though it be only disease, an abnormal tension of the brain, if when I recall and analyze the moment, it seems to have been one of harmony and beauty in the highest degree—an instant of deepest sensation, overflowing with unbounded joy and rapture, ecstatic devotion, and completest life?” Vague though this sounds, it was perfectly comprehensible to Muishkin, though he knew that it was but a feeble expression of his sensations.

That there was, indeed, beauty and harmony in those abnormal moments, that they really contained the highest synthesis of life, he could not doubt, nor even admit the possibility of doubt. He felt that they were not analogous to the fantastic and unreal dreams due to intoxication by hashish, opium or wine. Of that he could judge, when

the attack was over. These instants were characterized—to define it in a word—by an intense quickening of the sense of personality. Since, in the last conscious moment preceding the attack, he could say to himself, with full understanding of his words: “I would give my whole life for this one instant,” then doubtless to him it really was worth a lifetime. For the rest, he thought the dialectical part of his argument of little worth; he saw only too clearly that the result of these ecstatic moments was stupefaction, mental darkness, idiocy. No argument was possible on that point. His conclusion, his estimate of the “moment,” doubtless contained some error, yet the reality of the sensation troubled him. What’s more unanswerable than a fact? And this fact had occurred. The prince had confessed unreservedly to himself that the feeling of intense beatitude in that crowded moment made the moment worth a lifetime. “I feel then,” he said one day to Rogojin in Moscow, “I feel then as if I understood those amazing words—‘There shall be no more time.’” And he added with a smile: “No doubt the epileptic Mahomet refers to that same moment when he says that he visited all the dwellings of Allah, in less time than was needed to empty his pitcher of water.” Yes, he had often met Rogojin in Moscow, and many were the subjects they discussed. “He told me I had been a brother to him,” thought the prince. “He said so today, for the first time.”

He was sitting in the Summer Garden on a seat under a tree, and his mind dwelt on the matter. It was about seven o’clock, and the place was empty. The stifling atmosphere foretold a storm, and the prince felt a certain charm in the contemplative mood which possessed him. He found pleasure, too, in gazing at the exterior objects around him. All the time he was trying to forget some thing, to escape from some idea that haunted him; but melancholy thoughts came back, though he would so willingly have escaped from them. He remembered suddenly how he had been talking to the waiter, while he dined, about a recently committed murder which the whole town was discussing, and as he thought of it something strange came over him. He was seized all at once by a violent desire, almost a temptation, against which he strove in vain.

He jumped up and walked off as fast as he could towards the “Petersburg Side.” [One of the quarters of St. Petersburg.] He had asked someone, a little while before, to show him which was the Petersburg Side, on the banks of the Neva. He had not gone there, however; and he knew very well that it was of no use to go now, for he would certainly not find Lebedeff’s relation at home. He had the address, but she must certainly have gone to Pavlofsk, or Colia would have let him know. If he were to go now, it would merely be out of curiosity, but a sudden, new idea had come into his head.

However, it was something to move on and know where he was going. A minute later he was still moving on, but without knowing anything. He could no longer think out his new idea. He tried to take an interest in all he saw; in the sky, in the Neva. He spoke to some children he met. He felt his epileptic condition becoming more and more developed. The evening was very close; thunder was heard some way off.

The prince was haunted all that day by the face of Lebedeff's nephew whom he had seen for the first time that morning, just as one is haunted at times by some persistent musical refrain. By a curious association of ideas, the young man always appeared as the murderer of whom Lebedeff had spoken when introducing him to Muishkin. Yes, he had read something about the murder, and that quite recently. Since he came to Russia, he had heard many stories of this kind, and was interested in them. His conversation with the waiter, an hour ago, chanced to be on the subject of this murder of the Zemarins, and the latter had agreed with him about it. He thought of the waiter again, and decided that he was no fool, but a steady, intelligent man: though, said he to himself, "God knows what he may really be; in a country with which one is unfamiliar it is difficult to understand the people one meets." He was beginning to have a passionate faith in the Russian soul, however, and what discoveries he had made in the last six months, what unexpected discoveries! But every soul is a mystery, and depths of mystery lie in the soul of a Russian. He had been intimate with Rogojin, for example, and a brotherly friendship had sprung up between them—yet did he really know him? What chaos and ugliness fills the world at times! What a self-satisfied rascal is that nephew of Lebedeff's! "But what am I thinking," continued the prince to himself. "Can he really have committed that crime? Did he kill those six persons? I seem to be confusing things... how strange it all is.... My head goes round... And Lebedeff's daughter—how sympathetic and charming her face was as she held the child in her arms! What an innocent look and child-like laugh she had! It is curious that I had forgotten her until now. I expect Lebedeff adores her—and I really believe, when I think of it, that as sure as two and two make four, he is fond of that nephew, too!"

Well, why should he judge them so hastily! Could he really say what they were, after one short visit? Even Lebedeff seemed an enigma today. Did he expect to find him so? He had never seen him like that before. Lebedeff and the Comtesse du Barry! Good Heavens! If Rogojin should really kill someone, it would not, at any rate, be such a senseless, chaotic affair. A knife made to a special pattern, and six people killed in a kind of delirium. But Rogojin also had a knife made to a special pattern. Can it be that Rogojin wishes to murder anyone? The prince began to tremble violently. "It is a crime on my part to imagine anything so base, with such cynical frankness." His face

reddened with shame at the thought; and then there came across him as in a flash the memory of the incidents at the Pavlofsk station, and at the other station in the morning; and the question asked him by Rogojin about *the eyes* and Rogojin's cross, that he was even now wearing; and the benediction of Rogojin's mother; and his embrace on the darkened staircase—that last supreme renunciation—and now, to find himself full of this new “idea,” staring into shop-windows, and looking round for things—how base he was!

Despair overmastered his soul; he would not go on, he would go back to his hotel; he even turned and went the other way; but a moment after he changed his mind again and went on in the old direction.

Why, here he was on the Petersburg Side already, quite close to the house! Where was his “idea”? He was marching along without it now. Yes, his malady was coming back, it was clear enough; all this gloom and heaviness, all these “ideas,” were nothing more nor less than a fit coming on; perhaps he would have a fit this very day.

But just now all the gloom and darkness had fled, his heart felt full of joy and hope, there was no such thing as doubt. And yes, he hadn't seen her for so long; he really must see her. He wished he could meet Rogojin; he would take his hand, and they would go to her together. His heart was pure, he was no rival of Parfen's. Tomorrow, he would go and tell him that he had seen her. Why, he had only come for the sole purpose of seeing her, all the way from Moscow! Perhaps she might be here still, who knows? She might not have gone away to Pavlofsk yet.

Yes, all this must be put straight and above-board, there must be no more passionate renuncements, such as Rogojin's. It must all be clear as day. Cannot Rogojin's soul bear the light? He said he did not love her with sympathy and pity; true, he added that “your pity is greater than my love,” but he was not quite fair on himself there. Kin! Rogojin reading a book—wasn't that sympathy beginning? Did it not show that he comprehended his relations with her? And his story of waiting day and night for her forgiveness? That didn't look quite like passion alone.

And as to her face, could it inspire nothing but passion? Could her face inspire passion at all now? Oh, it inspired suffering, grief, overwhelming grief of the soul! A poignant, agonizing memory swept over the prince's heart.

Yes, agonizing. He remembered how he had suffered that first day when he thought he observed in her the symptoms of madness. He had almost fallen into despair. How could he have lost his hold upon her when she ran away from him to Rogojin? He ought to have run after her himself, rather than wait for news as he had done. Can

Rogojin have failed to observe, up to now, that she is mad? Rogojin attributes her strangeness to other causes, to passion! What insane jealousy! What was it he had hinted at in that suggestion of his? The prince suddenly blushed, and shuddered to his very heart.

But why recall all this? There was insanity on both sides. For him, the prince, to love this woman with passion, was unthinkable. It would be cruel and inhuman. Yes. Rogojin is not fair to himself; he has a large heart; he has aptitude for sympathy. When he learns the truth, and finds what a pitiable being is this injured, broken, half-insane creature, he will forgive her all the torment she has caused him. He will become her slave, her brother, her friend. Compassion will teach even Rogojin, it will show him how to reason. Compassion is the chief law of human existence. Oh, how guilty he felt towards Rogojin! And, for a few warm, hasty words spoken in Moscow, Parfen had called him “brother,” while he—but no, this was delirium! It would all come right! That gloomy Parfen had implied that his faith was waning; he must suffer dreadfully. He said he liked to look at that picture; it was not that he liked it, but he felt the need of looking at it. Rogojin was not merely a passionate soul; he was a fighter. He was fighting for the restoration of his dying faith. He must have something to hold on to and believe, and someone to believe in. What a strange picture that of Holbein’s is! Why, this is the street, and here’s the house, No. 16.

The prince rang the bell, and asked for Nastasia Philipovna. The lady of the house came out, and stated that Nastasia had gone to stay with Daria Alexeyevna at Pavlofsk, and might be there some days.

Madame Filisoff was a little woman of forty, with a cunning face, and crafty, piercing eyes. When, with an air of mystery, she asked her visitor’s name, he refused at first to answer, but in a moment he changed his mind, and left strict instructions that it should be given to Nastasia Philipovna. The urgency of his request seemed to impress Madame Filisoff, and she put on a knowing expression, as if to say, “You need not be afraid, I quite understand.” The prince’s name evidently was a great surprise to her. He stood and looked absently at her for a moment, then turned, and took the road back to his hotel. But he went away not as he came. A great change had suddenly come over him. He went blindly forward; his knees shook under him; he was tormented by “ideas”; his lips were blue, and trembled with a feeble, meaningless smile. His demon was upon him once more.

What had happened to him? Why was his brow clammy with drops of moisture, his knees shaking beneath him, and his soul oppressed with a cold gloom? Was it because he had just seen these dreadful eyes again? Why, he had left the Summer

Garden on purpose to see them; that had been his “idea.” He had wished to assure himself that he would see them once more at that house. Then why was he so overwhelmed now, having seen them as he expected? just as though he had not expected to see them! Yes, they were the very same eyes; and no doubt about it. The same that he had seen in the crowd that morning at the station, the same that he had surprised in Rogojin’s rooms some hours later, when the latter had replied to his inquiry with a sneering laugh, “Well, whose eyes were they?” Then for the third time they had appeared just as he was getting into the train on his way to see Aglaya. He had had a strong impulse to rush up to Rogojin, and repeat his words of the morning “Whose eyes are they?” Instead he had fled from the station, and knew nothing more, until he found himself gazing into the window of a cutler’s shop, and wondering if a knife with a staghorn handle would cost more than sixty copecks. And as the prince sat dreaming in the Summer Garden under a lime-tree, a wicked demon had come and whispered in his ear: “Rogojin has been spying upon you and watching you all the morning in a frenzy of desperation. When he finds you have not gone to Pavlofsk—a terrible discovery for him—he will surely go at once to that house in Petersburg Side, and watch for you there, although only this morning you gave your word of honour not to see *her*, and swore that you had not come to Petersburg for that purpose.” And thereupon the prince had hastened off to that house, and what was there in the fact that he had met Rogojin there? He had only seen a wretched, suffering creature, whose state of mind was gloomy and miserable, but most comprehensible. In the morning Rogojin had seemed to be trying to keep out of the way; but at the station this afternoon he had stood out, he had concealed himself, indeed, less than the prince himself; at the house, now, he had stood fifty yards off on the other side of the road, with folded hands, watching, plainly in view and apparently desirous of being seen. He had stood there like an accuser, like a judge, not like a—a what?

And why had not the prince approached him and spoken to him, instead of turning away and pretending he had seen nothing, although their eyes met? (Yes, their eyes had met, and they had looked at each other.) Why, he had himself wished to take Rogojin by the hand and go in together, he had himself determined to go to him on the morrow and tell him that he had seen her, he had repudiated the demon as he walked to the house, and his heart had been full of joy.

Was there something in the whole aspect of the man, today, sufficient to justify the prince’s terror, and the awful suspicions of his demon? Something seen, but indescribable, which filled him with dreadful presentiments? Yes, he was convinced of it—convinced of what? (Oh, how mean and hideous of him to feel this conviction, this presentiment! How he blamed himself for it!) “Speak if you dare, and tell me, what

is the presentiment?" he repeated to himself, over and over again. "Put it into words, speak out clearly and distinctly. Oh, miserable coward that I am!" The prince flushed with shame for his own baseness. "How shall I ever look this man in the face again? My God, what a day! And what a nightmare, what a nightmare!"

There was a moment, during this long, wretched walk back from the Petersburg Side, when the prince felt an irresistible desire to go straight to Rogojin's, wait for him, embrace him with tears of shame and contrition, and tell him of his distrust, and finish with it—once for all.

But here he was back at his hotel.

How often during the day he had thought of this hotel with loathing—its corridor, its rooms, its stairs. How he had dreaded coming back to it, for some reason.

"What a regular old woman I am today," he had said to himself each time, with annoyance. "I believe in every foolish presentiment that comes into my head."

He stopped for a moment at the door; a great flush of shame came over him. "I am a coward, a wretched coward," he said, and moved forward again; but once more he paused.

Among all the incidents of the day, one recurred to his mind to the exclusion of the rest; although now that his self-control was regained, and he was no longer under the influence of a nightmare, he was able to think of it calmly. It concerned the knife on Rogojin's table. "Why should not Rogojin have as many knives on his table as he chooses?" thought the prince, wondering at his suspicions, as he had done when he found himself looking into the cutler's window. "What could it have to do with me?" he said to himself again, and stopped as if rooted to the ground by a kind of paralysis of limb such as attacks people under the stress of some humiliating recollection.

The doorway was dark and gloomy at any time; but just at this moment it was rendered doubly so by the fact that the thunder-storm had just broken, and the rain was coming down in torrents.

And in the semi-darkness the prince distinguished a man standing close to the stairs, apparently waiting.

There was nothing particularly significant in the fact that a man was standing back in the doorway, waiting to come out or go upstairs; but the prince felt an irresistible conviction that he knew this man, and that it was Rogojin. The man moved on up the stairs; a moment later the prince passed up them, too. His heart froze within him. "In a minute or two I shall know all," he thought.

The staircase led to the first and second corridors of the hotel, along which lay the guests' bedrooms. As is often the case in Petersburg houses, it was narrow and very dark, and turned around a massive stone column.

On the first landing, which was as small as the necessary turn of the stairs allowed, there was a niche in the column, about half a yard wide, and in this niche the prince felt convinced that a man stood concealed. He thought he could distinguish a figure standing there. He would pass by quickly and not look. He took a step forward, but could bear the uncertainty no longer and turned his head.

The eyes—the same two eyes—met his! The man concealed in the niche had also taken a step forward. For one second they stood face to face.

Suddenly the prince caught the man by the shoulder and twisted him round towards the light, so that he might see his face more clearly.

Rogojin's eyes flashed, and a smile of insanity distorted his countenance. His right hand was raised, and something glittered in it. The prince did not think of trying to stop it. All he could remember afterwards was that he seemed to have called out:

"Parfen! I won't believe it."

Next moment something appeared to burst open before him: a wonderful inner light illuminated his soul. This lasted perhaps half a second, yet he distinctly remembered hearing the beginning of the wail, the strange, dreadful wail, which burst from his lips of its own accord, and which no effort of will on his part could suppress.

Next moment he was absolutely unconscious; black darkness blotted out everything. He had fallen in an epileptic fit.

As is well known, these fits occur instantaneously. The face, especially the eyes, become terribly disfigured, convulsions seize the limbs, a terrible cry breaks from the sufferer, a wail from which everything human seems to be blotted out, so that it is impossible to believe that the man who has just fallen is the same who emitted the dreadful cry. It seems more as though some other being, inside the stricken one, had cried. Many people have borne witness to this impression; and many cannot behold an epileptic fit without a feeling of mysterious terror and dread.

Such a feeling, we must suppose, overtook Rogojin at this moment, and saved the prince's life. Not knowing that it was a fit, and seeing his victim disappear head foremost into the darkness, hearing his head strike the stone steps below with a

crash, Rogojin rushed downstairs, skirting the body, and flung himself headlong out of the hotel, like a raving madman.

The prince's body slipped convulsively down the steps till it rested at the bottom. Very soon, in five minutes or so, he was discovered, and a crowd collected around him.

A pool of blood on the steps near his head gave rise to grave fears. Was it a case of accident, or had there been a crime? It was, however, soon recognized as a case of epilepsy, and identification and proper measures for restoration followed one another, owing to a fortunate circumstance. Colia Ivogin had come back to his hotel about seven o'clock, owing to a sudden impulse which made him refuse to dine at the Epanchins', and, finding a note from the prince awaiting him, had sped away to the latter's address. Arrived there, he ordered a cup of tea and sat sipping it in the coffee-room. While there he heard excited whispers of someone just found at the bottom of the stairs in a fit; upon which he had hurried to the spot, with a presentiment of evil, and at once recognized the prince.

The sufferer was immediately taken to his room, and though he partially regained consciousness, he lay long in a semi-dazed condition.

The doctor stated that there was no danger to be apprehended from the wound on the head, and as soon as the prince could understand what was going on around him, Colia hired a carriage and took him away to Lebedeff's. There he was received with much cordiality, and the departure to the country was hastened on his account. Three days later they were all at Pavlofsk.

VI.

Lebedeff's country-house was not large, but it was pretty and convenient, especially the part which was let to the prince.

A row of orange and lemon trees and jasmines, planted in green tubs, stood on the fairly wide terrace. According to Lebedeff, these trees gave the house a most delightful aspect. Some were there when he bought it, and he was so charmed with the effect that he promptly added to their number. When the tubs containing these plants arrived at the villa and were set in their places, Lebedeff kept running into the street to enjoy the view of the house, and every time he did so the rent to be demanded from the future tenant went up with a bound.

This country villa pleased the prince very much in his state of physical and mental exhaustion. On the day that they left for Pavlofsk, that is the day after his attack, he appeared almost well, though in reality he felt very far from it. The faces of those

around him for the last three days had made a pleasant impression. He was pleased to see, not only Colia, who had become his inseparable companion, but Lebedeff himself and all the family, except the nephew, who had left the house. He was also glad to receive a visit from General Ivolgin, before leaving St. Petersburg.

It was getting late when the party arrived at Pavlofsk, but several people called to see the prince, and assembled in the verandah. Gania was the first to arrive. He had grown so pale and thin that the prince could hardly recognize him. Then came Varia and Ptitsin, who were rusticating in the neighbourhood. As to General Ivolgin, he scarcely budged from Lebedeff's house, and seemed to have moved to Pavlofsk with him. Lebedeff did his best to keep Ardalion Alexandrovitch by him, and to prevent him from invading the prince's quarters. He chatted with him confidentially, so that they might have been taken for old friends. During those three days the prince had noticed that they frequently held long conversations; he often heard their voices raised in argument on deep and learned subjects, which evidently pleased Lebedeff. He seemed as if he could not do without the general. But it was not only Ardalion Alexandrovitch whom Lebedeff kept out of the prince's way. Since they had come to the villa, he treated his own family the same. Upon the pretext that his tenant needed quiet, he kept him almost in isolation, and Muishkin protested in vain against this excess of zeal. Lebedeff stamped his feet at his daughters and drove them away if they attempted to join the prince on the terrace; not even Vera was excepted.

"They will lose all respect if they are allowed to be so free and easy; besides it is not proper for them," he declared at last, in answer to a direct question from the prince.

"Why on earth not?" asked the latter. "Really, you know, you are making yourself a nuisance, by keeping guard over me like this. I get bored all by myself; I have told you so over and over again, and you get on my nerves more than ever by waving your hands and creeping in and out in the mysterious way you do."

It was a fact that Lebedeff, though he was so anxious to keep everyone else from disturbing the patient, was continually in and out of the prince's room himself. He invariably began by opening the door a crack and peering in to see if the prince was there, or if he had escaped; then he would creep softly up to the arm-chair, sometimes making Muishkin jump by his sudden appearance. He always asked if the patient wanted anything, and when the latter replied that he only wanted to be left in peace, he would turn away obediently and make for the door on tip-toe, with deprecatory gestures to imply that he had only just looked in, that he would not speak a word, and would go away and not intrude again; which did not prevent him from reappearing in ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. Colia had free access to the prince,

at which Lebedeff was quite disgusted and indignant. He would listen at the door for half an hour at a time while the two were talking. Colia found this out, and naturally told the prince of his discovery.

“Do you think yourself my master, that you try to keep me under lock and key like this?” said the prince to Lebedeff. “In the country, at least, I intend to be free, and you may make up your mind that I mean to see whom I like, and go where I please.”

“Why, of course,” replied the clerk, gesticulating with his hands.

The prince looked him sternly up and down.

“Well, Lukian Timofeyovitch, have you brought the little cupboard that you had at the head of your bed with you here?”

“No, I left it where it was.”

“Impossible!”

“It cannot be moved; you would have to pull the wall down, it is so firmly fixed.”

“Perhaps you have one like it here?”

“I have one that is even better, much better; that is really why I bought this house.”

“Ah! What visitor did you turn away from my door, about an hour ago?”

“The-the general. I would not let him in; there is no need for him to visit you, prince... I have the deepest esteem for him, he is a—a great man. You don’t believe it? Well, you will see, and yet, most excellent prince, you had much better not receive him.”

“May I ask why? and also why you walk about on tiptoe and always seem as if you were going to whisper a secret in my ear whenever you come near me?”

“I am vile, vile; I know it!” cried Lebedeff, beating his breast with a contrite air. “But will not the general be too hospitable for you?”

“Too hospitable?”

“Yes. First, he proposes to come and live in my house. Well and good; but he sticks at nothing; he immediately makes himself one of the family. We have talked over our respective relations several times, and discovered that we are connected by marriage. It seems also that you are a sort of nephew on his mother’s side; he was explaining it to me again only yesterday. If you are his nephew, it follows that I must also be a relation of yours, most excellent prince. Never mind about that, it is only a foible; but just now he assured me that all his life, from the day he was made an ensign to the

11th of last June, he has entertained at least two hundred guests at his table every day. Finally, he went so far as to say that they never rose from the table; they dined, supped, and had tea, for fifteen hours at a stretch. This went on for thirty years without a break; there was barely time to change the table-cloth; directly one person left, another took his place. On feast-days he entertained as many as three hundred guests, and they numbered seven hundred on the thousandth anniversary of the foundation of the Russian Empire. It amounts to a passion with him; it makes one uneasy to hear of it. It is terrible to have to entertain people who do things on such a scale. That is why I wonder whether such a man is not too hospitable for you and me.”