

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

suiting 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.

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“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 Ivogin, 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 rusticated in the neighbourhood. As to General Ivogin, 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.”

“But you seem to be on the best of terms with him?”

“Quite fraternal—I look upon it as a joke. Let us be brothers-in-law, it is all the same to me,—rather an honour than not. But in spite of the two hundred guests and the thousandth anniversary of the Russian Empire, I can see that he is a very remarkable man. I am quite sincere. You said just now that I always looked as if I was going to tell you a secret; you are right. I have a secret to tell you: a certain person has just let me know that she is very anxious for a secret interview with you.”

“Why should it be secret? Not at all; I will call on her myself tomorrow.”

“No, oh no!” cried Lebedeff, waving his arms; “if she is afraid, it is not for the reason you think. By the way, do you know that the monster comes every day to inquire after your health?”

“You call him a monster so often that it makes me suspicious.”

“You must have no suspicions, none whatever,” said Lebedeff quickly. “I only want you to know that the person in question is not afraid of him, but of something quite, quite different.”

“What on earth is she afraid of, then? Tell me plainly, without any more beating about the bush,” said the prince, exasperated by the other’s mysterious grimaces.

“Ah that is the secret,” said Lebedeff, with a smile.

“Whose secret?”

“Yours. You forbade me yourself to mention it before you, most excellent prince,” murmured Lebedeff. Then, satisfied that he had worked up Muishkin’s curiosity to the highest pitch, he added abruptly: “She is afraid of Aglaya Ivanovna.”

The prince frowned for a moment in silence, and then said suddenly:

“Really, Lebedeff, I must leave your house. Where are Gavril Ardalionovitch and the Ptitsins? Are they here? Have you chased them away, too?”

“They are coming, they are coming; and the general as well. I will open all the doors; I will call all my daughters, all of them, this very minute,” said Lebedeff in a low voice, thoroughly frightened, and waving his hands as he ran from door to door.

At that moment Colia appeared on the terrace; he announced that Lizabetha Prokofievna and her three daughters were close behind him.

Moved by this news, Lebedeff hurried up to the prince.

“Shall I call the Ptitsins, and Gavril Ardalionovitch? Shall I let the general in?” he asked.

“Why not? Let in anyone who wants to see me. I assure you, Lebedeff, you have misunderstood my position from the very first; you have been wrong all along. I have not the slightest reason to hide myself from anyone,” replied the prince gaily.

Seeing him laugh, Lebedeff thought fit to laugh also, and though much agitated his satisfaction was quite visible.

Colia was right; the Epanchin ladies were only a few steps behind him. As they approached the terrace other visitors appeared from Lebedeff’s side of the house—the Ptitsins, Gania, and Ardalion Alexandrovitch.

The Epanchins had only just heard of the prince’s illness and of his presence in Pavlofsk, from Colia; and up to this time had been in a state of considerable bewilderment about him. The general brought the prince’s card down from town, and Mrs. Epanchin had felt convinced that he himself would follow his card at once; she was much excited.

In vain the girls assured her that a man who had not written for six months would not be in such a dreadful hurry, and that probably he had enough to do in town without needing to bustle down to Pavlofsk to see them. Their mother was quite angry at the

very idea of such a thing, and announced her absolute conviction that he would turn up the next day at latest.

So next day the prince was expected all the morning, and at dinner, tea, and supper; and when he did not appear in the evening, Mrs. Epanchin quarrelled with everyone in the house, finding plenty of pretexts without so much as mentioning the prince's name.

On the third day there was no talk of him at all, until Aglaya remarked at dinner: "Mamma is cross because the prince hasn't turned up," to which the general replied that it was not his fault.

Mrs. Epanchin misunderstood the observation, and rising from her place she left the room in majestic wrath. In the evening, however, Colia came with the story of the prince's adventures, so far as he knew them. Mrs. Epanchin was triumphant; although Colia had to listen to a long lecture. "He idles about here the whole day long, one can't get rid of him; and then when he is wanted he does not come. He might have sent a line if he did not wish to inconvenience himself."

At the words "one can't get rid of him," Colia was very angry, and nearly flew into a rage; but he resolved to be quiet for the time and show his resentment later. If the words had been less offensive he might have forgiven them, so pleased was he to see Lizabetha Prokofievna worried and anxious about the prince's illness.

She would have insisted on sending to Petersburg at once, for a certain great medical celebrity; but her daughters dissuaded her, though they were not willing to stay behind when she at once prepared to go and visit the invalid. Aglaya, however, suggested that it was a little unceremonious to go *en masse* to see him.

"Very well then, stay at home," said Mrs. Epanchin, "and a good thing too, for Evgenie Pavlovitch is coming down and there will be no one at home to receive him."

Of course, after this, Aglaya went with the rest. In fact, she had never had the slightest intention of doing otherwise.

Prince S., who was in the house, was requested to escort the ladies. He had been much interested when he first heard of the prince from the Epanchins. It appeared that they had known one another before, and had spent some time together in a little provincial town three months ago. Prince S. had greatly taken to him, and was delighted with the opportunity of meeting him again.

The general had not come down from town as yet, nor had Evgenie Pavlovitch arrived.

It was not more than two or three hundred yards from the Epanchins' house to Lebedeff's. The first disagreeable impression experienced by Mrs. Epanchin was to find the prince surrounded by a whole assembly of other guests—not to mention the fact that some of those present were particularly detestable in her eyes. The next annoying circumstance was when an apparently strong and healthy young fellow, well dressed, and smiling, came forward to meet her on the terrace, instead of the half-dying unfortunate whom she had expected to see.

She was astonished and vexed, and her disappointment pleased Colia immensely. Of course he could have undeceived her before she started, but the mischievous boy had been careful not to do that, foreseeing the probably laughable disgust that she would experience when she found her dear friend, the prince, in good health. Colia was indelicate enough to voice the delight he felt at his success in managing to annoy Elizabetha Prokofievna, with whom, in spite of their really amicable relations, he was constantly sparring.

“Just wait a while, my boy!” said she; “don't be too certain of your triumph.” And she sat down heavily, in the arm-chair pushed forward by the prince.

Lebedeff, Ptitsin, and General Ivolgin hastened to find chairs for the young ladies. Varia greeted them joyfully, and they exchanged confidences in ecstatic whispers.

“I must admit, prince, I was a little put out to see you up and about like this—I expected to find you in bed; but I give you my word, I was only annoyed for an instant, before I collected my thoughts properly. I am always wiser on second thoughts, and I dare say you are the same. I assure you I am as glad to see you well as though you were my own son,—yes, and more; and if you don't believe me the more shame to you, and it's not my fault. But that spiteful boy delights in playing all sorts of tricks. You are his patron, it seems. Well, I warn you that one fine morning I shall deprive myself of the pleasure of his further acquaintance.”

“What have I done wrong now?” cried Colia. “What was the good of telling you that the prince was nearly well again? You would not have believed me; it was so much more interesting to picture him on his death-bed.”

“How long do you remain here, prince?” asked Madame Epanchin.

“All the summer, and perhaps longer.”

“You are alone, aren't you,—not married?”

“No, I'm not married!” replied the prince, smiling at the ingenuousness of this little feeler.

“Oh, you needn’t laugh! These things do happen, you know! Now then—why didn’t you come to us? We have a wing quite empty. But just as you like, of course. Do you lease it from *him*?—this fellow, I mean,” she added, nodding towards Lebedeff. “And why does he always wriggle so?”

At that moment Vera, carrying the baby in her arms as usual, came out of the house, on to the terrace. Lebedeff kept fidgeting among the chairs, and did not seem to know what to do with himself, though he had no intention of going away. He no sooner caught sight of his daughter, than he rushed in her direction, waving his arms to keep her away; he even forgot himself so far as to stamp his foot.

“Is he mad?” asked Madame Epanchin suddenly.

“No, he...”

“Perhaps he is drunk? Your company is rather peculiar,” she added, with a glance at the other guests....

“But what a pretty girl! Who is she?”

“That is Lebedeff’s daughter—Vera Lukianovna.”

“Indeed? She looks very sweet. I should like to make her acquaintance.”

The words were hardly out of her mouth, when Lebedeff dragged Vera forward, in order to present her.

“Orphans, poor orphans!” he began in a pathetic voice.

“The child she carries is an orphan, too. She is Vera’s sister, my daughter Luboff. The day this babe was born, six weeks ago, my wife died, by the will of God Almighty.... Yes... Vera takes her mother’s place, though she is but her sister... nothing more... nothing more...”

“And you! You are nothing more than a fool, if you’ll excuse me! Well! well! you know that yourself, I expect,” said the lady indignantly.

Lebedeff bowed low. “It is the truth,” he replied, with extreme respect.

“Oh, Mr. Lebedeff, I am told you lecture on the Apocalypse. Is it true?” asked Aglaya.

“Yes, that is so... for the last fifteen years.”

“I have heard of you, and I think read of you in the newspapers.”

“No, that was another commentator, whom the papers named. He is dead, however, and I have taken his place,” said the other, much delighted.

“We are neighbours, so will you be so kind as to come over one day and explain the Apocalypse to me?” said Aglaya. “I do not understand it in the least.”

“Allow me to warn you,” interposed General Ivolgin, “that he is the greatest charlatan on earth.” He had taken the chair next to the girl, and was impatient to begin talking. “No doubt there are pleasures and amusements peculiar to the country,” he continued, “and to listen to a pretended student holding forth on the book of the Revelations may be as good as any other. It may even be original. But... you seem to be looking at me with some surprise—may I introduce myself—General Ivolgin—I carried you in my arms as a baby—”

“Delighted, I’m sure,” said Aglaya; “I am acquainted with Varvara Ardalionovna and Nina Alexandrovna.” She was trying hard to restrain herself from laughing.

Mrs. Epanchin flushed up; some accumulation of spleen in her suddenly needed an outlet. She could not bear this General Ivolgin whom she had once known, long ago—in society.

“You are deviating from the truth, sir, as usual!” she remarked, boiling over with indignation; “you never carried her in your life!”

“You have forgotten, mother,” said Aglaya, suddenly. “He really did carry me about,—in Tver, you know. I was six years old, I remember. He made me a bow and arrow, and I shot a pigeon. Don’t you remember shooting a pigeon, you and I, one day?”

“Yes, and he made me a cardboard helmet, and a little wooden sword—I remember!” said Adelaida.

“Yes, I remember too!” said Alexandra. “You quarrelled about the wounded pigeon, and Adelaida was put in the corner, and stood there with her helmet and sword and all.”

The poor general had merely made the remark about having carried Aglaya in his arms because he always did so begin a conversation with young people. But it happened that this time he had really hit upon the truth, though he had himself entirely forgotten the fact. But when Adelaida and Aglaya recalled the episode of the pigeon, his mind became filled with memories, and it is impossible to describe how this poor old man, usually half drunk, was moved by the recollection.

“I remember—I remember it all!” he cried. “I was captain then. You were such a lovely little thing—Nina Alexandrovna!—Gania, listen! I was received then by General Epanchin.”

“Yes, and look what you have come to now!” interrupted Mrs. Epanchin. “However, I see you have not quite drunk your better feelings away. But you’ve broken your wife’s heart, sir—and instead of looking after your children, you have spent your time in public-houses and debtors’ prisons! Go away, my friend, stand in some corner and weep, and bemoan your fallen dignity, and perhaps God will forgive you yet! Go, go! I’m serious! There’s nothing so favourable for repentance as to think of the past with feelings of remorse!”

There was no need to repeat that she was serious. The general, like all drunkards, was extremely emotional and easily touched by recollections of his better days. He rose and walked quietly to the door, so meekly that Mrs. Epanchin was instantly sorry for him.

“Ardalion Alexandrovitch,” she cried after him, “wait a moment, we are all sinners! When you feel that your conscience reproaches you a little less, come over to me and we’ll have a talk about the past! I dare say I am fifty times more of a sinner than you are! And now go, go, good-bye, you had better not stay here!” she added, in alarm, as he turned as though to come back.

“Don’t go after him just now, Colia, or he’ll be vexed, and the benefit of this moment will be lost!” said the prince, as the boy was hurrying out of the room.

“Quite true! Much better to go in half an hour or so,” said Mrs. Epanchin.

“That’s what comes of telling the truth for once in one’s life!” said Lebedeff. “It reduced him to tears.”

“Come, come! the less *you* say about it the better—to judge from all I have heard about you!” replied Mrs. Epanchin.

The prince took the first opportunity of informing the Epanchin ladies that he had intended to pay them a visit that day, if they had not themselves come this afternoon, and Lizabetha Prokofievna replied that she hoped he would still do so.

By this time some of the visitors had disappeared.

Ptitsin had tactfully retreated to Lebedeff’s wing; and Gania soon followed him.

The latter had behaved modestly, but with dignity, on this occasion of his first meeting with the Epanchins since the rupture. Twice Mrs. Epanchin had deliberately examined

him from head to foot; but he had stood fire without flinching. He was certainly much changed, as anyone could see who had not met him for some time; and this fact seemed to afford Aglaya a good deal of satisfaction.

“That was Gavriila Ardalionovitch, who just went out, wasn’t it?” she asked suddenly, interrupting somebody else’s conversation to make the remark.

“Yes, it was,” said the prince.

“I hardly knew him; he is much changed, and for the better!”

“I am very glad,” said the prince.

“He has been very ill,” added Varia.

“How has he changed for the better?” asked Mrs. Epanchin. “I don’t see any change for the better! What’s better in him? Where did you get *that* idea from? *what’s* better?”

“There’s nothing better than the ‘poor knight!’” said Colia, who was standing near the last speaker’s chair.

“I quite agree with you there!” said Prince S., laughing.

“So do I,” said Adelaida, solemnly.

“*What* poor knight?” asked Mrs. Epanchin, looking round at the face of each of the speakers in turn. Seeing, however, that Aglaya was blushing, she added, angrily:

“What nonsense you are all talking! What do you mean by poor knight?”

“It’s not the first time this urchin, your favourite, has shown his impudence by twisting other people’s words,” said Aglaya, haughtily.

Every time that Aglaya showed temper (and this was very often), there was so much childish pouting, such “school-girlishness,” as it were, in her apparent wrath, that it was impossible to avoid smiling at her, to her own unutterable indignation. On these occasions she would say, “How can they, how *dare* they laugh at me?”

This time everyone laughed at her, her sisters, Prince S., Prince Muishkin (though he himself had flushed for some reason), and Colia. Aglaya was dreadfully indignant, and looked twice as pretty in her wrath.

“He’s always twisting round what one says,” she cried.

“I am only repeating your own exclamation!” said Colia. “A month ago you were turning over the pages of your Don Quixote, and suddenly called out ‘there is nothing

better than the poor knight.' I don't know whom you were referring to, of course, whether to Don Quixote, or Evgenie Pavlovitch, or someone else, but you certainly said these words, and afterwards there was a long conversation..."

"You are inclined to go a little too far, my good boy, with your guesses," said Mrs. Epanchin, with some show of annoyance.

"But it's not I alone," cried Colia. "They all talked about it, and they do still. Why, just now Prince S. and Adelaida Ivanovna declared that they upheld 'the poor knight'; so evidently there does exist a 'poor knight'; and if it were not for Adelaida Ivanovna, we should have known long ago who the 'poor knight' was."

"Why, how am I to blame?" asked Adelaida, smiling.

"You wouldn't draw his portrait for us, that's why you are to blame! Aglaya Ivanovna asked you to draw his portrait, and gave you the whole subject of the picture. She invented it herself; and you wouldn't."

"What was I to draw? According to the lines she quoted:

"From his face he never lifted
That eternal mask of steel."

"What sort of a face was I to draw? I couldn't draw a mask."

"I don't know what you are driving at; what mask do you mean?" said Mrs. Epanchin, irritably. She began to see pretty clearly though what it meant, and whom they referred to by the generally accepted title of "poor knight." But what specially annoyed her was that the prince was looking so uncomfortable, and blushing like a ten-year-old child.

"Well, have you finished your silly joke?" she added, "and am I to be told what this 'poor knight' means, or is it a solemn secret which cannot be approached lightly?"

But they all laughed on.

"It's simply that there is a Russian poem," began Prince S., evidently anxious to change the conversation, "a strange thing, without beginning or end, and all about a 'poor knight.' A month or so ago, we were all talking and laughing, and looking up a subject for one of Adelaida's pictures—you know it is the principal business of this family to find subjects for Adelaida's pictures. Well, we happened upon this 'poor knight.' I don't remember who thought of it first—"

"Oh! Aglaya Ivanovna did," said Colia.

"Very likely—I don't recollect," continued Prince S.

“Some of us laughed at the subject; some liked it; but she declared that, in order to make a picture of the gentleman, she must first see his face. We then began to think over all our friends’ faces to see if any of them would do, and none suited us, and so the matter stood; that’s all. I don’t know why Nicolai Ardalionovitch has brought up the joke now. What was appropriate and funny then, has quite lost all interest by this time.”

“Probably there’s some new silliness about it,” said Mrs. Epanchin, sarcastically.

“There is no silliness about it at all—only the profoundest respect,” said Aglaya, very seriously. She had quite recovered her temper; in fact, from certain signs, it was fair to conclude that she was delighted to see this joke going so far; and a careful observer might have remarked that her satisfaction dated from the moment when the fact of the prince’s confusion became apparent to all.

“‘Profoundest respect!’ What nonsense! First, insane giggling, and then, all of a sudden, a display of ‘profoundest respect.’ Why respect? Tell me at once, why have you suddenly developed this ‘profound respect,’ eh?”

“Because,” replied Aglaya gravely, “in the poem the knight is described as a man capable of living up to an ideal all his life. That sort of thing is not to be found every day among the men of our times. In the poem it is not stated exactly what the ideal was, but it was evidently some vision, some revelation of pure Beauty, and the knight wore round his neck, instead of a scarf, a rosary. A device—A. N. B.—the meaning of which is not explained, was inscribed on his shield—”

“No, A. N. D.,” corrected Colia.

“I say A. N. B., and so it shall be!” cried Aglaya, irritably. “Anyway, the ‘poor knight’ did not care what his lady was, or what she did. He had chosen his ideal, and he was bound to serve her, and break lances for her, and acknowledge her as the ideal of pure Beauty, whatever she might say or do afterwards. If she had taken to stealing, he would have championed her just the same. I think the poet desired to embody in this one picture the whole spirit of medieval chivalry and the platonic love of a pure and high-souled knight. Of course it’s all an ideal, and in the ‘poor knight’ that spirit reached the utmost limit of asceticism. He is a Don Quixote, only serious and not comical. I used not to understand him, and laughed at him, but now I love the ‘poor knight,’ and respect his actions.”

So ended Aglaya; and, to look at her, it was difficult, indeed, to judge whether she was joking or in earnest.

“Pooh! he was a fool, and his actions were the actions of a fool,” said Mrs. Epanchin; “and as for you, young woman, you ought to know better. At all events, you are not to talk like that again. What poem is it? Recite it! I want to hear this poem! I have hated poetry all my life. Prince, you must excuse this nonsense. We neither of us like this sort of thing! Be patient!”

They certainly were put out, both of them.

The prince tried to say something, but he was too confused, and could not get his words out. Aglaya, who had taken such liberties in her little speech, was the only person present, perhaps, who was not in the least embarrassed. She seemed, in fact, quite pleased.

She now rose solemnly from her seat, walked to the centre of the terrace, and stood in front of the prince’s chair. All looked on with some surprise, and Prince S. and her sisters with feelings of decided alarm, to see what new frolic she was up to; it had gone quite far enough already, they thought. But Aglaya evidently thoroughly enjoyed the affectation and ceremony with which she was introducing her recitation of the poem.

Mrs. Epanchin was just wondering whether she would not forbid the performance after all, when, at the very moment that Aglaya commenced her declamation, two new guests, both talking loudly, entered from the street. The new arrivals were General Epanchin and a young man.

Their entrance caused some slight commotion.