

VII.

The young fellow accompanying the general was about twenty-eight, tall, and well built, with a handsome and clever face, and bright black eyes, full of fun and intelligence.

Aglaya did not so much as glance at the new arrivals, but went on with her recitation, gazing at the prince the while in an affected manner, and at him alone. It was clear to him that she was doing all this with some special object.

But the new guests at least somewhat eased his strained and uncomfortable position. Seeing them approaching, he rose from his chair, and nodding amicably to the general, signed to him not to interrupt the recitation. He then got behind his chair, and stood there with his left hand resting on the back of it. Thanks to this change of position, he was able to listen to the ballad with far less embarrassment than before. Mrs. Epanchin had also twice motioned to the new arrivals to be quiet, and stay where they were.

The prince was much interested in the young man who had just entered. He easily concluded that this was Evgenie Pavlovitch Radomski, of whom he had already heard mention several times. He was puzzled, however, by the young man's plain clothes, for he had always heard of Evgenie Pavlovitch as a military man. An ironical smile played on Evgenie's lips all the while the recitation was proceeding, which showed that he, too, was probably in the secret of the 'poor knight' joke. But it had become quite a different matter with Aglaya. All the affectation of manner which she had displayed at the beginning disappeared as the ballad proceeded. She spoke the lines in so serious and exalted a manner, and with so much taste, that she even seemed to justify the exaggerated solemnity with which she had stepped forward. It was impossible to discern in her now anything but a deep feeling for the spirit of the poem which she had undertaken to interpret.

Her eyes were aglow with inspiration, and a slight tremor of rapture passed over her lovely features once or twice. She continued to recite:

"Once there came a vision glorious,
Mystic, dreadful, wondrous fair;
Burned itself into his spirit,
And abode for ever there!

"Never more—from that sweet moment—
Gazéd he on womankind;

He was dumb to love and wooing
And to all their graces blind.

“Full of love for that sweet vision,
Brave and pure he took the field;
With his blood he stained the letters
N. P. B. upon his shield.

“Lumen caeli, sancta Rosa!’
Shouting on the foe he fell,
And like thunder rang his war-cry
O’er the cowering infidel.

“Then within his distant castle,
Home returned, he dreamed his days—
Silent, sad,—and when death took him
He was mad, the legend says.”

When recalling all this afterwards the prince could not for the life of him understand how to reconcile the beautiful, sincere, pure nature of the girl with the irony of this jest. That it was a jest there was no doubt whatever; he knew that well enough, and had good reason, too, for his conviction; for during her recitation of the ballad Aglaya had deliberately changed the letters A. N. B. into N. P. B. He was quite sure she had not done this by accident, and that his ears had not deceived him. At all events her performance—which was a joke, of course, if rather a crude one,—was premeditated. They had evidently talked (and laughed) over the ‘poor knight’ for more than a month.

Yet Aglaya had brought out these letters N. P. B. not only without the slightest appearance of irony, or even any particular accentuation, but with so even and unbroken an appearance of seriousness that assuredly anyone might have supposed that these initials were the original ones written in the ballad. The thing made an uncomfortable impression upon the prince. Of course Mrs. Epanchin saw nothing either in the change of initials or in the insinuation embodied therein. General Epanchin only knew that there was a recitation of verses going on, and took no further interest in the matter. Of the rest of the audience, many had understood the allusion and wondered both at the daring of the lady and at the motive underlying it, but tried to show no sign of their feelings. But Evgenie Pavlovitch (as the prince was ready to wager) both comprehended and tried his best to show that he comprehended; his smile was too mocking to leave any doubt on that point.

“How beautiful that is!” cried Mrs. Epanchin, with sincere admiration. “Whose is it?”

“Pushkin’s, mama, of course! Don’t disgrace us all by showing your ignorance,” said Adelaida.

“As soon as we reach home give it to me to read.”

“I don’t think we have a copy of Pushkin in the house.”

“There are a couple of torn volumes somewhere; they have been lying about from time immemorial,” added Alexandra.

“Send Feodor or Alexey up by the very first train to buy a copy, then.—Aglaya, come here—kiss me, dear, you recited beautifully! but,” she added in a whisper, “if you were sincere I am sorry for you. If it was a joke, I do not approve of the feelings which prompted you to do it, and in any case you would have done far better not to recite it at all. Do you understand?—Now come along, young woman; we’ve sat here too long. I’ll speak to you about this another time.”

Meanwhile the prince took the opportunity of greeting General Epanchin, and the general introduced Evgenie Pavlovitch to him.

“I caught him up on the way to your house,” explained the general. “He had heard that we were all here.”

“Yes, and I heard that you were here, too,” added Evgenie Pavlovitch; “and since I had long promised myself the pleasure of seeking not only your acquaintance but your friendship, I did not wish to waste time, but came straight on. I am sorry to hear that you are unwell.”

“Oh, but I’m quite well now, thank you, and very glad to make your acquaintance. Prince S. has often spoken to me about you,” said Muishkin, and for an instant the two men looked intently into one another’s eyes.

The prince remarked that Evgenie Pavlovitch’s plain clothes had evidently made a great impression upon the company present, so much so that all other interests seemed to be effaced before this surprising fact.

His change of dress was evidently a matter of some importance. Adelaida and Alexandra poured out a stream of questions; Prince S., a relative of the young man, appeared annoyed; and Ivan Fedorovitch quite excited. Aglaya alone was not interested. She merely looked closely at Evgenie for a minute, curious perhaps as to whether civil or military clothes became him best, then turned away and paid no more attention to him or his costume. Lizabetha Prokofievna asked no questions, but it was

clear that she was uneasy, and the prince fancied that Evgenie was not in her good graces.

“He has astonished me,” said Ivan Fedorovitch. “I nearly fell down with surprise. I could hardly believe my eyes when I met him in Petersburg just now. Why this haste? That’s what I want to know. He has always said himself that there is no need to break windows.”

Evgenie Pavlovitch remarked here that he had spoken of his intention of leaving the service long ago. He had, however, always made more or less of a joke about it, so no one had taken him seriously. For that matter he joked about everything, and his friends never knew what to believe, especially if he did not wish them to understand him.

“I have only retired for a time,” said he, laughing. “For a few months; at most for a year.”

“But there is no necessity for you to retire at all,” complained the general, “as far as I know.”

“I want to go and look after my country estates. You advised me to do that yourself,” was the reply. “And then I wish to go abroad.”

After a few more expostulations, the conversation drifted into other channels, but the prince, who had been an attentive listener, thought all this excitement about so small a matter very curious. “There must be more in it than appears,” he said to himself.

“I see the ‘poor knight’ has come on the scene again,” said Evgenie Pavlovitch, stepping to Aglaya’s side.

To the amazement of the prince, who overheard the remark, Aglaya looked haughtily and inquiringly at the questioner, as though she would give him to know, once for all, that there could be no talk between them about the ‘poor knight,’ and that she did not understand his question.

“But not now! It is too late to send to town for a Pushkin now. It is much too late, I say!” Colia was exclaiming in a loud voice. “I have told you so at least a hundred times.”

“Yes, it is really much too late to send to town now,” said Evgenie Pavlovitch, who had escaped from Aglaya as rapidly as possible. “I am sure the shops are shut in Petersburg; it is past eight o’clock,” he added, looking at his watch.

“We have done without him so far,” interrupted Adelaida in her turn. “Surely we can wait until to-morrow.”

“Besides,” said Colia, “it is quite unusual, almost improper, for people in our position to take any interest in literature. Ask Evgenie Pavlovitch if I am not right. It is much more fashionable to drive a waggonette with red wheels.”

“You got that from some magazine, Colia,” remarked Adelaida.

“He gets most of his conversation in that way,” laughed Evgenie Pavlovitch. “He borrows whole phrases from the reviews. I have long had the pleasure of knowing both Nicholai Ardalionovitch and his conversational methods, but this time he was not repeating something he had read; he was alluding, no doubt, to my yellow waggonette, which has, or had, red wheels. But I have exchanged it, so you are rather behind the times, Colia.”

The prince had been listening attentively to Radomski’s words, and thought his manner very pleasant. When Colia chaffed him about his waggonette he had replied with perfect equality and in a friendly fashion. This pleased Muishkin.

At this moment Vera came up to Lizabetha Prokofievna, carrying several large and beautifully bound books, apparently quite new.

“What is it?” demanded the lady.

“This is Pushkin,” replied the girl. “Papa told me to offer it to you.”

“What? Impossible!” exclaimed Mrs. Epanchin.

“Not as a present, not as a present! I should not have taken the liberty,” said Lebedeff, appearing suddenly from behind his daughter. “It is our own Pushkin, our family copy, Annenkoff’s edition; it could not be bought now. I beg to suggest, with great respect, that your excellency should buy it, and thus quench the noble literary thirst which is consuming you at this moment,” he concluded grandiloquently.

“Oh! if you will sell it, very good—and thank you. You shall not be a loser! But for goodness’ sake, don’t twist about like that, sir! I have heard of you; they tell me you are a very learned person. We must have a talk one of these days. You will bring me the books yourself?”

“With the greatest respect... and... and veneration,” replied Lebedeff, making extraordinary grimaces.

“Well, bring them, with or without respect, provided always you do not drop them on the way; but on the condition,” went on the lady, looking full at him, “that you do not cross my threshold. I do not intend to receive you today. You may send your daughter Vera at once, if you like. I am much pleased with her.”

“Why don’t you tell him about them?” said Vera impatiently to her father. “They will come in, whether you announce them or not, and they are beginning to make a row. Lef Nicolaievitch,”—she addressed herself to the prince—“four men are here asking for you. They have waited some time, and are beginning to make a fuss, and papa will not bring them in.”

“Who are these people?” said the prince.

“They say that they have come on business, and they are the kind of men, who, if you do not see them here, will follow you about the street. It would be better to receive them, and then you will get rid of them. Gavril Ardalionovitch and Ptitsin are both there, trying to make them hear reason.”

“Pavlicheff’s son! It is not worth while!” cried Lebedeff. “There is no necessity to see them, and it would be most unpleasant for your excellency. They do not deserve...”

“What? Pavlicheff’s son!” cried the prince, much perturbed. “I know... I know—but I entrusted this matter to Gavril Ardalionovitch. He told me...”

At that moment Gania, accompanied by Ptitsin, came out to the terrace. From an adjoining room came a noise of angry voices, and General Ivolgin, in loud tones, seemed to be trying to shout them down. Colia rushed off at once to investigate the cause of the uproar.

“This is most interesting!” observed Evgenie Pavlovitch.

“I expect he knows all about it!” thought the prince.

“What, the son of Pavlicheff? And who may this son of Pavlicheff be?” asked General Epanchin with surprise; and looking curiously around him, he discovered that he alone had no clue to the mystery. Expectation and suspense were on every face, with the exception of that of the prince, who stood gravely wondering how an affair so entirely personal could have awakened such lively and widespread interest in so short a time.

Aglaya went up to him with a peculiarly serious look.

“It will be well,” she said, “if you put an end to this affair yourself *at once*: but you must allow us to be your witnesses. They want to throw mud at you, prince, and you must be triumphantly vindicated. I give you joy beforehand!”

“And I also wish for justice to be done, once for all,” cried Madame Epanchin, “about this impudent claim. Deal with them promptly, prince, and don’t spare them! I am sick of hearing about the affair, and many a quarrel I have had in your cause. But I confess I

am anxious to see what happens, so do make them come out here, and we will remain. You have heard people talking about it, no doubt?" she added, turning to Prince S.

"Of course," said he. "I have heard it spoken about at your house, and I am anxious to see these young men!"

"They are Nihilists, are they not?"

"No, they are not Nihilists," explained Lebedeff, who seemed much excited. "This is another lot—a special group. According to my nephew they are more advanced even than the Nihilists. You are quite wrong, excellency, if you think that your presence will intimidate them; nothing intimidates them. Educated men, learned men even, are to be found among Nihilists; these go further, in that they are men of action. The movement is, properly speaking, a derivative from Nihilism—though they are only known indirectly, and by hearsay, for they never advertise their doings in the papers. They go straight to the point. For them, it is not a question of showing that Pushkin is stupid, or that Russia must be torn in pieces. No; but if they have a great desire for anything, they believe they have a right to get it even at the cost of the lives, say, of eight persons. They are checked by no obstacles. In fact, prince, I should not advise you..."

But Muishkin had risen, and was on his way to open the door for his visitors.

"You are slandering them, Lebedeff," said he, smiling.

"You are always thinking about your nephew's conduct. Don't believe him, Lizabetha Prokofievna. I can assure you Gorsky and Daniloff are exceptions—and that these are only... mistaken. However, I do not care about receiving them here, in public. Excuse me, Lizabetha Prokofievna. They are coming, and you can see them, and then I will take them away. Please come in, gentlemen!"

Another thought tormented him: He wondered was this an arranged business—arranged to happen when he had guests in his house, and in anticipation of his humiliation rather than of his triumph? But he reproached himself bitterly for such a thought, and felt as if he should die of shame if it were discovered. When his new visitors appeared, he was quite ready to believe himself infinitely less to be respected than any of them.

Four persons entered, led by General Ivogin, in a state of great excitement, and talking eloquently.

“He is for me, undoubtedly!” thought the prince, with a smile. Colia also had joined the party, and was talking with animation to Hippolyte, who listened with a jeering smile on his lips.

The prince begged the visitors to sit down. They were all so young that it made the proceedings seem even more extraordinary. Ivan Fedorovitch, who really understood nothing of what was going on, felt indignant at the sight of these youths, and would have interfered in some way had it not been for the extreme interest shown by his wife in the affair. He therefore remained, partly through curiosity, partly through good-nature, hoping that his presence might be of some use. But the bow with which General Ivolgin greeted him irritated him anew; he frowned, and decided to be absolutely silent.

As to the rest, one was a man of thirty, the retired officer, now a boxer, who had been with Rogojin, and in his happier days had given fifteen roubles at a time to beggars. Evidently he had joined the others as a comrade to give them moral, and if necessary material, support. The man who had been spoken of as “Pavlicheff’s son,” although he gave the name of Antip Burdovsky, was about twenty-two years of age, fair, thin and rather tall. He was remarkable for the poverty, not to say uncleanliness, of his personal appearance: the sleeves of his overcoat were greasy; his dirty waistcoat, buttoned up to his neck, showed not a trace of linen; a filthy black silk scarf, twisted till it resembled a cord, was round his neck, and his hands were unwashed. He looked round with an air of insolent effrontery. His face, covered with pimples, was neither thoughtful nor even contemptuous; it wore an expression of complacent satisfaction in demanding his rights and in being an aggrieved party. His voice trembled, and he spoke so fast, and with such stammerings, that he might have been taken for a foreigner, though the purest Russian blood ran in his veins. Lebedeff’s nephew, whom the reader has seen already, accompanied him, and also the youth named Hippolyte Terentieff. The latter was only seventeen or eighteen. He had an intelligent face, though it was usually irritated and fretful in expression. His skeleton-like figure, his ghastly complexion, the brightness of his eyes, and the red spots of colour on his cheeks, betrayed the victim of consumption to the most casual glance. He coughed persistently, and panted for breath; it looked as though he had but a few weeks more to live. He was nearly dead with fatigue, and fell, rather than sat, into a chair. The rest bowed as they came in; and being more or less abashed, put on an air of extreme self-assurance. In short, their attitude was not that which one would have expected in men who professed to despise all trivialities, all foolish mundane conventions, and indeed everything, except their own personal interests.

“Antip Burdovsky,” stuttered the son of Pavlicheff.

“Vladimir Doktorenko,” said Lebedeff’s nephew briskly, and with a certain pride, as if he boasted of his name.

“Keller,” murmured the retired officer.

“Hippolyte Terentieff,” cried the last-named, in a shrill voice.

They sat now in a row facing the prince, and frowned, and played with their caps. All appeared ready to speak, and yet all were silent; the defiant expression on their faces seemed to say, “No, sir, you don’t take us in!” It could be felt that the first word spoken by anyone present would bring a torrent of speech from the whole deputation.

VIII.

“I *did* not expect you, gentlemen,” began the prince. “I have been ill until to-day. A month ago,” he continued, addressing himself to Antip Burdovsky, “I put your business into Gavril Ardalionovitch Ivolgin’s hands, as I told you then. I do not in the least object to having a personal interview... but you will agree with me that this is hardly the time... I propose that we go into another room, if you will not keep me long... As you see, I have friends here, and believe me...”

“Friends as many as you please, but allow me,” interrupted the harsh voice of Lebedeff’s nephew—“allow me to tell you that you might have treated us rather more politely, and not have kept us waiting at least two hours...”

“No doubt... and I... is that acting like a prince? And you... you may be a general! But I... I am not your valet! And I... I...” stammered Antip Burdovsky.

He was extremely excited; his lips trembled, and the resentment of an embittered soul was in his voice. But he spoke so indistinctly that hardly a dozen words could be gathered.

“It was a princely action!” sneered Hippolyte.

“If anyone had treated me so,” grumbled the boxer.

“I mean to say that if I had been in Burdovsky’s place...!...”

“Gentlemen, I did not know you were there; I have only just been informed, I assure you,” repeated Muishkin.

“We are not afraid of your friends, prince,” remarked Lebedeff’s nephew, “for we are within our rights.”

The shrill tones of Hippolyte interrupted him. "What right have you... by what right do you demand us to submit this matter, about Burdovsky... to the judgment of your friends? We know only too well what the judgment of your friends will be!..."

This beginning gave promise of a stormy discussion. The prince was much discouraged, but at last he managed to make himself heard amid the vociferations of his excited visitors.

"If you," he said, addressing Burdovsky—"if you prefer not to speak here, I offer again to go into another room with you... and as to your waiting to see me, I repeat that I only this instant heard..."

"Well, you have no right, you have no right, no right at all!... Your friends indeed!..." gabbled Burdovsky, defiantly examining the faces round him, and becoming more and more excited. "You have no right!..." As he ended thus abruptly, he leant forward, staring at the prince with his short-sighted, bloodshot eyes. The latter was so astonished, that he did not reply, but looked steadily at him in return.

"Lef Nicolaievitch!" interposed Madame Epanchin, suddenly, "read this at once, this very moment! It is about this business."

She held out a weekly comic paper, pointing to an article on one of its pages. Just as the visitors were coming in, Lebedeff, wishing to ingratiate himself with the great lady, had pulled this paper from his pocket, and presented it to her, indicating a few columns marked in pencil. Lizabetha Prokofievna had had time to read some of it, and was greatly upset.

"Would it not be better to peruse it alone... later," asked the prince, nervously.

"No, no, read it—read it at once directly, and aloud, aloud!" cried she, calling Colia to her and giving him the journal.—"Read it aloud, so that everyone may hear it!"

An impetuous woman, Lizabetha Prokofievna sometimes weighed her anchors and put out to sea quite regardless of the possible storms she might encounter. Ivan Fedorovitch felt a sudden pang of alarm, but the others were merely curious, and somewhat surprised. Colia unfolded the paper, and began to read, in his clear, high-pitched voice, the following article:

"Proletarians and scions of nobility! An episode of the brigandage of today and every day! Progress! Reform! Justice!"

"Strange things are going on in our so-called Holy Russia in this age of reform and great enterprises; this age of patriotism in which hundreds of millions are yearly sent

abroad; in which industry is encouraged, and the hands of Labour paralyzed, etc.; there is no end to this, gentlemen, so let us come to the point. A strange thing has happened to a scion of our defunct aristocracy. (*De profundis!*) The grandfathers of these scions ruined themselves at the gaming-tables; their fathers were forced to serve as officers or subalterns; some have died just as they were about to be tried for innocent thoughtlessness in the handling of public funds. Their children are sometimes congenital idiots, like the hero of our story; sometimes they are found in the dock at the Assizes, where they are generally acquitted by the jury for edifying motives; sometimes they distinguish themselves by one of those burning scandals that amaze the public and add another blot to the stained record of our age. Six months ago—that is, last winter—this particular scion returned to Russia, wearing gaiters like a foreigner, and shivering with cold in an old scantily-lined cloak. He had come from Switzerland, where he had just undergone a successful course of treatment for idiocy (*sic!*). Certainly Fortune favoured him, for, apart from the interesting malady of which he was cured in Switzerland (can there be a cure for idiocy?) his story proves the truth of the Russian proverb that ‘happiness is the right of certain classes!’ Judge for yourselves. Our subject was an infant in arms when he lost his father, an officer who died just as he was about to be court-martialled for gambling away the funds of his company, and perhaps also for flogging a subordinate to excess (remember the good old days, gentlemen). The orphan was brought up by the charity of a very rich Russian landowner. In the good old days, this man, whom we will call P—, owned four thousand souls as serfs (souls as serfs!—can you understand such an expression, gentlemen? I cannot; it must be looked up in a dictionary before one can understand it; these things of a bygone day are already unintelligible to us). He appears to have been one of those Russian parasites who lead an idle existence abroad, spending the summer at some spa, and the winter in Paris, to the greater profit of the organizers of public balls. It may safely be said that the manager of the Chateau des Fleurs (lucky man!) pocketed at least a third of the money paid by Russian peasants to their lords in the days of serfdom. However this may be, the gay P— brought up the orphan like a prince, provided him with tutors and governesses (pretty, of course!) whom he chose himself in Paris. But the little aristocrat, the last of his noble race, was an idiot. The governesses, recruited at the Chateau des Fleurs, laboured in vain; at twenty years of age their pupil could not speak in any language, not even Russian. But ignorance of the latter was still excusable. At last P— was seized with a strange notion; he imagined that in Switzerland they could change an idiot into a man of sense. After all, the idea was quite logical; a parasite and landowner naturally supposed that intelligence was a marketable commodity like everything else, and that in Switzerland especially it could be bought for money. The

case was entrusted to a celebrated Swiss professor, and cost thousands of roubles; the treatment lasted five years. Needless to say, the idiot did not become intelligent, but it is alleged that he grew into something more or less resembling a man. At this stage P—— died suddenly, and, as usual, he had made no will and left his affairs in disorder. A crowd of eager claimants arose, who cared nothing about any last scion of a noble race undergoing treatment in Switzerland, at the expense of the deceased, as a congenital idiot. Idiot though he was, the noble scion tried to cheat his professor, and they say he succeeded in getting him to continue the treatment gratis for two years, by concealing the death of his benefactor. But the professor himself was a charlatan. Getting anxious at last when no money was forthcoming, and alarmed above all by his patient's appetite, he presented him with a pair of old gaiters and a shabby cloak and packed him off to Russia, third class. It would seem that Fortune had turned her back upon our hero. Not at all; Fortune, who lets whole populations die of hunger, showered all her gifts at once upon the little aristocrat, like Kryloff's Cloud which passes over an arid plain and empties itself into the sea. He had scarcely arrived in St. Petersburg, when a relation of his mother's (who was of bourgeois origin, of course), died at Moscow. He was a merchant, an Old Believer, and he had no children. He left a fortune of several millions in good current coin, and everything came to our noble scion, our gaitered baron, formerly treated for idiocy in a Swiss lunatic asylum. Instantly the scene changed, crowds of friends gathered round our baron, who meanwhile had lost his head over a celebrated demi-mondaine; he even discovered some relations; moreover a number of young girls of high birth burned to be united to him in lawful matrimony. Could anyone possibly imagine a better match? Aristocrat, millionaire, and idiot, he has every advantage! One might hunt in vain for his equal, even with the lantern of Diogenes; his like is not to be had even by getting it made to order!"

"Oh, I don't know what this means" cried Ivan Fedorovitch, transported with indignation.

"Leave off, Colia," begged the prince. Exclamations arose on all sides.

"Let him go on reading at all costs!" ordered Lizabetha Prokofievna, evidently preserving her composure by a desperate effort. "Prince, if the reading is stopped, you and I will quarrel."

Colia had no choice but to obey. With crimson cheeks he read on unsteadily:

"But while our young millionaire dwelt as it were in the Empyrean, something new occurred. One fine morning a man called upon him, calm and severe of aspect, distinguished, but plainly dressed. Politely, but in dignified terms, as befitted his

errand, he briefly explained the motive for his visit. He was a lawyer of enlightened views; his client was a young man who had consulted him in confidence. This young man was no other than the son of P——, though he bears another name. In his youth P——, the sensualist, had seduced a young girl, poor but respectable. She was a serf, but had received a European education. Finding that a child was expected, he hastened her marriage with a man of noble character who had loved her for a long time. He helped the young couple for a time, but he was soon obliged to give up, for the high-minded husband refused to accept anything from him. Soon the careless nobleman forgot all about his former mistress and the child she had borne him; then, as we know, he died intestate. P——'s son, born after his mother's marriage, found a true father in the generous man whose name he bore. But when he also died, the orphan was left to provide for himself, his mother now being an invalid who had lost the use of her limbs. Leaving her in a distant province, he came to the capital in search of pupils. By dint of daily toil he earned enough to enable him to follow the college courses, and at last to enter the university. But what can one earn by teaching the children of Russian merchants at ten copecks a lesson, especially with an invalid mother to keep? Even her death did not much diminish the hardships of the young man's struggle for existence. Now this is the question: how, in the name of justice, should our scion have argued the case? Our readers will think, no doubt, that he would say to himself: 'P—— showered benefits upon me all my life; he spent tens of thousands of roubles to educate me, to provide me with governesses, and to keep me under treatment in Switzerland. Now I am a millionaire, and P——'s son, a noble young man who is not responsible for the faults of his careless and forgetful father, is wearing himself out giving ill-paid lessons. According to justice, all that was done for me ought to have been done for him. The enormous sums spent upon me were not really mine; they came to me by an error of blind Fortune, when they ought to have gone to P——'s son. They should have gone to benefit him, not me, in whom P—— interested himself by a mere caprice, instead of doing his duty as a father. If I wished to behave nobly, justly, and with delicacy, I ought to bestow half my fortune upon the son of my benefactor; but as economy is my favourite virtue, and I know this is not a case in which the law can intervene, I will not give up half my millions. But it would be too openly vile, too flagrantly infamous, if I did not at least restore to P——'s son the tens of thousands of roubles spent in curing my idiocy. This is simply a case of conscience and of strict justice. Whatever would have become of me if P—— had not looked after my education, and had taken care of his own son instead of me?'

"No, gentlemen, our scions of the nobility do not reason thus. The lawyer, who had taken up the matter purely out of friendship to the young man, and almost against his

will, invoked every consideration of justice, delicacy, honour, and even plain figures; in vain, the ex-patient of the Swiss lunatic asylum was inflexible. All this might pass, but the sequel is absolutely unpardonable, and not to be excused by any interesting malady. This millionaire, having but just discarded the old gaiters of his professor, could not even understand that the noble young man slaving away at his lessons was not asking for charitable help, but for his rightful due, though the debt was not a legal one; that, correctly speaking, he was not asking for anything, but it was merely his friends who had thought fit to bestir themselves on his behalf. With the cool insolence of a bloated capitalist, secure in his millions, he majestically drew a banknote for fifty roubles from his pocket-book and sent it to the noble young man as a humiliating piece of charity. You can hardly believe it, gentlemen! You are scandalized and disgusted; you cry out in indignation! But that is what he did! Needless to say, the money was returned, or rather flung back in his face. The case is not within the province of the law, it must be referred to the tribunal of public opinion; this is what we now do, guaranteeing the truth of all the details which we have related.”

When Colia had finished reading, he handed the paper to the prince, and retired silently to a corner of the room, hiding his face in his hands. He was overcome by a feeling of inexpressible shame; his boyish sensitiveness was wounded beyond endurance. It seemed to him that something extraordinary, some sudden catastrophe had occurred, and that he was almost the cause of it, because he had read the article aloud.

Yet all the others were similarly affected. The girls were uncomfortable and ashamed. Lizabetha Prokofievna restrained her violent anger by a great effort; perhaps she bitterly regretted her interference in the matter; for the present she kept silence. The prince felt as very shy people often do in such a case; he was so ashamed of the conduct of other people, so humiliated for his guests, that he dared not look them in the face. Ptitsin, Varia, Gania, and Lebedeff himself, all looked rather confused. Stranger still, Hippolyte and the “son of Pavlicheff” also seemed slightly surprised, and Lebedeff’s nephew was obviously far from pleased. The boxer alone was perfectly calm; he twisted his moustaches with affected dignity, and if his eyes were cast down it was certainly not in confusion, but rather in noble modesty, as if he did not wish to be insolent in his triumph. It was evident that he was delighted with the article.

“The devil knows what it means,” growled Ivan Fedorovitch, under his breath; “it must have taken the united wits of fifty footmen to write it.”

“May I ask your reason for such an insulting supposition, sir?” said Hippolyte, trembling with rage.

“You will admit yourself, general, that for an honourable man, if the author is an honourable man, that is an—an insult,” growled the boxer suddenly, with convulsive jerkings of his shoulders.

“In the first place, it is not for you to address me as ‘sir,’ and, in the second place, I refuse to give you any explanation,” said Ivan Fedorovitch vehemently; and he rose without another word, and went and stood on the first step of the flight that led from the verandah to the street, turning his back on the company. He was indignant with Lizabetha Prokofievna, who did not think of moving even now.

“Gentlemen, gentlemen, let me speak at last,” cried the prince, anxious and agitated. “Please let us understand one another. I say nothing about the article, gentlemen, except that every word is false; I say this because you know it as well as I do. It is shameful. I should be surprised if any one of you could have written it.”

“I did not know of its existence till this moment,” declared Hippolyte. “I do not approve of it.”

“I knew it had been written, but I would not have advised its publication,” said Lebedeff’s nephew, “because it is premature.”

“I knew it, but I have a right. I... I...” stammered the “son of Pavlicheff.”

“What! Did you write all that yourself? Is it possible?” asked the prince, regarding Burdovsky with curiosity.

“One might dispute your right to ask such questions,” observed Lebedeff’s nephew.

“I was only surprised that Mr. Burdovsky should have—however, this is what I have to say. Since you had already given the matter publicity, why did you object just now, when I began to speak of it to my friends?”

“At last!” murmured Lizabetha Prokofievna indignantly.

Lebedeff could restrain himself no longer; he made his way through the row of chairs.

“Prince,” he cried, “you are forgetting that if you consented to receive and hear them, it was only because of your kind heart which has no equal, for they had not the least right to demand it, especially as you had placed the matter in the hands of Gavriila Ardalionovitch, which was also extremely kind of you. You are also forgetting, most excellent prince, that you are with friends, a select company; you cannot sacrifice them to these gentlemen, and it is only for you to have them turned out this instant. As the master of the house I shall have great pleasure”

“Quite right!” agreed General Ivolgin in a loud voice.

“That will do, Lebedeff, that will do—” began the prince, when an indignant outcry drowned his words.

“Excuse me, prince, excuse me, but now that will not do,” shouted Lebedeff’s nephew, his voice dominating all the others. “The matter must be clearly stated, for it is obviously not properly understood. They are calling in some legal chicanery, and upon that ground they are threatening to turn us out of the house! Really, prince, do you think we are such fools as not to be aware that this matter does not come within the law, and that legally we cannot claim a rouble from you? But we are also aware that if actual law is not on our side, human law is for us, natural law, the law of common-sense and conscience, which is no less binding upon every noble and honest man—that is, every man of sane judgment—because it is not to be found in miserable legal codes. If we come here without fear of being turned out (as was threatened just now) because of the imperative tone of our demand, and the unseemliness of such a visit at this late hour (though it was not late when we arrived, we were kept waiting in your anteroom), if, I say, we came in without fear, it is just because we expected to find you a man of sense; I mean, a man of honour and conscience. It is quite true that we did not present ourselves humbly, like your flatterers and parasites, but holding up our heads as befits independent men. We present no petition, but a proud and free demand (note it well, we do not beseech, we demand!). We ask you fairly and squarely in a dignified manner. Do you believe that in this affair of Burdovsky you have right on your side? Do you admit that Pavlicheff overwhelmed you with benefits, and perhaps saved your life? If you admit it (which we take for granted), do you intend, now that you are a millionaire, and do you not think it in conformity with justice, to indemnify Burdovsky? Yes or no? If it is yes, or, in other words, if you possess what you call honour and conscience, and we more justly call common-sense, then accede to our demand, and the matter is at an end. Give us satisfaction, without entreaties or thanks from us; do not expect thanks from us, for what you do will be done not for our sake, but for the sake of justice. If you refuse to satisfy us, that is, if your answer is no, we will go away at once, and there will be an end of the matter. But we will tell you to your face before the present company that you are a man of vulgar and undeveloped mind; we will openly deny you the right to speak in future of your honour and conscience, for you have not paid the fair price of such a right. I have no more to say—I have put the question before you. Now turn us out if you dare. You can do it; force is on your side. But remember that we do not beseech, we demand! We do not beseech, we demand!”

With these last excited words, Lebedeff’s nephew was silent.

“We demand, we demand, we demand, we do not beseech,” spluttered Burdovsky, red as a lobster.

The speech of Lebedeff’s nephew caused a certain stir among the company; murmurs arose, though with the exception of Lebedeff, who was still very much excited, everyone was careful not to interfere in the matter. Strangely enough, Lebedeff, although on the prince’s side, seemed quite proud of his nephew’s eloquence. Gratified vanity was visible in the glances he cast upon the assembled company.

“In my opinion, Mr. Doktorenko,” said the prince, in rather a low voice, “you are quite right in at least half of what you say. I would go further and say that you are altogether right, and that I quite agree with you, if there were not something lacking in your speech. I cannot undertake to say precisely what it is, but you have certainly omitted something, and you cannot be quite just while there is something lacking. But let us put that aside and return to the point. Tell me what induced you to publish this article. Every word of it is a calumny, and I think, gentlemen, that you have been guilty of a mean action.”

“Allow me—”

“Sir—”

“What? What? What?” cried all the visitors at once, in violent agitation.

“As to the article,” said Hippolyte in his croaking voice, “I have told you already that we none of us approve of it! There is the writer,” he added, pointing to the boxer, who sat beside him. “I quite admit that he has written it in his old regimental manner, with an equal disregard for style and decency. I know he is a cross between a fool and an adventurer; I make no bones about telling him so to his face every day. But after all he is half justified; publicity is the lawful right of every man; consequently, Burdovsky is not excepted. Let him answer for his own blunders. As to the objection which I made just now in the name of all, to the presence of your friends, I think I ought to explain, gentlemen, that I only did so to assert our rights, though we really wished to have witnesses; we had agreed unanimously upon the point before we came in. We do not care who your witnesses may be, or whether they are your friends or not. As they cannot fail to recognize Burdovsky’s right (seeing that it is mathematically demonstrable), it is just as well that the witnesses should be your friends. The truth will only be more plainly evident.”

“It is quite true; we had agreed upon that point,” said Lebedeff’s nephew, in confirmation.

“If that is the case, why did you begin by making such a fuss about it?” asked the astonished prince.

The boxer was dying to get in a few words; owing, no doubt, to the presence of the ladies, he was becoming quite jovial.

“As to the article, prince,” he said, “I admit that I wrote it, in spite of the severe criticism of my poor friend, in whom I always overlook many things because of his unfortunate state of health. But I wrote and published it in the form of a letter, in the paper of a friend. I showed it to no one but Burdovsky, and I did not read it all through, even to him. He immediately gave me permission to publish it, but you will admit that I might have done so without his consent. Publicity is a noble, beneficent, and universal right. I hope, prince, that you are too progressive to deny this?”

“I deny nothing, but you must confess that your article—”

“Is a bit thick, you mean? Well, in a way that is in the public interest; you will admit that yourself, and after all one cannot overlook a blatant fact. So much the worse for the guilty parties, but the public welfare must come before everything. As to certain inaccuracies and figures of speech, so to speak, you will also admit that the motive, aim, and intention, are the chief thing. It is a question, above all, of making a wholesome example; the individual case can be examined afterwards; and as to the style—well, the thing was meant to be humorous, so to speak, and, after all, everybody writes like that; you must admit it yourself! Ha, ha!”

“But, gentlemen, I assure you that you are quite astray,” exclaimed the prince. “You have published this article upon the supposition that I would never consent to satisfy Mr. Burdovsky. Acting on that conviction, you have tried to intimidate me by this publication and to be revenged for my supposed refusal. But what did you know of my intentions? It may be that I have resolved to satisfy Mr. Burdovsky’s claim. I now declare openly, in the presence of these witnesses, that I will do so.”

“The noble and intelligent word of an intelligent and most noble man, at last!” exclaimed the boxer.

“Good God!” exclaimed Lizabetha Prokofievna involuntarily.

“This is intolerable,” growled the general.

“Allow me, gentlemen, allow me,” urged the prince.

“I will explain matters to you. Five weeks ago I received a visit from Tchebaroff, your agent, Mr. Burdovsky. You have given a very flattering description of him in your article,

Mr. Keller," he continued, turning to the boxer with a smile, "but he did not please me at all. I saw at once that Tchebaroff was the moving spirit in the matter, and, to speak frankly, I thought he might have induced you, Mr. Burdovsky, to make this claim, by taking advantage of your simplicity."

"You have no right.... I am not simple," stammered Burdovsky, much agitated.

"You have no sort of right to suppose such things," said Lebedeff's nephew in a tone of authority.

"It is most offensive!" shrieked Hippolyte; "it is an insulting suggestion, false, and most ill-timed."

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen; please excuse me," said the prince. "I thought absolute frankness on both sides would be best, but have it your own way. I told Tchebaroff that, as I was not in Petersburg, I would commission a friend to look into the matter without delay, and that I would let you know, Mr. Burdovsky. Gentlemen, I have no hesitation in telling you that it was the fact of Tchebaroff's intervention that made me suspect a fraud. Oh! do not take offence at my words, gentlemen, for Heaven's sake do not be so touchy!" cried the prince, seeing that Burdovsky was getting excited again, and that the rest were preparing to protest. "If I say I suspected a fraud, there is nothing personal in that. I had never seen any of you then; I did not even know your names; I only judged by Tchebaroff; I am speaking quite generally—if you only knew how I have been 'done' since I came into my fortune!"

"You are shockingly naive, prince," said Lebedeff's nephew in mocking tones.

"Besides, though you are a prince and a millionaire, and even though you may really be simple and good-hearted, you can hardly be outside the general law," Hippolyte declared loudly.

"Perhaps not; it is very possible," the prince agreed hastily, "though I do not know what general law you allude to. I will go on—only please do not take offence without good cause. I assure you I do not mean to offend you in the least. Really, it is impossible to speak three words sincerely without your flying into a rage! At first I was amazed when Tchebaroff told me that Pavlicheff had a son, and that he was in such a miserable position. Pavlicheff was my benefactor, and my father's friend. Oh, Mr. Keller, why does your article impute things to my father without the slightest foundation? He never squandered the funds of his company nor ill-treated his subordinates, I am absolutely certain of it; I cannot imagine how you could bring yourself to write such a calumny! But your assertions concerning Pavlicheff are absolutely intolerable! You do not scruple to make a libertine of that noble man; you call him a sensualist as coolly

as if you were speaking the truth, and yet it would not be possible to find a chaster man. He was even a scholar of note, and in correspondence with several celebrated scientists, and spent large sums in the interests of science. As to his kind heart and his good actions, you were right indeed when you said that I was almost an idiot at that time, and could hardly understand anything—(I could speak and understand Russian, though),—but now I can appreciate what I remember—”

“Excuse me,” interrupted Hippolyte, “is not this rather sentimental? You said you wished to come to the point; please remember that it is after nine o’clock.”

“Very well, gentlemen—very well,” replied the prince. “At first I received the news with mistrust, then I said to myself that I might be mistaken, and that Pavlicheff might possibly have had a son. But I was absolutely amazed at the readiness with which the son had revealed the secret of his birth at the expense of his mother’s honour. For Tchebaroff had already menaced me with publicity in our interview....”

“What nonsense!” Lebedeff’s nephew interrupted violently.

“You have no right—you have no right!” cried Burdovsky.

“The son is not responsible for the misdeeds of his father; and the mother is not to blame,” added Hippolyte, with warmth.

“That seems to me all the more reason for sparing her,” said the prince timidly.

“Prince, you are not only simple, but your simplicity is almost past the limit,” said Lebedeff’s nephew, with a sarcastic smile.

“But what right had you?” said Hippolyte in a very strange tone.

“None—none whatever,” agreed the prince hastily. “I admit you are right there, but it was involuntary, and I immediately said to myself that my personal feelings had nothing to do with it,—that if I thought it right to satisfy the demands of Mr. Burdovsky, out of respect for the memory of Pavlicheff, I ought to do so in any case, whether I esteemed Mr. Burdovsky or not. I only mentioned this, gentlemen, because it seemed so unnatural to me for a son to betray his mother’s secret in such a way. In short, that is what convinced me that Tchebaroff must be a rogue, and that he had induced Mr. Burdovsky to attempt this fraud.”

“But this is intolerable!” cried the visitors, some of them starting to their feet.

“Gentlemen, I supposed from this that poor Mr. Burdovsky must be a simple-minded man, quite defenceless, and an easy tool in the hands of rogues. That is why I thought it my duty to try and help him as ‘Pavlicheff’s son’; in the first place by rescuing him

from the influence of Tchubaroff, and secondly by making myself his friend. I have resolved to give him ten thousand roubles; that is about the sum which I calculate that Pavlicheff must have spent on me.”

“What, only ten thousand!” cried Hippolyte.

“Well, prince, your arithmetic is not up to much, or else you are mighty clever at it, though you affect the air of a simpleton,” said Lebedeff’s nephew.

“I will not accept ten thousand roubles,” said Burdovsky.

“Accept, Antip,” whispered the boxer eagerly, leaning past the back of Hippolyte’s chair to give his friend this piece of advice. “Take it for the present; we can see about more later on.”

“Look here, Mr. Muishkin,” shouted Hippolyte, “please understand that we are not fools, nor idiots, as your guests seem to imagine; these ladies who look upon us with such scorn, and especially this fine gentleman” (pointing to Evgenie Pavlovitch) “whom I have not the honour of knowing, though I think I have heard some talk about him—”

“Really, really, gentlemen,” cried the prince in great agitation, “you are misunderstanding me again. In the first place, Mr. Keller, you have greatly overestimated my fortune in your article. I am far from being a millionaire. I have barely a tenth of what you suppose. Secondly, my treatment in Switzerland was very far from costing tens of thousands of roubles. Schneider received six hundred roubles a year, and he was only paid for the first three years. As to the pretty governesses whom Pavlicheff is supposed to have brought from Paris, they only exist in Mr. Keller’s imagination; it is another calumny. According to my calculations, the sum spent on me was very considerably under ten thousand roubles, but I decided on that sum, and you must admit that in paying a debt I could not offer Mr. Burdovsky more, however kindly disposed I might be towards him; delicacy forbids it; I should seem to be offering him charity instead of rightful payment. I don’t know how you cannot see that, gentlemen! Besides, I had no intention of leaving the matter there. I meant to intervene amicably later on and help to improve poor Mr. Burdovsky’s position. It is clear that he has been deceived, or he would never have agreed to anything so vile as the scandalous revelations about his mother in Mr. Keller’s article. But, gentlemen, why are you getting angry again? Are we never to come to an understanding? Well, the event has proved me right! I have just seen with my own eyes the proof that my conjecture was correct!” he added, with increasing eagerness.

He meant to calm his hearers, and did not perceive that his words had only increased their irritation.

“What do you mean? What are you convinced of?” they demanded angrily.

“In the first place, I have had the opportunity of getting a correct idea of Mr. Burdovsky. I see what he is for myself. He is an innocent man, deceived by everyone! A defenceless victim, who deserves indulgence! Secondly, Gavrila Ardalionovitch, in whose hands I had placed the matter, had his first interview with me barely an hour ago. I had not heard from him for some time, as I was away, and have been ill for three days since my return to St. Petersburg. He tells me that he has exposed the designs of Tchebaroff and has proof that justifies my opinion of him. I know, gentlemen, that many people think me an idiot. Counting upon my reputation as a man whose purse-strings are easily loosened, Tchebaroff thought it would be a simple matter to fleece me, especially by trading on my gratitude to Pavlicheff. But the main point is—listen, gentlemen, let me finish!—the main point is that Mr. Burdovsky is not Pavlicheff’s son at all. Gavrila Ardalionovitch has just told me of his discovery, and assures me that he has positive proofs. Well, what do you think of that? It is scarcely credible, even after all the tricks that have been played upon me. Please note that we have positive proofs! I can hardly believe it myself, I assure you; I do not yet believe it; I am still doubtful, because Gavrila Ardalionovitch has not had time to go into details; but there can be no further doubt that Tchebaroff is a rogue! He has deceived poor Mr. Burdovsky, and all of you, gentlemen, who have come forward so nobly to support your friend—he evidently needs support, I quite see that!). He has abused your credulity and involved you all in an attempted fraud, for when all is said and done this claim is nothing else!”

“What! a fraud? What, he is not Pavlicheff’s son? Impossible!”

These exclamations but feebly expressed the profound bewilderment into which the prince’s words had plunged Burdovsky’s companions.

“Certainly it is a fraud! Since Mr. Burdovsky is not Pavlicheff’s son, his claim is neither more nor less than attempted fraud (supposing, of course, that he had known the truth), but the fact is that he has been deceived. I insist on this point in order to justify him; I repeat that his simple-mindedness makes him worthy of pity, and that he cannot stand alone; otherwise he would have behaved like a scoundrel in this matter. But I feel certain that he does not understand it! I was just the same myself before I went to Switzerland; I stammered incoherently; one tries to express oneself and cannot. I understand that. I am all the better able to pity Mr. Burdovsky, because I know from experience what it is to be like that, and so I have a right to speak. Well, though there is no such person as ‘Pavlicheff’s son,’ and it is all nothing but a humbug,

yet I will keep to my decision, and I am prepared to give up ten thousand roubles in memory of Pavlicheff. Before Mr. Burdovsky made this claim, I proposed to found a school with this money, in memory of my benefactor, but I shall honour his memory quite as well by giving the ten thousand roubles to Mr. Burdovsky, because, though he was not Pavlicheff's son, he was treated almost as though he were. That is what gave a rogue the opportunity of deceiving him; he really did think himself Pavlicheff's son. Listen, gentlemen; this matter must be settled; keep calm; do not get angry; and sit down! Gavril Ardalionovitch will explain everything to you at once, and I confess that I am very anxious to hear all the details myself. He says that he has even been to Pskoff to see your mother, Mr. Burdovsky; she is not dead, as the article which was just read to us makes out. Sit down, gentlemen, sit down!"

The prince sat down, and at length prevailed upon Burdovsky's company to do likewise. During the last ten or twenty minutes, exasperated by continual interruptions, he had raised his voice, and spoken with great vehemence. Now, no doubt, he bitterly regretted several words and expressions which had escaped him in his excitement. If he had not been driven beyond the limits of endurance, he would not have ventured to express certain conjectures so openly. He had no sooner sat down than his heart was torn by sharp remorse. Besides insulting Burdovsky with the supposition, made in the presence of witnesses, that he was suffering from the complaint for which he had himself been treated in Switzerland, he reproached himself with the grossest indelicacy in having offered him the ten thousand roubles before everyone. "I ought to have waited till to-morrow and offered him the money when we were alone," thought Muishkin. "Now it is too late, the mischief is done! Yes, I am an idiot, an absolute idiot!" he said to himself, overcome with shame and regret.

Till then Gavril Ardalionovitch had sat apart in silence. When the prince called upon him, he came and stood by his side, and in a calm, clear voice began to render an account of the mission confided to him. All conversation ceased instantly. Everyone, especially the Burdovsky party, listened with the utmost curiosity.

IX.

"You will not deny, I am sure," said Gavril Ardalionovitch, turning to Burdovsky, who sat looking at him with wide-open eyes, perplexed and astonished. "You will not deny, seriously, that you were born just two years after your mother's legal marriage to Mr. Burdovsky, your father. Nothing would be easier than to prove the date of your birth from well-known facts; we can only look on Mr. Keller's version as a work of imagination, and one, moreover, extremely offensive both to you and your mother. Of course he distorted the truth in order to strengthen your claim, and to serve your

interests. Mr. Keller said that he previously consulted you about his article in the paper, but did not read it to you as a whole. Certainly he could not have read that passage...”

“As a matter of fact, I did not read it,” interrupted the boxer, “but its contents had been given me on unimpeachable authority, and I...”

“Excuse me, Mr. Keller,” interposed Gavrila Ardalionovitch. “Allow me to speak. I assure you your article shall be mentioned in its proper place, and you can then explain everything, but for the moment I would rather not anticipate. Quite accidentally, with the help of my sister, Varvara Ardalionovna Ptitsin, I obtained from one of her intimate friends, Madame Zoubkoff, a letter written to her twenty-five years ago, by Nicolai Andreevitch Pavlicheff, then abroad. After getting into communication with this lady, I went by her advice to Timofei Fedorovitch Viazovkin, a retired colonel, and one of Pavlicheff’s oldest friends. He gave me two more letters written by the latter when he was still in foreign parts. These three documents, their dates, and the facts mentioned in them, prove in the most undeniable manner, that eighteen months before your birth, Nicolai Andreevitch went abroad, where he remained for three consecutive years. Your mother, as you are well aware, has never been out of Russia.... It is too late to read the letters now; I am content to state the fact. But if you desire it, come to me tomorrow morning, bring witnesses and writing experts with you, and I will prove the absolute truth of my story. From that moment the question will be decided.”

These words caused a sensation among the listeners, and there was a general movement of relief. Burdovsky got up abruptly.

“If that is true,” said he, “I have been deceived, grossly deceived, but not by Tchubaroff: and for a long time past, a long time. I do not wish for experts, not I, nor to go to see you. I believe you. I give it up.... But I refuse the ten thousand roubles. Good-bye.”

“Wait five minutes more, Mr. Burdovsky,” said Gavrila Ardalionovitch pleasantly. “I have more to say. Some rather curious and important facts have come to light, and it is absolutely necessary, in my opinion, that you should hear them. You will not regret, I fancy, to have the whole matter thoroughly cleared up.”

Burdovsky silently resumed his seat, and bent his head as though in profound thought. His friend, Lebedeff’s nephew, who had risen to accompany him, also sat down again. He seemed much disappointed, though as self-confident as ever. Hippolyte looked dejected and sulky, as well as surprised. He had just been attacked

by a violent fit of coughing, so that his handkerchief was stained with blood. The boxer looked thoroughly frightened.

“Oh, Antip!” cried he in a miserable voice, “I did say to you the other day—the day before yesterday—that perhaps you were not really Pavlicheff’s son!”

There were sounds of half-smothered laughter at this.

“Now, that is a valuable piece of information, Mr. Keller,” replied Gania. “However that may be, I have private information which convinces me that Mr. Burdovsky, though doubtless aware of the date of his birth, knew nothing at all about Pavlicheff’s sojourn abroad. Indeed, he passed the greater part of his life out of Russia, returning at intervals for short visits. The journey in question is in itself too unimportant for his friends to recollect it after more than twenty years; and of course Mr. Burdovsky could have known nothing about it, for he was not born. As the event has proved, it was not impossible to find evidence of his absence, though I must confess that chance has helped me in a quest which might very well have come to nothing. It was really almost impossible for Burdovsky or Tchegaroff to discover these facts, even if it had entered their heads to try. Naturally they never dreamt...”

Here the voice of Hippolyte suddenly intervened.

“Allow me, Mr. Ivogin,” he said irritably. “What is the good of all this rigmarole? Pardon me. All is now clear, and we acknowledge the truth of your main point. Why go into these tedious details? You wish perhaps to boast of the cleverness of your investigation, to cry up your talents as detective? Or perhaps your intention is to excuse Burdovsky, by proving that he took up the matter in ignorance? Well, I consider that extremely impudent on your part! You ought to know that Burdovsky has no need of being excused or justified by you or anyone else! It is an insult! The affair is quite painful enough for him without that. Will nothing make you understand?”

“Enough! enough! Mr. Terentieff,” interrupted Gania.

“Don’t excite yourself; you seem very ill, and I am sorry for that. I am almost done, but there are a few facts to which I must briefly refer, as I am convinced that they ought to be clearly explained once for all...” A movement of impatience was noticed in his audience as he resumed: “I merely wish to state, for the information of all concerned, that the reason for Mr. Pavlicheff’s interest in your mother, Mr. Burdovsky, was simply that she was the sister of a serf-girl with whom he was deeply in love in his youth, and whom most certainly he would have married but for her sudden death. I have proofs that this circumstance is almost, if not quite, forgotten. I may add that when your mother was about ten years old, Pavlicheff took her under his care, gave her a good

education, and later, a considerable dowry. His relations were alarmed, and feared he might go so far as to marry her, but she gave her hand to a young land-surveyor named Burdovsky when she reached the age of twenty. I can even say definitely that it was a marriage of affection. After his wedding your father gave up his occupation as land-surveyor, and with his wife's dowry of fifteen thousand roubles went in for commercial speculations. As he had had no experience, he was cheated on all sides, and took to drink in order to forget his troubles. He shortened his life by his excesses, and eight years after his marriage he died. Your mother says herself that she was left in the direst poverty, and would have died of starvation had it not been for Pavlicheff, who generously allowed her a yearly pension of six hundred roubles. Many people recall his extreme fondness for you as a little boy. Your mother confirms this, and agrees with others in thinking that he loved you the more because you were a sickly child, stammering in your speech, and almost deformed—for it is known that all his life Nicolai Andreevitch had a partiality for unfortunates of every kind, especially children. In my opinion this is most important. I may add that I discovered yet another fact, the last on which I employed my detective powers. Seeing how fond Pavlicheff was of you,—it was thanks to him you went to school, and also had the advantage of special teachers—his relations and servants grew to believe that you were his son, and that your father had been betrayed by his wife. I may point out that this idea was only accredited generally during the last years of Pavlicheff's life, when his next-of-kin were trembling about the succession, when the earlier story was quite forgotten, and when all opportunity for discovering the truth had seemingly passed away. No doubt you, Mr. Burdovsky, heard this conjecture, and did not hesitate to accept it as true. I have had the honour of making your mother's acquaintance, and I find that she knows all about these reports. What she does not know is that you, her son, should have listened to them so complaisantly. I found your respected mother at Pskoff, ill and in deep poverty, as she has been ever since the death of your benefactor. She told me with tears of gratitude how you had supported her; she expects much of you, and believes fervently in your future success..."

"Oh, this is unbearable!" said Lebedeff's nephew impatiently. "What is the good of all this romancing?"

"It is revolting and unseemly!" cried Hippolyte, jumping up in a fury.

Burdovsky alone sat silent and motionless.

"What is the good of it?" repeated Gavril Ardalionovitch, with pretended surprise.

"Well, firstly, because now perhaps Mr. Burdovsky is quite convinced that Mr.

Pavlicheff's love for him came simply from generosity of soul, and not from paternal

duty. It was most necessary to impress this fact upon his mind, considering that he approved of the article written by Mr. Keller. I speak thus because I look on you, Mr. Burdovsky, as an honourable man. Secondly, it appears that there was no intention of cheating in this case, even on the part of Tchebaroff. I wish to say this quite plainly, because the prince hinted a while ago that I too thought it an attempt at robbery and extortion. On the contrary, everyone has been quite sincere in the matter, and although Tchebaroff may be somewhat of a rogue, in this business he has acted simply as any sharp lawyer would do under the circumstances. He looked at it as a case that might bring him in a lot of money, and he did not calculate badly; because on the one hand he speculated on the generosity of the prince, and his gratitude to the late Mr. Pavlicheff, and on the other to his chivalrous ideas as to the obligations of honour and conscience. As to Mr. Burdovsky, allowing for his principles, we may acknowledge that he engaged in the business with very little personal aim in view. At the instigation of Tchebaroff and his other friends, he decided to make the attempt in the service of truth, progress, and humanity. In short, the conclusion may be drawn that, in spite of all appearances, Mr. Burdovsky is a man of irreproachable character, and thus the prince can all the more readily offer him his friendship, and the assistance of which he spoke just now..”

“Hush! hush! Gavril Ardalionovitch!” cried Muishkin in dismay, but it was too late.

“I said, and I have repeated it over and over again,” shouted Burdovsky furiously, “that I did not want the money. I will not take it... why...I will not... I am going away!”

He was rushing hurriedly from the terrace, when Lebedeff’s nephew seized his arms, and said something to him in a low voice. Burdovsky turned quickly, and drawing an addressed but unsealed envelope from his pocket, he threw it down on a little table beside the prince.

“There’s the money!... How dare you?... The money!”

“Those are the two hundred and fifty roubles you dared to send him as a charity, by the hands of Tchebaroff,” explained Doktorenko.

“The article in the newspaper put it at fifty!” cried Colia.

“I beg your pardon,” said the prince, going up to Burdovsky. “I have done you a great wrong, but I did not send you that money as a charity, believe me. And now I am again to blame. I offended you just now.” (The prince was much distressed; he seemed worn out with fatigue, and spoke almost incoherently.) “I spoke of swindling... but I did not apply that to you. I was deceived I said you were... afflicted... like me... But you are not like me... you give lessons... you support your mother. I said you had dishonoured

your mother, but you love her. She says so herself... I did not know... Gavril Ardalionovitch did not tell me that... Forgive me! I dared to offer you ten thousand roubles, but I was wrong. I ought to have done it differently, and now... there is no way of doing it, for you despise me..."

"I declare, this is a lunatic asylum!" cried Lizabetha Prokofievna.

"Of course it is a lunatic asylum!" repeated Aglaya sharply, but her words were overpowered by other voices. Everybody was talking loudly, making remarks and comments; some discussed the affair gravely, others laughed. Ivan Fedorovitch Epanchin was extremely indignant. He stood waiting for his wife with an air of offended dignity. Lebedeff's nephew took up the word again.

"Well, prince, to do you justice, you certainly know how to make the most of your—let us call it infirmity, for the sake of politeness; you have set about offering your money and friendship in such a way that no self-respecting man could possibly accept them. This is an excess of ingenuousness or of malice—you ought to know better than anyone which word best fits the case."

"Allow me, gentlemen," said Gavril Ardalionovitch, who had just examined the contents of the envelope, "there are only a hundred roubles here, not two hundred and fifty. I point this out, prince, to prevent misunderstanding."

"Never mind, never mind," said the prince, signing to him to keep quiet.

"But we do mind," said Lebedeff's nephew vehemently. "Prince, your 'never mind' is an insult to us. We have nothing to hide; our actions can bear daylight. It is true that there are only a hundred roubles instead of two hundred and fifty, but it is all the same."

"Why, no, it is hardly the same," remarked Gavril Ardalionovitch, with an air of ingenuous surprise.

"Don't interrupt, we are not such fools as you think, Mr. Lawyer," cried Lebedeff's nephew angrily. "Of course there is a difference between a hundred roubles and two hundred and fifty, but in this case the principle is the main point, and that a hundred and fifty roubles are missing is only a side issue. The point to be emphasized is that Burdovsky will not accept your highness's charity; he flings it back in your face, and it scarcely matters if there are a hundred roubles or two hundred and fifty. Burdovsky has refused ten thousand roubles; you heard him. He would not have returned even a hundred roubles if he was dishonest! The hundred and fifty roubles were paid to Tchebaroff for his travelling expenses. You may jeer at our stupidity and at our inexperience in business matters; you have done all you could already to make us

look ridiculous; but do not dare to call us dishonest. The four of us will club together every day to repay the hundred and fifty roubles to the prince, if we have to pay it in instalments of a rouble at a time, but we will repay it, with interest. Burdovsky is poor, he has no millions. After his journey to see the prince Tchebaroff sent in his bill. We counted on winning... Who would not have done the same in such a case?"

"Who indeed?" exclaimed Prince S.

"I shall certainly go mad, if I stay here!" cried Lizabetha Prokofievna.

"It reminds me," said Evgenie Pavlovitch, laughing, "of the famous plea of a certain lawyer who lately defended a man for murdering six people in order to rob them. He excused his client on the score of poverty. 'It is quite natural,' he said in conclusion, 'considering the state of misery he was in, that he should have thought of murdering these six people; which of you, gentlemen, would not have done the same in his place?'"

"Enough," cried Lizabetha Prokofievna abruptly, trembling with anger, "we have had enough of this balderdash!"

In a state of terrible excitement she threw back her head, with flaming eyes, casting looks of contempt and defiance upon the whole company, in which she could no longer distinguish friend from foe. She had restrained herself so long that she felt forced to vent her rage on somebody. Those who knew Lizabetha Prokofievna saw at once how it was with her. "She flies into these rages sometimes," said Ivan Fedorovitch to Prince S. the next day, "but she is not often so violent as she was yesterday; it does not happen more than once in three years."

"Be quiet, Ivan Fedorovitch! Leave me alone!" cried Mrs. Epanchin. "Why do you offer me your arm now? You had not sense enough to take me away before. You are my husband, you are a father, it was your duty to drag me away by force, if in my folly I refused to obey you and go quietly. You might at least have thought of your daughters. We can find our way out now without your help. Here is shame enough for a year! Wait a moment 'till I thank the prince! Thank you, prince, for the entertainment you have given us! It was most amusing to hear these young men... It is vile, vile! A chaos, a scandal, worse than a nightmare! Is it possible that there can be many such people on earth? Be quiet, Aglaya! Be quiet, Alexandra! It is none of your business! Don't fuss round me like that, Evgenie Pavlovitch; you exasperate me! So, my dear," she cried, addressing the prince, "you go so far as to beg their pardon! He says, 'Forgive me for offering you a fortune.' And you, you mountebank, what are you laughing at?" she cried, turning suddenly on Lebedeff's nephew. "'We refuse ten thousand roubles; we

do not beseech, we demand!’ As if he did not know that this idiot will call on them tomorrow to renew his offers of money and friendship. You will, won’t you? You will? Come, will you, or won’t you?”

“I shall,” said the prince, with gentle humility.

“You hear him! You count upon it, too,” she continued, turning upon Doktorenko. “You are as sure of him now as if you had the money in your pocket. And there you are playing the swaggerer to throw dust in our eyes! No, my dear sir, you may take other people in! I can see through all your airs and graces, I see your game!”

“Lizabetha Prokofievna!” exclaimed the prince.

“Come, Lizabetha Prokofievna, it is quite time for us to be going, we will take the prince with us,” said Prince S. with a smile, in the coolest possible way.

The girls stood apart, almost frightened; their father was positively horrified. Mrs. Epanchin’s language astonished everybody. Some who stood a little way off smiled furtively, and talked in whispers. Lebedeff wore an expression of utmost ecstasy.

“Chaos and scandal are to be found everywhere, madame,” remarked Doktorenko, who was considerably put out of countenance.

“Not like this! Nothing like the spectacle you have just given us, sir,” answered Lizabetha Prokofievna, with a sort of hysterical rage. “Leave me alone, will you?” she cried violently to those around her, who were trying to keep her quiet. “No, Evgenie Pavlovitch, if, as you said yourself just now, a lawyer said in open court that he found it quite natural that a man should murder six people because he was in misery, the world must be coming to an end. I had not heard of it before. Now I understand everything. And this stutterer, won’t he turn out a murderer?” she cried, pointing to Burdovsky, who was staring at her with stupefaction. “I bet he will! He will have none of your money, possibly, he will refuse it because his conscience will not allow him to accept it, but he will go murdering you by night and walking off with your cashbox, with a clear conscience! He does not call it a dishonest action but ‘the impulse of a noble despair’; ‘a negation’; or the devil knows what! Bah! everything is upside down, everyone walks head downwards. A young girl, brought up at home, suddenly jumps into a cab in the middle of the street, saying: ‘Good-bye, mother, I married Karlitch, or Ivanitch, the other day!’ And you think it quite right? You call such conduct estimable and natural? The ‘woman question’? Look here,” she continued, pointing to Colia, “the other day that whippersnapper told me that this was the whole meaning of the ‘woman question.’ But even supposing that your mother is a fool, you are none the less, bound to treat her with humanity. Why did you come here tonight so insolently?”

‘Give us our rights, but don’t dare to speak in our presence. Show us every mark of deepest respect, while we treat you like the scum of the earth.’ The miscreants have written a tissue of calumny in their article, and these are the men who seek for truth, and do battle for the right! ‘We do not beseech, we demand, you will get no thanks from us, because you will be acting to satisfy your own conscience!’ What morality! But, good heavens! if you declare that the prince’s generosity will, excite no gratitude in you, he might answer that he is not, bound to be grateful to Pavlicheff, who also was only satisfying his own conscience. But you counted on the prince’s, gratitude towards Pavlicheff; you never lent him any money; he owes you nothing; then what were you counting upon if not on his gratitude? And if you appeal to that sentiment in others, why should you expect to be exempted from it? They are mad! They say society is savage and inhuman because it despises a young girl who has been seduced. But if you call society inhuman you imply that the young girl is made to suffer by its censure. How then, can you hold her up to the scorn of society in the newspapers without realizing that you are making her suffering, still greater? Madmen! Vain fools! They don’t believe in God, they don’t believe in Christ! But you are so eaten up by pride and vanity, that you will end by devouring each other—that is my prophecy! Is not this absurd? Is it not monstrous chaos? And after all this, that shameless creature will go and beg their pardon! Are there many people like you? What are you smiling at? Because I am not ashamed to disgrace myself before you?—Yes, I am disgraced—it can’t be helped now! But don’t you jeer at me, you scum!” (this was aimed at Hippolyte). “He is almost at his last gasp, yet he corrupts others. You, have got hold of this lad—” (she pointed to Colia); “you, have turned his head, you have taught him to be an atheist, you don’t believe in God, and you are not too old to be whipped, sir! A plague upon you! And so, Prince Lef Nicolaievitch, you will call on them tomorrow, will you?” she asked the prince breathlessly, for the second time.

“Yes.”

“Then I will never speak to you again.” She made a sudden movement to go, and then turned quickly back. “And you will call on that atheist?” she continued, pointing to Hippolyte. “How dare you grin at me like that?” she shouted furiously, rushing at the invalid, whose mocking smile drove her to distraction.

Exclamations arose on all sides.

“Lizabetha Prokofievna! Lizabetha Prokofievna! Lizabetha Prokofievna!”

“Mother, this is disgraceful!” cried Aglaya.

Mrs. Epanchin had approached Hippolyte and seized him firmly by the arm, while her eyes, blazing with fury, were fixed upon his face.

“Do not distress yourself, Aglaya Ivanovitch,” he answered calmly; “your mother knows that one cannot strike a dying man. I am ready to explain why I was laughing. I shall be delighted if you will let me—”

A violent fit of coughing, which lasted a full minute, prevented him from finishing his sentence.

“He is dying, yet he will not stop holding forth!” cried Lizabetha Prokofievna. She loosed her hold on his arm, almost terrified, as she saw him wiping the blood from his lips. “Why do you talk? You ought to go home to bed.”

“So I will,” he whispered hoarsely. “As soon as I get home I will go to bed at once; and I know I shall be dead in a fortnight; Botkine told me so himself last week. That is why I should like to say a few farewell words, if you will let me.”

“But you must be mad! It is ridiculous! You should take care of yourself; what is the use of holding a conversation now? Go home to bed, do!” cried Mrs. Epanchin in horror.

“When I do go to bed I shall never get up again,” said Hippolyte, with a smile. “I meant to take to my bed yesterday and stay there till I died, but as my legs can still carry me, I put it off for two days, so as to come here with them to-day—but I am very tired.”

“Oh, sit down, sit down, why are you standing?”

Lizabetha Prokofievna placed a chair for him with her own hands.

“Thank you,” he said gently. “Sit opposite to me, and let us talk. We must have a talk now, Lizabetha Prokofievna; I am very anxious for it.” He smiled at her once more.

“Remember that today, for the last time, I am out in the air, and in the company of my fellow-men, and that in a fortnight I shall certainly be no longer in this world. So, in a way, this is my farewell to nature and to men. I am not very sentimental, but do you know, I am quite glad that all this has happened at Pavlofsk, where at least one can see a green tree.”

“But why talk now?” replied Lizabetha Prokofievna, more and more alarmed; “You are quite feverish. Just now you would not stop shouting, and now you can hardly breathe. You are gasping.”

“I shall have time to rest. Why will you not grant my last wish? Do you know, Lizabetha Prokofievna, that I have dreamed of meeting you for a long while? I had often heard of

you from Colia; he is almost the only person who still comes to see me. You are an original and eccentric woman; I have seen that for myself—Do you know, I have even been rather fond of you?”

“Good heavens! And I very nearly struck him!”

“You were prevented by Aglaya Ivanovna. I think I am not mistaken? That is your daughter, Aglaya Ivanovna? She is so beautiful that I recognized her directly, although I had never seen her before. Let me, at least, look on beauty for the last time in my life,” he said with a wry smile. “You are here with the prince, and your husband, and a large company. Why should you refuse to gratify my last wish?”

“Give me a chair!” cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, but she seized one for herself and sat down opposite to Hippolyte. “Colia, you must go home with him,” she commanded, “and tomorrow I will come myself.”

“Will you let me ask the prince for a cup of tea?... I am exhausted. Do you know what you might do, Lizabetha Prokofievna? I think you wanted to take the prince home with you for tea. Stay here, and let us spend the evening together. I am sure the prince will give us all some tea. Forgive me for being so free and easy—but I know you are kind, and the prince is kind, too. In fact, we are all good-natured people—it is really quite comical.”

The prince bestirred himself to give orders. Lebedeff hurried out, followed by Vera.

“It is quite true,” said Mrs. Epanchin decisively. “Talk, but not too loud, and don’t excite yourself. You have made me sorry for you. Prince, you don’t deserve that I should stay and have tea with you, yet I will, all the same, but I won’t apologize. I apologize to nobody! Nobody! It is absurd! However, forgive me, prince, if I blew you up—that is, if you like, of course. But please don’t let me keep anyone,” she added suddenly to her husband and daughters, in a tone of resentment, as though they had grievously offended her. “I can come home alone quite well.”

But they did not let her finish, and gathered round her eagerly. The prince immediately invited everyone to stay for tea, and apologized for not having thought of it before. The general murmured a few polite words, and asked Lizabetha Prokofievna if she did not feel cold on the terrace. He very nearly asked Hippolyte how long he had been at the University, but stopped himself in time. Evgenie Pavlovitch and Prince S. suddenly grew extremely gay and amiable. Adelaida and Alexandra had not recovered from their surprise, but it was now mingled with satisfaction; in short, everyone seemed very much relieved that Lizabetha Prokofievna had got over her paroxysm. Aglaya alone still frowned, and sat apart in silence. All the other guests stayed on as well; no one

wanted to go, not even General Ivolgin, but Lebedeff said something to him in passing which did not seem to please him, for he immediately went and sulked in a corner. The prince took care to offer tea to Burdovsky and his friends as well as the rest. The invitation made them rather uncomfortable. They muttered that they would wait for Hippolyte, and went and sat by themselves in a distant corner of the verandah. Tea was served at once; Lebedeff had no doubt ordered it for himself and his family before the others arrived. It was striking eleven.

X.

After moistening his lips with the tea which Vera Lebedeff brought him, Hippolyte set the cup down on the table, and glanced round. He seemed confused and almost at a loss.

“Just look, Lizabetha Prokofievna,” he began, with a kind of feverish haste; “these china cups are supposed to be extremely valuable. Lebedeff always keeps them locked up in his china-cupboard; they were part of his wife’s dowry. Yet he has brought them out tonight—in your honour, of course! He is so pleased—” He was about to add something else, but could not find the words.

“There, he is feeling embarrassed; I expected as much,” whispered Evgenie Pavlovitch suddenly in the prince’s ear. “It is a bad sign; what do you think? Now, out of spite, he will come out with something so outrageous that even Lizabetha Prokofievna will not be able to stand it.”

Muishkin looked at him inquiringly.

“You do not care if he does?” added Evgenie Pavlovitch. “Neither do I; in fact, I should be glad, merely as a proper punishment for our dear Lizabetha Prokofievna. I am very anxious that she should get it, without delay, and I shall stay till she does. You seem feverish.”

“Never mind; by-and-by; yes, I am not feeling well,” said the prince impatiently, hardly listening. He had just heard Hippolyte mention his own name.

“You don’t believe it?” said the invalid, with a nervous laugh. “I don’t wonder, but the prince will have no difficulty in believing it; he will not be at all surprised.”

“Do you hear, prince—do you hear that?” said Lizabetha Prokofievna, turning towards him.

There was laughter in the group around her, and Lebedeff stood before her gesticulating wildly.

“He declares that your humbug of a landlord revised this gentleman’s article—the article that was read aloud just now—in which you got such a charming dressing-down.”

The prince regarded Lebedeff with astonishment.

“Why don’t you say something?” cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, stamping her foot.

“Well,” murmured the prince, with his eyes still fixed on Lebedeff, “I can see now that he did.”

“Is it true?” she asked eagerly.

“Absolutely, your excellency,” said Lebedeff, without the least hesitation.

Mrs. Epanchin almost sprang up in amazement at his answer, and at the assurance of his tone.

“He actually seems to boast of it!” she cried.

“I am base—base!” muttered Lebedeff, beating his breast, and hanging his head.

“What do I care if you are base or not? He thinks he has only to say, ‘I am base,’ and there is an end of it. As to you, prince, are you not ashamed?—I repeat, are you not ashamed, to mix with such riff-raff? I will never forgive you!”

“The prince will forgive me!” said Lebedeff with emotional conviction.

Keller suddenly left his seat, and approached Lizabetha Prokofievna.

“It was only out of generosity, madame,” he said in a resonant voice, “and because I would not betray a friend in an awkward position, that I did not mention this revision before; though you heard him yourself threatening to kick us down the steps. To clear the matter up, I declare now that I did have recourse to his assistance, and that I paid him six roubles for it. But I did not ask him to correct my style; I simply went to him for information concerning the facts, of which I was ignorant to a great extent, and which he was competent to give. The story of the gaiters, the appetite in the Swiss professor’s house, the substitution of fifty roubles for two hundred and fifty—all such details, in fact, were got from him. I paid him six roubles for them; but he did not correct the style.”

“I must state that I only revised the first part of the article,” interposed Lebedeff with feverish impatience, while laughter rose from all around him; “but we fell out in the middle over one idea, so I never corrected the second part. Therefore I cannot be held responsible for the numerous grammatical blunders in it.”

“That is all he thinks of!” cried Lizabetha Prokofievna.

“May I ask when this article was revised?” said Evgenie Pavlovitch to Keller.

“Yesterday morning,” he replied, “we had an interview which we all gave our word of honour to keep secret.”

“The very time when he was cringing before you and making protestations of devotion! Oh, the mean wretches! I will have nothing to do with your Pushkin, and your daughter shall not set foot in my house!”

Lizabetha Prokofievna was about to rise, when she saw Hippolyte laughing, and turned upon him with irritation.

“Well, sir, I suppose you wanted to make me look ridiculous?”

“Heaven forbid!” he answered, with a forced smile. “But I am more than ever struck by your eccentricity, Lizabetha Prokofievna. I admit that I told you of Lebedeff’s duplicity, on purpose. I knew the effect it would have on you,—on you alone, for the prince will forgive him. He has probably forgiven him already, and is racking his brains to find some excuse for him—is not that the truth, prince?”

He gasped as he spoke, and his strange agitation seemed to increase.

“Well?” said Mrs. Epanchin angrily, surprised at his tone; “well, what more?”

“I have heard many things of the kind about you...they delighted me... I have learned to hold you in the highest esteem,” continued Hippolyte.

His words seemed tinged with a kind of sarcastic mockery, yet he was extremely agitated, casting suspicious glances around him, growing confused, and constantly losing the thread of his ideas. All this, together with his consumptive appearance, and the frenzied expression of his blazing eyes, naturally attracted the attention of everyone present.

“I might have been surprised (though I admit I know nothing of the world), not only that you should have stayed on just now in the company of such people as myself and my friends, who are not of your class, but that you should let these... young ladies listen to such a scandalous affair, though no doubt novel-reading has taught them all there is to know. I may be mistaken; I hardly know what I am saying; but surely no one but you would have stayed to please a whippersnapper (yes, a whippersnapper; I admit it) to spend the evening and take part in everything—only to be ashamed of it tomorrow. (I know I express myself badly.) I admire and appreciate it all extremely, though the expression on the face of his excellency, your husband, shows that he thinks it very

improper. He-he!” He burst out laughing, and was seized with a fit of coughing which lasted for two minutes and prevented him from speaking.

“He has lost his breath now!” said Lizabetha Prokofievna coldly, looking at him with more curiosity than pity: “Come, my dear boy, that is quite enough—let us make an end of this.”

Ivan Fedorovitch, now quite out of patience, interrupted suddenly. “Let me remark in my turn, sir,” he said in tones of deep annoyance, “that my wife is here as the guest of Prince Lef Nicolaievitch, our friend and neighbour, and that in any case, young man, it is not for you to pass judgment on the conduct of Lizabetha Prokofievna, or to make remarks aloud in my presence concerning what feelings you think may be read in my face. Yes, my wife stayed here,” continued the general, with increasing irritation, “more out of amazement than anything else. Everyone can understand that a collection of such strange young men would attract the attention of a person interested in contemporary life. I stayed myself, just as I sometimes stop to look on in the street when I see something that may be regarded as-as-as-”

“As a curiosity,” suggested Evgenie Pavlovitch, seeing his excellency involved in a comparison which he could not complete.

“That is exactly the word I wanted,” said the general with satisfaction—“a curiosity. However, the most astonishing and, if I may so express myself, the most painful, thing in this matter, is that you cannot even understand, young man, that Lizabetha Prokofievna, only stayed with you because you are ill,—if you really are dying—moved by the pity awakened by your plaintive appeal, and that her name, character, and social position place her above all risk of contamination. Lizabetha Prokofievna!” he continued, now crimson with rage, “if you are coming, we will say goodnight to the prince, and—”

“Thank you for the lesson, general,” said Hippolyte, with unexpected gravity, regarding him thoughtfully.

“Two minutes more, if you please, dear Ivan Fedorovitch,” said Lizabetha Prokofievna to her husband; “it seems to me that he is in a fever and delirious; you can see by his eyes what a state he is in; it is impossible to let him go back to Petersburg tonight. Can you put him up, Lef Nicolaievitch? I hope you are not bored, dear prince,” she added suddenly to Prince S. “Alexandra, my dear, come here! Your hair is coming down.”

She arranged her daughter’s hair, which was not in the least disordered, and gave her a kiss. This was all that she had called her for.

“I thought you were capable of development,” said Hippolyte, coming out of his fit of abstraction. “Yes, that is what I meant to say,” he added, with the satisfaction of one who suddenly remembers something he had forgotten. “Here is Burdovsky, sincerely anxious to protect his mother; is not that so? And he himself is the cause of her disgrace. The prince is anxious to help Burdovsky and offers him friendship and a large sum of money, in the sincerity of his heart. And here they stand like two sworn enemies—ha, ha, ha! You all hate Burdovsky because his behaviour with regard to his mother is shocking and repugnant to you; do you not? Is not that true? Is it not true? You all have a passion for beauty and distinction in outward forms; that is all you care for, isn’t it? I have suspected for a long time that you cared for nothing else! Well, let me tell you that perhaps there is not one of you who loved your mother as Burdovsky loved his. As to you, prince, I know that you have sent money secretly to Burdovsky’s mother through Gania. Well, I bet now,” he continued with an hysterical laugh, “that Burdovsky will accuse you of indelicacy, and reproach you with a want of respect for his mother! Yes, that is quite certain! Ha, ha, ha!”

He caught his breath, and began to cough once more.

“Come, that is enough! That is all now; you have no more to say? Now go to bed; you are burning with fever,” said Lizabetha Prokofievna impatiently. Her anxious eyes had never left the invalid. “Good heavens, he is going to begin again!”

“You are laughing, I think? Why do you keep laughing at me?” said Hippolyte irritably to Evgenie Pavlovitch, who certainly was laughing.

“I only want to know, Mr. Hippolyte—excuse me, I forget your surname.”

“Mr. Terentieff,” said the prince.

“Oh yes, Mr. Terentieff. Thank you prince. I heard it just now, but had forgotten it. I want to know, Mr. Terentieff, if what I have heard about you is true. It seems you are convinced that if you could speak to the people from a window for a quarter of an hour, you could make them all adopt your views and follow you?”

“I may have said so,” answered Hippolyte, as if trying to remember. “Yes, I certainly said so,” he continued with sudden animation, fixing an unflinching glance on his questioner. “What of it?”

“Nothing. I was only seeking further information, to put the finishing touch.”

Evgenie Pavlovitch was silent, but Hippolyte kept his eyes fixed upon him, waiting impatiently for more.

“Well, have you finished?” said Lizabetha Prokofievna to Evgenie. “Make haste, sir; it is time he went to bed. Have you more to say?” She was very angry.

“Yes, I have a little more,” said Evgenie Pavlovitch, with a smile. “It seems to me that all you and your friends have said, Mr. Terentieff, and all you have just put forward with such undeniable talent, may be summed up in the triumph of right above all, independent of everything else, to the exclusion of everything else; perhaps even before having discovered what constitutes the right. I may be mistaken?”

“You are certainly mistaken; I do not even understand you. What else?”

Murmurs arose in the neighbourhood of Burdovsky and his companions; Lebedeff’s nephew protested under his breath.

“I have nearly finished,” replied Evgenie Pavlovitch.

“I will only remark that from these premises one could conclude that might is right—I mean the right of the clenched fist, and of personal inclination. Indeed, the world has often come to that conclusion. Prudhon upheld that might is right. In the American War some of the most advanced Liberals took sides with the planters on the score that the blacks were an inferior race to the whites, and that might was the right of the white race.”

“Well?”

“You mean, no doubt, that you do not deny that might is right?”

“What then?”

“You are at least logical. I would only point out that from the right of might, to the right of tigers and crocodiles, or even Daniloff and Gorsky, is but a step.”

“I know nothing about that; what else?”

Hippolyte was scarcely listening. He kept saying “well?” and “what else?” mechanically, without the least curiosity, and by mere force of habit.

“Why, nothing else; that is all.”

“However, I bear you no grudge,” said Hippolyte suddenly, and, hardly conscious of what he was doing, he held out his hand with a smile. The gesture took Evgenie Pavlovitch by surprise, but with the utmost gravity he touched the hand that was offered him in token of forgiveness.

“I can but thank you,” he said, in a tone too respectful to be sincere, “for your kindness in letting me speak, for I have often noticed that our Liberals never allow other people to have an opinion of their own, and immediately answer their opponents with abuse, if they do not have recourse to arguments of a still more unpleasant nature.”

“What you say is quite true,” observed General Epanchin; then, clasping his hands behind his back, he returned to his place on the terrace steps, where he yawned with an air of boredom.

“Come, sir, that will do; you weary me,” said Lizabetha Prokofievna suddenly to Evgenie Pavlovitch.

Hippolyte rose all at once, looking troubled and almost frightened.

“It is time for me to go,” he said, glancing round in perplexity. “I have detained you... I wanted to tell you everything... I thought you all... for the last time... it was a whim...”

He evidently had sudden fits of returning animation, when he awoke from his semi-delirium; then, recovering full self-possession for a few moments, he would speak, in disconnected phrases which had perhaps haunted him for a long while on his bed of suffering, during weary, sleepless nights.

“Well, good-bye,” he said abruptly. “You think it is easy for me to say good-bye to you? Ha, ha!”

Feeling that his question was somewhat gauche, he smiled angrily. Then as if vexed that he could not ever express what he really meant, he said irritably, in a loud voice:

“Excellency, I have the honour of inviting you to my funeral; that is, if you will deign to honour it with your presence. I invite you all, gentlemen, as well as the general.”

He burst out laughing again, but it was the laughter of a madman. Lizabetha Prokofievna approached him anxiously and seized his arm. He stared at her for a moment, still laughing, but soon his face grew serious.

“Do you know that I came here to see those trees?” pointing to the trees in the park. “It is not ridiculous, is it? Say that it is not ridiculous!” he demanded urgently of Lizabetha Prokofievna. Then he seemed to be plunged in thought. A moment later he raised his head, and his eyes sought for someone. He was looking for Evgenie Pavlovitch, who was close by on his right as before, but he had forgotten this, and his eyes ranged over the assembled company. “Ah! you have not gone!” he said, when he caught sight of him at last. “You kept on laughing just now, because I thought of speaking to the people from the window for a quarter of an hour. But I am not eighteen, you know;

lying on that bed, and looking out of that window, I have thought of all sorts of things for such a long time that... a dead man has no age, you know. I was saying that to myself only last week, when I was awake in the night. Do you know what you fear most? You fear our sincerity more than anything, although you despise us! The idea crossed my mind that night... You thought I was making fun of you just now, Lizabetha Prokofievna? No, the idea of mockery was far from me; I only meant to praise you. Colia told me the prince called you a child—very well—but let me see, I had something else to say...” He covered his face with his hands and tried to collect his thoughts.

“Ah, yes—you were going away just now, and I thought to myself: ‘I shall never see these people again—never again! This is the last time I shall see the trees, too. I shall see nothing after this but the red brick wall of Meyer’s house opposite my window. Tell them about it—try to tell them,’ I thought. ‘Here is a beautiful young girl—you are a dead man; make them understand that. Tell them that a dead man may say anything—and Mrs. Grundy will not be angry—ha-ha! You are not laughing?’” He looked anxiously around. “But you know I get so many queer ideas, lying there in bed. I have grown convinced that nature is full of mockery—you called me an atheist just now, but you know this nature... why are you laughing again? You are very cruel!” he added suddenly, regarding them all with mournful reproach. “I have not corrupted Colia,” he concluded in a different and very serious tone, as if remembering something again.

“Nobody here is laughing at you. Calm yourself,” said Lizabetha Prokofievna, much moved. “You shall see a new doctor tomorrow; the other was mistaken; but sit down, do not stand like that! You are delirious—” Oh, what shall we do with him she cried in anguish, as she made him sit down again in the arm-chair.

A tear glistened on her cheek. At the sight of it Hippolyte seemed amazed. He lifted his hand timidly and, touched the tear with his finger, smiling like a child.

“I... you,” he began joyfully. “You cannot tell how I... he always spoke so enthusiastically of you, Colia here; I liked his enthusiasm. I was not corrupting him! But I must leave him, too—I wanted to leave them all—there was not one of them—not one! I wanted to be a man of action—I had a right to be. Oh! what a lot of things I wanted! Now I want nothing; I renounce all my wants; I swore to myself that I would want nothing; let them seek the truth without me! Yes, nature is full of mockery! Why”—he continued with sudden warmth—“does she create the choicest beings only to mock at them? The only human being who is recognized as perfect, when nature showed him to mankind, was given the mission to say things which have caused the shedding of so much blood that it would have drowned mankind if it had all been shed

at once! Oh! it is better for me to die! I should tell some dreadful lie too; nature would so contrive it! I have corrupted nobody. I wanted to live for the happiness of all men, to find and spread the truth. I used to look out of my window at the wall of Meyer's house, and say to myself that if I could speak for a quarter of an hour I would convince the whole world, and now for once in my life I have come into contact with... you—if not with the others! And what is the result? Nothing! The sole result is that you despise me! Therefore I must be a fool, I am useless, it is time I disappeared! And I shall leave not even a memory! Not a sound, not a trace, not a single deed! I have not spread a single truth!... Do not laugh at the fool! Forget him! Forget him forever! I beseech you, do not be so cruel as to remember! Do you know that if I were not consumptive, I would kill myself?"

Though he seemed to wish to say much more, he became silent. He fell back into his chair, and, covering his face with his hands, began to sob like a little child.

"Oh! what on earth are we to do with him?" cried Lizabetha Prokofievna. She hastened to him and pressed his head against her bosom, while he sobbed convulsively.

"Come, come, come! There, you must not cry, that will do. You are a good child! God will forgive you, because you knew no better. Come now, be a man! You know presently you will be ashamed."

Hippolyte raised his head with an effort, saying:

"I have little brothers and sisters, over there, poor avid innocent. She will corrupt them! You are a saint! You are a child yourself—save them! Snatch them from that... she is... it is shameful! Oh! help them! God will repay you a hundredfold. For the love of God, for the love of Christ!"

"Speak, Ivan Fedorovitch! What are we to do?" cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, irritably. "Please break your majestic silence! I tell you, if you cannot come to some decision, I will stay here all night myself. You have tyrannized over me enough, you autocrat!"

She spoke angrily, and in great excitement, and expected an immediate reply. But in such a case, no matter how many are present, all prefer to keep silence: no one will take the initiative, but all reserve their comments till afterwards. There were some present—Varvara Ardalionovna, for instance—who would have willingly sat there till morning without saying a word. Varvara had sat apart all the evening without opening her lips, but she listened to everything with the closest attention; perhaps she had her reasons for so doing.

“My dear,” said the general, “it seems to me that a sick-nurse would be of more use here than an excitable person like you. Perhaps it would be as well to get some sober, reliable man for the night. In any case we must consult the prince, and leave the patient to rest at once. Tomorrow we can see what can be done for him.”

“It is nearly midnight; we are going. Will he come with us, or is he to stay here?”
Doktorenko asked crossly of the prince.

“You can stay with him if you like,” said Muishkin.

“There is plenty of room here.”

Suddenly, to the astonishment of all, Keller went quickly up to the general.

“Excellency,” he said, impulsively, “if you want a reliable man for the night, I am ready to sacrifice myself for my friend—such a soul as he has! I have long thought him a great man, excellency! My article showed my lack of education, but when he criticizes he scatters pearls!”

Ivan Fedorovitch turned from the boxer with a gesture of despair.

“I shall be delighted if he will stay; it would certainly be difficult for him to get back to Petersburg,” said the prince, in answer to the eager questions of Lizabetha Prokofievna.

“But you are half asleep, are you not? If you don’t want him, I will take him back to my house! Why, good gracious! He can hardly stand up himself! What is it? Are you ill?”

Not finding the prince on his death-bed, Lizabetha Prokofievna had been misled by his appearance to think him much better than he was. But his recent illness, the painful memories attached to it, the fatigue of this evening, the incident with “Pavlicheff’s son,” and now this scene with Hippolyte, had all so worked on his oversensitive nature that he was now almost in a fever. Moreover, a new trouble, almost a fear, showed itself in his eyes; he watched Hippolyte anxiously as if expecting something further.

Suddenly Hippolyte arose. His face, shockingly pale, was that of a man overwhelmed with shame and despair. This was shown chiefly in the look of fear and hatred which he cast upon the assembled company, and in the wild smile upon his trembling lips. Then he cast down his eyes, and with the same smile, staggered towards Burdovsky and Doktorenko, who stood at the entrance to the verandah. He had decided to go with them.

“There! that is what I feared!” cried the prince. “It was inevitable!”

Hippolyte turned upon him, a prey to maniacal rage, which set all the muscles of his face quivering.

“Ah! that is what you feared! It was inevitable, you say! Well, let me tell you that if I hate anyone here—I hate you all,” he cried, in a hoarse, strained voice—“but you, you, with your jesuitical soul, your soul of sickly sweetness, idiot, beneficent millionaire—I hate you worse than anything or anyone on earth! I saw through you and hated you long ago; from the day I first heard of you. I hated you with my whole heart. You have contrived all this! You have driven me into this state! You have made a dying man disgrace himself. You, you, you are the cause of my abject cowardice! I would kill you if I remained alive! I do not want your benefits; I will accept none from anyone; do you hear? Not from any one! I want nothing! I was delirious, do not dare to triumph! I curse every one of you, once for all!”

Breath failed him here, and he was obliged to stop.

“He is ashamed of his tears!” whispered Lebedeff to Lizabetha Prokofievna. “It was inevitable. Ah! what a wonderful man the prince is! He read his very soul.”

But Mrs. Epanchin would not deign to look at Lebedeff. Drawn up haughtily, with her head held high, she gazed at the “riff-raff,” with scornful curiosity. When Hippolyte had finished, Ivan Fedorovitch shrugged his shoulders, and his wife looked him angrily up and down, as if to demand the meaning of his movement. Then she turned to the prince.

“Thanks, prince, many thanks, eccentric friend of the family, for the pleasant evening you have provided for us. I am sure you are quite pleased that you have managed to mix us up with your extraordinary affairs. It is quite enough, dear family friend; thank you for giving us an opportunity of getting to know you so well.”

She arranged her cloak with hands that trembled with anger as she waited for the “riff-raff” to go. The cab which Lebedeff’s son had gone to fetch a quarter of an hour ago, by Doktorenko’s order, arrived at that moment. The general thought fit to put in a word after his wife.

“Really, prince, I hardly expected after—after all our friendly intercourse—and you see, Lizabetha Prokofievna—”

“Papa, how can you?” cried Adelaida, walking quickly up to the prince and holding out her hand.

He smiled absently at her; then suddenly he felt a burning sensation in his ear as an angry voice whispered:

“If you do not turn those dreadful people out of the house this very instant, I shall hate you all my life—all my life!” It was Aglaya. She seemed almost in a frenzy, but she turned away before the prince could look at her. However, there was no one left to turn out of the house, for they had managed meanwhile to get Hippolyte into the cab, and it had driven off.

“Well, how much longer is this going to last, Ivan Fedorovitch? What do you think? Shall I soon be delivered from these odious youths?”

“My dear, I am quite ready; naturally... the prince.”

Ivan Fedorovitch held out his hand to Muishkin, but ran after his wife, who was leaving with every sign of violent indignation, before he had time to shake it. Adelaida, her fiance, and Alexandra, said good-bye to their host with sincere friendliness. Evgenie Pavlovitch did the same, and he alone seemed in good spirits.

“What I expected has happened! But I am sorry, you poor fellow, that you should have had to suffer for it,” he murmured, with a most charming smile.

Aglaya left without saying good-bye. But the evening was not to end without a last adventure. An unexpected meeting was yet in store for Lizabetha Prokofievna.

She had scarcely descended the terrace steps leading to the high road that skirts the park at Pavlofsk, when suddenly there dashed by a smart open carriage, drawn by a pair of beautiful white horses. Having passed some ten yards beyond the house, the carriage suddenly drew up, and one of the two ladies seated in it turned sharp round as though she had just caught sight of some acquaintance whom she particularly wished to see.

“Evgenie Pavlovitch! Is that you?” cried a clear, sweet voice, which caused the prince, and perhaps someone else, to tremble. “Well, I *am* glad I’ve found you at last! I’ve sent to town for you twice today myself! My messengers have been searching for you everywhere!”

Evgenie Pavlovitch stood on the steps like one struck by lightning. Mrs. Epanchin stood still too, but not with the petrified expression of Evgenie. She gazed haughtily at the audacious person who had addressed her companion, and then turned a look of astonishment upon Evgenie himself.

“There’s news!” continued the clear voice. “You need not be anxious about Kupferof’s IOU’s—Rogojin has bought them up. I persuaded him to!—I dare say we shall settle Biscup too, so it’s all right, you see! *Au revoir*, tomorrow! And don’t worry!” The carriage moved on, and disappeared.

“The woman’s mad!” cried Evgenie, at last, crimson with anger, and looking confusedly around. “I don’t know what she’s talking about! What IOU’s? Who is she?” Mrs. Epanchin continued to watch his face for a couple of seconds; then she marched briskly and haughtily away towards her own house, the rest following her.

A minute afterwards, Evgenie Pavlovitch reappeared on the terrace, in great agitation.

“Prince,” he said, “tell me the truth; do you know what all this means?”

“I know nothing whatever about it!” replied the latter, who was, himself, in a state of nervous excitement.

“No?”

“No!”

“Well, nor do I!” said Evgenie Pavlovitch, laughing suddenly. “I haven’t the slightest knowledge of any such IOU’s as she mentioned, I swear I haven’t—What’s the matter, are you fainting?”

“Oh, no—no—I’m all right, I assure you!”

XI.

The anger of the Epanchin family was unappeased for three days. As usual the prince reproached himself, and had expected punishment, but he was inwardly convinced that Lizabetha Prokofievna could not be seriously angry with him, and that she probably was more angry with herself. He was painfully surprised, therefore, when three days passed with no word from her. Other things also troubled and perplexed him, and one of these grew more important in his eyes as the days went by. He had begun to blame himself for two opposite tendencies—on the one hand to extreme, almost “senseless,” confidence in his fellows, on the other to a “vile, gloomy suspiciousness.”

By the end of the third day the incident of the eccentric lady and Evgenie Pavlovitch had attained enormous and mysterious proportions in his mind. He sorrowfully asked himself whether he had been the cause of this new “monstrosity,” or was it... but he refrained from saying who else might be in fault. As for the letters N.P.B., he looked on that as a harmless joke, a mere childish piece of mischief—so childish that he felt it would be shameful, almost dishonourable, to attach any importance to it.

The day after these scandalous events, however, the prince had the honour of receiving a visit from Adelaida and her fiance, Prince S. They came, ostensibly, to inquire after his health. They had wandered out for a walk, and called in “by accident,”

and talked for almost the whole of the time they were with him about a certain most lovely tree in the park, which Adelaida had set her heart upon for a picture. This, and a little amiable conversation on Prince S.'s part, occupied the time, and not a word was said about last evening's episodes. At length Adelaida burst out laughing, apologized, and explained that they had come incognito; from which, and from the circumstance that they said nothing about the prince's either walking back with them or coming to see them later on, the latter inferred that he was in Mrs. Epanchin's black books. Adelaida mentioned a watercolour that she would much like to show him, and explained that she would either send it by Colia, or bring it herself the next day—which to the prince seemed very suggestive.

At length, however, just as the visitors were on the point of departing, Prince S. seemed suddenly to recollect himself. "Oh yes, by-the-by," he said, "do you happen to know, my dear Lef Nicolaievitch, who that lady was who called out to Evgenie Pavlovitch last night, from the carriage?"

"It was Nastasia Philipovna," said the prince; "didn't you know that? I cannot tell you who her companion was."

"But what on earth did she mean? I assure you it is a real riddle to me—to me, and to others, too!" Prince S. seemed to be under the influence of sincere astonishment.

"She spoke of some bills of Evgenie Pavlovitch's," said the prince, simply, "which Rogojin had bought up from someone; and implied that Rogojin would not press him."

"Oh, I heard that much, my dear fellow! But the thing is so impossibly absurd! A man of property like Evgenie to give IOU's to a money-lender, and to be worried about them! It is ridiculous. Besides, he cannot possibly be on such intimate terms with Nastasia Philipovna as she gave us to understand; that's the principal part of the mystery! He has given me his word that he knows nothing whatever about the matter, and of course I believe him. Well, the question is, my dear prince, do you know anything about it? Has any sort of suspicion of the meaning of it come across you?"

"No, I know nothing whatever about it. I assure you I had nothing at all to do with it."

"Oh, prince, how strange you have become! I assure you, I hardly know you for your old self. How can you suppose that I ever suggested you could have had a finger in such a business? But you are not quite yourself today, I can see." He embraced the prince, and kissed him.

"What do you mean, though," asked Muishkin, "'by such a business'? I don't see any particular 'business' about it at all!"

“Oh, undoubtedly, this person wished somehow, and for some reason, to do Evgenie Pavlovitch a bad turn, by attributing to him—before witnesses—qualities which he neither has nor can have,” replied Prince S. drily enough.

Muiskhin looked disturbed, but continued to gaze intently and questioningly into Prince S.’s face. The latter, however, remained silent.

“Then it was not simply a matter of bills?” Muishkin said at last, with some impatience. “It was not as she said?”

“But I ask you, my dear sir, how can there be anything in common between Evgenie Pavlovitch, and—her, and again Rogojin? I tell you he is a man of immense wealth—as I know for a fact; and he has further expectations from his uncle. Simply Nastasia Philipovna—”

Prince S. paused, as though unwilling to continue talking about Nastasia Philipovna.

“Then at all events he knows her!” remarked the prince, after a moment’s silence.

“Oh, that may be. He may have known her some time ago—two or three years, at least. He used to know Totski. But it is impossible that there should be any intimacy between them. She has not even been in the place—many people don’t even know that she has returned from Moscow! I have only observed her carriage about for the last three days or so.”

“It’s a lovely carriage,” said Adelaida.

“Yes, it was a beautiful turn-out, certainly!”

The visitors left the house, however, on no less friendly terms than before. But the visit was of the greatest importance to the prince, from his own point of view. Admitting that he had his suspicions, from the moment of the occurrence of last night, perhaps even before, that Nastasia had some mysterious end in view, yet this visit confirmed his suspicions and justified his fears. It was all clear to him; Prince S. was wrong, perhaps, in his view of the matter, but he was somewhere near the truth, and was right in so far as that he understood there to be an intrigue of some sort going on. Perhaps Prince S. saw it all more clearly than he had allowed his hearers to understand. At all events, nothing could be plainer than that he and Adelaida had come for the express purpose of obtaining explanations, and that they suspected him of being concerned in the affair. And if all this were so, then *she* must have some terrible object in view! What was it? There was no stopping *her*, as Muishkin knew from experience, in the performance of anything she had set her mind on! “Oh, she is mad, mad!” thought the poor prince.

But there were many other puzzling occurrences that day, which required immediate explanation, and the prince felt very sad. A visit from Vera Lebedeff distracted him a little. She brought the infant Lubotchka with her as usual, and talked cheerfully for some time. Then came her younger sister, and later the brother, who attended a school close by. He informed Muishkin that his father had lately found a new interpretation of the star called “wormwood,” which fell upon the water-springs, as described in the Apocalypse. He had decided that it meant the network of railroads spread over the face of Europe at the present time. The prince refused to believe that Lebedeff could have given such an interpretation, and they decided to ask him about it at the earliest opportunity. Vera related how Keller had taken up his abode with them on the previous evening. She thought he would remain for some time, as he was greatly pleased with the society of General Ivolgin and of the whole family. But he declared that he had only come to them in order to complete his education! The prince always enjoyed the company of Lebedeff’s children, and today it was especially welcome, for Colia did not appear all day. Early that morning he had started for Petersburg. Lebedeff also was away on business. But Gavril Ardalionovitch had promised to visit Muishkin, who eagerly awaited his coming.

About seven in the evening, soon after dinner, he arrived. At the first glance it struck the prince that he, at any rate, must know all the details of last night’s affair. Indeed, it would have been impossible for him to remain in ignorance considering the intimate relationship between him, Varvara Ardalionovna, and Ptitsin. But although he and the prince were intimate, in a sense, and although the latter had placed the Burdovsky affair in his hands—and this was not the only mark of confidence he had received—it seemed curious how many matters there were that were tacitly avoided in their conversations. Muishkin thought that Gania at times appeared to desire more cordiality and frankness. It was apparent now, when he entered, that he was convinced that the moment for breaking the ice between them had come at last.

But all the same Gania was in haste, for his sister was waiting at Lebedeff’s to consult him on an urgent matter of business. If he had anticipated impatient questions, or impulsive confidences, he was soon undeceived. The prince was thoughtful, reserved, even a little absent-minded, and asked none of the questions—one in particular—that Gania had expected. So he imitated the prince’s demeanour, and talked fast and brilliantly upon all subjects but the one on which their thoughts were engaged. Among other things Gania told his host that Nastasia Philipovna had been only four days in Pavlofsk, and that everyone was talking about her already. She was staying with Daria Alexeyevna, in an ugly little house in Mattrossky Street, but drove about in the smartest carriage in the place. A crowd of followers had pursued her from

the first, young and old. Some escorted her on horse-back when she took the air in her carriage.

She was as capricious as ever in the choice of her acquaintances, and admitted few into her narrow circle. Yet she already had a numerous following and many champions on whom she could depend in time of need. One gentleman on his holiday had broken off his engagement on her account, and an old general had quarrelled with his only son for the same reason.

She was accompanied sometimes in her carriage by a girl of sixteen, a distant relative of her hostess. This young lady sang very well; in fact, her music had given a kind of notoriety to their little house. Nastasia, however, was behaving with great discretion on the whole. She dressed quietly, though with such taste as to drive all the ladies in Pavlofsk mad with envy, of that, as well as of her beauty and her carriage and horses.

“As for yesterday’s episode,” continued Gania, “of course it was pre-arranged.” Here he paused, as though expecting to be asked how he knew that. But the prince did not inquire. Concerning Evgenie Pavlovitch, Gania stated, without being asked, that he believed the former had not known Nastasia Philipovna in past years, but that he had probably been introduced to her by somebody in the park during these four days. As to the question of the IOU’s she had spoken of, there might easily be something in that; for though Evgenie was undoubtedly a man of wealth, yet certain of his affairs were equally undoubtedly in disorder. Arrived at this interesting point, Gania suddenly broke off, and said no more about Nastasia’s prank of the previous evening.

At last Varvara Ardalionovna came in search of her brother, and remained for a few minutes. Without Muishkin’s asking her, she informed him that Evgenie Pavlovitch was spending the day in Petersburg, and perhaps would remain there over tomorrow; and that her husband had also gone to town, probably in connection with Evgenie Pavlovitch’s affairs.

“Lizabetha Prokofievna is in a really fiendish temper today,” she added, as she went out, “but the most curious thing is that Aglaya has quarrelled with her whole family; not only with her father and mother, but with her sisters also. It is not a good sign.” She said all this quite casually, though it was extremely important in the eyes of the prince, and went off with her brother. Regarding the episode of “Pavlicheff’s son,” Gania had been absolutely silent, partly from a kind of false modesty, partly, perhaps, to “spare the prince’s feelings.” The latter, however, thanked him again for the trouble he had taken in the affair.

Muishkin was glad enough to be left alone. He went out of the garden, crossed the road, and entered the park. He wished to reflect, and to make up his mind as to a certain "step." This step was one of those things, however, which are not thought out, as a rule, but decided for or against hastily, and without much reflection. The fact is, he felt a longing to leave all this and go away—go anywhere, if only it were far enough, and at once, without bidding farewell to anyone. He felt a presentiment that if he remained but a few days more in this place, and among these people, he would be fixed there irrevocably and permanently. However, in a very few minutes he decided that to run away was impossible; that it would be cowardly; that great problems lay before him, and that he had no right to leave them unsolved, or at least to refuse to give all his energy and strength to the attempt to solve them. Having come to this determination, he turned and went home, his walk having lasted less than a quarter of an hour. At that moment he was thoroughly unhappy.

Lebedeff had not returned, so towards evening Keller managed to penetrate into the prince's apartments. He was not drunk, but in a confidential and talkative mood. He announced that he had come to tell the story of his life to Muishkin, and had only remained at Pavlofsk for that purpose. There was no means of turning him out; nothing short of an earthquake would have removed him.

In the manner of one with long hours before him, he began his history; but after a few incoherent words he jumped to the conclusion, which was that "having ceased to believe in God Almighty, he had lost every vestige of morality, and had gone so far as to commit a theft." "Could you imagine such a thing?" said he.

"Listen to me, Keller," returned the prince. "If I were in your place, I should not acknowledge that unless it were absolutely necessary for some reason. But perhaps you are making yourself out to be worse than you are, purposely?"

"I should tell it to no one but yourself, prince, and I only name it now as a help to my soul's evolution. When I die, that secret will die with me! But, excellency, if you knew, if you only had the least idea, how difficult it is to get money nowadays! Where to find it is the question. Ask for a loan, the answer is always the same: 'Give us gold, jewels, or diamonds, and it will be quite easy.' Exactly what one has not got! Can you picture that to yourself? I got angry at last, and said, 'I suppose you would accept emeralds?' 'Certainly, we accept emeralds with pleasure. Yes!' 'Well, that's all right,' said I. 'Go to the devil, you den of thieves!' And with that I seized my hat, and walked out."

"Had you any emeralds?" asked the prince.

“What? I have emeralds? Oh, prince! with what simplicity, with what almost pastoral simplicity, you look upon life!”

Could not something be made of this man under good influences? asked the prince of himself, for he began to feel a kind of pity for his visitor. He thought little of the value of his own personal influence, not from a sense of humility, but from his peculiar way of looking at things in general. Imperceptibly the conversation grew more animated and more interesting, so that neither of the two felt anxious to bring it to a close. Keller confessed, with apparent sincerity, to having been guilty of many acts of such a nature that it astonished the prince that he could mention them, even to him. At every fresh avowal he professed the deepest repentance, and described himself as being “bathed in tears”; but this did not prevent him from putting on a boastful air at times, and some of his stories were so absurdly comical that both he and the prince laughed like madmen.

“One point in your favour is that you seem to have a child-like mind, and extreme truthfulness,” said the prince at last. “Do you know that that atones for much?”

“I am assuredly noble-minded, and chivalrous to a degree!” said Keller, much softened. “But, do you know, this nobility of mind exists in a dream, if one may put it so? It never appears in practice or deed. Now, why is that? I can never understand.”

“Do not despair. I think we may say without fear of deceiving ourselves, that you have now given a fairly exact account of your life. I, at least, think it would be impossible to add much to what you have just told me.”

“Impossible?” cried Keller, almost pityingly. “Oh prince, how little you really seem to understand human nature!”

“Is there really much more to be added?” asked the prince, with mild surprise. “Well, what is it you really want of me? Speak out; tell me why you came to make your confession to me?”

“What did I want? Well, to begin with, it is good to meet a man like you. It is a pleasure to talk over my faults with you. I know you for one of the best of men... and then... then...”

He hesitated, and appeared so much embarrassed that the prince helped him out.

“Then you wanted me to lend you money?”

The words were spoken in a grave tone, and even somewhat shyly.

Keller started, gave an astonished look at the speaker, and thumped the table with his fist.

“Well, prince, that’s enough to knock me down! It astounds me! Here you are, as simple and innocent as a knight of the golden age, and yet... yet... you read a man’s soul like a psychologist! Now, do explain it to me, prince, because I... I really do not understand!... Of course, my aim was to borrow money all along, and you... you asked the question as if there was nothing blameable in it—as if you thought it quite natural.”

“Yes... from you it is quite natural.”

“And you are not offended?”

“Why should I be offended?”

“Well, just listen, prince. I remained here last evening, partly because I have a great admiration for the French archbishop Bourdaloue. I enjoyed a discussion over him till three o’clock in the morning, with Lebedeff; and then... then—I swear by all I hold sacred that I am telling you the truth—then I wished to develop my soul in this frank and heartfelt confession to you. This was my thought as I was sobbing myself to sleep at dawn. Just as I was losing consciousness, tears in my soul, tears on my face (I remember how I lay there sobbing), an idea from hell struck me. ‘Why not, after confessing, borrow money from him?’ You see, this confession was a kind of masterstroke; I intended to use it as a means to your good grace and favour—and then—then I meant to walk off with a hundred and fifty roubles. Now, do you not call that base?”

“It is hardly an exact statement of the case,” said the prince in reply. “You have confused your motives and ideas, as I need scarcely say too often happens to myself. I can assure you, Keller, I reproach myself bitterly for it sometimes. When you were talking just now I seemed to be listening to something about myself. At times I have imagined that all men were the same,” he continued earnestly, for he appeared to be much interested in the conversation, “and that consoled me in a certain degree, for a *double* motive is a thing most difficult to fight against. I have tried, and I know. God knows whence they arise, these ideas that you speak of as base. I fear these double motives more than ever just now, but I am not your judge, and in my opinion it is going too far to give the name of baseness to it—what do you think? You were going to employ your tears as a ruse in order to borrow money, but you also say—in fact, you have sworn to the fact—that independently of this your confession was made with an honourable motive. As for the money, you want it for drink, do you not? After your confession, that is weakness, of course; but, after all, how can anyone give up a bad

habit at a moment's notice? It is impossible. What can we do? It is best, I think, to leave the matter to your own conscience. How does it seem to you?" As he concluded the prince looked curiously at Keller; evidently this problem of double motives had often been considered by him before.

"Well, how anybody can call you an idiot after that, is more than I can understand!" cried the boxer.

The prince reddened slightly.

"Bourdaloue, the archbishop, would not have spared a man like me," Keller continued, "but you, you have judged me with humanity. To show how grateful I am, and as a punishment, I will not accept a hundred and fifty roubles. Give me twenty-five—that will be enough; it is all I really need, for a fortnight at least. I will not ask you for more for a fortnight. I should like to have given Agatha a present, but she does not really deserve it. Oh, my dear prince, God bless you!"

At this moment Lebedeff appeared, having just arrived from Petersburg. He frowned when he saw the twenty-five rouble note in Keller's hand, but the latter, having got the money, went away at once. Lebedeff began to abuse him.

"You are unjust; I found him sincerely repentant," observed the prince, after listening for a time.

"What is the good of repentance like that? It is the same exactly as mine yesterday, when I said, 'I am base, I am base,'—words, and nothing more!"

"Then they were only words on your part? I thought, on the contrary..."

"Well, I don't mind telling you the truth—you only! Because you see through a man somehow. Words and actions, truth and falsehood, are all jumbled up together in me, and yet I am perfectly sincere. I feel the deepest repentance, believe it or not, as you choose; but words and lies come out in the infernal craving to get the better of other people. It is always there—the notion of cheating people, and of using my repentant tears to my own advantage! I assure you this is the truth, prince! I would not tell any other man for the world! He would laugh and jeer at me—but you, you judge a man humanely."

"Why, Keller said the same thing to me nearly word for word a few minutes ago!" cried Muishkin. "And you both seem inclined to boast about it! You astonish me, but I think he is more sincere than you, for you make a regular trade of it. Oh, don't put on that pathetic expression, and don't put your hand on your heart! Have you anything to say to me? You have not come for nothing..."

Lebedeff grinned and wriggled.

“I have been waiting all day for you, because I want to ask you a question; and, for once in your life, please tell me the truth at once. Had you anything to do with that affair of the carriage yesterday?”

Lebedeff began to grin again, rubbed his hands, sneezed, but spoke not a word in reply.

“I see you had something to do with it.”

“Indirectly, quite indirectly! I am speaking the truth—I am indeed! I merely told a certain person that I had people in my house, and that such and such personages might be found among them.”

“I am aware that you sent your son to that house—he told me so himself just now, but what is this intrigue?” said the prince, impatiently.

“It is not my intrigue!” cried Lebedeff, waving his hand.

“It was engineered by other people, and is, properly speaking, rather a fantasy than an intrigue!”

“But what is it all about? Tell me, for Heaven’s sake! Cannot you understand how nearly it touches me? Why are they blackening Evgenie Pavlovitch’s reputation?”

Lebedeff grimaced and wriggled again.

“Prince!” said he. “Excellency! You won’t let me tell you the whole truth; I have tried to explain; more than once I have begun, but you have not allowed me to go on...”

The prince gave no answer, and sat deep in thought. Evidently he was struggling to decide.

“Very well! Tell me the truth,” he said, dejectedly.

“Aglaya Ivanovna...” began Lebedeff, promptly.

“Be silent! At once!” interrupted the prince, red with indignation, and perhaps with shame, too. “It is impossible and absurd! All that has been invented by you, or fools like you! Let me never hear you say a word again on that subject!”

Late in the evening Colia came in with a whole budget of Petersburg and Pavlofsk news. He did not dwell much on the Petersburg part of it, which consisted chiefly of intelligence about his friend Hippolyte, but passed quickly to the Pavlofsk tidings. He had gone straight to the Epanchins’ from the station.

“There’s the deuce and all going on there!” he said. “First of all about the row last night, and I think there must be something new as well, though I didn’t like to ask. Not a word about *you*, prince, the whole time! The most interesting fact was that Aglaya had been quarrelling with her people about Gania. Colia did not know any details, except that it had been a terrible quarrel! Also Evgenie Pavlovitch had called, and met with an excellent reception all round. And another curious thing: Mrs. Epanchin was so angry that she called Varia to her—Varia was talking to the girls—and turned her out of the house ‘once for all’ she said. I heard it from Varia herself—Mrs. Epanchin was quite polite, but firm; and when Varia said good-bye to the girls, she told them nothing about it, and they didn’t know they were saying goodbye for the last time. I’m sorry for Varia, and for Gania too; he isn’t half a bad fellow, in spite of his faults, and I shall never forgive myself for not liking him before! I don’t know whether I ought to continue to go to the Epanchins’ now,” concluded Colia—“I like to be quite independent of others, and of other people’s quarrels if I can; but I must think over it.”

“I don’t think you need break your heart over Gania,” said the prince; “for if what you say is true, he must be considered dangerous in the Epanchin household, and if so, certain hopes of his must have been encouraged.”

“What? What hopes?” cried Colia; “you surely don’t mean Aglaya?—oh, no!—”

“You’re a dreadful sceptic, prince,” he continued, after a moment’s silence. “I have observed of late that you have grown sceptical about everything. You don’t seem to believe in people as you did, and are always attributing motives and so on—am I using the word ‘sceptic’ in its proper sense?”

“I believe so; but I’m not sure.”

“Well, I’ll change it, right or wrong; I’ll say that you are not sceptical, but *jealous*. There! you are deadly jealous of Gania, over a certain proud damsel! Come!” Colia jumped up, with these words, and burst out laughing. He laughed as he had perhaps never laughed before, and still more when he saw the prince flushing up to his temples. He was delighted that the prince should be jealous about Aglaya. However, he stopped immediately on seeing that the other was really hurt, and the conversation continued, very earnestly, for an hour or more.

Next day the prince had to go to town, on business. Returning in the afternoon, he happened upon General Epanchin at the station. The latter seized his hand, glancing around nervously, as if he were afraid of being caught in wrong-doing, and dragged him into a first-class compartment. He was burning to speak about something of importance.

“In the first place, my dear prince, don’t be angry with me. I would have come to see you yesterday, but I didn’t know how Lizabetha Prokofievna would take it. My dear fellow, my house is simply a hell just now, a sort of sphinx has taken up its abode there. We live in an atmosphere of riddles; I can’t make head or tail of anything. As for you, I feel sure you are the least to blame of any of us, though you certainly have been the cause of a good deal of trouble. You see, it’s all very pleasant to be a philanthropist; but it can be carried too far. Of course I admire kind-heartedness, and I esteem my wife, but—”

The general wandered on in this disconnected way for a long time; it was clear that he was much disturbed by some circumstance which he could make nothing of.

“It is plain to me, that *you* are not in it at all,” he continued, at last, a little less vaguely, “but perhaps you had better not come to our house for a little while. I ask you in the friendliest manner, mind; just till the wind changes again. As for Evgenie Pavlovitch,” he continued with some excitement, “the whole thing is a calumny, a dirty calumny. It is simply a plot, an intrigue, to upset our plans and to stir up a quarrel. You see, prince, I’ll tell you privately, Evgenie and ourselves have not said a word yet, we have no formal understanding, we are in no way bound on either side, but the word may be said very soon, don’t you see, *very soon*, and all this is most injurious, and is meant to be so. Why? I’m sure I can’t tell you. She’s an extraordinary woman, you see, an eccentric woman; I tell you I am so frightened of that woman that I can’t sleep. What a carriage that was, and where did it come from, eh? I declare, I was base enough to suspect Evgenie at first; but it seems certain that that cannot be the case, and if so, why is she interfering here? That’s the riddle, what does she want? Is it to keep Evgenie to herself? But, my dear fellow, I swear to you, I swear he doesn’t even *know* her, and as for those bills, why, the whole thing is an invention! And the familiarity of the woman! It’s quite clear we must treat the impudent creature’s attempt with disdain, and redouble our courtesy towards Evgenie. I told my wife so.

“Now I’ll tell you my secret conviction. I’m certain that she’s doing this to revenge herself on me, on account of the past, though I assure you that all the time I was blameless. I blush at the very idea. And now she turns up again like this, when I thought she had finally disappeared! Where’s Rogojin all this time? I thought she was Mrs. Rogojin, long ago.”

The old man was in a state of great mental perturbation. The whole of the journey, which occupied nearly an hour, he continued in this strain, putting questions and answering them himself, shrugging his shoulders, pressing the prince’s hand, and assuring the latter that, at all events, he had no suspicion whatever of *him*. This last

assurance was satisfactory, at all events. The general finished by informing him that Evgenie's uncle was head of one of the civil service departments, and rich, very rich, and a gourmand. "And, well, Heaven preserve him, of course—but Evgenie gets his money, don't you see? But, for all this, I'm uncomfortable, I don't know why. There's something in the air, I feel there's something nasty in the air, like a bat, and I'm by no means comfortable."

And it was not until the third day that the formal reconciliation between the prince and the Epanchins took place, as said before.

XII.

It was seven in the evening, and the prince was just preparing to go out for a walk in the park, when suddenly Mrs. Epanchin appeared on the terrace.

"In the first place, don't dare to suppose," she began, "that I am going to apologize. Nonsense! You were entirely to blame."

The prince remained silent.

"Were you to blame, or not?"

"No, certainly not, no more than yourself, though at first I thought I was."

"Oh, very well, let's sit down, at all events, for I don't intend to stand up all day. And remember, if you say, one word about 'mischievous urchins,' I shall go away and break with you altogether. Now then, did you, or did you not, send a letter to Aglaya, a couple of months or so ago, about Easter-tide?"

"Yes!"

"What for? What was your object? Show me the letter." Mrs. Epanchin's eyes flashed; she was almost trembling with impatience.

"I have not got the letter," said the prince, timidly, extremely surprised at the turn the conversation had taken. "If anyone has it, if it still exists, Aglaya Ivanovna must have it."

"No finessing, please. What did you write about?"

"I am not finessing, and I am not in the least afraid of telling you; but I don't see the slightest reason why I should not have written."

"Be quiet, you can talk afterwards! What was the letter about? Why are you blushing?"

The prince was silent. At last he spoke.

“I don’t understand your thoughts, Lizabetha Prokofievna; but I can see that the fact of my having written is for some reason repugnant to you. You must admit that I have a perfect right to refuse to answer your questions; but, in order to show you that I am neither ashamed of the letter, nor sorry that I wrote it, and that I am not in the least inclined to blush about it” (here the prince’s blushes redoubled), “I will repeat the substance of my letter, for I think I know it almost by heart.”

So saying, the prince repeated the letter almost word for word, as he had written it.

“My goodness, what utter twaddle, and what may all this nonsense have signified, pray? If it had any meaning at all!” said Mrs. Epanchin, cuttingly, after having listened with great attention.

“I really don’t absolutely know myself; I know my feeling was very sincere. I had moments at that time full of life and hope.”

“What sort of hope?”

“It is difficult to explain, but certainly not the hopes you have in your mind. Hopes—well, in a word, hopes for the future, and a feeling of joy that *there*, at all events, I was not entirely a stranger and a foreigner. I felt an ecstasy in being in my native land once more; and one sunny morning I took up a pen and wrote her that letter, but why to *her*, I don’t quite know. Sometimes one longs to have a friend near, and I evidently felt the need of one then,” added the prince, and paused.

“Are you in love with her?”

“N-no! I wrote to her as to a sister; I signed myself her brother.”

“Oh yes, of course, on purpose! I quite understand.”

“It is very painful to me to answer these questions, Lizabetha Prokofievna.”

“I dare say it is; but that’s no affair of mine. Now then, assure me truly as before Heaven, are you lying to me or not?”

“No, I am not lying.”

“Are you telling the truth when you say you are not in love?”

“I believe it is the absolute truth.”

“I believe, indeed! Did that mischievous urchin give it to her?”

“I asked Nicolai Ardalionovitch...”

“The urchin! the urchin!” interrupted Lizabetha Prokofievna in an angry voice. “I do not want to know if it were Nicolai Ardalionovitch! The urchin!”

“Nicolai Ardalionovitch...”

“The urchin, I tell you!”

“No, it was not the urchin: it was Nicolai Ardalionovitch,” said the prince very firmly, but without raising his voice.

“Well, all right! All right, my dear! I shall put that down to your account.”

She was silent a moment to get breath, and to recover her composure.

“Well!—and what’s the meaning of the ‘poor knight,’ eh?”

“I don’t know in the least; I wasn’t present when the joke was made. It *is* a joke. I suppose, and that’s all.”

“Well, that’s a comfort, at all events. You don’t suppose she could take any interest in you, do you? Why, she called you an ‘idiot’ herself.”

“I think you might have spared me that,” murmured the prince reproachfully, almost in a whisper.

“Don’t be angry; she is a wilful, mad, spoilt girl. If she likes a person she will pitch into him, and chaff him. I used to be just such another. But for all that you needn’t flatter yourself, my boy; she is not for you. I don’t believe it, and it is not to be. I tell you so at once, so that you may take proper precautions. Now, I want to hear you swear that you are not married to that woman?”

“Lizabetha Prokofievna, what are you thinking of?” cried the prince, almost leaping to his feet in amazement.

“Why? You very nearly were, anyhow.”

“Yes—I nearly was,” whispered the prince, hanging his head.

“Well then, have you come here for *her*? Are you in love with *her*? With *that* creature?”

“I did not come to marry at all,” replied the prince.

“Is there anything you hold sacred?”

“There is.”

“Then swear by it that you did not come here to marry *her*!”

“I’ll swear it by whatever you please.”

“I believe you. You may kiss me; I breathe freely at last. But you must know, my dear friend, Aglaya does not love you, and she shall never be your wife while I am out of my grave. So be warned in time. Do you hear me?”

“Yes, I hear.”

The prince flushed up so much that he could not look her in the face.

“I have waited for you with the greatest impatience (not that you were worth it). Every night I have drenched my pillow with tears, not for you, my friend, not for you, don’t flatter yourself! I have my own grief, always the same, always the same. But I’ll tell you why I have been awaiting you so impatiently, because I believe that Providence itself sent you to be a friend and a brother to me. I haven’t a friend in the world except Princess Bielokonski, and she is growing as stupid as a sheep from old age. Now then, tell me, yes or no? Do you know why she called out from her carriage the other night?”

“I give you my word of honour that I had nothing to do with the matter and know nothing about it.”

“Very well, I believe you. I have my own ideas about it. Up to yesterday morning I thought it was really Evgenie Pavlovitch who was to blame; now I cannot help agreeing with the others. But why he was made such a fool of I cannot understand. However, he is not going to marry Aglaya, I can tell you that. He may be a very excellent fellow, but—so it shall be. I was not at all sure of accepting him before, but now I have quite made up my mind that I won’t have him. ‘Put me in my coffin first and then into my grave, and then you may marry my daughter to whomsoever you please,’ so I said to the general this very morning. You see how I trust you, my boy.”

“Yes, I see and understand.”

Mrs. Epanchin gazed keenly into the prince’s eyes. She was anxious to see what impression the news as to Evgenie Pavlovitch had made upon him.

“Do you know anything about Gavril Ardalionovitch?” she asked at last.

“Oh yes, I know a good deal.”

“Did you know he had communications with Aglaya?”

“No, I didn’t,” said the prince, trembling a little, and in great agitation. “You say Gavril Ardalionovitch has private communications with Aglaya?—Impossible!”

“Only quite lately. His sister has been working like a rat to clear the way for him all the winter.”

“I don’t believe it!” said the prince abruptly, after a short pause. “Had it been so I should have known long ago.”

“Oh, of course, yes; he would have come and wept out his secret on your bosom. Oh, you simpleton—you simpleton! Anyone can deceive you and take you in like a—like a,—aren’t you ashamed to trust him? Can’t you see that he humbugs you just as much as ever he pleases?”

“I know very well that he does deceive me occasionally, and he knows that I know it, but—” The prince did not finish his sentence.

“And that’s why you trust him, eh? So I should have supposed. Good Lord, was there ever such a man as you? Tfu! and are you aware, sir, that this Gania, or his sister Varia, have brought her into correspondence with Nastasia Philipovna?”

“Brought whom?” cried Muishkin.

“Aglaya.”

“I don’t believe it! It’s impossible! What object could they have?” He jumped up from his chair in his excitement.

“Nor do I believe it, in spite of the proofs. The girl is self-willed and fantastic, and insane! She’s wicked, wicked! I’ll repeat it for a thousand years that she’s wicked; they *all* are, just now, all my daughters, even that ‘wet hen’ Alexandra. And yet I don’t believe it. Because I don’t choose to believe it, perhaps; but I don’t. Why haven’t you been?” she turned on the prince suddenly. “Why didn’t you come near us all these three days, eh?”

The prince began to give his reasons, but she interrupted him again.

“Everybody takes you in and deceives you; you went to town yesterday. I dare swear you went down on your knees to that rogue, and begged him to accept your ten thousand roubles!”

“I never thought of doing any such thing. I have not seen him, and he is not a rogue, in my opinion. I have had a letter from him.”

“Show it me!”

The prince took a paper from his pocket-book, and handed it to Lizabetha Prokofievna. It ran as follows:

“Sir,

“In the eyes of the world I am sure that I have no cause for pride or self-esteem. I am much too insignificant for that. But what may be so to other men’s eyes is not so to yours. I am convinced that you are better than other people. Doktorenko disagrees with me, but I am content to differ from him on this point. I will never accept one single copeck from you, but you have helped my mother, and I am bound to be grateful to you for that, however weak it may seem. At any rate, I have changed my opinion about you, and I think right to inform you of the fact; but I also suppose that there can be no further intercourse between us.

“Antip Burdovsky.

“P.S.—The two hundred roubles I owe you shall certainly be repaid in time.”

“How extremely stupid!” cried Mrs. Epanchin, giving back the letter abruptly. “It was not worth the trouble of reading. Why are you smiling?”

“Confess that you are pleased to have read it.”

“What! Pleased with all that nonsense! Why, cannot you see that they are all infatuated with pride and vanity?”

“He has acknowledged himself to be in the wrong. Don’t you see that the greater his vanity, the more difficult this admission must have been on his part? Oh, what a little child you are, Lizabetha Prokofievna!”

“Are you tempting me to box your ears for you, or what?”

“Not at all. I am only proving that you are glad about the letter. Why conceal your real feelings? You always like to do it.”

“Never come near my house again!” cried Mrs. Epanchin, pale with rage. “Don’t let me see as much as a *shadow* of you about the place! Do you hear?”

“Oh yes, and in three days you’ll come and invite me yourself. Aren’t you ashamed now? These are your best feelings; you are only tormenting yourself.”

“I’ll die before I invite you! I shall forget your very name! I’ve forgotten it already!”

She marched towards the door.

“But I’m forbidden your house as it is, without your added threats!” cried the prince after her.

“What? Who forbade you?”

She turned round so suddenly that one might have supposed a needle had been stuck into her.

The prince hesitated. He perceived that he had said too much now.

“*Who forbade you?*” cried Mrs. Epanchin once more.

“Aglaya Ivanovna told me—”

“When? Speak—quick!”

“She sent to say, yesterday morning, that I was never to dare to come near the house again.”

Lizabetha Prokofievna stood like a stone.

“What did she send? Whom? Was it that boy? Was it a message?—quick!”

“I had a note,” said the prince.

“Where is it? Give it here, at once.”

The prince thought a moment. Then he pulled out of his waistcoat pocket an untidy slip of paper, on which was scrawled:

“PRINCE LEF NICOLAIEVITCH,—If you think fit, after all that has passed, to honour our house with a visit, I can assure you you will not find me among the number of those who are in any way delighted to see you.

“Aglaya Epanchin.”

Mrs. Epanchin reflected a moment. The next minute she flew at the prince, seized his hand, and dragged him after her to the door.

“Quick—come along!” she cried, breathless with agitation and impatience. “Come along with me this moment!”

“But you declared I wasn’t—”

“Don’t be a simpleton. You behave just as though you weren’t a man at all. Come on! I shall see, now, with my own eyes. I shall see all.”

“Well, let me get my hat, at least.”

“Here’s your miserable hat. He couldn’t even choose a respectable shape for his hat! Come on! She did that because I took your part and said you ought to have come—little vixen!—else she would never have sent you that silly note. It’s a most improper

note, I call it; most improper for such an intelligent, well-brought-up girl to write. H'm! I dare say she was annoyed that you didn't come; but she ought to have known that one can't write like that to an idiot like you, for you'd be sure to take it literally." Mrs. Epanchin was dragging the prince along with her all the time, and never let go of his hand for an instant. "What are you listening for?" she added, seeing that she had committed herself a little. "She wants a clown like you—she hasn't seen one for some time—to play with. That's why she is anxious for you to come to the house. And right glad I am that she'll make a thorough good fool of you. You deserve it; and she can do it—oh! she can, indeed!—as well as most people."