PART III

I.

The Epanchin family, or at least the more serious members of it, were sometimes grieved because they seemed so unlike the rest of the world. They were not quite certain, but had at times a strong suspicion that things did not happen to them as they did to other people. Others led a quiet, uneventful life, while they were subject to continual upheavals. Others kept on the rails without difficulty; they ran off at the slightest obstacle. Other houses were governed by a timid routine; theirs was somehow different. Perhaps Lizabetha Prokofievna was alone in making these fretful observations; the girls, though not wanting in intelligence, were still young; the general was intelligent, too, but narrow, and in any difficulty he was content to say, "H'm!" and leave the matter to his wife. Consequently, on her fell the responsibility. It was not that they distinguished themselves as a family by any particular originality, or that their excursions off the track led to any breach of the proprieties. Oh no.

There was nothing premeditated, there was not even any conscious purpose in it all, and yet, in spite of everything, the family, although highly respected, was not quite what every highly respected family ought to be. For a long time now Lizabetha Prokofievna had had it in her mind that all the trouble was owing to her "unfortunate character," and this added to her distress. She blamed her own stupid unconventional "eccentricity." Always restless, always on the go, she constantly seemed to lose her way, and to get into trouble over the simplest and more ordinary affairs of life.

We said at the beginning of our story, that the Epanchins were liked and esteemed by their neighbours. In spite of his humble origin, Ivan Fedorovitch himself was received everywhere with respect. He deserved this, partly on account of his wealth and position, partly because, though limited, he was really a very good fellow. But a certain limitation of mind seems to be an indispensable asset, if not to all public personages, at least to all serious financiers. Added to this, his manner was modest and unassuming; he knew when to be silent, yet never allowed himself to be trampled upon. Also—and this was more important than all—he had the advantage of being under exalted patronage.

As to Lizabetha Prokofievna, she, as the reader knows, belonged to an aristocratic family. True, Russians think more of influential friends than of birth, but she had both. She was esteemed and even loved by people of consequence in society, whose example in receiving her was therefore followed by others. It seems hardly necessary to remark that her family worries and anxieties had little or no foundation, or that her imagination increased them to an absurd degree; but if you have a wart on your

forehead or nose, you imagine that all the world is looking at it, and that people would make fun of you because of it, even if you had discovered America! Doubtless Lizabetha Prokofievna was considered “eccentric” in society, but she was none the less esteemed: the pity was that she was ceasing to believe in that esteem. When she thought of her daughters, she said to herself sorrowfully that she was a hindrance rather than a help to their future, that her character and temper were absurd, ridiculous, insupportable. Naturally, she put the blame on her surroundings, and from morning to night was quarrelling with her husband and children, whom she really loved to the point of self-sacrifice, even, one might say, of passion.

She was, above all distressed by the idea that her daughters might grow up “eccentric,” like herself; she believed that no other society girls were like them. “They are growing into Nihilists!” she repeated over and over again. For years she had tormented herself with this idea, and with the question: “Why don’t they get married?”

“It is to annoy their mother; that is their one aim in life; it can be nothing else. The fact is it is all of a piece with these modern ideas, that wretched woman’s question! Six months ago Aglaya took a fancy to cut off her magnificent hair. Why, even I, when I was young, had nothing like it! The scissors were in her hand, and I had to go down on my knees and implore her... She did it, I know, from sheer mischief, to spite her mother, for she is a naughty, capricious girl, a real spoiled child spiteful and mischievous to a degree! And then Alexandra wanted to shave her head, not from caprice or mischief, but, like a little fool, simply because Aglaya persuaded her she would sleep better without her hair, and not suffer from headache! And how many suitors have they not had during the last five years! Excellent offers, too! What more do they want? Why don’t they get married? For no other reason than to vex their mother—none—none!”

But Lizabetha Prokofievna felt somewhat consoled when she could say that one of her girls, Adelaida, was settled at last. “It will be one off our hands!” she declared aloud, though in private she expressed herself with greater tenderness. The engagement was both happy and suitable, and was therefore approved in society. Prince S. was a distinguished man, he had money, and his future wife was devoted to him; what more could be desired? Lizabetha Prokofievna had felt less anxious about this daughter, however, although she considered her artistic tastes suspicious. But to make up for them she was, as her mother expressed it, “merry,” and had plenty of “common-sense.” It was Aglaya’s future which disturbed her most. With regard to her eldest daughter, Alexandra, the mother never quite knew whether there was cause for anxiety or not. Sometimes she felt as if there was nothing to be expected from her. She was twenty-five now, and must be fated to be an old maid, and “with such beauty,

too!" The mother spent whole nights in weeping and lamenting, while all the time the cause of her grief slumbered peacefully. "What is the matter with her? Is she a Nihilist, or simply a fool?"

But Lizabetha Prokofievna knew perfectly well how unnecessary was the last question. She set a high value on Alexandra Ivanovna's judgment, and often consulted her in difficulties; but that she was a 'wet hen' she never for a moment doubted. "She is so calm; nothing rouses her—though wet hens are not always calm! Oh! I can't understand it!" Her eldest daughter inspired Lizabetha with a kind of puzzled compassion. She did not feel this in Aglaya's case, though the latter was her idol. It may be said that these outbursts and epithets, such as "wet hen" (in which the maternal solicitude usually showed itself), only made Alexandra laugh. Sometimes the most trivial thing annoyed Mrs. Epanchin, and drove her into a frenzy. For instance, Alexandra Ivanovna liked to sleep late, and was always dreaming, though her dreams had the peculiarity of being as innocent and naive as those of a child of seven; and the very innocence of her dreams annoyed her mother. Once she dreamt of nine hens, and this was the cause of quite a serious quarrel—no one knew why. Another time she had—it was most unusual—a dream with a spark of originality in it. She dreamt of a monk in a dark room, into which she was too frightened to go. Adelaida and Aglaya rushed off with shrieks of laughter to relate this to their mother, but she was quite angry, and said her daughters were all fools.

"H'm! she is as stupid as a fool! A veritable 'wet hen'! Nothing excites her; and yet she is not happy; some days it makes one miserable only to look at her! Why is she unhappy, I wonder?" At times Lizabetha Prokofievna put this question to her husband, and as usual she spoke in the threatening tone of one who demands an immediate answer. Ivan Fedorovitch would frown, shrug his shoulders, and at last give his opinion: "She needs a husband!"

"God forbid that he should share your ideas, Ivan Fedorovitch!" his wife flashed back. "Or that he should be as gross and churlish as you!"

The general promptly made his escape, and Lizabetha Prokofievna after a while grew calm again. That evening, of course, she would be unusually attentive, gentle, and respectful to her "gross and churlish" husband, her "dear, kind Ivan Fedorovitch," for she had never left off loving him. She was even still "in love" with him. He knew it well, and for his part held her in the greatest esteem.

But the mother's great and continual anxiety was Aglaya. "She is exactly like me—my image in everything," said Mrs. Epanchin to herself. "A tyrant! A real little demon! A Nihilist! Eccentric, senseless and mischievous! Good Lord, how unhappy she will be!"

But as we said before, the fact of Adelaida's approaching marriage was balm to the mother. For a whole month she forgot her fears and worries.

Adelaida's fate was settled; and with her name that of Aglaya's was linked, in society gossip. People whispered that Aglaya, too, was "as good as engaged;" and Aglaya always looked so sweet and behaved so well (during this period), that the mother's heart was full of joy. Of course, Evgenie Pavlovitch must be thoroughly studied first, before the final step should be taken; but, really, how lovely dear Aglaya had become—she actually grew more beautiful every day! And then—Yes, and then—this abominable prince showed his face again, and everything went topsy-turvy at once, and everyone seemed as mad as March hares.

What had really happened?

If it had been any other family than the Epanchins', nothing particular would have happened. But, thanks to Mrs. Epanchin's invariable fussiness and anxiety, there could not be the slightest hitch in the simplest matters of everyday life, but she immediately foresaw the most dreadful and alarming consequences, and suffered accordingly.

What then must have been her condition, when, among all the imaginary anxieties and calamities which so constantly beset her, she now saw looming ahead a serious cause for annoyance—something really likely to arouse doubts and suspicions!

"How dared they, how *dared* they write that hateful anonymous letter informing me that Aglaya is in communication with Nastasia Philipovna?" she thought, as she dragged the prince along towards her own house, and again when she sat him down at the round table where the family was already assembled. "How dared they so much as *think* of such a thing? I should *die* with shame if I thought there was a particle of truth in it, or if I were to show the letter to Aglaya herself! Who dares play these jokes upon *us*, the Epanchins? *Why* didn't we go to the Yelagin instead of coming down here? I *told* you we had better go to the Yelagin this summer, Ivan Fedorovitch. It's all your fault. I dare say it was that Varia who sent the letter. It's all Ivan Fedorovitch. *That* woman is doing it all for him, I know she is, to show she can make a fool of him now just as she did when he used to give her pearls.

"But after all is said, we are mixed up in it. Your daughters are mixed up in it, Ivan Fedorovitch; young ladies in society, young ladies at an age to be married; they were present, they heard everything there was to hear. They were mixed up with that other scene, too, with those dreadful youths. You must be pleased to remember they heard it all. I cannot forgive that wretched prince. I never shall forgive him! And why, if you

please, has Aglaya had an attack of nerves for these last three days? Why has she all but quarrelled with her sisters, even with Alexandra—whom she respects so much that she always kisses her hands as though she were her mother? What are all these riddles of hers that we have to guess? What has Gavrila Ardalionovitch to do with it? Why did she take upon herself to champion him this morning, and burst into tears over it? Why is there an allusion to that cursed 'poor knight' in the anonymous letter? And why did I rush off to him just now like a lunatic, and drag him back here? I do believe I've gone mad at last. What on earth have I done now? To talk to a young man about my daughter's secrets—and secrets having to do with himself, too! Thank goodness, he's an idiot, and a friend of the house! Surely Aglaya hasn't fallen in love with such a gaby! What an idea! Pfu! we ought all to be put under glass cases—myself first of all—and be shown off as curiosities, at ten copecks a peep!"

"I shall never forgive you for all this, Ivan Fedorovitch—never! Look at her now. Why doesn't she make fun of him? She said she would, and she doesn't. Look there! She stares at him with all her eyes, and doesn't move; and yet she told him not to come. He looks pale enough; and that abominable chatterbox, Evgenie Pavlovitch, monopolizes the whole of the conversation. Nobody else can get a word in. I could soon find out all about everything if I could only change the subject."

The prince certainly was very pale. He sat at the table and seemed to be feeling, by turns, sensations of alarm and rapture.

Oh, how frightened he was of looking to one side—one particular corner—whence he knew very well that a pair of dark eyes were watching him intently, and how happy he was to think that he was once more among them, and occasionally hearing that well-known voice, although she had written and forbidden him to come again!

"What on earth will she say to me, I wonder?" he thought to himself.

He had not said a word yet; he sat silent and listened to Evgenie Pavlovitch's eloquence. The latter had never appeared so happy and excited as on this evening. The prince listened to him, but for a long time did not take in a word he said.

Excepting Ivan Fedorovitch, who had not as yet returned from town, the whole family was present. Prince S. was there; and they all intended to go out to hear the band very soon.

Colia arrived presently and joined the circle. "So he is received as usual, after all," thought the prince.

The Epanchins' country-house was a charming building, built after the model of a Swiss chalet, and covered with creepers. It was surrounded on all sides by a flower garden, and the family sat, as a rule, on the open verandah as at the prince's house.

The subject under discussion did not appear to be very popular with the assembly, and some would have been delighted to change it; but Evgenie would not stop holding forth, and the prince's arrival seemed to spur him on to still further oratorical efforts.

Lizabetha Prokofievna frowned, but had not as yet grasped the subject, which seemed to have arisen out of a heated argument. Aglaya sat apart, almost in the corner, listening in stubborn silence.

"Excuse me," continued Evgenie Pavlovitch hotly, "I don't say a word against liberalism. Liberalism is not a sin, it is a necessary part of a great whole, which whole would collapse and fall to pieces without it. Liberalism has just as much right to exist as has the most moral conservatism; but I am attacking *Russian* liberalism; and I attack it for the simple reason that a Russian liberal is not a Russian liberal, he is a non-Russian liberal. Show me a real Russian liberal, and I'll kiss him before you all, with pleasure."

"If he cared to kiss you, that is," said Alexandra, whose cheeks were red with irritation and excitement.

"Look at that, now," thought the mother to herself, "she does nothing but sleep and eat for a year at a time, and then suddenly flies out in the most incomprehensible way!"

The prince observed that Alexandra appeared to be angry with Evgenie, because he spoke on a serious subject in a frivolous manner, pretending to be in earnest, but with an under-current of irony.

"I was saying just now, before you came in, prince, that there has been nothing national up to now, about our liberalism, and nothing the liberals do, or have done, is in the least degree national. They are drawn from two classes only, the old landowning class, and clerical families—"

"How, nothing that they have done is Russian?" asked Prince S.

"It may be Russian, but it is not national. Our liberals are not Russian, nor are our conservatives, and you may be sure that the nation does not recognize anything that has been done by the landed gentry, or by the seminarists, or what is to be done either."

“Come, that’s good! How can you maintain such a paradox? If you are serious, that is. I cannot allow such a statement about the landed proprietors to pass unchallenged. Why, you are a landed proprietor yourself!” cried Prince S. hotly.

“I suppose you’ll say there is nothing national about our literature either?” said Alexandra.

“Well, I am not a great authority on literary questions, but I certainly do hold that Russian literature is not Russian, except perhaps Lomonosoff, Pouschkin and Gogol.”

“In the first place, that is a considerable admission, and in the second place, one of the above was a peasant, and the other two were both landed proprietors!”

“Quite so, but don’t be in such a hurry! For since it has been the part of these three men, and only these three, to say something absolutely their own, not borrowed, so by this very fact these three men become really national. If any Russian shall have done or said anything really and absolutely original, he is to be called national from that moment, though he may not be able to talk the Russian language; still he is a national Russian. I consider that an axiom. But we were not speaking of literature; we began by discussing the socialists. Very well then, I insist that there does not exist one single Russian socialist. There does not, and there has never existed such a one, because all socialists are derived from the two classes—the landed proprietors, and the seminarists. All our eminent socialists are merely old liberals of the class of landed proprietors, men who were liberals in the days of serfdom. Why do you laugh? Give me their books, give me their studies, their memoirs, and though I am not a literary critic, yet I will prove as clear as day that every chapter and every word of their writings has been the work of a former landed proprietor of the old school. You’ll find that all their raptures, all their generous transports are proprietary, all their woes and their tears, proprietary; all proprietary or seminarist! You are laughing again, and you, prince, are smiling too. Don’t you agree with me?”

It was true enough that everybody was laughing, the prince among them.

“I cannot tell you on the instant whether I agree with you or not,” said the latter, suddenly stopping his laughter, and starting like a schoolboy caught at mischief. “But, I assure you, I am listening to you with extreme gratification.”

So saying, he almost panted with agitation, and a cold sweat stood upon his forehead. These were his first words since he had entered the house; he tried to lift his eyes, and look around, but dared not; Evgenie Pavlovitch noticed his confusion, and smiled.

“I’ll just tell you one fact, ladies and gentlemen,” continued the latter, with apparent seriousness and even exaltation of manner, but with a suggestion of “chaff” behind every word, as though he were laughing in his sleeve at his own nonsense—“a fact, the discovery of which, I believe, I may claim to have made by myself alone. At all events, no other has ever said or written a word about it; and in this fact is expressed the whole essence of Russian liberalism of the sort which I am now considering.

“In the first place, what is liberalism, speaking generally, but an attack (whether mistaken or reasonable, is quite another question) upon the existing order of things? Is this so? Yes. Very well. Then my ‘fact’ consists in this, that *Russian* liberalism is not an attack upon the existing order of things, but an attack upon the very essence of things themselves—indeed, on the things themselves; not an attack on the Russian order of things, but on Russia itself. My Russian liberal goes so far as to reject Russia; that is, he hates and strikes his own mother. Every misfortune and mishap of the mother-country fills him with mirth, and even with ecstasy. He hates the national customs, Russian history, and everything. If he has a justification, it is that he does not know what he is doing, and believes that his hatred of Russia is the grandest and most profitable kind of liberalism. (You will often find a liberal who is applauded and esteemed by his fellows, but who is in reality the dreariest, blindest, dullest of conservatives, and is not aware of the fact.) This hatred for Russia has been mistaken by some of our ‘Russian liberals’ for sincere love of their country, and they boast that they see better than their neighbours what real love of one’s country should consist in. But of late they have grown, more candid and are ashamed of the expression ‘love of country,’ and have annihilated the very spirit of the words as something injurious and petty and undignified. This is the truth, and I hold by it; but at the same time it is a phenomenon which has not been repeated at any other time or place; and therefore, though I hold to it as a fact, yet I recognize that it is an accidental phenomenon, and may likely enough pass away. There can be no such thing anywhere else as a liberal who really hates his country; and how is this fact to be explained among *us?* By my original statement that a Russian liberal is *not* a *Russian* liberal—that’s the only explanation that I can see.”

“I take all that you have said as a joke,” said Prince S. seriously.

“I have not seen all kinds of liberals, and cannot, therefore, set myself up as a judge,” said Alexandra, “but I have heard all you have said with indignation. You have taken some accidental case and twisted it into a universal law, which is unjust.”

“Accidental case!” said Evgenie Pavlovitch. “Do you consider it an accidental case, prince?”

“I must also admit,” said the prince, “that I have not seen much, or been very far into the question; but I cannot help thinking that you are more or less right, and that Russian liberalism—that phase of it which you are considering, at least—really is sometimes inclined to hate Russia itself, and not only its existing order of things in general. Of course this is only *partially* the truth; you cannot lay down the law for all…”

The prince blushed and broke off, without finishing what he meant to say.

In spite of his shyness and agitation, he could not help being greatly interested in the conversation. A special characteristic of his was the naive candour with which he always listened to arguments which interested him, and with which he answered any questions put to him on the subject at issue. In the very expression of his face this naivete was unmistakably evident, this disbelief in the insincerity of others, and unsuspecting disregard of irony or humour in their words.

But though Evgenie Pavlovitch had put his questions to the prince with no other purpose but to enjoy the joke of his simple-minded seriousness, yet now, at his answer, he was surprised into some seriousness himself, and looked gravely at Muishkin as though he had not expected that sort of answer at all.

“Why, how strange!” he ejaculated. “You didn’t answer me seriously, surely, did you?”

“Did not you ask me the question seriously” inquired the prince, in amazement.

Everybody laughed.

“Oh, trust *him* for that!” said Adelaida. “Evgenie Pavlovitch turns everything and everybody he can lay hold of to ridicule. You should hear the things he says sometimes, apparently in perfect seriousness.”

“In my opinion the conversation has been a painful one throughout, and we ought never to have begun it,” said Alexandra. “We were all going for a walk—”

“Come along then,” said Evgenie; “it’s a glorious evening. But, to prove that this time I was speaking absolutely seriously, and especially to prove this to the prince (for you, prince, have interested me exceedingly, and I swear to you that I am not quite such an ass as I like to appear sometimes, although I am rather an ass, I admit), and—well, ladies and gentlemen, will you allow me to put just one more question to the prince, out of pure curiosity? It shall be the last. This question came into my mind a couple of hours since (you see, prince, I do think seriously at times), and I made my own decision upon it; now I wish to hear what the prince will say to it.”

“We have just used the expression ‘accidental case.’ This is a significant phrase; we often hear it. Well, not long since everyone was talking and reading about that terrible murder of six people on the part of a—young fellow, and of the extraordinary speech of the counsel for the defence, who observed that in the poverty-stricken condition of the criminal it must have come *naturally* into his head to kill these six people. I do not quote his words, but that is the sense of them, or something very like it. Now, in my opinion, the barrister who put forward this extraordinary plea was probably absolutely convinced that he was stating the most liberal, the most humane, the most enlightened view of the case that could possibly be brought forward in these days. Now, was this distortion, this capacity for a perverted way of viewing things, a special or accidental case, or is such a general rule?”

Everyone laughed at this.

“A special case—accidental, of course!” cried Alexandra and Adelaida.

“Let me remind you once more, Evgenie,” said Prince S., “that your joke is getting a little threadbare.”

“What do you think about it, prince?” asked Evgenie, taking no notice of the last remark, and observing Muishkin’s serious eyes fixed upon his face. “What do you think—was it a special or a usual case—the rule, or an exception? I confess I put the question especially for you.”

“No, I don’t think it was a special case,” said the prince, quietly, but firmly.

“My dear fellow!” cried Prince S., with some annoyance, “don’t you see that he is chaffing you? He is simply laughing at you, and wants to make game of you.”

“I thought Evgenie Pavlovitch was talking seriously,” said the prince, blushing and dropping his eyes.

“My dear prince,” continued Prince S. “remember what you and I were saying two or three months ago. We spoke of the fact that in our newly opened Law Courts one could already lay one’s finger upon so many talented and remarkable young barristers. How pleased you were with the state of things as we found it, and how glad I was to observe your delight! We both said it was a matter to be proud of; but this clumsy defence that Evgenie mentions, this strange argument *can*, of course, only be an accidental case—one in a thousand!”

The prince reflected a little, but very soon he replied, with absolute conviction in his tone, though he still spoke somewhat shyly and timidly:

“I only wished to say that this ‘distortion,’ as Evgenie Pavlovitch expressed it, is met with very often, and is far more the general rule than the exception, unfortunately for Russia. So much so, that if this distortion were not the general rule, perhaps these dreadful crimes would be less frequent.”

“Dreadful crimes? But I can assure you that crimes just as dreadful, and probably more horrible, have occurred before our times, and at all times, and not only here in Russia, but everywhere else as well. And in my opinion it is not at all likely that such murders will cease to occur for a very long time to come. The only difference is that in former times there was less publicity, while now everyone talks and writes freely about such things—which fact gives the impression that such crimes have only now sprung into existence. That is where your mistake lies—an extremely natural mistake, I assure you, my dear fellow!” said Prince S.

“I know that there were just as many, and just as terrible, crimes before our times. Not long since I visited a convict prison and made acquaintance with some of the criminals. There were some even more dreadful criminals than this one we have been speaking of—men who have murdered a dozen of their fellow-creatures, and feel no remorse whatever. But what I especially noticed was this, that the very most hopeless and remorseless murderer—however hardened a criminal he may be—still *knows that he is a criminal*; that is, he is conscious that he has acted wickedly, though he may feel no remorse whatever. And they were all like this. Those of whom Evgenie Pavlovitch has spoken, do not admit that they are criminals at all; they think they had a right to do what they did, and that they were even doing a good deed, perhaps. I consider there is the greatest difference between the two cases. And recollect—it was a *youth*, at the particular age which is most helplessly susceptible to the distortion of ideas!”

Prince S. was now no longer smiling; he gazed at the prince in bewilderment.

Alexandra, who had seemed to wish to put in her word when the prince began, now sat silent, as though some sudden thought had caused her to change her mind about speaking.

Evgenie Pavlovitch gazed at him in real surprise, and this time his expression of face had no mockery in it whatever.

“What are you looking so surprised about, my friend?” asked Mrs. Epanchin, suddenly. “Did you suppose he was stupider than yourself, and was incapable of forming his own opinions, or what?”

“No! Oh no! Not at all!” said Evgenie. “But—how is it, prince, that you—(excuse the question, will you?)—if you are capable of observing and seeing things as you evidently do, how is it that you saw nothing distorted or perverted in that claim upon your property, which you acknowledged a day or two since; and which was full of arguments founded upon the most distorted views of right and wrong?”

“I’ll tell you what, my friend,” cried Mrs. Epanchin, of a sudden, “here are we all sitting here and imagining we are very clever, and perhaps laughing at the prince, some of us, and meanwhile he has received a letter this very day in which that same claimant renounces his claim, and begs the prince’s pardon. There! *we* don’t often get that sort of letter; and yet we are not ashamed to walk with our noses in the air before him.”

“And Hippolyte has come down here to stay,” said Colia, suddenly.

“What! has he arrived?” said the prince, starting up.

“Yes, I brought him down from town just after you had left the house.”

“There now! It’s just like him,” cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, boiling over once more, and entirely oblivious of the fact that she had just taken the prince’s part. “I dare swear that you went up to town yesterday on purpose to get the little wretch to do you the great honour of coming to stay at your house. You did go up to town, you know you did—you said so yourself! Now then, did you, or did you not, go down on your knees and beg him to come, confess!”

“No, he didn’t, for I saw it all myself,” said Colia. “On the contrary, Hippolyte kissed his hand twice and thanked him; and all the prince said was that he thought Hippolyte might feel better here in the country!”

“Don’t, Colia,—what is the use of saying all that?” cried the prince, rising and taking his hat.

“Where are you going to now?” cried Mrs. Epanchin.

“Never mind about him now, prince,” said Colia. “He is all right and taking a nap after the journey. He is very happy to be here; but I think perhaps it would be better if you let him alone for today,—he is very sensitive now that he is so ill—and he might be embarrassed if you show him too much attention at first. He is decidedly better today, and says he has not felt so well for the last six months, and has coughed much less, too.”

The prince observed that Aglaya came out of her corner and approached the table at this point.

He did not dare look at her, but he was conscious, to the very tips of his fingers, that she was gazing at him, perhaps angrily; and that she had probably flushed up with a look of fiery indignation in her black eyes.

“It seems to me, Mr. Colia, that you were very foolish to bring your young friend down—if he is the same consumptive boy who wept so profusely, and invited us all to his own funeral,” remarked Evgenie Pavlovitch. “He talked so eloquently about the blank wall outside his bedroom window, that I’m sure he will never support life here without it.”

“I think so too,” said Mrs. Epanchin; “he will quarrel with you, and be off,” and she drew her workbox towards her with an air of dignity, quite oblivious of the fact that the family was about to start for a walk in the park.

“Yes, I remember he boasted about the blank wall in an extraordinary way,” continued Evgenie, “and I feel that without that blank wall he will never be able to die eloquently; and he does so long to die eloquently!”

“Oh, you must forgive him the blank wall,” said the prince, quietly. “He has come down to see a few trees now, poor fellow.”

“Oh, I forgive him with all my heart; you may tell him so if you like,” laughed Evgenie.

“I don’t think you should take it quite like that,” said the prince, quietly, and without removing his eyes from the carpet. “I think it is more a case of his forgiving you.”

“Forgiving me! why so? What have I done to need his forgiveness?”

“If you don’t understand, then—but of course, you do understand. He wished—he wished to bless you all round and to have your blessing—before he died—that’s all.”

“My dear prince,” began Prince S., hurriedly, exchanging glances with some of those present, “you will not easily find heaven on earth, and yet you seem to expect to. Heaven is a difficult thing to find anywhere, prince; far more difficult than appears to that good heart of yours. Better stop this conversation, or we shall all be growing quite disturbed in our minds, and—”

“Let’s go and hear the band, then,” said Lizabetha Prokofievna, angrily rising from her place.

The rest of the company followed her example.

II.

The prince suddenly approached Evgenie Pavlovitch.

“Evgenie Pavlovitch,” he said, with strange excitement and seizing the latter’s hand in his own, “be assured that I esteem you as a generous and honourable man, in spite of everything. Be assured of that.”

Evgenie Pavlovitch fell back a step in astonishment. For one moment it was all he could do to restrain himself from bursting out laughing; but, looking closer, he observed that the prince did not seem to be quite himself; at all events, he was in a very curious state.

“I wouldn’t mind betting, prince,” he cried, “that you did not in the least mean to say that, and very likely you meant to address someone else altogether. What is it? Are you feeling unwell or anything?”

“Very likely, extremely likely, and you must be a very close observer to detect the fact that perhaps I did not intend to come up to *you* at all.”

So saying he smiled strangely; but suddenly and excitedly he began again:

“Don’t remind me of what I have done or said. Don’t! I am very much ashamed of myself, I—”

“Why, what have you done? I don’t understand you.”

“I see you are ashamed of me, Evgenie Pavlovitch; you are blushing for me; that’s a sign of a good heart. Don’t be afraid; I shall go away directly.”

“What’s the matter with him? Do his fits begin like that?” said Lizabetha Prokofievna, in a high state of alarm, addressing Colia.

“No, no, Lizabetha Prokofievna, take no notice of me. I am not going to have a fit. I will go away directly; but I know I am afflicted. I was twenty-four years an invalid, you see—the first twenty-four years of my life—so take all I do and say as the sayings and actions of an invalid. I’m going away directly, I really am—don’t be afraid. I am not blushing, for I don’t think I need blush about it, need I? But I see that I am out of place in society—society is better without me. It’s not vanity, I assure you. I have thought over it all these last three days, and I have made up my mind that I ought to unbosom myself candidly before you at the first opportunity. There are certain things, certain great ideas, which I must not so much as approach, as Prince S. has just reminded me, or I shall make you all laugh. I have no sense of proportion, I know; my words and gestures do not express my ideas—they are a humiliation and abasement of the ideas, and therefore, I have no right—and I am too sensitive. Still, I believe I am beloved in this household, and esteemed far more than I deserve. But I can’t help knowing that

after twenty-four years of illness there must be some trace left, so that it is impossible for people to refrain from laughing at me sometimes; don't you think so?"

He seemed to pause for a reply, for some verdict, as it were, and looked humbly around him.

All present stood rooted to the earth with amazement at this unexpected and apparently uncalled-for outbreak; but the poor prince's painful and rambling speech gave rise to a strange episode.

"Why do you say all this here?" cried Aglaya, suddenly. "Why do you talk like this to *them?*"

She appeared to be in the last stages of wrath and irritation; her eyes flashed. The prince stood dumbly and blindly before her, and suddenly grew pale.

"There is not one of them all who is worthy of these words of yours," continued Aglaya. "Not one of them is worth your little finger, not one of them has heart or head to compare with yours! You are more honest than all, and better, nobler, kinder, wiser than all. There are some here who are unworthy to bend and pick up the handkerchief you have just dropped. Why do you humiliate yourself like this, and place yourself lower than these people? Why do you debase yourself before them? Why have you no pride?"

"My God! Who would ever have believed this?" cried Mrs. Epanchin, wringing her hands.

"Hurrah for the 'poor knight'!" cried Colia.

"Be quiet! How dare they laugh at me in your house?" said Aglaya, turning sharply on her mother in that hysterical frame of mind that rides recklessly over every obstacle and plunges blindly through proprieties. "Why does everyone, everyone worry and torment me? Why have they all been bullying me these three days about you, prince? I will not marry you—never, and under no circumstances! Know that once and for all; as if anyone could marry an absurd creature like you! Just look in the glass and see what you look like, this very moment! Why, *why* do they torment me and say I am going to marry you? You must know it; you are in the plot with them!"

"No one ever tormented you on the subject," murmured Adelaida, aghast.

"No one ever thought of such a thing! There has never been a word said about it!" cried Alexandra.

“Who has been annoying her? Who has been tormenting the child? Who could have said such a thing to her? Is she raving?” cried Lizabetha Prokofievna, trembling with rage, to the company in general.

“Every one of them has been saying it—every one of them—all these three days! And I will never, never marry him!”

So saying, Aglaya burst into bitter tears, and, hiding her face in her handkerchief, sank back into a chair.

“But he has never even—”

“I have never asked you to marry me, Aglaya Ivanovna!” said the prince, of a sudden.

“*What?*” cried Mrs. Epanchin, raising her hands in horror. “*What's* that?”

She could not believe her ears.

“I meant to say—I only meant to say,” said the prince, faltering, “I merely meant to explain to Aglaya Ivanovna—to have the honour to explain, as it were—that I had no intention—never had—to ask the honour of her hand. I assure you I am not guilty, Aglaya Ivanovna, I am not, indeed. I never did wish to—I never thought of it at all—and never shall—you'll see it yourself—you may be quite assured of it. Some wicked person has been maligning me to you; but it's all right. Don't worry about it.”

So saying, the prince approached Aglaya.

She took the handkerchief from her face, glanced keenly at him, took in what he had said, and burst out laughing—such a merry, unrestrained laugh, so hearty and gay, that Adelaida could not contain herself. She, too, glanced at the prince's panic-stricken countenance, then rushed at her sister, threw her arms round her neck, and burst into as merry a fit of laughter as Aglaya's own. They laughed together like a couple of school-girls. Hearing and seeing this, the prince smiled happily, and in accents of relief and joy, he exclaimed “Well, thank God—thank God!”

Alexandra now joined in, and it looked as though the three sisters were going to laugh on for ever.

“They are insane,” muttered Lizabetha Prokofievna. “Either they frighten one out of one's wits, or else—”

But Prince S. was laughing now, too, so was Evgenie Pavlovitch, so was Colia, and so was the prince himself, who caught the infection as he looked round radiantly upon the others.

“Come along, let’s go out for a walk!” cried Adelaida. “We’ll all go together, and the prince must absolutely go with us. You needn’t go away, you dear good fellow! *Isn’t* he a dear, Aglaya? Isn’t he, mother? I must really give him a kiss for—for his explanation to Aglaya just now. Mother, dear, I may kiss him, mayn’t I? Aglaya, may I kiss *your* prince?” cried the young rogue, and sure enough she skipped up to the prince and kissed his forehead.

He seized her hands, and pressed them so hard that Adelaida nearly cried out; he then gazed with delight into her eyes, and raising her right hand to his lips with enthusiasm, kissed it three times.

“Come along,” said Aglaya. “Prince, you must walk with me. May he, mother? This young cavalier, who won’t have me? You said you would *never* have me, didn’t you, prince? No—no, not like that; *that’s* not the way to give your arm. Don’t you know how to give your arm to a lady yet? There—so. Now, come along, you and I will lead the way. Would you like to lead the way with me alone, tête-à-tête?”

She went on talking and chatting without a pause, with occasional little bursts of laughter between.

“Thank God—thank God!” said Lizabetha Prokofievna to herself, without quite knowing why she felt so relieved.

“What extraordinary people they are!” thought Prince S., for perhaps the hundredth time since he had entered into intimate relations with the family; but—he liked these “extraordinary people,” all the same. As for Prince Lef Nicolaievitch himself, Prince S. did not seem quite to like him, somehow. He was decidedly preoccupied and a little disturbed as they all started off.

Evgenie Pavlovitch seemed to be in a lively humour. He made Adelaida and Alexandra laugh all the way to the Vauxhall; but they both laughed so very readily and promptly that the worthy Evgenie began at last to suspect that they were not listening to him at all.

At this idea, he burst out laughing all at once, in quite unaffected mirth, and without giving any explanation.

The sisters, who also appeared to be in high spirits, never tired of glancing at Aglaya and the prince, who were walking in front. It was evident that their younger sister was a thorough puzzle to them both.

Prince S. tried hard to get up a conversation with Mrs. Epanchin upon outside subjects, probably with the good intention of distracting and amusing her; but he

bored her dreadfully. She was absent-minded to a degree, and answered at cross purposes, and sometimes not at all.

But the puzzle and mystery of Aglaya was not yet over for the evening. The last exhibition fell to the lot of the prince alone. When they had proceeded some hundred paces or so from the house, Aglaya said to her obstinately silent cavalier in a quick half-whisper:

“Look to the right!”

The prince glanced in the direction indicated.

“Look closer. Do you see that bench, in the park there, just by those three big trees—that green bench?”

The prince replied that he saw it.

“Do you like the position of it? Sometimes of a morning early, at seven o’clock, when all the rest are still asleep, I come out and sit there alone.”

The prince muttered that the spot was a lovely one.

“Now, go away, I don’t wish to have your arm any longer; or perhaps, better, continue to give me your arm, and walk along beside me, but don’t speak a word to me. I wish to think by myself.”

The warning was certainly unnecessary; for the prince would not have said a word all the rest of the time whether forbidden to speak or not. His heart beat loud and painfully when Aglaya spoke of the bench; could she—but no! he banished the thought, after an instant’s deliberation.

At Pavlofsk, on weekdays, the public is more select than it is on Sundays and Saturdays, when the townsfolk come down to walk about and enjoy the park.

The ladies dress elegantly, on these days, and it is the fashion to gather round the band, which is probably the best of our pleasure-garden bands, and plays the newest pieces. The behaviour of the public is most correct and proper, and there is an appearance of friendly intimacy among the usual frequenters. Many come for nothing but to look at their acquaintances, but there are others who come for the sake of the music. It is very seldom that anything happens to break the harmony of the proceedings, though, of course, accidents will happen everywhere.

On this particular evening the weather was lovely, and there were a large number of people present. All the places anywhere near the orchestra were occupied.

Our friends took chairs near the side exit. The crowd and the music cheered Mrs. Epanchin a little, and amused the girls; they bowed and shook hands with some of their friends and nodded at a distance to others; they examined the ladies' dresses, noticed comicalities and eccentricities among the people, and laughed and talked among themselves. Evgenie Pavlovitch, too, found plenty of friends to bow to. Several people noticed Aglaya and the prince, who were still together.

Before very long two or three young men had come up, and one or two remained to talk; all of these young men appeared to be on intimate terms with Evgenie Pavlovitch. Among them was a young officer, a remarkably handsome fellow—very good-natured and a great chatterbox. He tried to get up a conversation with Aglaya, and did his best to secure her attention. Aglaya behaved very graciously to him, and chatted and laughed merrily. Evgenie Pavlovitch begged the prince's leave to introduce their friend to him. The prince hardly realized what was wanted of him, but the introduction came off; the two men bowed and shook hands.

Evgenie Pavlovitch's friend asked the prince some question, but the latter did not reply, or if he did, he muttered something so strangely indistinct that there was nothing to be made of it. The officer stared intently at him, then glanced at Evgenie, divined why the latter had introduced him, and gave his undivided attention to Aglaya again. Only Evgenie Pavlovitch observed that Aglaya flushed up for a moment at this.

The prince did not notice that others were talking and making themselves agreeable to Aglaya; in fact, at moments, he almost forgot that he was sitting by her himself. At other moments he felt a longing to go away somewhere and be alone with his thoughts, and to feel that no one knew where he was.

Or if that were impossible he would like to be alone at home, on the terrace—without either Lebedeff or his children, or anyone else about him, and to lie there and think—a day and night and another day again! He thought of the mountains—and especially of a certain spot which he used to frequent, whence he would look down upon the distant valleys and fields, and see the waterfall, far off, like a little silver thread, and the old ruined castle in the distance. Oh! how he longed to be there now—alone with his thoughts—to think of one thing all his life—one thing! A thousand years would not be too much time! And let everyone here forget him—forget him utterly! How much better it would have been if they had never known him—if all this could but prove to be a dream. Perhaps it was a dream!

Now and then he looked at Aglaya for five minutes at a time, without taking his eyes off her face; but his expression was very strange; he would gaze at her as though she were

an object a couple of miles distant, or as though he were looking at her portrait and not at herself at all.

“Why do you look at me like that, prince?” she asked suddenly, breaking off her merry conversation and laughter with those about her. “I’m afraid of you! You look as though you were just going to put out your hand and touch my face to see if it’s real! Doesn’t he, Evgenie Pavlovitch—doesn’t he look like that?”

The prince seemed surprised that he should have been addressed at all; he reflected a moment, but did not seem to take in what had been said to him; at all events, he did not answer. But observing that she and the others had begun to laugh, he too opened his mouth and laughed with them.

The laughter became general, and the young officer, who seemed a particularly lively sort of person, simply shook with mirth.

Aglaya suddenly whispered angrily to herself the word—

“Idiot!”

“My goodness—surely she is not in love with such a—surely she isn’t mad!” groaned Mrs. Epanchin, under her breath.

“It’s all a joke, mamma; it’s just a joke like the ‘poor knight’—nothing more whatever, I assure you!” Alexandra whispered in her ear. “She is chaffing him—making a fool of him, after her own private fashion, that’s all! But she carries it just a little too far—she is a regular little actress. How she frightened us just now—didn’t she?—and all for a lark!”

“Well, it’s lucky she has happened upon an idiot, then, that’s all I can say!” whispered Lizabetha Prokofievna, who was somewhat comforted, however, by her daughter’s remark.

The prince had heard himself referred to as “idiot,” and had shuddered at the moment; but his shudder, it so happened, was not caused by the word applied to him. The fact was that in the crowd, not far from where he was sitting, a pale familiar face, with curly black hair, and a well-known smile and expression, had flashed across his vision for a moment, and disappeared again. Very likely he had imagined it! There only remained to him the impression of a strange smile, two eyes, and a bright green tie. Whether the man had disappeared among the crowd, or whether he had turned towards the Vauxhall, the prince could not say.

But a moment or two afterwards he began to glance keenly about him. That first vision might only too likely be the forerunner of a second; it was almost certain to be so. Surely he had not forgotten the possibility of such a meeting when he came to the Vauxhall? True enough, he had not remarked where he was coming to when he set out with Aglaya; he had not been in a condition to remark anything at all.

Had he been more careful to observe his companion, he would have seen that for the last quarter of an hour Aglaya had also been glancing around in apparent anxiety, as though she expected to see someone, or something particular, among the crowd of people. Now, at the moment when his own anxiety became so marked, her excitement also increased visibly, and when he looked about him, she did the same.

The reason for their anxiety soon became apparent. From that very side entrance to the Vauxhall, near which the prince and all the Epanchin party were seated, there suddenly appeared quite a large knot of persons, at least a dozen.

Heading this little band walked three ladies, two of whom were remarkably lovely; and there was nothing surprising in the fact that they should have had a large troop of admirers following in their wake.

But there was something in the appearance of both the ladies and their admirers which was peculiar, quite different for that of the rest of the public assembled around the orchestra.

Nearly everyone observed the little band advancing, and all pretended not to see or notice them, except a few young fellows who exchanged glances and smiled, saying something to one another in whispers.

It was impossible to avoid noticing them, however, in reality, for they made their presence only too conspicuous by laughing and talking loudly. It was to be supposed that some of them were more than half drunk, although they were well enough dressed, some even particularly well. There were one or two, however, who were very strange-looking creatures, with flushed faces and extraordinary clothes; some were military men; not all were quite young; one or two were middle-aged gentlemen of decidedly disagreeable appearance, men who are avoided in society like the plague, decked out in large gold studs and rings, and magnificently “got up,” generally.

Among our suburban resorts there are some which enjoy a specially high reputation for respectability and fashion; but the most careful individual is not absolutely exempt from the danger of a tile falling suddenly upon his head from his neighbour’s roof.

Such a tile was about to descend upon the elegant and decorous public now assembled to hear the music.

In order to pass from the Vauxhall to the band-stand, the visitor has to descend two or three steps. Just at these steps the group paused, as though it feared to proceed further; but very quickly one of the three ladies, who formed its apex, stepped forward into the charmed circle, followed by two members of her suite.

One of these was a middle-aged man of very respectable appearance, but with the stamp of parvenu upon him, a man whom nobody knew, and who evidently knew nobody. The other follower was younger and far less respectable-looking.

No one else followed the eccentric lady; but as she descended the steps she did not even look behind her, as though it were absolutely the same to her whether anyone were following or not. She laughed and talked loudly, however, just as before. She was dressed with great taste, but with rather more magnificence than was needed for the occasion, perhaps.

She walked past the orchestra, to where an open carriage was waiting, near the road.

The prince had not seen *her* for more than three months. All these days since his arrival from Petersburg he had intended to pay her a visit, but some mysterious presentiment had restrained him. He could not picture to himself what impression this meeting with her would make upon him, though he had often tried to imagine it, with fear and trembling. One fact was quite certain, and that was that the meeting would be painful.

Several times during the last six months he had recalled the effect which the first sight of this face had had upon him, when he only saw its portrait. He recollected well that even the portrait face had left but too painful an impression.

That month in the provinces, when he had seen this woman nearly every day, had affected him so deeply that he could not now look back upon it calmly. In the very look of this woman there was something which tortured him. In conversation with Rogojin he had attributed this sensation to pity—immeasurable pity, and this was the truth. The sight of the portrait face alone had filled his heart full of the agony of real sympathy; and this feeling of sympathy, nay, of actual *suffering*, for her, had never left his heart since that hour, and was still in full force. Oh yes, and more powerful than ever!

But the prince was not satisfied with what he had said to Rogojin. Only at this moment, when she suddenly made her appearance before him, did he realize to the

full the exact emotion which she called up in him, and which he had not described correctly to Rogojin.

And, indeed, there were no words in which he could have expressed his horror, yes, *horror*, for he was now fully convinced from his own private knowledge of her, that the woman was mad.

If, loving a woman above everything in the world, or at least having a foretaste of the possibility of such love for her, one were suddenly to behold her on a chain, behind bars and under the lash of a keeper, one would feel something like what the poor prince now felt.

“What’s the matter?” asked Aglaya, in a whisper, giving his sleeve a little tug.

He turned his head towards her and glanced at her black and (for some reason) flashing eyes, tried to smile, and then, apparently forgetting her in an instant, turned to the right once more, and continued to watch the startling apparition before him.

Nastasia Philipovna was at this moment passing the young ladies’ chairs.

Evgenie Pavlovitch continued some apparently extremely funny and interesting anecdote to Alexandra, speaking quickly and with much animation. The prince remembered that at this moment Aglaya remarked in a half-whisper:

“*What* a—”

She did not finish her indefinite sentence; she restrained herself in a moment; but it was enough.

Nastasia Philipovna, who up to now had been walking along as though she had not noticed the Epanchin party, suddenly turned her head in their direction, as though she had just observed Evgenie Pavlovitch sitting there for the first time.

“Why, I declare, here he is!” she cried, stopping suddenly. “The man one can’t find with all one’s messengers sent about the place, sitting just under one’s nose, exactly where one never thought of looking! I thought you were sure to be at your uncle’s by this time.”

Evgenie Pavlovitch flushed up and looked angrily at Nastasia Philipovna, then turned his back on her.

“What! don’t you know about it yet? He doesn’t know—imagine that! Why, he’s shot himself. Your uncle shot himself this very morning. I was told at two this afternoon. Half the town must know it by now. They say there are three hundred and fifty

thousand roubles, government money, missing; some say five hundred thousand. And I was under the impression that he would leave you a fortune! He's whistled it all away. A most depraved old gentleman, really! Well, ta, ta!—bonne chance! Surely you intend to be off there, don't you? Ha, ha! You've retired from the army in good time, I see! Plain clothes! Well done, sly rogue! Nonsense! I see—you knew it all before—I dare say you knew all about it yesterday-"

Although the impudence of this attack, this public proclamation of intimacy, as it were, was doubtless premeditated, and had its special object, yet Evgenie Pavlovitch at first seemed to intend to make no show of observing either his tormentor or her words. But Nastasia's communication struck him with the force of a thunderclap. On hearing of his uncle's death he suddenly grew as white as a sheet, and turned towards his informant.

At this moment, Lizabetha Prokofievna rose swiftly from her seat, beckoned her companions, and left the place almost at a run.

Only the prince stopped behind for a moment, as though in indecision; and Evgenie Pavlovitch lingered too, for he had not collected his scattered wits. But the Epanchins had not had time to get more than twenty paces away when a scandalous episode occurred. The young officer, Evgenie Pavlovitch's friend who had been conversing with Aglaya, said aloud in a great state of indignation:

"She ought to be whipped—that's the only way to deal with creatures like that—she ought to be whipped!"

This gentleman was a confidant of Evgenie's, and had doubtless heard of the carriage episode.

Nastasia turned to him. Her eyes flashed; she rushed up to a young man standing near, whom she did not know in the least, but who happened to have in his hand a thin cane. Seizing this from him, she brought it with all her force across the face of her insulter.

All this occurred, of course, in one instant of time.

The young officer, forgetting himself, sprang towards her. Nastasia's followers were not by her at the moment (the elderly gentleman having disappeared altogether, and the younger man simply standing aside and roaring with laughter).

In another moment, of course, the police would have been on the spot, and it would have gone hard with Nastasia Philipovna had not unexpected aid appeared.

Muishkin, who was but a couple of steps away, had time to spring forward and seize the officer's arms from behind.

The officer, tearing himself from the prince's grasp, pushed him so violently backwards that he staggered a few steps and then subsided into a chair.

But there were other defenders for Nastasia on the spot by this time. The gentleman known as the "boxer" now confronted the enraged officer.

"Keller is my name, sir; ex-lieutenant," he said, very loud. "If you will accept me as champion of the fair sex, I am at your disposal. English boxing has no secrets from me. I sympathize with you for the insult you have received, but I can't permit you to raise your hand against a woman in public. If you prefer to meet me—as would be more fitting to your rank—in some other manner, of course you understand me, captain."

But the young officer had recovered himself, and was no longer listening. At this moment Rogojin appeared, elbowing through the crowd; he took Nastasia's hand, drew it through his arm, and quickly led her away. He appeared to be terribly excited; he was trembling all over, and was as pale as a corpse. As he carried Nastasia off, he turned and grinned horribly in the officer's face, and with low malice observed:

"Tfu! look what the fellow got! Look at the blood on his cheek! Ha, ha!"

Recollecting himself, however, and seeing at a glance the sort of people he had to deal with, the officer turned his back on both his opponents, and courteously, but concealing his face with his handkerchief, approached the prince, who was now rising from the chair into which he had fallen.

"Prince Muishkin, I believe? The gentleman to whom I had the honour of being introduced?"

"She is mad, insane—I assure you, she is mad," replied the prince in trembling tones, holding out both his hands mechanically towards the officer.

"I cannot boast of any such knowledge, of course, but I wished to know your name."

He bowed and retired without waiting for an answer.

Five seconds after the disappearance of the last actor in this scene, the police arrived. The whole episode had not lasted more than a couple of minutes. Some of the spectators had risen from their places, and departed altogether; some merely exchanged their seats for others a little further off; some were delighted with the occurrence, and talked and laughed over it for a long time.

In a word, the incident closed as such incidents do, and the band began to play again. The prince walked away after the Epanchin party. Had he thought of looking round to the left after he had been pushed so unceremoniously into the chair, he would have observed Aglaya standing some twenty yards away. She had stayed to watch the scandalous scene in spite of her mother's and sisters' anxious cries to her to come away.

Prince S. ran up to her and persuaded her, at last, to come home with them.

Lizabetha Prokofievna saw that she returned in such a state of agitation that it was doubtful whether she had even heard their calls. But only a couple of minutes later, when they had reached the park, Aglaya suddenly remarked, in her usual calm, indifferent voice:

"I wanted to see how the farce would end."

III.

The occurrence at the Vauxhall had filled both mother and daughters with something like horror. In their excitement Lizabetha Prokofievna and the girls were nearly running all the way home.

In her opinion there was so much disclosed and laid bare by the episode, that, in spite of the chaotic condition of her mind, she was able to feel more or less decided on certain points which, up to now, had been in a cloudy condition.

However, one and all of the party realized that something important had happened, and that, perhaps fortunately enough, something which had hitherto been enveloped in the obscurity of guess-work had now begun to come forth a little from the mists. In spite of Prince S.'s assurances and explanations, Evgenie Pavlovitch's real character and position were at last coming to light. He was publicly convicted of intimacy with "that creature." So thought Lizabetha Prokofievna and her two elder daughters.

But the real upshot of the business was that the number of riddles to be solved was augmented. The two girls, though rather irritated at their mother's exaggerated alarm and haste to depart from the scene, had been unwilling to worry her at first with questions.

Besides, they could not help thinking that their sister Aglaya probably knew more about the whole matter than both they and their mother put together.

Prince S. looked as black as night, and was silent and moody. Mrs. Epanchin did not say a word to him all the way home, and he did not seem to observe the fact. Adelaida

tried to pump him a little by asking, “who was the uncle they were talking about, and what was it that had happened in Petersburg?” But he had merely muttered something disconnected about “making inquiries,” and that “of course it was all nonsense.” “Oh, of course,” replied Adelaida, and asked no more questions. Aglaya, too, was very quiet; and the only remark she made on the way home was that they were “walking much too fast to be pleasant.”

Once she turned and observed the prince hurrying after them. Noticing his anxiety to catch them up, she smiled ironically, and then looked back no more. At length, just as they neared the house, General Epanchin came out and met them; he had only just arrived from town.

His first word was to inquire after Evgenie Pavlovitch. But Lizabetha stalked past him, and neither looked at him nor answered his question.

He immediately judged from the faces of his daughters and Prince S. that there was a thunderstorm brewing, and he himself already bore evidences of unusual perturbation of mind.

He immediately button-holed Prince S., and standing at the front door, engaged in a whispered conversation with him. By the troubled aspect of both of them, when they entered the house, and approached Mrs. Epanchin, it was evident that they had been discussing very disturbing news.

Little by little the family gathered together upstairs in Lizabetha Prokofievna’s apartments, and Prince Muishkin found himself alone on the verandah when he arrived. He settled himself in a corner and sat waiting, though he knew not what he expected. It never struck him that he had better go away, with all this disturbance in the house. He seemed to have forgotten all the world, and to be ready to sit on where he was for years on end. From upstairs he caught sounds of excited conversation every now and then.

He could not say how long he sat there. It grew late and became quite dark.

Suddenly Aglaya entered the verandah. She seemed to be quite calm, though a little pale.

Observing the prince, whom she evidently did not expect to see there, alone in the corner, she smiled, and approached him:

“What are you doing there?” she asked.

The prince muttered something, blushed, and jumped up; but Aglaya immediately sat down beside him; so he reseated himself.

She looked suddenly, but attentively into his face, then at the window, as though thinking of something else, and then again at him.

“Perhaps she wants to laugh at me,” thought the prince, “but no; for if she did she certainly would do so.”

“Would you like some tea? I’ll order some,” she said, after a minute or two of silence.

“N-no thanks, I don’t know—”

“Don’t know! How can you not know? By-the-by, look here—if someone were to challenge you to a duel, what should you do? I wished to ask you this—some time ago—”

“Why? Nobody would ever challenge me to a duel!”

“But if they were to, would you be dreadfully frightened?”

“I dare say I should be—much alarmed!”

“Seriously? Then are you a coward?”

“N-no!—I don’t think so. A coward is a man who is afraid and runs away; the man who is frightened but does not run away, is not quite a coward,” said the prince with a smile, after a moment’s thought.

“And you wouldn’t run away?”

“No—I don’t think I should run away,” replied the prince, laughing outright at last at Aglaya’s questions.

“Though I am a woman, I should certainly not run away for anything,” said Aglaya, in a slightly pained voice. “However, I see you are laughing at me and twisting your face up as usual in order to make yourself look more interesting. Now tell me, they generally shoot at twenty paces, don’t they? At ten, sometimes? I suppose if at ten they must be either wounded or killed, mustn’t they?”

“I don’t think they often kill each other at duels.”

“They killed Pushkin that way.”

“That may have been an accident.”

“Not a bit of it; it was a duel to the death, and he was killed.”

“The bullet struck so low down that probably his antagonist would never have aimed at that part of him—people never do; he would have aimed at his chest or head; so that probably the bullet hit him accidentally. I have been told this by competent authorities.”

“Well, a soldier once told me that they were always ordered to aim at the middle of the body. So you see they don’t aim at the chest or head; they aim lower on purpose. I asked some officer about this afterwards, and he said it was perfectly true.”

“That is probably when they fire from a long distance.”

“Can you shoot at all?”

“No, I have never shot in my life.”

“Can’t you even load a pistol?”

“No! That is, I understand how it’s done, of course, but I have never done it.”

“Then, you don’t know how, for it is a matter that needs practice. Now listen and learn; in the first place buy good powder, not damp (they say it mustn’t be at all damp, but very dry), some fine kind it is—you must ask for *pistol* powder, not the stuff they load cannons with. They say one makes the bullets oneself, somehow or other. Have you got a pistol?”

“No—and I don’t want one,” said the prince, laughing.

“Oh, what *nonsense!* You must buy one. French or English are the best, they say. Then take a little powder, about a thimbleful, or perhaps two, and pour it into the barrel. Better put plenty. Then push in a bit of felt (it *must* be felt, for some reason or other); you can easily get a bit off some old mattress, or off a door; it’s used to keep the cold out. Well, when you have pushed the felt down, put the bullet in; do you hear now? The bullet last and the powder first, not the other way, or the pistol won’t shoot. What are you laughing at? I wish you to buy a pistol and practise every day, and you must learn to hit a mark for *certain*; will you?”

The prince only laughed. Aglaya stamped her foot with annoyance.

Her serious air, however, during this conversation had surprised him considerably. He had a feeling that he ought to be asking her something, that there was something he wanted to find out far more important than how to load a pistol; but his thoughts had all scattered, and he was only aware that she was sitting by him, and talking to him, and that he was looking at her; as to what she happened to be saying to him, that did not matter in the least.

The general now appeared on the verandah, coming from upstairs. He was on his way out, with an expression of determination on his face, and of preoccupation and worry also.

“Ah! Lef Nicolaievitch, it’s you, is it? Where are you off to now?” he asked, oblivious of the fact that the prince had not showed the least sign of moving. “Come along with me; I want to say a word or two to you.”

“*Au revoir*, then!” said Aglaya, holding out her hand to the prince.

It was quite dark now, and Muishkin could not see her face clearly, but a minute or two later, when he and the general had left the villa, he suddenly flushed up, and squeezed his right hand tightly.

It appeared that he and the general were going in the same direction. In spite of the lateness of the hour, the general was hurrying away to talk to someone upon some important subject. Meanwhile he talked incessantly but disconnectedly to the prince, and continually brought in the name of Lizabetha Prokofievna.

If the prince had been in a condition to pay more attention to what the general was saying, he would have discovered that the latter was desirous of drawing some information out of him, or indeed of asking him some question outright; but that he could not make up his mind to come to the point.

Muishkin was so absent, that from the very first he could not attend to a word the other was saying; and when the general suddenly stopped before him with some excited question, he was obliged to confess, ignominiously, that he did not know in the least what he had been talking about.

The general shrugged his shoulders.

“How strange everyone, yourself included, has become of late,” said he. “I was telling you that I cannot in the least understand Lizabetha Prokofievna’s ideas and agitations. She is in hysterics up there, and moans and says that we have been ‘shamed and disgraced.’ How? Why? When? By whom? I confess that I am very much to blame myself; I do not conceal the fact; but the conduct, the outrageous behaviour of this woman, must really be kept within limits, by the police if necessary, and I am just on my way now to talk the question over and make some arrangements. It can all be managed quietly and gently, even kindly, and without the slightest fuss or scandal. I foresee that the future is pregnant with events, and that there is much that needs explanation. There is intrigue in the wind; but if on one side nothing is known, on the other side nothing will be explained. If I have heard nothing about it, nor have *you*,

nor *he*, nor *she*—who *has* heard about it, I should like to know? How *can* all this be explained except by the fact that half of it is mirage or moonshine, or some hallucination of that sort?"

"*She* is insane," muttered the prince, suddenly recollecting all that had passed, with a spasm of pain at his heart.

"I too had that idea, and I slept in peace. But now I see that their opinion is more correct. I do not believe in the theory of madness! The woman has no common sense; but she is not only not insane, she is artful to a degree. Her outburst of this evening about Evgenie's uncle proves that conclusively. It was *villainous*, simply jesuitical, and it was all for some special purpose."

"What about Evgenie's uncle?"

"My goodness, Lef Nicolaievitch, why, you can't have heard a single word I said! Look at me, I'm still trembling all over with the dreadful shock! It is that that kept me in town so late. Evgenie Pavlovitch's uncle—"

"Well?" cried the prince.

"Shot himself this morning, at seven o'clock. A respected, eminent old man of seventy; and exactly point for point as she described it; a sum of money, a considerable sum of government money, missing!"

"Why, how could she—"

"What, know of it? Ha, ha, ha! Why, there was a whole crowd round her the moment she appeared on the scenes here. You know what sort of people surround her nowadays, and solicit the honour of her 'acquaintance.' Of course she might easily have heard the news from someone coming from town. All Petersburg, if not all Pavlofsk, knows it by now. Look at the slyness of her observation about Evgenie's uniform! I mean, her remark that he had retired just in time! There's a venomous hint for you, if you like! No, no! there's no insanity there! Of course I refuse to believe that Evgenie Pavlovitch could have known beforehand of the catastrophe; that is, that at such and such a day at seven o'clock, and all that; but he might well have had a presentiment of the truth. And I—all of us—Prince S. and everybody, believed that he was to inherit a large fortune from this uncle. It's dreadful, horrible! Mind, I don't suspect Evgenie of anything, be quite clear on that point; but the thing is a little suspicious, nevertheless. Prince S. can't get over it. Altogether it is a very extraordinary combination of circumstances."

"What suspicion attaches to Evgenie Pavlovitch?"

“Oh, none at all! He has behaved very well indeed. I didn’t mean to drop any sort of hint. His own fortune is intact, I believe. Lizabetha Prokofievna, of course, refuses to listen to anything. That’s the worst of it all, these family catastrophes or quarrels, or whatever you like to call them. You know, prince, you are a friend of the family, so I don’t mind telling you; it now appears that Evgenie Pavlovitch proposed to Aglaya a month ago, and was refused.”

“Impossible!” cried the prince.

“Why? Do you know anything about it? Look here,” continued the general, more agitated than ever, and trembling with excitement, “maybe I have been letting the cat out of the bag too freely with you, if so, it is because you are—that sort of man, you know! Perhaps you have some special information?”

“I know nothing about Evgenie Pavlovitch!” said the prince.

“Nor do I! They always try to bury me underground when there’s anything going on; they don’t seem to reflect that it is unpleasant to a man to be treated so! I won’t stand it! We have just had a terrible scene!—mind, I speak to you as I would to my own son! Aglaya laughs at her mother. Her sisters guessed about Evgenie having proposed and been rejected, and told Lizabetha.

“I tell you, my dear fellow, Aglaya is such an extraordinary, such a self-willed, fantastical little creature, you wouldn’t believe it! Every high quality, every brilliant trait of heart and mind, are to be found in her, and, with it all, so much caprice and mockery, such wild fancies—indeed, a little devil! She has just been laughing at her mother to her very face, and at her sisters, and at Prince S., and everybody—and of course she always laughs at me! You know I love the child—I love her even when she laughs at me, and I believe the wild little creature has a special fondness for me for that very reason. She is fonder of me than any of the others. I dare swear she has had a good laugh at *you* before now! You were having a quiet talk just now, I observed, after all the thunder and lightning upstairs. She was sitting with you just as though there had been no row at all.”

The prince blushed painfully in the darkness, and closed his right hand tightly, but he said nothing.

“My dear good Prince Lef Nicolaievitch,” began the general again, suddenly, “both I and Lizabetha Prokofievna—(who has begun to respect you once more, and me through you, goodness knows why!)—we both love you very sincerely, and esteem you, in spite of any appearances to the contrary. But you’ll admit what a riddle it must have been for us when that calm, cold, little spitfire, Aglaya—(for she stood up to her

mother and answered her questions with inexpressible contempt, and mine still more so, because, like a fool, I thought it my duty to assert myself as head of the family)—when Aglaya stood up of a sudden and informed us that 'that madwoman' (strangely enough, she used exactly the same expression as you did) 'has taken it into her head to marry me to Prince Lef Nicolaievitch, and therefore is doing her best to choke Evgenie Pavlovitch off, and rid the house of him.' That's what she said. She would not give the slightest explanation; she burst out laughing, banged the door, and went away. We all stood there with our mouths open. Well, I was told afterwards of your little passage with Aglaya this afternoon, and—and—dear prince—you are a good, sensible fellow, don't be angry if I speak out—she is laughing at you, my boy! She is enjoying herself like a child, at your expense, and therefore, since she is a child, don't be angry with her, and don't think anything of it. I assure you, she is simply making a fool of you, just as she does with one and all of us out of pure lack of something better to do. Well—good-bye! You know our feelings, don't you—our sincere feelings for yourself? They are unalterable, you know, dear boy, under all circumstances, but—Well, here we part; I must go down to the right. Rarely have I sat so uncomfortably in my saddle, as they say, as I now sit. And people talk of the charms of a country holiday!"

Left to himself at the cross-roads, the prince glanced around him, quickly crossed the road towards the lighted window of a neighbouring house, and unfolded a tiny scrap of paper which he had held clasped in his right hand during the whole of his conversation with the general.

He read the note in the uncertain rays that fell from the window. It was as follows:

"Tomorrow morning, I shall be at the green bench in the park at seven, and shall wait there for you. I have made up my mind to speak to you about a most important matter which closely concerns yourself.

"P.S.—I trust that you will not show this note to anyone. Though I am ashamed of giving you such instructions, I feel that I must do so, considering what you are. I therefore write the words, and blush for your simple character.

"P.P.S.—It is the same green bench that I showed you before. There! aren't you ashamed of yourself? I felt that it was necessary to repeat even that information."

The note was written and folded anyhow, evidently in a great hurry, and probably just before Aglaya had come down to the verandah.

In inexpressible agitation, amounting almost to fear, the prince slipped quickly away from the window, away from the light, like a frightened thief, but as he did so he

collided violently with some gentleman who seemed to spring from the earth at his feet.

“I was watching for you, prince,” said the individual.

“Is that you, Keller?” said the prince, in surprise.

“Yes, I’ve been looking for you. I waited for you at the Epanchins’ house, but of course I could not come in. I dogged you from behind as you walked along with the general. Well, prince, here is Keller, absolutely at your service—command him!—ready to sacrifice himself—even to die in case of need.”

“But—why?”

“Oh, why?—Of course you’ll be challenged! That was young Lieutenant Moloftsoff. I know him, or rather of him; he won’t pass an insult. He will take no notice of Rogojin and myself, and, therefore, you are the only one left to account for. You’ll have to pay the piper, prince. He has been asking about you, and undoubtedly his friend will call on you tomorrow—perhaps he is at your house already. If you would do me the honour to have me for a second, prince, I should be happy. That’s why I have been looking for you now.”

“Duel! You’ve come to talk about a duel, too!” The prince burst out laughing, to the great astonishment of Keller. He laughed unrestrainedly, and Keller, who had been on pins and needles, and in a fever of excitement to offer himself as “second,” was very near being offended.

“You caught him by the arms, you know, prince. No man of proper pride can stand that sort of treatment in public.”

“Yes, and he gave me a fearful dig in the chest,” cried the prince, still laughing. “What are we to fight about? I shall beg his pardon, that’s all. But if we must fight—we’ll fight! Let him have a shot at me, by all means; I should rather like it. Ha, ha, ha! I know how to load a pistol now; do you know how to load a pistol, Keller? First, you have to buy the powder, you know; it mustn’t be wet, and it mustn’t be that coarse stuff that they load cannons with—it must be pistol powder. Then you pour the powder in, and get hold of a bit of felt from some door, and then shove the bullet in. But don’t shove the bullet in before the powder, because the thing wouldn’t go off—do you hear, Keller, the thing wouldn’t go off! Ha, ha, ha! Isn’t that a grand reason, Keller, my friend, eh? Do you know, my dear fellow, I really must kiss you, and embrace you, this very moment. Ha, ha! How was it you so suddenly popped up in front of me as you did? Come to my house as soon as you can, and we’ll have some champagne. We’ll all get drunk! Do

you know I have a dozen of champagne in Lebedeff's cellar? Lebedeff sold them to me the day after I arrived. I took the lot. We'll invite everybody! Are you going to do any sleeping tonight?"

"As much as usual, prince—why?"

"Pleasant dreams then—ha, ha!"

The prince crossed the road, and disappeared into the park, leaving the astonished Keller in a state of ludicrous wonder. He had never before seen the prince in such a strange condition of mind, and could not have imagined the possibility of it.

"Fever, probably," he said to himself, "for the man is all nerves, and this business has been a little too much for him. He is not *afraid*, that's clear; that sort never funks! H'm! champagne! That was an interesting item of news, at all events!—Twelve bottles! Dear me, that's a very respectable little stock indeed! I bet anything Lebedeff lent somebody money on deposit of this dozen of champagne. Hum! he's a nice fellow, is this prince! I like this sort of man. Well, I needn't be wasting time here, and if it's a case of champagne, why—there's no time like the present!"

That the prince was almost in a fever was no more than the truth. He wandered about the park for a long while, and at last came to himself in a lonely avenue. He was vaguely conscious that he had already paced this particular walk—from that large, dark tree to the bench at the other end—about a hundred yards altogether—at least thirty times backwards and forwards.

As to recollecting what he had been thinking of all that time, he could not. He caught himself, however, indulging in one thought which made him roar with laughter, though there was nothing really to laugh at in it; but he felt that he must laugh, and go on laughing.

It struck him that the idea of the duel might not have occurred to Keller alone, but that his lesson in the art of pistol-loading might have been not altogether accidental! "Pooh! nonsense!" he said to himself, struck by another thought, of a sudden. "Why, she was immensely surprised to find me there on the verandah, and laughed and talked about *tea!* And yet she had this little note in her hand, therefore she must have known that I was sitting there. So why was she surprised? Ha, ha, ha!"

He pulled the note out and kissed it; then paused and reflected. "How strange it all is! how strange!" he muttered, melancholy enough now. In moments of great joy, he invariably felt a sensation of melancholy come over him—he could not tell why.

He looked intently around him, and wondered why he had come here; he was very tired, so he approached the bench and sat down on it. Around him was profound silence; the music in the Vauxhall was over. The park seemed quite empty, though it was not, in reality, later than half-past eleven. It was a quiet, warm, clear night—a real Petersburg night of early June; but in the dense avenue, where he was sitting, it was almost pitch dark.

If anyone had come up at this moment and told him that he was in love, passionately in love, he would have rejected the idea with astonishment, and, perhaps, with irritation. And if anyone had added that Aglaya's note was a love-letter, and that it contained an appointment to a lover's rendezvous, he would have blushed with shame for the speaker, and, probably, have challenged him to a duel.

All this would have been perfectly sincere on his part. He had never for a moment entertained the idea of the possibility of this girl loving him, or even of such a thing as himself falling in love with her. The possibility of being loved himself, "a man like me," as he put it, he ranked among ridiculous suppositions. It appeared to him that it was simply a joke on Aglaya's part, if there really were anything in it at all; but that seemed to him quite natural. His preoccupation was caused by something different.

As to the few words which the general had let slip about Aglaya laughing at everybody, and at himself most of all—he entirely believed them. He did not feel the slightest sensation of offence; on the contrary, he was quite certain that it was as it should be.

His whole thoughts were now as to next morning early; he would see her; he would sit by her on that little green bench, and listen to how pistols were loaded, and look at her. He wanted nothing more.

The question as to what she might have to say of special interest to himself occurred to him once or twice. He did not doubt, for a moment, that she really had some such subject of conversation in store, but so very little interested in the matter was he that it did not strike him to wonder what it could be. The crunch of gravel on the path suddenly caused him to raise his head.

A man, whose face it was difficult to see in the gloom, approached the bench, and sat down beside him. The prince peered into his face, and recognized the livid features of Rogojin.

"I knew you'd be wandering about somewhere here. I didn't have to look for you very long," muttered the latter between his teeth.

It was the first time they had met since the encounter on the staircase at the hotel.

Painfully surprised as he was at this sudden apparition of Rogojin, the prince, for some little while, was unable to collect his thoughts. Rogojin, evidently, saw and understood the impression he had made; and though he seemed more or less confused at first, yet he began talking with what looked like assumed ease and freedom. However, the prince soon changed his mind on this score, and thought that there was not only no affectation of indifference, but that Rogojin was not even particularly agitated. If there were a little apparent awkwardness, it was only in his words and gestures. The man could not change his heart.

“How did you—find me here?” asked the prince for the sake of saying something.

“Keller told me (I found him at your place) that you were in the park. ‘Of course he is!’ I thought.”

“Why so?” asked the prince uneasily.

Rogojin smiled, but did not explain.

“I received your letter, Lef Nicolaievitch—what’s the good of all that?—It’s no use, you know. I’ve come to you from *her*,—she bade me tell you that she must see you, she has something to say to you. She told me to find you today.”

“I’ll come tomorrow. Now I’m going home—are you coming to my house?”

“Why should I? I’ve given you the message.—Goodbye!”

“Won’t you come?” asked the prince in a gentle voice.

“What an extraordinary man you are! I wonder at you!” Rogojin laughed sarcastically.

“Why do you hate me so?” asked the prince, sadly. “You know yourself that all you suspected is quite unfounded. I felt you were still angry with me, though. Do you know why? Because you tried to kill me—that’s why you can’t shake off your wrath against me. I tell you that I only remember the Parfen Rogojin with whom I exchanged crosses, and vowed brotherhood. I wrote you this in yesterday’s letter, in order that you might forget all that madness on your part, and that you might not feel called to talk about it when we met. Why do you avoid me? Why do you hold your hand back from me? I tell you again, I consider all that has passed a delirium, an insane dream. I can understand all you did, and all you felt that day, as if it were myself. What you were then imagining was not the case, and could never be the case. Why, then, should there be anger between us?”

“You don’t know what anger is!” laughed Rogojin, in reply to the prince’s heated words.

He had moved a pace or two away, and was hiding his hands behind him.

“No, it is impossible for me to come to your house again,” he added slowly.

“Why? Do you hate me so much as all that?”

“I don’t love you, Lef Nicolaievitch, and, therefore, what would be the use of my coming to see you? You are just like a child—you want a plaything, and it must be taken out and given you—and then you don’t know how to work it. You are simply repeating all you said in your letter, and what’s the use? Of course I believe every word you say, and I know perfectly well that you neither did or ever can deceive me in any way, and yet, I don’t love you. You write that you’ve forgotten everything, and only remember your brother Parfen, with whom you exchanged crosses, and that you don’t remember anything about the Rogojin who aimed a knife at your throat. What do you know about my feelings, eh?” (Rogojin laughed disagreeably.) “Here you are holding out your brotherly forgiveness to me for a thing that I have perhaps never repented of in the slightest degree. I did not think of it again all that evening; all my thoughts were centred on something else—”

“Not think of it again? Of course you didn’t!” cried the prince. “And I dare swear that you came straight away down here to Pavlofsk to listen to the music and dog her about in the crowd, and stare at her, just as you did today. There’s nothing surprising in that! If you hadn’t been in that condition of mind that you could think of nothing but one subject, you would, probably, never have raised your knife against me. I had a presentiment of what you would do, that day, ever since I saw you first in the morning. Do you know yourself what you looked like? I knew you would try to murder me even at the very moment when we exchanged crosses. What did you take me to your mother for? Did you think to stay your hand by doing so? Perhaps you did not put your thoughts into words, but you and I were thinking the same thing, or feeling the same thing looming over us, at the same moment. What should you think of me now if you had not raised your knife to me—the knife which God averted from my throat? I would have been guilty of suspecting you all the same—and you would have intended the murder all the same; therefore we should have been mutually guilty in any case. Come, don’t frown; you needn’t laugh at me, either. You say you haven’t ‘repented.’ Repented! You probably couldn’t, if you were to try; you dislike me too much for that. Why, if I were an angel of light, and as innocent before you as a babe, you would still loathe me if you believed that *she* loved me, instead of loving yourself. That’s jealousy—that is the real jealousy.

“But do you know what I have been thinking out during this last week, Parfen? I’ll tell you. What if she loves you now better than anyone? And what if she torments

you *because* she loves you, and in proportion to her love for you, so she torments you the more? She won't tell you this, of course; you must have eyes to see. Why do you suppose she consents to marry you? She must have a reason, and that reason she will tell you some day. Some women desire the kind of love you give her, and she is probably one of these. Your love and your wild nature impress her. Do you know that a woman is capable of driving a man crazy almost, with her cruelties and mockeries, and feels not one single pang of regret, because she looks at him and says to herself, 'There! I'll torment this man nearly into his grave, and then, oh! how I'll compensate him for it all with my love!'"

Rogojin listened to the end, and then burst out laughing:

"Why, prince, I declare you must have had a taste of this sort of thing yourself—haven't you? I have heard tell of something of the kind, you know; is it true?"

"What? What can you have heard?" said the prince, stammering.

Rogojin continued to laugh loudly. He had listened to the prince's speech with curiosity and some satisfaction. The speaker's impulsive warmth had surprised and even comforted him.

"Why, I've not only heard of it; I see it for myself," he said. "When have you ever spoken like that before? It wasn't like yourself, prince. Why, if I hadn't heard this report about you, I should never have come all this way into the park—at midnight, too!"

"I don't understand you in the least, Parfen."

"Oh, *she* told me all about it long ago, and tonight I saw for myself. I saw you at the music, you know, and whom you were sitting with. She swore to me yesterday, and again today, that you are madly in love with Aglaya Ivanovna. But that's all the same to me, prince, and it's not my affair at all; for if you have ceased to love *her*, *she* has not ceased to love *you*. You know, of course, that she wants to marry you to that girl? She's sworn to it! Ha, ha! She says to me, 'Until then I won't marry you. When they go to church, we'll go too—and not before.' What on earth does she mean by it? I don't know, and I never did. Either she loves you without limits or—yet, if she loves you, why does she wish to marry you to another girl? She says, 'I want to see him happy,' which is to say—she loves you."

"I wrote, and I say to you once more, that she is not in her right mind," said the prince, who had listened with anguish to what Rogojin said.

"Goodness knows—you may be wrong there! At all events, she named the day this evening, as we left the gardens. 'In three weeks,' says she, 'and perhaps sooner, we

shall be married.' She swore to it, took off her cross and kissed it. So it all depends upon you now, prince, You see! Ha, ha!"

"That's all madness. What you say about me, Parfen, never can and never will be. Tomorrow, I shall come and see you—"

"How can she be mad," Rogojin interrupted, "when she is sane enough for other people and only mad for you? How can she write letters to *her*, if she's mad? If she were insane they would observe it in her letters."

"What letters?" said the prince, alarmed.

"She writes to *her*—and the girl reads the letters. Haven't you heard?—You are sure to hear; she's sure to show you the letters herself."

"I won't believe this!" cried the prince.

"Why, prince, you've only gone a few steps along this road, I perceive. You are evidently a mere beginner. Wait a bit! Before long, you'll have your own detectives, you'll watch day and night, and you'll know every little thing that goes on there—that is, if—"

"Drop that subject, Rogojin, and never mention it again. And listen: as I have sat here, and talked, and listened, it has suddenly struck me that tomorrow is my birthday. It must be about twelve o'clock, now; come home with me—do, and we'll see the day in! We'll have some wine, and you shall wish me—I don't know what—but you, especially you, must wish me a good wish, and I shall wish you full happiness in return. Otherwise, hand me my cross back again. You didn't return it to me next day. Haven't you got it on now?"

"Yes, I have," said Rogojin.

"Come along, then. I don't wish to meet my new year without you—my new life, I should say, for a new life is beginning for me. Did you know, Parfen, that a new life had begun for me?"

"I see for myself that it is so—and I shall tell *her*. But you are not quite yourself, Lef Nicolaievitch."

IV.

The prince observed with great surprise, as he approached his villa, accompanied by Rogojin, that a large number of people were assembled on his verandah, which was brilliantly lighted up. The company seemed merry and were noisily laughing and

talking—even quarrelling, to judge from the sounds. At all events they were clearly enjoying themselves, and the prince observed further on closer investigation—that all had been drinking champagne. To judge from the lively condition of some of the party, it was to be supposed that a considerable quantity of champagne had been consumed already.

All the guests were known to the prince; but the curious part of the matter was that they had all arrived on the same evening, as though with one accord, although he had only himself recollected the fact that it was his birthday a few moments since.

“You must have told somebody you were going to trot out the champagne, and that’s why they are all come!” muttered Rogojin, as the two entered the verandah. “We know all about that! You’ve only to whistle and they come up in shoals!” he continued, almost angrily. He was doubtless thinking of his own late experiences with his boon companions.

All surrounded the prince with exclamations of welcome, and, on hearing that it was his birthday, with cries of congratulation and delight; many of them were very noisy.

The presence of certain of those in the room surprised the prince vastly, but the guest whose advent filled him with the greatest wonder—almost amounting to alarm—was Evgenie Pavlovitch. The prince could not believe his eyes when he beheld the latter, and could not help thinking that something was wrong.

Lebedeff ran up promptly to explain the arrival of all these gentlemen. He was himself somewhat intoxicated, but the prince gathered from his long-winded periods that the party had assembled quite naturally, and accidentally.

First of all Hippolyte had arrived, early in the evening, and feeling decidedly better, had determined to await the prince on the verandah. There Lebedeff had joined him, and his household had followed—that is, his daughters and General Ivolgin. Burdovsky had brought Hippolyte, and stayed on with him. Gania and Ptitsin had dropped in accidentally later on; then came Keller, and he and Colia insisted on having champagne. Evgenie Pavlovitch had only dropped in half an hour or so ago. Lebedeff had served the champagne readily.

“My own though, prince, my own, mind,” he said, “and there’ll be some supper later on; my daughter is getting it ready now. Come and sit down, prince, we are all waiting for you, we want you with us. Fancy what we have been discussing! You know the question, ‘to be or not to be,’—out of Hamlet! A contemporary theme! Quite up-to-date! Mr. Hippolyte has been eloquent to a degree. He won’t go to bed, but he has only drunk a little champagne, and that can’t do him any harm. Come along, prince, and

settle the question. Everyone is waiting for you, sighing for the light of your luminous intelligence..."

The prince noticed the sweet, welcoming look on Vera Lebedeff's face, as she made her way towards him through the crowd. He held out his hand to her. She took it, blushing with delight, and wished him "a happy life from that day forward." Then she ran off to the kitchen, where her presence was necessary to help in the preparations for supper. Before the prince's arrival she had spent some time on the terrace, listening eagerly to the conversation, though the visitors, mostly under the influence of wine, were discussing abstract subjects far beyond her comprehension. In the next room her younger sister lay on a wooden chest, sound asleep, with her mouth wide open; but the boy, Lebedeff's son, had taken up his position close beside Colia and Hippolyte, his face lit up with interest in the conversation of his father and the rest, to which he would willingly have listened for ten hours at a stretch.

"I have waited for you on purpose, and am very glad to see you arrive so happy," said Hippolyte, when the prince came forward to press his hand, immediately after greeting Vera.

"And how do you know that I am 'so happy'?"

"I can see it by your face! Say 'how do you do' to the others, and come and sit down here, quick—I've been waiting for you!" he added, accentuating the fact that he had waited. On the prince's asking, "Will it not be injurious to you to sit out so late?" he replied that he could not believe that he had thought himself dying three days or so ago, for he never had felt better than this evening.

Burdovsky next jumped up and explained that he had come in by accident, having escorted Hippolyte from town. He murmured that he was glad he had "written nonsense" in his letter, and then pressed the prince's hand warmly and sat down again.

The prince approached Evgenie Pavlovitch last of all. The latter immediately took his arm.

"I have a couple of words to say to you," he began, "and those on a very important matter; let's go aside for a minute or two."

"Just a couple of words!" whispered another voice in the prince's other ear, and another hand took his other arm. Muishkin turned, and to his great surprise observed a red, flushed face and a droll-looking figure which he recognized at once as that of Ferdishenko. Goodness knows where he had turned up from!

“Do you remember Ferdishenko?” he asked.

“Where have you dropped from?” cried the prince.

“He is sorry for his sins now, prince,” cried Keller. “He did not want to let you know he was here; he was hidden over there in the corner,—but he repents now, he feels his guilt.”

“Why, what has he done?”

“I met him outside and brought him in—he’s a gentleman who doesn’t often allow his friends to see him, of late—but he’s sorry now.”

“Delighted, I’m sure!—I’ll come back directly, gentlemen,—sit down there with the others, please,—excuse me one moment,” said the host, getting away with difficulty in order to follow Evgenie.

“You are very gay here,” began the latter, “and I have had quite a pleasant half-hour while I waited for you. Now then, my dear Lef Nicolaievitch, this is what’s the matter. I’ve arranged it all with Moloftsoff, and have just come in to relieve your mind on that score. You need be under no apprehensions. He was very sensible, as he should be, of course, for I think he was entirely to blame himself.”

“What Moloftsoff?”

“The young fellow whose arms you held, don’t you know? He was so wild with you that he was going to send a friend to you tomorrow morning.”

“What nonsense!”

“Of course it is nonsense, and in nonsense it would have ended, doubtless; but you know these fellows, they—”

“Excuse me, but I think you must have something else that you wished to speak about, Evgenie Pavlovitch?”

“Of course, I have!” said the other, laughing. “You see, my dear fellow, tomorrow, very early in the morning, I must be off to town about this unfortunate business (my uncle, you know!). Just imagine, my dear sir, it is all true—word for word—and, of course, everybody knew it excepting myself. All this has been such a blow to me that I have not managed to call in at the Epanchins’. Tomorrow I shall not see them either, because I shall be in town. I may not be here for three days or more; in a word, my affairs are a little out of gear. But though my town business is, of course, most pressing, still I determined not to go away until I had seen you, and had a clear

understanding with you upon certain points; and that without loss of time. I will wait now, if you will allow me, until the company departs; I may just as well, for I have nowhere else to go to, and I shall certainly not do any sleeping tonight; I'm far too excited. And finally, I must confess that, though I know it is bad form to pursue a man in this way, I have come to beg your friendship, my dear prince. You are an unusual sort of a person; you don't lie at every step, as some men do; in fact, you don't lie at all, and there is a matter in which I need a true and sincere friend, for I really may claim to be among the number of bona fide unfortunates just now."

He laughed again.

"But the trouble is," said the prince, after a slight pause for reflection, "that goodness only knows when this party will break up. Hadn't we better stroll into the park? I'll excuse myself, there's no danger of their going away."

"No, no! I have my reasons for wishing them not to suspect us of being engaged in any specially important conversation. There are gentry present who are a little too much interested in us. You are not aware of that perhaps, prince? It will be a great deal better if they see that we are friendly just in an ordinary way. They'll all go in a couple of hours, and then I'll ask you to give me twenty minutes—half an hour at most."

"By all means! I assure you I am delighted—you need not have entered into all these explanations. As for your remarks about friendship with me—thanks, very much indeed. You must excuse my being a little absent this evening. Do you know, I cannot somehow be attentive to anything just now?"

"I see, I see," said Evgenie, smiling gently. His mirth seemed very near the surface this evening.

"What do you see?" said the prince, startled.

"I don't want you to suspect that I have simply come here to deceive you and pump information out of you!" said Evgenie, still smiling, and without making any direct reply to the question.

"Oh, but I haven't the slightest doubt that you did come to pump me," said the prince, laughing himself, at last; "and I dare say you are quite prepared to deceive me too, so far as that goes. But what of that? I'm not afraid of you; besides, you'll hardly believe it, I feel as though I really didn't care a scrap one way or the other, just now!—And—and—and as you are a capital fellow, I am convinced of that, I dare say we really shall end by being good friends. I like you very much Evgenie Pavlovitch; I consider you a very good fellow indeed."

“Well, in any case, you are a most delightful man to have to deal with, be the business what it may,” concluded Evgenie. “Come along now, I’ll drink a glass to your health. I’m charmed to have entered into alliance with you. By-the-by,” he added suddenly, “has this young Hippolyte come down to stay with you?”

“Yes.”

“He’s not going to die at once, I should think, is he?”

“Why?”

“Oh, I don’t know. I’ve been half an hour here with him, and he—”

Hippolyte had been waiting for the prince all this time, and had never ceased looking at him and Evgenie Pavlovitch as they conversed in the corner. He became much excited when they approached the table once more. He was disturbed in his mind, it seemed; perspiration stood in large drops on his forehead; in his gleaming eyes it was easy to read impatience and agitation; his gaze wandered from face to face of those present, and from object to object in the room, apparently without aim. He had taken a part, and an animated one, in the noisy conversation of the company; but his animation was clearly the outcome of fever. His talk was almost incoherent; he would break off in the middle of a sentence which he had begun with great interest, and forget what he had been saying. The prince discovered to his dismay that Hippolyte had been allowed to drink two large glasses of champagne; the one now standing by him being the third. All this he found out afterwards; at the moment he did not notice anything, very particularly.

“Do you know I am specially glad that today is your birthday!” cried Hippolyte.

“Why?”

“You’ll soon see. D’you know I had a feeling that there would be a lot of people here tonight? It’s not the first time that my presentiments have been fulfilled. I wish I had known it was your birthday, I’d have brought you a present—perhaps I have got a present for you! Who knows? Ha, ha! How long is it now before daylight?”

“Not a couple of hours,” said Ptitsin, looking at his watch. “What’s the good of daylight now? One can read all night in the open air without it,” said someone.

“The good of it! Well, I want just to see a ray of the sun,” said Hippolyte. “Can one drink to the sun’s health, do you think, prince?”

“Oh, I dare say one can; but you had better be calm and lie down, Hippolyte—that’s much more important.”

“You are always preaching about resting; you are a regular nurse to me, prince. As soon as the sun begins to ‘resound’ in the sky—what poet said that? ‘The sun resounded in the sky.’ It is beautiful, though there’s no sense in it!—then we will go to bed. Lebedeff, tell me, is the sun the source of life? What does the source, or ‘spring,’ of life really mean in the Apocalypse? You have heard of the ‘Star that is called Wormwood,’ prince?”

“I have heard that Lebedeff explains it as the railroads that cover Europe like a net.”

Everybody laughed, and Lebedeff got up abruptly.

“No! Allow me, that is not what we are discussing!” he cried, waving his hand to impose silence. “Allow me! With these gentlemen… all these gentlemen,” he added, suddenly addressing the prince, “on certain points… that is…” He thumped the table repeatedly, and the laughter increased. Lebedeff was in his usual evening condition, and had just ended a long and scientific argument, which had left him excited and irritable. On such occasions he was apt to evince a supreme contempt for his opponents.

“It is not right! Half an hour ago, prince, it was agreed among us that no one should interrupt, no one should laugh, that each person was to express his thoughts freely; and then at the end, when everyone had spoken, objections might be made, even by the atheists. We chose the general as president. Now without some such rule and order, anyone might be shouted down, even in the loftiest and most profound thought….”

“Go on! Go on! Nobody is going to interrupt you!” cried several voices.

“Speak, but keep to the point!”

“What is this ‘star’?” asked another.

“I have no idea,” replied General Ivolgin, who presided with much gravity.

“I love these arguments, prince,” said Keller, also more than half intoxicated, moving restlessly in his chair. “Scientific and political.” Then, turning suddenly towards Evgenie Pavlovitch, who was seated near him: “Do you know, I simply adore reading the accounts of the debates in the English parliament. Not that the discussions themselves interest me; I am not a politician, you know; but it delights me to see how they address each other ‘the noble lord who agrees with me,’ ‘my honourable opponent who astonished Europe with his proposal,’ ‘the noble viscount sitting opposite’—all these expressions, all this parliamentarism of a free people, has an

enormous attraction for me. It fascinates me, prince. I have always been an artist in the depths of my soul, I assure you, Evgenie Pavlovitch."

"Do you mean to say," cried Gania, from the other corner, "do you mean to say that railways are accursed inventions, that they are a source of ruin to humanity, a poison poured upon the earth to corrupt the springs of life?"

Gavrila Ardalionovitch was in high spirits that evening, and it seemed to the prince that his gaiety was mingled with triumph. Of course he was only joking with Lebedeff, meaning to egg him on, but he grew excited himself at the same time.

"Not the railways, oh dear, no!" replied Lebedeff, with a mixture of violent anger and extreme enjoyment. "Considered alone, the railways will not pollute the springs of life, but as a whole they are accursed. The whole tendency of our latest centuries, in its scientific and materialistic aspect, is most probably accursed."

"Is it certainly accursed?... or do you only mean it might be? That is an important point," said Evgenie Pavlovitch.

"It is accursed, certainly accursed!" replied the clerk, vehemently.

"Don't go so fast, Lebedeff; you are much milder in the morning," said Ptitsin, smiling.

"But, on the other hand, more frank in the evening! In the evening sincere and frank," repeated Lebedeff, earnestly. "More candid, more exact, more honest, more honourable, and... although I may show you my weak side, I challenge you all; you atheists, for instance! How are you going to save the world? How find a straight road of progress, you men of science, of industry, of cooperation, of trades unions, and all the rest? How are you going to save it, I say? By what? By credit? What is credit? To what will credit lead you?"

"You are too inquisitive," remarked Evgenie Pavlovitch.

"Well, anyone who does not interest himself in questions such as this is, in my opinion, a mere fashionable dummy."

"But it will lead at least to solidarity, and balance of interests," said Ptitsin.

"You will reach that with nothing to help you but credit? Without recourse to any moral principle, having for your foundation only individual selfishness, and the satisfaction of material desires? Universal peace, and the happiness of mankind as a whole, being the result! Is it really so that I may understand you, sir?"

“But the universal necessity of living, of drinking, of eating—in short, the whole scientific conviction that this necessity can only be satisfied by universal co-operation and the solidarity of interests—is, it seems to me, a strong enough idea to serve as a basis, so to speak, and a ‘spring of life,’ for humanity in future centuries,” said Gavrila Ardalionovitch, now thoroughly roused.

“The necessity of eating and drinking, that is to say, solely the instinct of self-preservation…”

“Is not that enough? The instinct of self-preservation is the normal law of humanity…”

“Who told you that?” broke in Evgenie Pavlovitch.

“It is a law, doubtless, but a law neither more nor less normal than that of destruction, even self-destruction. Is it possible that the whole normal law of humanity is contained in this sentiment of self-preservation?”

“Ah!” cried Hippolyte, turning towards Evgenie Pavlovitch, and looking at him with a queer sort of curiosity.

Then seeing that Radomski was laughing, he began to laugh himself, nudged Colia, who was sitting beside him, with his elbow, and again asked what time it was. He even pulled Colia’s silver watch out of his hand, and looked at it eagerly. Then, as if he had forgotten everything, he stretched himself out on the sofa, put his hands behind his head, and looked up at the sky. After a minute or two he got up and came back to the table to listen to Lebedeff’s outpourings, as the latter passionately commentated on Evgenie Pavlovitch’s paradox.

“That is an artful and traitorous idea. A smart notion,” vociferated the clerk, “thrown out as an apple of discord. But it is just. You are a scoffer, a man of the world, a cavalry officer, and, though not without brains, you do not realize how profound is your thought, nor how true. Yes, the laws of self-preservation and of self-destruction are equally powerful in this world. The devil will hold his empire over humanity until a limit of time which is still unknown. You laugh? You do not believe in the devil? Scepticism as to the devil is a French idea, and it is also a frivolous idea. Do you know who the devil is? Do you know his name? Although you don’t know his name you make a mockery of his form, following the example of Voltaire. You sneer at his hoofs, at his tail, at his horns—all of them the produce of your imagination! In reality the devil is a great and terrible spirit, with neither hoofs, nor tail, nor horns; it is you who have endowed him with these attributes! But… he is not the question just now!”

“How do you know he is not the question now?” cried Hippolyte, laughing hysterically.

“Another excellent idea, and worth considering!” replied Lebedeff. “But, again, that is not the question. The question at this moment is whether we have not weakened ‘the springs of life’ by the extension…”

“Of railways?” put in Colia eagerly.

“Not railways, properly speaking, presumptuous youth, but the general tendency of which railways may be considered as the outward expression and symbol. We hurry and push and hustle, for the good of humanity! ‘The world is becoming too noisy, too commercial!’ groans some solitary thinker. ‘Undoubtedly it is, but the noise of waggons bearing bread to starving humanity is of more value than tranquillity of soul,’ replies another triumphantly, and passes on with an air of pride. As for me, I don’t believe in these waggons bringing bread to humanity. For, founded on no moral principle, these may well, even in the act of carrying bread to humanity, coldly exclude a considerable portion of humanity from enjoying it; that has been seen more than once.”

“What, these waggons may coldly exclude?” repeated someone.

“That has been seen already,” continued Lebedeff, not deigning to notice the interruption. “Malthus was a friend of humanity, but, with ill-founded moral principles, the friend of humanity is the devourer of humanity, without mentioning his pride; for, touch the vanity of one of these numberless philanthropists, and to avenge his self-esteem, he will be ready at once to set fire to the whole globe; and to tell the truth, we are all more or less like that. I, perhaps, might be the first to set a light to the fuel, and then run away. But, again, I must repeat, that is not the question.”

“What is it then, for goodness’ sake?”

“He is boring us!”

“The question is connected with the following anecdote of past times; for I am obliged to relate a story. In our times, and in our country, which I hope you love as much as I do, for as far as I am concerned, I am ready to shed the last drop of my blood…

“Go on! Go on!”

“In our dear country, as indeed in the whole of Europe, a famine visits humanity about four times a century, as far as I can remember; once in every twenty-five years. I won’t swear to this being the exact figure, but anyhow they have become comparatively rare.”

“Comparatively to what?”

“To the twelfth century, and those immediately preceding and following it. We are told by historians that widespread famines occurred in those days every two or three years, and such was the condition of things that men actually had recourse to cannibalism, in secret, of course. One of these cannibals, who had reached a good age, declared of his own free will that during the course of his long and miserable life he had personally killed and eaten, in the most profound secrecy, sixty monks, not to mention several children; the number of the latter he thought was about six, an insignificant total when compared with the enormous mass of ecclesiastics consumed by him. As to adults, laymen that is to say, he had never touched them.”

The president joined in the general outcry.

“That’s impossible!” said he in an aggrieved tone. “I am often discussing subjects of this nature with him, gentlemen, but for the most part he talks nonsense enough to make one deaf: this story has no pretence of being true.”

“General, remember the siege of Kars! And you, gentlemen, I assure you my anecdote is the naked truth. I may remark that reality, although it is governed by invariable law, has at times a resemblance to falsehood. In fact, the truer a thing is the less true it sounds.”

“But could anyone possibly eat sixty monks?” objected the scoffing listeners.

“It is quite clear that he did not eat them all at once, but in a space of fifteen or twenty years: from that point of view the thing is comprehensible and natural…”

“Natural?”

“And natural,” repeated Lebedeff with pedantic obstinacy. “Besides, a Catholic monk is by nature excessively curious; it would be quite easy therefore to entice him into a wood, or some secret place, on false pretences, and there to deal with him as said. But I do not dispute in the least that the number of persons consumed appears to denote a spice of greediness.”

“It is perhaps true, gentlemen,” said the prince, quietly. He had been listening in silence up to that moment without taking part in the conversation, but laughing heartily with the others from time to time. Evidently he was delighted to see that everybody was amused, that everybody was talking at once, and even that everybody was drinking. It seemed as if he were not intending to speak at all, when suddenly he intervened in such a serious voice that everyone looked at him with interest.

“It is true that there were frequent famines at that time, gentlemen. I have often heard of them, though I do not know much history. But it seems to me that it must have been

so. When I was in Switzerland I used to look with astonishment at the many ruins of feudal castles perched on the top of steep and rocky heights, half a mile at least above sea-level, so that to reach them one had to climb many miles of stony tracks. A castle, as you know, is, a kind of mountain of stones—a dreadful, almost an impossible, labour! Doubtless the builders were all poor men, vassals, and had to pay heavy taxes, and to keep up the priesthood. How, then, could they provide for themselves, and when had they time to plough and sow their fields? The greater number must, literally, have died of starvation. I have sometimes asked myself how it was that these communities were not utterly swept off the face of the earth, and how they could possibly survive. Lebedeff is not mistaken, in my opinion, when he says that there were cannibals in those days, perhaps in considerable numbers; but I do not understand why he should have dragged in the monks, nor what he means by that."

"It is undoubtedly because, in the twelfth century, monks were the only people one could eat; they were the fat, among many lean," said Gavrila Ardalionovitch.

"A brilliant idea, and most true!" cried Lebedeff, "for he never even touched the laity. Sixty monks, and not a single layman! It is a terrible idea, but it is historic, it is statistic; it is indeed one of those facts which enables an intelligent historian to reconstruct the physiognomy of a special epoch, for it brings out this further point with mathematical accuracy, that the clergy were in those days sixty times richer and more flourishing than the rest of humanity and perhaps sixty times fatter also…"

"You are exaggerating, you are exaggerating, Lebedeff!" cried his hearers, amid laughter.

"I admit that it is an historic thought, but what is your conclusion?" asked the prince.

He spoke so seriously in addressing Lebedeff, that his tone contrasted quite comically with that of the others. They were very nearly laughing at him, too, but he did not notice it.

"Don't you see he is a lunatic, prince?" whispered Evgenie Pavlovitch in his ear. "Someone told me just now that he is a bit touched on the subject of lawyers, that he has a mania for making speeches and intends to pass the examinations. I am expecting a splendid burlesque now."

"My conclusion is vast," replied Lebedeff, in a voice like thunder. "Let us examine first the psychological and legal position of the criminal. We see that in spite of the difficulty of finding other food, the accused, or, as we may say, my client, has often during his peculiar life exhibited signs of repentance, and of wishing to give up this

clerical diet. Incontrovertible facts prove this assertion. He has eaten five or six children, a relatively insignificant number, no doubt, but remarkable enough from another point of view. It is manifest that, pricked by remorse—for my client is religious, in his way, and has a conscience, as I shall prove later—and desiring to extenuate his sin as far as possible, he has tried six times at least to substitute lay nourishment for clerical. That this was merely an experiment we can hardly doubt: for if it had been only a question of gastronomic variety, six would have been too few; why only six? Why not thirty? But if we regard it as an experiment, inspired by the fear of committing new sacrilege, then this number six becomes intelligible. Six attempts to calm his remorse, and the pricking of his conscience, would amply suffice, for these attempts could scarcely have been happy ones. In my humble opinion, a child is too small; I should say, not sufficient; which would result in four or five times more lay children than monks being required in a given time. The sin, lessened on the one hand, would therefore be increased on the other, in quantity, not in quality. Please understand, gentlemen, that in reasoning thus, I am taking the point of view which might have been taken by a criminal of the middle ages. As for myself, a man of the late nineteenth century, I, of course, should reason differently; I say so plainly, and therefore you need not jeer at me nor mock me, gentlemen. As for you, general, it is still more unbecoming on your part. In the second place, and giving my own personal opinion, a child's flesh is not a satisfying diet; it is too insipid, too sweet; and the criminal, in making these experiments, could have satisfied neither his conscience nor his appetite. I am about to conclude, gentlemen; and my conclusion contains a reply to one of the most important questions of that day and of our own! This criminal ended at last by denouncing himself to the clergy, and giving himself up to justice. We cannot but ask, remembering the penal system of that day, and the tortures that awaited him—the wheel, the stake, the fire!—we cannot but ask, I repeat, what induced him to accuse himself of this crime? Why did he not simply stop short at the number sixty, and keep his secret until his last breath? Why could he not simply leave the monks alone, and go into the desert to repent? Or why not become a monk himself? That is where the puzzle comes in! There must have been something stronger than the stake or the fire, or even than the habits of twenty years! There must have been an idea more powerful than all the calamities and sorrows of this world, famine or torture, leprosy or plague—an idea which entered into the heart, directed and enlarged the springs of life, and made even that hell supportable to humanity! Show me a force, a power like that, in this our century of vices and railways! I might say, perhaps, in our century of steamboats and railways, but I repeat in our century of vices and railways, because I am drunk but truthful! Show me a single idea which unites men nowadays with half the strength that it had in those centuries, and dare to

maintain that the ‘springs of life’ have not been polluted and weakened beneath this ‘star,’ beneath this network in which men are entangled! Don’t talk to me about your prosperity, your riches, the rarity of famine, the rapidity of the means of transport! There is more of riches, but less of force. The idea uniting heart and soul to heart and soul exists no more. All is loose, soft, limp—we are all of us limp.... Enough, gentlemen! I have done. That is not the question. No, the question is now, excellency, I believe, to sit down to the banquet you are about to provide for us!”

Lebedeff had roused great indignation in some of his auditors (it should be remarked that the bottles were constantly uncorked during his speech); but this unexpected conclusion calmed even the most turbulent spirits. “That’s how a clever barrister makes a good point!” said he, when speaking of his peroration later on. The visitors began to laugh and chatter once again; the committee left their seats, and stretched their legs on the terrace. Keller alone was still disgusted with Lebedeff and his speech; he turned from one to another, saying in a loud voice:

“He attacks education, he boasts of the fanaticism of the twelfth century, he makes absurd grimaces, and added to that he is by no means the innocent he makes himself out to be. How did he get the money to buy this house, allow me to ask?”

In another corner was the general, holding forth to a group of hearers, among them Ptitsin, whom he had buttonholed. “I have known,” said he, “a real interpreter of the Apocalypse, the late Gregory Semeonovitch Burmistroff, and he—he pierced the heart like a fiery flash! He began by putting on his spectacles, then he opened a large black book; his white beard, and his two medals on his breast, recalling acts of charity, all added to his impressiveness. He began in a stern voice, and before him generals, hard men of the world, bowed down, and ladies fell to the ground fainting. But this one here—he ends by announcing a banquet! That is not the real thing!”

Ptitsin listened and smiled, then turned as if to get his hat; but if he had intended to leave, he changed his mind. Before the others had risen from the table, Gania had suddenly left off drinking, and pushed away his glass, a dark shadow seemed to come over his face. When they all rose, he went and sat down by Rogojin. It might have been believed that quite friendly relations existed between them. Rogojin, who had also seemed on the point of going away now sat motionless, his head bent, seeming to have forgotten his intention. He had drunk no wine, and appeared absorbed in reflection. From time to time he raised his eyes, and examined everyone present; one might have imagined that he was expecting something very important to himself, and that he had decided to wait for it. The prince had taken two or three glasses of champagne, and seemed cheerful. As he rose he noticed Evgenie Pavlovitch, and,

remembering the appointment he had made with him, smiled pleasantly. Evgenie Pavlovitch made a sign with his head towards Hippolyte, whom he was attentively watching. The invalid was fast asleep, stretched out on the sofa.

“Tell me, prince, why on earth did this boy intrude himself upon you?” he asked, with such annoyance and irritation in his voice that the prince was quite surprised. “I wouldn’t mind laying odds that he is up to some mischief.”

“I have observed,” said the prince, “that he seems to be an object of very singular interest to you, Evgenie Pavlovitch. Why is it?”

“You may add that I have surely enough to think of, on my own account, without him; and therefore it is all the more surprising that I cannot tear my eyes and thoughts away from his detestable physiognomy.”

“Oh, come! He has a handsome face.”

“Why, look at him—look at him now!”

The prince glanced again at Evgenie Pavlovitch with considerable surprise.

V.

Hippolyte, who had fallen asleep during Lebedeff’s discourse, now suddenly woke up, just as though someone had jogged him in the side. He shuddered, raised himself on his arm, gazed around, and grew very pale. A look almost of terror crossed his face as he recollected.

“What! are they all off? Is it all over? Is the sun up?” He trembled, and caught at the prince’s hand. “What time is it? Tell me, quick, for goodness’ sake! How long have I slept?” he added, almost in despair, just as though he had overslept something upon which his whole fate depended.

“You have slept seven or perhaps eight minutes,” said Evgenie Pavlovitch.

Hippolyte gazed eagerly at the latter, and mused for a few moments.

“Oh, is that all?” he said at last. “Then I—”

He drew a long, deep breath of relief, as it seemed. He realized that all was not over as yet, that the sun had not risen, and that the guests had merely gone to supper. He smiled, and two hectic spots appeared on his cheeks.

“So you counted the minutes while I slept, did you, Evgenie Pavlovitch?” he said, ironically. “You have not taken your eyes off me all the evening—I have noticed that

much, you see! Ah, Rogojin! I've just been dreaming about him, prince," he added, frowning. "Yes, by the by," starting up, "where's the orator? Where's Lebedeff? Has he finished? What did he talk about? Is it true, prince, that you once declared that 'beauty would save the world'? Great Heaven! The prince says that beauty saves the world! And I declare that he only has such playful ideas because he's in love! Gentlemen, the prince is in love. I guessed it the moment he came in. Don't blush, prince; you make me sorry for you. What beauty saves the world? Colia told me that you are a zealous Christian; is it so? Colia says you call yourself a Christian."

The prince regarded him attentively, but said nothing.

"You don't answer me; perhaps you think I am very fond of you?" added Hippolyte, as though the words had been drawn from him.

"No, I don't think that. I know you don't love me."

"What, after yesterday? Wasn't I honest with you?"

"I knew yesterday that you didn't love me."

"Why so? why so? Because I envy you, eh? You always think that, I know. But do you know why I am saying all this? Look here! I must have some more champagne—pour me out some, Keller, will you?"

"No, you're not to drink any more, Hippolyte. I won't let you." The prince moved the glass away.

"Well perhaps you're right," said Hippolyte, musing. "They might say—yet, devil take them! what does it matter?—prince, what can it matter what people will say of us *then*, eh? I believe I'm half asleep. I've had such a dreadful dream—I've only just remembered it. Prince, I don't wish you such dreams as that, though sure enough, perhaps, I *don't* love you. Why wish a man evil, though you do not love him, eh? Give me your hand—let me press it sincerely. There—you've given me your hand—you must feel that I *do* press it sincerely, don't you? I don't think I shall drink any more. What time is it? Never mind, I know the time. The time has come, at all events. What! they are laying supper over there, are they? Then this table is free? Capital, gentlemen! I—hem! these gentlemen are not listening. Prince, I will just read over an article I have here. Supper is more interesting, of course, but—"

Here Hippolyte suddenly, and most unexpectedly, pulled out of his breast-pocket a large sealed paper. This imposing-looking document he placed upon the table before him.

The effect of this sudden action upon the company was instantaneous. Evgenie Pavlovitch almost bounded off his chair in excitement. Rogojin drew nearer to the table with a look on his face as if he knew what was coming. Gania came nearer too; so did Lebedeff and the others—the paper seemed to be an object of great interest to the company in general.

“What have you got there?” asked the prince, with some anxiety.

“At the first glimpse of the rising sun, prince, I will go to bed. I told you I would, word of honour! You shall see!” cried Hippolyte. “You think I’m not capable of opening this packet, do you?” He glared defiantly round at the audience in general.

The prince observed that he was trembling all over.

“None of us ever thought such a thing!” Muishkin replied for all. “Why should you suppose it of us? And what are you going to read, Hippolyte? What is it?”

“Yes, what is it?” asked others. The packet sealed with red wax seemed to attract everyone, as though it were a magnet.

“I wrote this yesterday, myself, just after I saw you, prince, and told you I would come down here. I wrote all day and all night, and finished it this morning early. Afterwards I had a dream.”

“Hadn’t we better hear it tomorrow?” asked the prince timidly.

“Tomorrow ‘there will be no more time!’” laughed Hippolyte, hysterically. “You needn’t be afraid; I shall get through the whole thing in forty minutes, at most an hour! Look how interested everybody is! Everybody has drawn near. Look! look at them all staring at my sealed packet! If I hadn’t sealed it up it wouldn’t have been half so effective! Ha, ha! that’s mystery, that is! Now then, gentlemen, shall I break the seal or not? Say the word; it’s a mystery, I tell you—a secret! Prince, you know who said there would be ‘no more time’? It was the great and powerful angel in the Apocalypse.”

“Better not read it now,” said the prince, putting his hand on the packet.

“No, don’t read it!” cried Evgenie suddenly. He appeared so strangely disturbed that many of those present could not help wondering.

“Reading? None of your reading now!” said somebody; “it’s supper-time.” “What sort of an article is it? For a paper? Probably it’s very dull,” said another. But the prince’s timid gesture had impressed even Hippolyte.

“Then I’m not to read it?” he whispered, nervously. “Am I not to read it?” he repeated, gazing around at each face in turn. “What are you afraid of, prince?” he turned and asked the latter suddenly.

“What should I be afraid of?”

“Has anyone a coin about them? Give me a twenty-copeck piece, somebody!” And Hippolyte leapt from his chair.

“Here you are,” said Lebedeff, handing him one; he thought the boy had gone mad.

“Vera Lukianovna,” said Hippolyte, “toss it, will you? Heads, I read, tails, I don’t.”

Vera Lebedeff tossed the coin into the air and let it fall on the table.

It was “heads.”

“Then I read it,” said Hippolyte, in the tone of one bowing to the fiat of destiny. He could not have grown paler if a verdict of death had suddenly been presented to him.

“But after all, what is it? Is it possible that I should have just risked my fate by tossing up?” he went on, shuddering; and looked round him again. His eyes had a curious expression of sincerity. “That is an astonishing psychological fact,” he cried, suddenly addressing the prince, in a tone of the most intense surprise. “It is… it is something quite inconceivable, prince,” he repeated with growing animation, like a man regaining consciousness. “Take note of it, prince, remember it; you collect, I am told, facts concerning capital punishment… They told me so. Ha, ha! My God, how absurd!” He sat down on the sofa, put his elbows on the table, and laid his head on his hands. “It is shameful—though what does it matter to me if it is shameful?

“Gentlemen, gentlemen! I am about to break the seal,” he continued, with determination. “I—I—of course I don’t insist upon anyone listening if they do not wish to.”

With trembling fingers he broke the seal and drew out several sheets of paper, smoothed them out before him, and began sorting them.

“What on earth does all this mean? What’s he going to read?” muttered several voices. Others said nothing; but one and all sat down and watched with curiosity. They began to think something strange might really be about to happen. Vera stood and trembled behind her father’s chair, almost in tears with fright; Colia was nearly as much alarmed as she was. Lebedeff jumped up and put a couple of candles nearer to Hippolyte, so that he might see better.

“Gentlemen, this—you’ll soon see what this is,” began Hippolyte, and suddenly commenced his reading.

“It’s headed, ‘A Necessary Explanation,’ with the motto, ‘*Après moi le déluge!*’ Oh, deuce take it all! Surely I can never have seriously written such a silly motto as that? Look here, gentlemen, I beg to give notice that all this is very likely terrible nonsense. It is only a few ideas of mine. If you think that there is anything mysterious coming—or in a word—”

“Better read on without any more beating about the bush,” said Gania.

“Affectation!” remarked someone else.

“Too much talk,” said Rogojin, breaking the silence for the first time.

Hippolyte glanced at him suddenly, and when their eyes met Rogojin showed his teeth in a disagreeable smile, and said the following strange words: “That’s not the way to settle this business, my friend; that’s not the way at all.”

Of course nobody knew what Rogojin meant by this; but his words made a deep impression upon all. Everyone seemed to see in a flash the same idea.

As for Hippolyte, their effect upon him was astounding. He trembled so that the prince was obliged to support him, and would certainly have cried out, but that his voice seemed to have entirely left him for the moment. For a minute or two he could not speak at all, but panted and stared at Rogojin. At last he managed to ejaculate:

“Then it was *you* who came—*you*—*you?*”

“Came where? What do you mean?” asked Rogojin, amazed. But Hippolyte, panting and choking with excitement, interrupted him violently.

“*You* came to me last week, in the night, at two o’clock, the day I was with you in the morning! Confess it was you!”

“Last week? In the night? Have you gone cracked, my good friend?”

Hippolyte paused and considered a moment. Then a smile of cunning—almost triumph—crossed his lips.

“It was you,” he murmured, almost in a whisper, but with absolute conviction. “Yes, it was you who came to my room and sat silently on a chair at my window for a whole hour—more! It was between one and two at night; you rose and went out at about three. It was you, you! Why you should have frightened me so, why you should have wished to torment me like that, I cannot tell—but you it was.”

There was absolute hatred in his eyes as he said this, but his look of fear and his trembling had not left him.

“You shall hear all this directly, gentlemen. I—I—listen!”

He seized his paper in a desperate hurry; he fidgeted with it, and tried to sort it, but for a long while his trembling hands could not collect the sheets together. “He’s either mad or delirious,” murmured Rogojin. At last he began.

For the first five minutes the reader’s voice continued to tremble, and he read disconnectedly and unevenly; but gradually his voice strengthened. Occasionally a violent fit of coughing stopped him, but his animation grew with the progress of the reading—as did also the disagreeable impression which it made upon his audience,—until it reached the highest pitch of excitement.

Here is the article.

MY NECESSARY EXPLANATION.

“*Après moi le déluge*.

“Yesterday morning the prince came to see me. Among other things he asked me to come down to his villa. I knew he would come and persuade me to this step, and that he would adduce the argument that it would be easier for me to die ‘among people and green trees,’—as he expressed it. But today he did not say ‘die,’ he said ‘live.’ It is pretty much the same to me, in my position, which he says. When I asked him why he made such a point of his ‘green trees,’ he told me, to my astonishment, that he had heard that last time I was in Pavlofsk I had said that I had come ‘to have a last look at the trees.’

“When I observed that it was all the same whether one died among trees or in front of a blank brick wall, as here, and that it was not worth making any fuss over a fortnight, he agreed at once. But he insisted that the good air at Pavlofsk and the greenness would certainly cause a physical change for the better, and that my excitement, and my *dreams*, would be perhaps relieved. I remarked to him, with a smile, that he spoke like a materialist, and he answered that he had always been one. As he never tells a lie, there must be something in his words. His smile is a pleasant one. I have had a good look at him. I don’t know whether I like him or not; and I have no time to waste over the question. The hatred which I felt for him for five months has become considerably modified, I may say, during the last month. Who knows, perhaps I am going to Pavlofsk on purpose to see him! But why do I leave my chamber? Those who are sentenced to death should not leave their cells. If I had not formed a final resolve,

but had decided to wait until the last minute, I should not leave my room, or accept his invitation to come and die at Pavlofsk. I must be quick and finish this explanation before tomorrow. I shall have no time to read it over and correct it, for I must read it tomorrow to the prince and two or three witnesses whom I shall probably find there.

“As it will be absolutely true, without a touch of falsehood, I am curious to see what impression it will make upon me myself at the moment when I read it out. This is my ‘last and solemn’—but why need I call it that? There is no question about the truth of it, for it is not worthwhile lying for a fortnight; a fortnight of life is not itself worth having, which is a proof that I write nothing here but pure truth.

(“N.B.—Let me remember to consider; am I mad at this moment, or not? or rather at these moments? I have been told that consumptives sometimes do go out of their minds for a while in the last stages of the malady. I can prove this tomorrow when I read it out, by the impression it makes upon the audience. I must settle this question once and for all, otherwise I can’t go on with anything.)

“I believe I have just written dreadful nonsense; but there’s no time for correcting, as I said before. Besides that, I have made myself a promise not to alter a single word of what I write in this paper, even though I find that I am contradicting myself every five lines. I wish to verify the working of the natural logic of my ideas tomorrow during the reading—whether I am capable of detecting logical errors, and whether all that I have meditated over during the last six months be true, or nothing but delirium.

“If two months since I had been called upon to leave my room and the view of Meyer’s wall opposite, I verily believe I should have been sorry. But now I have no such feeling, and yet I am leaving this room and Meyer’s brick wall *for ever*. So that my conclusion, that it is not worth while indulging in grief, or any other emotion, for a fortnight, has proved stronger than my very nature, and has taken over the direction of my feelings. But is it so? Is it the case that my nature is conquered entirely? If I were to be put on the rack now, I should certainly cry out. I should not say that it is not worth while to yell and feel pain because I have but a fortnight to live.

“But is it true that I have but a fortnight of life left to me? I know I told some of my friends that Doctor B. had informed me that this was the case; but I now confess that I lied; B. has not even seen me. However, a week ago, I called in a medical student, Kislorodoff, who is a Nationalist, an Atheist, and a Nihilist, by conviction, and that is why I had him. I needed a man who would tell me the bare truth without any humbug or ceremony—and so he did—indeed, almost with pleasure (which I thought was going a little too far).

“Well, he plumped out that I had about a month left me; it might be a little more, he said, under favourable circumstances, but it might also be considerably less. According to his opinion I might die quite suddenly—tomorrow, for instance—there had been such cases. Only a day or two since a young lady at Colomna who suffered from consumption, and was about on a par with myself in the march of the disease, was going out to market to buy provisions, when she suddenly felt faint, lay down on the sofa, gasped once, and died.

“Kislorodoff told me all this with a sort of exaggerated devil-may-care negligence, and as though he did me great honour by talking to me so, because it showed that he considered me the same sort of exalted Nihilistic being as himself, to whom death was a matter of no consequence whatever, either way.

“At all events, the fact remained—a month of life and no more! That he is right in his estimation I am absolutely persuaded.

“It puzzles me much to think how on earth the prince guessed yesterday that I have had bad dreams. He said to me, ‘Your excitement and dreams will find relief at Pavlofsk.’ Why did he say ‘dreams’? Either he is a doctor, or else he is a man of exceptional intelligence and wonderful powers of observation. (But that he is an ‘idiot,’ at bottom there can be no doubt whatever.) It so happened that just before he arrived I had a delightful little dream; one of a kind that I have hundreds of just now. I had fallen asleep about an hour before he came in, and dreamed that I was in some room, not my own. It was a large room, well furnished, with a cupboard, chest of drawers, sofa, and my bed, a fine wide bed covered with a silken counterpane. But I observed in the room a dreadful-looking creature, a sort of monster. It was a little like a scorpion, but was not a scorpion, but far more horrible, and especially so, because there are no creatures anything like it in nature, and because it had appeared to me for a purpose, and bore some mysterious signification. I looked at the beast well; it was brown in colour and had a shell; it was a crawling kind of reptile, about eight inches long, and narrowed down from the head, which was about a couple of fingers in width, to the end of the tail, which came to a fine point. Out of its trunk, about a couple of inches below its head, came two legs at an angle of forty-five degrees, each about three inches long, so that the beast looked like a trident from above. It had eight hard needle-like whiskers coming out from different parts of its body; it went along like a snake, bending its body about in spite of the shell it wore, and its motion was very quick and very horrible to look at. I was dreadfully afraid it would sting me; somebody had told me, I thought, that it was venomous; but what tormented me most of all was the wondering and wondering as to who had sent it into my room, and what was the mystery which I felt it contained.

“It hid itself under the cupboard and under the chest of drawers, and crawled into the corners. I sat on a chair and kept my legs tucked under me. Then the beast crawled quietly across the room and disappeared somewhere near my chair. I looked about for it in terror, but I still hoped that as my feet were safely tucked away it would not be able to touch me.

“Suddenly I heard behind me, and about on a level with my head, a sort of rattling sound. I turned sharp round and saw that the brute had crawled up the wall as high as the level of my face, and that its horrible tail, which was moving incredibly fast from side to side, was actually touching my hair! I jumped up—and it disappeared. I did not dare lie down on my bed for fear it should creep under my pillow. My mother came into the room, and some friends of hers. They began to hunt for the reptile and were more composed than I was; they did not seem to be afraid of it. But they did not understand as I did.

“Suddenly the monster reappeared; it crawled slowly across the room and made for the door, as though with some fixed intention, and with a slow movement that was more horrible than ever.

“Then my mother opened the door and called my dog, Norma. Norma was a great Newfoundland, and died five years ago.

“She sprang forward and stood still in front of the reptile as if she had been turned to stone. The beast stopped too, but its tail and claws still moved about. I believe animals are incapable of feeling supernatural fright—if I have been rightly informed,—but at this moment there appeared to me to be something more than ordinary about Norma’s terror, as though it must be supernatural; and as though she felt, just as I did myself, that this reptile was connected with some mysterious secret, some fatal omen.

“Norma backed slowly and carefully away from the brute, which followed her, creeping deliberately after her as though it intended to make a sudden dart and sting her.

“In spite of Norma’s terror she looked furious, though she trembled in all her limbs. At length she slowly bared her terrible teeth, opened her great red jaws, hesitated—took courage, and seized the beast in her mouth. It seemed to try to dart out of her jaws twice, but Norma caught at it and half swallowed it as it was escaping. The shell cracked in her teeth; and the tail and legs stuck out of her mouth and shook about in a horrible manner. Suddenly Norma gave a piteous whine; the reptile had bitten her tongue. She opened her mouth wide with the pain, and I saw the beast lying across

her tongue, and out of its body, which was almost bitten in two, came a hideous white-looking substance, oozing out into Norma's mouth; it was of the consistency of a crushed black-beetle. Just then I awoke and the prince entered the room."

"Gentlemen!" said Hippolyte, breaking off here, "I have not done yet, but it seems to me that I have written down a great deal here that is unnecessary,—this dream—"

"You have indeed!" said Gania.

"There is too much about myself, I know, but—" As Hippolyte said this his face wore a tired, pained look, and he wiped the sweat off his brow.

"Yes," said Lebedeff, "you certainly think a great deal too much about yourself."

"Well—gentlemen—I do not force anyone to listen! If any of you are unwilling to sit it out, please go away, by all means!"

"He turns people out of a house that isn't his own," muttered Rogojin.

"Suppose we all go away?" said Ferdishenko suddenly.

Hippolyte clutched his manuscript, and gazing at the last speaker with glittering eyes, said: "You don't like me at all!" A few laughed at this, but not all.

"Hippolyte," said the prince, "give me the papers, and go to bed like a sensible fellow. We'll have a good talk tomorrow, but you really mustn't go on with this reading; it is not good for you!"

"How can I? How can I?" cried Hippolyte, looking at him in amazement. "Gentlemen! I was a fool! I won't break off again. Listen, everyone who wants to!"

He gulped down some water out of a glass standing near, bent over the table, in order to hide his face from the audience, and recommenced.

"The idea that it is not worth while living for a few weeks took possession of me a month ago, when I was told that I had four weeks to live, but only partially so at that time. The idea quite overmastered me three days since, that evening at Pavlofsk. The first time that I felt really impressed with this thought was on the terrace at the prince's, at the very moment when I had taken it into my head to make a last trial of life. I wanted to see people and trees (I believe I said so myself), I got excited, I maintained Burdovsky's rights, 'my neighbour!'—I dreamt that one and all would open their arms, and embrace me, that there would be an indescribable exchange of forgiveness between us all! In a word, I behaved like a fool, and then, at that very same instant, I felt my 'last conviction.' I ask myself now how I could have waited six months

for that conviction! I knew that I had a disease that spares no one, and I really had no illusions; but the more I realized my condition, the more I clung to life; I wanted to live at any price. I confess I might well have resented that blind, deaf fate, which, with no apparent reason, seemed to have decided to crush me like a fly; but why did I not stop at resentment? Why did I begin to live, knowing that it was not worthwhile to begin? Why did I attempt to do what I knew to be an impossibility? And yet I could not even read a book to the end; I had given up reading. What is the good of reading, what is the good of learning anything, for just six months? That thought has made me throw aside a book more than once.

"Yes, that wall of Meyer's could tell a tale if it liked. There was no spot on its dirty surface that I did not know by heart. Accursed wall! and yet it is dearer to me than all the Pavlofsk trees!—That is—it *would* be dearer if it were not all the same to me, now!

"I remember now with what hungry interest I began to watch the lives of other people—interest that I had never felt before! I used to wait for Colia's arrival impatiently, for I was so ill myself, then, that I could not leave the house. I so threw myself into every little detail of news, and took so much interest in every report and rumour, that I believe I became a regular gossip! I could not understand, among other things, how all these people—with so much life in and before them—do not become *rich*—and I don't understand it now. I remember being told of a poor wretch I once knew, who had died of hunger. I was almost beside myself with rage! I believe if I could have resuscitated him I would have done so for the sole purpose of murdering him!

"Occasionally I was so much better that I could go out; but the streets used to put me in such a rage that I would lock myself up for days rather than go out, even if I were well enough to do so! I could not bear to see all those preoccupied, anxious-looking creatures continuously surging along the streets past me! Why are they always anxious? What is the meaning of their eternal care and worry? It is their wickedness, their perpetual detestable malice—that's what it is—they are all full of malice, malice!

"Whose fault is it that they are all miserable, that they don't know how to live, though they have fifty or sixty years of life before them? Why did that fool allow himself to die of hunger with sixty years of unlived life before him?

"And everyone of them shows his rags, his toil-worn hands, and yells in his wrath: 'Here are we, working like cattle all our lives, and always as hungry as dogs, and there are others who do not work, and are fat and rich!' The eternal refrain! And side by side with them trots along some wretched fellow who has known better days, doing light porter's work from morn to night for a living, always blubbering and saying that 'his

wife died because he had no money to buy medicine with,' and his children dying of cold and hunger, and his eldest daughter gone to the bad, and so on. Oh! I have no pity and no patience for these fools of people. Why can't they be Rothschilds? Whose fault is it that a man has not got millions of money like Rothschild? If he has life, all this must be in his power! Whose fault is it that he does not know how to live his life?

"Oh! it's all the same to me now—*now!* But at that time I would soak my pillow at night with tears of mortification, and tear at my blanket in my rage and fury. Oh, how I longed at that time to be turned out—*me*, eighteen years old, poor, half-clothed, turned out into the street, quite alone, without lodging, without work, without a crust of bread, without relations, without a single acquaintance, in some large town—hungry, beaten (if you like), but in good health—and *then* I would show them—

"What would I show them?

"Oh, don't think that I have no sense of my own humiliation! I have suffered already in reading so far. Which of you all does not think me a fool at this moment—a young fool who knows nothing of life—forgetting that to live as I have lived these last six months is to live longer than grey-haired old men. Well, let them laugh, and say it is all nonsense, if they please. They may say it is all fairy-tales, if they like; and I have spent whole nights telling myself fairy-tales. I remember them all. But how can I tell fairy-tales now? The time for them is over. They amused me when I found that there was not even time for me to learn the Greek grammar, as I wanted to do. 'I shall die before I get to the syntax,' I thought at the first page—and threw the book under the table. It is there still, for I forbade anyone to pick it up.

"If this 'Explanation' gets into anybody's hands, and they have patience to read it through, they may consider me a madman, or a schoolboy, or, more likely, a man condemned to die, who thought it only natural to conclude that all men, excepting himself, esteem life far too lightly, live it far too carelessly and lazily, and are, therefore, one and all, unworthy of it. Well, I affirm that my reader is wrong again, for my convictions have nothing to do with my sentence of death. Ask them, ask any one of them, or all of them, what they mean by happiness! Oh, you may be perfectly sure that if Columbus was happy, it was not after he had discovered America, but when he was discovering it! You may be quite sure that he reached the culminating point of his happiness three days before he saw the New World with his actual eyes, when his mutinous sailors wanted to tack about, and return to Europe! What did the New World matter after all? Columbus had hardly seen it when he died, and in reality he was entirely ignorant of what he had discovered. The important thing is life—life and

nothing else! What is any ‘discovery’ whatever compared with the incessant, eternal discovery of life?

“But what is the use of talking? I’m afraid all this is so commonplace that my confession will be taken for a schoolboy exercise—the work of some ambitious lad writing in the hope of his work ‘seeing the light’; or perhaps my readers will say that ‘I had perhaps something to say, but did not know how to express it.’

“Let me add to this that in every idea emanating from genius, or even in every serious human idea—born in the human brain—there always remains something—some sediment—which cannot be expressed to others, though one wrote volumes and lectured upon it for five-and-thirty years. There is always a something, a remnant, which will never come out from your brain, but will remain there with you, and you alone, for ever and ever, and you will die, perhaps, without having imparted what may be the very essence of your idea to a single living soul.

“So that if I cannot now impart all that has tormented me for the last six months, at all events you will understand that, having reached my ‘last convictions,’ I must have paid a very dear price for them. That is what I wished, for reasons of my own, to make a point of in this my ‘Explanation.’

“But let me resume.”