THE POSSESSED

or, The Devils

A Novel In Three Parts

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Translated From The Russian By Constance Garnett

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PART III.

"Strike me dead, the track has vanished,

Well, what now? We've lost the way,

Demons have bewitched our horses,

Led us in the wilds astray.

"What a number! Whither drift they?

What's the mournful dirge they sing?

Do they hail a witch's marriage

Or a goblin's burying?"

A. Pushkin.

"And there was one herd of many swine feeding on this mountain; and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them.

"Then went the devils out of the man and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake and were choked.

"When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.

"Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind;

and they were afraid."

Luke, ch. viii. 32-37.

PART I

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTORY

SOME DETAILS OF THE BIOGRAPHY OF THAT HIGHLY RESPECTED GENTLEMAN STEPAN TROFIMOVITCH VERHOVENSKY.

I

IN UNDERTAKING to describe the recent and strange incidents in our town, till lately wrapped in uneventful obscurity, I find myself forced in absence of literary skill to begin my story rather far back, that is to say, with certain biographical details concerning that talented and highly-esteemed gentleman, Stepan Trofimovitch Verhovensky. I trust that these details may at least serve as an introduction, while my projected story itself will come later.

I will say at once that Stepan Trofimovitch had always filled a particular rôle among us, that of the progressive patriot, so to say, and he was passionately fond of playing the part—so much so that I really believe he could not have existed without it. Not that I would put him on a level with an actor at a theatre, God forbid, for I really have a respect for him. This may all have been the effect of habit, or rather, more exactly of a generous propensity he had from his earliest years for indulging in an agreeable day-dream in which he figured as a picturesque public character. He fondly loved, for instance, his position as a "persecuted" man and, so to speak, an "exile." There is a sort of traditional glamour about those two little words that fascinated him once for all

and, exalting him gradually in his own opinion, raised him in the course of years to a lofty pedestal very gratifying to vanity. In an English satire of the last century, Gulliver, returning from the land of the Lilliputians where the people were only three or four inches high, had grown so accustomed to consider himself a giant among them, that as he walked along the streets of London he could not help crying out to carriages and passers-by to be careful and get out of his way for fear he should crush them, imagining that they were little and he was still a giant. He was laughed at and abused for it, and rough coachmen even lashed at the giant with their whips. But was that just? What may not be done by habit? Habit had brought Stepan Trofimovitch almost to the same position, but in a more innocent and inoffensive form, if one may use such expressions, for he was a most excellent man.

I am even inclined to suppose that towards the end he had been entirely forgotten everywhere; but still it cannot be said that his name had never been known. It is beyond question that he had at one time belonged to a certain distinguished constellation of celebrated leaders of the last generation, and at one time—though only for the briefest moment—his name was pronounced by many hasty persons of that day almost as though it were on a level with the names of Tchaadaev, of Byelinsky, of Granovsky, and of Herzen, who had only just begun to write abroad. But Stepan Trofimovitch's activity ceased almost at the moment it began, owing, so to say, to a "vortex of combined circumstances." And would you believe it? It turned out afterwards that there had been no "vortex" and even no "circumstances," at least in that connection. I only learned the other day to my intense amazement, though on the most unimpeachable authority, that Stepan Trofimovitch had lived among us in our province not as an "exile" as we were accustomed to believe, and had never even been under police supervision at all. Such is the force of imagination! All his life he sincerely believed that in certain spheres he was a constant cause of apprehension, that every step he took was watched and noted, and that each one of the three governors who succeeded one another during twenty years in our province came with special and uneasy ideas concerning him, which had, by higher powers, been impressed upon each before everything else, on receiving the appointment. Had anyone assured the honest man on the most irrefutable grounds that he had nothing to be afraid of, he would certainly have been offended. Yet Stepan Trofimovitch was a most intelligent and gifted man, even, so to say, a man of science, though indeed, in science ... well, in fact he had not done such great things in science. I believe indeed he had done nothing at all. But that's very often the case, of course, with men of science among us in Russia.

He came back from abroad and was brilliant in the capacity of lecturer at the university, towards the end of the forties. He only had time to deliver a few lectures, I believe they were about the Arabs; he maintained, too, a brilliant thesis on the political and Hanseatic importance of the German town Hanau, of which there was promise in the epoch between 1413 and 1428, and on the special and obscure reasons why that promise was never fulfilled. This dissertation was a cruel and skilful thrust at the Slavophils of the day, and at once made him numerous and irreconcilable enemies among them. Later on—after he had lost his post as lecturer, however—he published (by way of revenge, so to say, and to show them what a man they had lost) in a progressive monthly review, which translated Dickens and advocated the views of George Sand, the beginning of a very profound investigation into the causes, I believe, of the extraordinary moral nobility of certain knights at a certain epoch or something of that nature.

Some lofty and exceptionally noble idea was maintained in it, anyway. It was said afterwards that the continuation was hurriedly forbidden and even that the progressive review had to suffer for having printed the first part. That may very well have been so, for what was not possible in those days? Though, in this case, it is more likely that there was nothing of the kind, and that the author himself was too lazy to conclude his essay. He cut short his lectures on the Arabs because, somehow and by someone (probably one of his reactionary enemies) a letter had been seized giving an account of certain circumstances, in consequence of which someone had demanded an explanation from him. I don't know whether the story is true, but it was asserted that at the same time there was discovered in Petersburg a vast, unnatural, and illegal conspiracy of thirty people which almost shook society to its foundations. It was said that they were positively on the point of translating Fourier. As though of design a poem of Stepan Trofimovitch's was seized in Moscow at that very time, though it had been written six years before in Berlin in his earliest youth, and manuscript copies had been passed round a circle consisting of two poetical amateurs and one student. This poem is lying now on my table. No longer ago than last year I received a recent copy in his own handwriting from Stepan Trofimovitch himself, signed by him, and bound in a splendid red leather binding. It is not without poetic merit, however, and even a certain talent. It's strange, but in those days (or to be more exact, in the thirties) people were constantly composing in that style. I find it difficult to describe the subject, for I really do not understand it. It is some sort of an allegory in lyrical-dramatic form, recalling the second part of Faust. The scene opens with a chorus of women, followed by a chorus of men, then a chorus of incorporeal powers of some sort, and at the end of all a chorus of spirits not yet living but very eager to come to

life. All these choruses sing about something very indefinite, for the most part about somebody's curse, but with a tinge of the higher humour. But the scene is suddenly changed. There begins a sort of "festival of life" at which even insects sing, a tortoise comes on the scene with certain sacramental Latin words, and even, if I remember aright, a mineral sings about something that is a quite inanimate object. In fact, they all sing continually, or if they converse, it is simply to abuse one another vaguely, but again with a tinge of higher meaning. At last the scene is changed again; a wilderness appears, and among the rocks there wanders a civilized young man who picks and sucks certain herbs. Asked by a fairy why he sucks these herbs, he answers that, conscious of a superfluity of life in himself, he seeks forgetfulness, and finds it in the juice of these herbs, but that his great desire is to lose his reason at once (a desire possibly superfluous). Then a youth of indescribable beauty rides in on a black steed, and an immense multitude of all nations follow him. The youth represents death, for whom all the peoples are yearning. And finally, in the last scene we are suddenly shown the Tower of Babel, and certain athletes at last finish building it with a song of new hope, and when at length they complete the topmost pinnacle, the lord (of Olympia, let us say) takes flight in a comic fashion, and man, grasping the situation and seizing his place, at once begins a new life with new insight into things. Well, this poem was thought at that time to be dangerous. Last year I proposed to Stepan Trofimovitch to publish it, on the ground of its perfect harmlessness nowadays, but he declined the suggestion with evident dissatisfaction. My view of its complete harmlessness evidently displeased him, and I even ascribe to it a certain coldness on his part, which lasted two whole months.

And what do you think? Suddenly, almost at the time I proposed printing it here, our poem was published abroad in a collection of revolutionary verse, without the knowledge of Stepan Trofimovitch. He was at first alarmed, rushed to the governor, and wrote a noble letter in self-defence to Petersburg. He read it to me twice, but did not send it, not knowing to whom to address it. In fact he was in a state of agitation for a whole month, but I am convinced that in the secret recesses of his heart he was enormously flattered. He almost took the copy of the collection to bed with him, and kept it hidden under his mattress in the daytime; he positively would not allow the women to turn his bed, and although he expected every day a telegram, he held his head high. No telegram came. Then he made friends with me again, which is a proof of the extreme kindness of his gentle and unresentful heart.

II

Of course I don't assert that he had never suffered for his convictions at all, but I am fully convinced that he might have gone on lecturing on his Arabs as long as he liked, if

he had only given the necessary explanations. But he was too lofty, and he proceeded with peculiar haste to assure himself that his career was ruined forever "by the vortex of circumstance." And if the whole truth is to be told the real cause of the change in his career was the very delicate proposition which had been made before and was then renewed by Varvara Petrovna Stavrogin, a lady of great wealth, the wife of a lieutenant-general, that he should undertake the education and the whole intellectual development of her only son in the capacity of a superior sort of teacher and friend, to say nothing of a magnificent salary. This proposal had been made to him the first time in Berlin, at the moment when he was first left a widower. His first wife was a frivolous girl from our province, whom he married in his early and unthinking youth, and apparently he had had a great deal of trouble with this young person, charming as she was, owing to the lack of means for her support; and also from other, more delicate, reasons. She died in Paris after three years' separation from him, leaving him a son of five years old; "the fruit of our first, joyous, and unclouded love," were the words the sorrowing father once let fall in my presence.

The child had, from the first, been sent back to Russia, where he was brought up in the charge of distant cousins in some remote region. Stepan Trofimovitch had declined Varvara Petrovna's proposal on that occasion and had quickly married again, before the year was over, a taciturn Berlin girl, and, what makes it more strange, there was no particular necessity for him to do so. But apart from his marriage there were, it appears, other reasons for his declining the situation. He was tempted by the resounding fame of a professor, celebrated at that time, and he, in his turn, hastened to the lecturer's chair for which he had been preparing himself, to try his eagle wings in flight. But now with singed wings he naturally remembered the proposition which even then had made him hesitate. The sudden death of his second wife, who did not live a year with him, settled the matter decisively. To put it plainly it was all brought about by the passionate sympathy and priceless, so to speak, classic friendship of Varvara Petrovna, if one may use such an expression of friendship. He flung himself into the arms of this friendship, and his position was settled for more than twenty years. I use the expression "flung himself into the arms of," but God forbid that anyone should fly to idle and superfluous conclusions. These embraces must be understood only in the most loftily moral sense. The most refined and delicate tie united these two beings, both so remarkable, forever.

The post of tutor was the more readily accepted too, as the property—a very small one—left to Stepan Trofimovitch by his first wife was close to Skvoreshniki, the Stavrogins' magnificent estate on the outskirts of our provincial town. Besides, in the stillness of his study, far from the immense burden of university work, it was always

possible to devote himself to the service of science, and to enrich the literature of his country with erudite studies. These works did not appear. But on the other hand it did appear possible to spend the rest of his life, more than twenty years, “a reproach incarnate,” so to speak, to his native country, in the words of a popular poet:

Reproach incarnate thou didst stand Erect before thy Fatherland, O Liberal idealist!

But the person to whom the popular poet referred may perhaps have had the right to adopt that pose for the rest of his life if he had wished to do so, though it must have been tedious. Our Stepan Trofimovitch was, to tell the truth, only an imitator compared with such people; moreover, he had grown weary of standing erect and often lay down for a while. But, to do him justice, the “incarnation of reproach” was preserved even in the recumbent attitude, the more so as that was quite sufficient for the province. You should have seen him at our club when he sat down to cards. His whole figure seemed to exclaim “Cards! Me sit down to whist with you! Is it consistent? Who is responsible for it? Who has shattered my energies and turned them to whist? Ah, perish, Russia!” and he would majestically trump with a heart.

And to tell the truth he dearly loved a game of cards, which led him, especially in later years, into frequent and unpleasant skirmishes with Varvara Petrovna, particularly as he was always losing. But of that later. I will only observe that he was a man of tender conscience (that is, sometimes) and so was often depressed. In the course of his twenty years’ friendship with Varvara Petrovna he used regularly, three or four times a year, to sink into a state of “patriotic grief,” as it was called among us, or rather really into an attack of spleen, but our estimable Varvara Petrovna preferred the former phrase. Of late years his grief had begun to be not only patriotic, but at times alcoholic too; but Varvara Petrovna’s alertness succeeded in keeping him all his life from trivial inclinations. And he needed someone to look after him indeed, for he sometimes behaved very oddly: in the midst of his exalted sorrow he would begin laughing like any simple peasant. There were moments when he began to take a humorous tone even about himself. But there was nothing Varvara Petrovna dreaded so much as a humorous tone. She was a woman of the classic type, a female Mæcenas, invariably guided only by the highest considerations. The influence of this exalted lady over her poor friend for twenty years is a fact of the first importance. I shall need to speak of her more particularly, which I now proceed to do.

III

There are strange friendships. The two friends are always ready to fly at one another, and go on like that all their lives, and yet they cannot separate. Parting, in fact, is utterly impossible. The one who has begun the quarrel and separated will be the first

to fall ill and even die, perhaps, if the separation comes off. I know for a positive fact that several times Stepan Trofimovitch has jumped up from the sofa and beaten the wall with his fists after the most intimate and emotional *tête-à-tête* with Varvara Petrovna.

This proceeding was by no means an empty symbol; indeed, on one occasion, he broke some plaster off the wall. It may be asked how I come to know such delicate details. What if I were myself a witness of it? What if Stepan Trofimovitch himself has, on more than one occasion, sobbed on my shoulder while he described to me in lurid colours all his most secret feelings. (And what was there he did not say at such times!) But what almost always happened after these tearful outbreaks was that next day he was ready to crucify himself for his ingratitude. He would send for me in a hurry or run over to see me simply to assure me that Varvara Petrovna was “an angel of honour and delicacy, while he was very much the opposite.” He did not only run to confide in me, but, on more than one occasion, described it all to her in the most eloquent letter, and wrote a full signed confession that no longer ago than the day before he had told an outsider that she kept him out of vanity, that she was envious of his talents and erudition, that she hated him and was only afraid to express her hatred openly, dreading that he would leave her and so damage her literary reputation, that this drove him to self-contempt, and he was resolved to die a violent death, and that he was waiting for the final word from her which would decide everything, and so on and so on in the same style. You can fancy after this what an hysterical pitch the nervous outbreaks of this most innocent of all fifty-year-old infants sometimes reached! I once read one of these letters after some quarrel between them, arising from a trivial matter, but growing venomous as it went on. I was horrified and besought him not to send it.

“I must ... more honourable ... duty ... I shall die if I don’t confess everything, everything!” he answered almost in delirium, and he did send the letter.

That was the difference between them, that Varvara Petrovna never would have sent such a letter. It is true that he was passionately fond of writing, he wrote to her though he lived in the same house, and during hysterical interludes he would write two letters a day. I know for a fact that she always read these letters with the greatest attention, even when she received two a day, and after reading them she put them away in a special drawer, sorted and annotated; moreover, she pondered them in her heart. But she kept her friend all day without an answer, met him as though there were nothing the matter, exactly as though nothing special had happened the day before. By degrees she broke him in so completely that at last he did not himself dare to allude to what had happened the day before, and only glanced into her eyes at times. But she

never forgot anything, while he sometimes forgot too quickly, and encouraged by her composure he would not infrequently, if friends came in, laugh and make jokes over the champagne the very same day. With what malignancy she must have looked at him at such moments, while he noticed nothing! Perhaps in a week's time, a month's time, or even six months later, chancing to recall some phrase in such a letter, and then the whole letter with all its attendant circumstances, he would suddenly grow hot with shame, and be so upset that he fell ill with one of his attacks of "summer cholera." These attacks of a sort of "summer cholera" were, in some cases, the regular consequence of his nervous agitations and were an interesting peculiarity of his physical constitution.

No doubt Varvara Petrovna did very often hate him. But there was one thing he had not discerned up to the end: that was that he had become for her a son, her creation, even, one may say, her invention; he had become flesh of her flesh, and she kept and supported him not simply from "envy of his talents." And how wounded she must have been by such suppositions! An inexhaustible love for him lay concealed in her heart in the midst of continual hatred, jealousy, and contempt. She would not let a speck of dust fall upon him, coddled him up for twenty-two years, would not have slept for nights together if there were the faintest breath against his reputation as a poet, a learned man, and a public character. She had invented him, and had been the first to believe in her own invention. He was, after a fashion, her day-dream.... But in return she exacted a great deal from him, sometimes even slavishness. It was incredible how long she harboured resentment. I have two anecdotes to tell about that.

IV

On one occasion, just at the time when the first rumours of the emancipation of the serfs were in the air, when all Russia was exulting and making ready for a complete regeneration, Varvara Petrovna was visited by a baron from Petersburg, a man of the highest connections, and very closely associated with the new reform. Varvara Petrovna prized such visits highly, as her connections in higher circles had grown weaker and weaker since the death of her husband, and had at last ceased altogether. The baron spent an hour drinking tea with her. There was no one else present but Stepan Trofimovitch, whom Varvara Petrovna invited and exhibited. The baron had heard something about him before or affected to have done so, but paid little attention to him at tea. Stepan Trofimovitch of course was incapable of making a social blunder, and his manners were most elegant. Though I believe he was by no means of exalted origin, yet it happened that he had from earliest childhood been brought up in a Moscow household—of high rank, and consequently was well bred. He spoke French like a Parisian. Thus the baron was to have seen from the first glance

the sort of people with whom Varvara Petrovna surrounded herself, even in provincial seclusion. But things did not fall out like this. When the baron positively asserted the absolute truth of the rumours of the great reform, which were then only just beginning to be heard, Stepan Trofimovitch could not contain himself, and suddenly shouted "Hurrah!" and even made some gesticulation indicative of delight. His ejaculation was not over-loud and quite polite, his delight was even perhaps premeditated, and his gesture purposely studied before the looking-glass half an hour before tea. But something must have been amiss with it, for the baron permitted himself a faint smile, though he, at once, with extraordinary courtesy, put in a phrase concerning the universal and befitting emotion of all Russian hearts in view of the great event. Shortly afterwards he took his leave and at parting did not forget to hold out two fingers to Stepan Trofimovitch. On returning to the drawing-room Varvara Petrovna was at first silent for two or three minutes, and seemed to be looking for something on the table. Then she turned to Stepan Trofimovitch, and with pale face and flashing eyes she hissed in a whisper:

"I shall never forgive you for that!"

Next day she met her friend as though nothing had happened, she never referred to the incident, but thirteen years afterwards, at a tragic moment, she recalled it and reproached him with it, and she turned pale, just as she had done thirteen years before. Only twice in the course of her life did she say to him:

"I shall never forgive you for that!"

The incident with the baron was the second time, but the first incident was so characteristic and had so much influence on the fate of Stepan Trofimovitch that I venture to refer to that too.

It was in 1855, in spring-time, in May, just after the news had reached Skvoreshniki of the death of Lieutenant-General Stavrogin, a frivolous old gentleman who died of a stomach ailment on the way to the Crimea, where he was hastening to join the army on active service. Varvara Petrovna was left a widow and put on deep mourning. She could not, it is true, deplore his death very deeply, since, for the last four years, she had been completely separated from him owing to incompatibility of temper, and was giving him an allowance. (The Lieutenant-General himself had nothing but one hundred and fifty serfs and his pay, besides his position and his connections. All the money and Skvoreshniki belonged to Varvara Petrovna, the only daughter of a very rich contractor.) Yet she was shocked by the suddenness of the news, and retired into complete solitude. Stepan Trofimovitch, of course, was always at her side.

May was in its full beauty. The evenings were exquisite. The wild cherry was in flower. The two friends walked every evening in the garden and used to sit till nightfall in the arbour, and pour out their thoughts and feelings to one another. They had poetic moments. Under the influence of the change in her position Varvara Petrovna talked more than usual. She, as it were, clung to the heart of her friend, and this continued for several evenings. A strange idea suddenly came over Stepan Trofimovitch: “Was not the inconsolable widow reckoning upon him, and expecting from him, when her mourning was over, the offer of his hand?” A cynical idea, but the very loftiness of a man’s nature sometimes increases a disposition to cynical ideas if only from the many-sidedness of his culture. He began to look more deeply into it, and thought it seemed like it. He pondered: “Her fortune is immense, of course, but …” Varvara Petrovna certainly could not be called a beauty. She was a tall, yellow, bony woman with an extremely long face, suggestive of a horse. Stepan Trofimovitch hesitated more and more, he was tortured by doubts, he positively shed tears of indecision once or twice (he wept not infrequently). In the evenings, that is to say in the arbour, his countenance involuntarily began to express something capricious and ironical, something coquettish and at the same time condescending. This is apt to happen as it were by accident, and the more gentlemanly the man the more noticeable it is. Goodness only knows what one is to think about it, but it’s most likely that nothing had begun working in her heart that could have fully justified Stepan Trofimovitch’s suspicions. Moreover, she would not have changed her name, Stavrogin, for his name, famous as it was. Perhaps there was nothing in it but the play of femininity on her side; the manifestation of an unconscious feminine yearning so natural in some extremely feminine types. However, I won’t answer for it; the depths of the female heart have not been explored to this day. But I must continue.

It is to be supposed that she soon inwardly guessed the significance of her friend’s strange expression; she was quick and observant, and he was sometimes extremely guileless. But the evenings went on as before, and their conversations were just as poetic and interesting. And behold on one occasion at nightfall, after the most lively and poetical conversation, they parted affectionately, warmly pressing each other’s hands at the steps of the lodge where Stepan Trofimovitch slept. Every summer he used to move into this little lodge which stood adjoining the huge seignorial house of Skvoreshniki, almost in the garden. He had only just gone in, and in restless hesitation taken a cigar, and not having yet lighted it, was standing weary and motionless before the open window, gazing at the light feathery white clouds gliding around the bright moon, when suddenly a faint rustle made him start and turn round. Varvara Petrovna, whom he had left only four minutes earlier, was standing before him again. Her yellow

face was almost blue. Her lips were pressed tightly together and twitching at the corners. For ten full seconds she looked him in the eyes in silence with a firm relentless gaze, and suddenly whispered rapidly:

“I shall never forgive you for this!”

When, ten years later, Stepan Trofimovitch, after closing the doors, told me this melancholy tale in a whisper, he vowed that he had been so petrified on the spot that he had not seen or heard how Varvara Petrovna had disappeared. As she never once afterwards alluded to the incident and everything went on as though nothing had happened, he was all his life inclined to the idea that it was all an hallucination, a symptom of illness, the more so as he was actually taken ill that very night and was indisposed for a fortnight, which, by the way, cut short the interviews in the arbour.

But in spite of his vague theory of hallucination he seemed every day, all his life, to be expecting the continuation, and, so to say, the *dénouement* of this affair. He could not believe that that was the end of it! And if so he must have looked strangely sometimes at his friend.

V

She had herself designed the costume for him which he wore for the rest of his life. It was elegant and characteristic; a long black frock-coat, buttoned almost to the top, but stylishly cut; a soft hat (in summer a straw hat) with a wide brim, a white batiste cravat with a full bow and hanging ends, a cane with a silver knob; his hair flowed on to his shoulders. It was dark brown, and only lately had begun to get a little grey. He was clean-shaven. He was said to have been very handsome in his youth. And, to my mind, he was still an exceptionally impressive figure even in old age. Besides, who can talk of old age at fifty-three? From his special pose as a patriot, however, he did not try to appear younger, but seemed rather to pride himself on the solidity of his age, and, dressed as described, tall and thin with flowing hair, he looked almost like a patriarch, or even more like the portrait of the poet Kukolnik, engraved in the edition of his works published in 1830 or thereabouts. This resemblance was especially striking when he sat in the garden in summertime, on a seat under a bush of flowering lilac, with both hands propped on his cane and an open book beside him, musing poetically over the setting sun. In regard to books I may remark that he came in later years rather to avoid reading. But that was only quite towards the end. The papers and magazines ordered in great profusion by Varvara Petrovna he was continually reading. He never lost interest in the successes of Russian literature either, though he always maintained a dignified attitude with regard to them. He was at one time engrossed in the study of our home and foreign politics, but he soon gave up the undertaking with a gesture of

despair. It sometimes happened that he would take De Tocqueville with him into the garden while he had a Paul de Kock in his pocket. But these are trivial matters.

I must observe in parenthesis about the portrait of Kukolnik; the engraving had first come into the hands of Varvara Petrovna when she was a girl in a high-class boarding-school in Moscow. She fell in love with the portrait at once, after the habit of all girls at school who fall in love with anything they come across, as well as with their teachers, especially the drawing and writing masters. What is interesting in this, though, is not the characteristics of girls but the fact that even at fifty Varvara Petrovna kept the engraving among her most intimate and treasured possessions, so that perhaps it was only on this account that she had designed for Stepan Trofimovitch a costume somewhat like the poet's in the engraving. But that, of course, is a trifling matter too.

For the first years or, more accurately, for the first half of the time he spent with Varvara Petrovna, Stepan Trofimovitch was still planning a book and every day seriously prepared to write it. But during the later period he must have forgotten even what he had done. More and more frequently he used to say to us:

"I seem to be ready for work, my materials are collected, yet the work doesn't get done! Nothing is done!"

And he would bow his head dejectedly. No doubt this was calculated to increase his prestige in our eyes as a martyr to science, but he himself was longing for something else. "They have forgotten me! I'm no use to anyone!" broke from him more than once. This intensified depression took special hold of him towards the end of the fifties. Varvara Petrovna realised at last that it was a serious matter. Besides, she could not endure the idea that her friend was forgotten and useless. To distract him and at the same time to renew his fame she carried him off to Moscow, where she had fashionable acquaintances in the literary and scientific world; but it appeared that Moscow too was unsatisfactory.

It was a peculiar time; something new was beginning, quite unlike the stagnation of the past, something very strange too, though it was felt everywhere, even at Skvoreshniki. Rumours of all sorts reached us. The facts were generally more or less well known, but it was evident that in addition to the facts there were certain ideas accompanying them, and what's more, a great number of them. And this was perplexing. It was impossible to estimate and find out exactly what was the drift of these ideas. Varvara Petrovna was prompted by the feminine composition of her character to a compelling desire to penetrate the secret of them. She took to reading newspapers and magazines, prohibited publications printed abroad and even the revolutionary manifestoes which were just beginning to appear at the time (she was

able to procure them all); but this only set her head in a whirl. She fell to writing letters; she got few answers, and they grew more incomprehensible as time went on. Stepan Trofimovitch was solemnly called upon to explain “these ideas” to her once for all, but she remained distinctly dissatisfied with his explanations.

Stepan Trofimovitch’s view of the general movement was supercilious in the extreme. In his eyes all it amounted to was that he was forgotten and of no use. At last his name was mentioned, at first in periodicals published abroad as that of an exiled martyr, and immediately afterwards in Petersburg as that of a former star in a celebrated constellation. He was even for some reason compared with Radishtchev. Then someone printed the statement that he was dead and promised an obituary notice of him. Stepan Trofimovitch instantly perked up and assumed an air of immense dignity. All his disdain for his contemporaries evaporated and he began to cherish the dream of joining the movement and showing his powers. Varvara Petrovna’s faith in everything instantly revived and she was thrown into a violent ferment. It was decided to go to Petersburg without a moment’s delay, to find out everything on the spot, to go into everything personally, and, if possible, to throw themselves heart and soul into the new movement. Among other things she announced that she was prepared to found a magazine of her own, and henceforward to devote her whole life to it. Seeing what it had come to, Stepan Trofimovitch became more condescending than ever, and on the journey began to behave almost patronisingly to Varvara Petrovna—which she at once laid up in her heart against him. She had, however, another very important reason for the trip, which was to renew her connections in higher spheres. It was necessary, as far as she could, to remind the world of her existence, or at any rate to make an attempt to do so. The ostensible object of the journey was to see her only son, who was just finishing his studies at a Petersburg lyceum.

VI

They spent almost the whole winter season in Petersburg. But by Lent everything burst like a rainbow-coloured soap-bubble.

Their dreams were dissipated, and the muddle, far from being cleared up, had become even more revoltingly incomprehensible. To begin with, connections with the higher spheres were not established, or only on a microscopic scale, and by humiliating exertions. In her mortification Varvara Petrovna threw herself heart and soul into the “new ideas,” and began giving evening receptions. She invited literary people, and they were brought to her at once in multitudes. Afterwards they came of themselves without invitation, one brought another. Never had she seen such literary men. They were incredibly vain, but quite open in their vanity, as though they were

performing a duty by the display of it. Some (but by no means all) of them even turned up intoxicated, seeming, however, to detect in this a peculiar, only recently discovered, merit. They were all strangely proud of something. On every face was written that they had only just discovered some extremely important secret. They abused one another, and took credit to themselves for it. It was rather difficult to find out what they had written exactly, but among them there were critics, novelists, dramatists, satirists, and exposers of abuses. Stepan Trofimovitch penetrated into their very highest circle from which the movement was directed. Incredible heights had to be scaled to reach this group; but they gave him a cordial welcome, though, of course, no one of them had ever heard of him or knew anything about him except that he "represented an idea." His manœuvres among them were so successful that he got them twice to Varvara Petrovna's salon in spite of their Olympian grandeur. These people were very serious and very polite; they behaved nicely; the others were evidently afraid of them; but it was obvious that they had no time to spare. Two or three former literary celebrities who happened to be in Petersburg, and with whom Varvara Petrovna had long maintained a most refined correspondence, came also. But to her surprise these genuine and quite indubitable celebrities were stiller than water, humbler than the grass, and some of them simply hung on to this new rabble, and were shamefully cringing before them. At first Stepan Trofimovitch was a success. People caught at him and began to exhibit him at public literary gatherings. The first time he came on to the platform at some public reading in which he was to take part, he was received with enthusiastic clapping which lasted for five minutes. He recalled this with tears nine years afterwards, though rather from his natural artistic sensibility than from gratitude. "I swear, and I'm ready to bet," he declared (but only to me, and in secret), "that not one of that audience knew anything whatever about me." A noteworthy admission. He must have had a keen intelligence since he was capable of grasping his position so clearly even on the platform, even in such a state of exaltation; it also follows that he had not a keen intelligence if, nine years afterwards, he could not recall it without mortification. He was made to sign two or three collective protests (against what he did not know); he signed them. Varvara Petrovna too was made to protest against some "disgraceful action" and she signed too. The majority of these new people, however, though they visited Varvara Petrovna, felt themselves for some reason called upon to regard her with contempt, and with undisguised irony. Stepan Trofimovitch hinted to me at bitter moments afterwards that it was from that time she had been envious of him. She saw, of course, that she could not get on with these people, yet she received them eagerly, with all the hysterical impatience of her sex, and, what is more, she expected something. At her parties she talked little, although she could talk, but she listened the more. They talked of the

abolition of the censorship, and of phonetic spelling, of the substitution of the Latin characters for the Russian alphabet, of someone's having been sent into exile the day before, of some scandal, of the advantage of splitting Russia into nationalities united in a free federation, of the abolition of the army and the navy, of the restoration of Poland as far as the Dnieper, of the peasant reforms, and of the manifestoes, of the abolition of the hereditary principle, of the family, of children, and of priests, of women's rights, of Kraevsky's house, for which no one ever seemed able to forgive Mr. Kraevsky, and so on, and so on. It was evident that in this mob of new people there were many impostors, but undoubtedly there were also many honest and very attractive people, in spite of some surprising characteristics in them. The honest ones were far more difficult to understand than the coarse and dishonest, but it was impossible to tell which was being made a tool of by the other. When Varvara Petrovna announced her idea of founding a magazine, people flocked to her in even larger numbers, but charges of being a capitalist and an exploiter of labour were showered upon her to her face. The rudeness of these accusations was only equalled by their unexpectedness. The aged General Ivan Ivanovitch Drozdov, an old friend and comrade of the late General Stavrogin's, known to us all here as an extremely stubborn and irritable, though very estimable, man (in his own way, of course), who ate a great deal, and was dreadfully afraid of atheism, quarrelled at one of Varvara Petrovna's parties with a distinguished young man. The latter at the first word exclaimed, "You must be a general if you talk like that," meaning that he could find no word of abuse worse than "general."

Ivan Ivanovitch flew into a terrible passion: "Yes, sir, I am a general, and a lieutenant-general, and I have served my Tsar, and you, sir, are a puppy and an infidel!"

An outrageous scene followed. Next day the incident was exposed in print, and they began getting up a collective protest against Varvara Petrovna's disgraceful conduct in not having immediately turned the general out. In an illustrated paper there appeared a malignant caricature in which Varvara Petrovna, Stepan Trofimovitch, and General Drozdov were depicted as three reactionary friends. There were verses attached to this caricature written by a popular poet especially for the occasion. I may observe, for my own part, that many persons of general's rank certainly have an absurd habit of saying, "I have served my Tsar" ... just as though they had not the same Tsar as all the rest of us, their simple fellow-subjects, but had a special Tsar of their own.

It was impossible, of course, to remain any longer in Petersburg, all the more so as Stepan Trofimovitch was overtaken by a complete fiasco. He could not resist talking of the claims of art, and they laughed at him more loudly as time went on. At his last lecture he thought to impress them with patriotic eloquence, hoping to touch their

hearts, and reckoning on the respect inspired by his "persecution." He did not attempt to dispute the uselessness and absurdity of the word "fatherland," acknowledged the pernicious influence of religion, but firmly and loudly declared that boots were of less consequence than Pushkin; of much less, indeed. He was hissed so mercilessly that he burst into tears, there and then, on the platform. Varvara Petrovna took him home more dead than alive. *"On m'a traité comme un vieux bonnet de coton,"* he babbled senselessly. She was looking after him all night, giving him laurel-drops and repeating to him till daybreak, "You will still be of use; you will still make your mark; you will be appreciated ... in another place."

Early next morning five literary men called on Varvara Petrovna, three of them complete strangers, whom she had never set eyes on before. With a stern air they informed her that they had looked into the question of her magazine, and had brought her their decision on the subject. Varvara Petrovna had never authorised anyone to look into or decide anything concerning her magazine. Their decision was that, having founded the magazine, she should at once hand it over to them with the capital to run it, on the basis of a co-operative society. She herself was to go back to Skvoreshniki, not forgetting to take with her Stepan Trofimovitch, who was "out of date." From delicacy they agreed to recognise the right of property in her case, and to send her every year a sixth part of the net profits. What was most touching about it was that of these five men, four certainly were not actuated by any mercenary motive, and were simply acting in the interests of the "cause."

"We came away utterly at a loss," Stepan Trofimovitch used to say afterwards. "I couldn't make head or tail of it, and kept muttering, I remember, to the rumble of the train:

'Vyek, and vyek, and Lyov Kambek,

Lyov Kambek and vyek, and vyek.'

and goodness knows what, all the way to Moscow. It was only in Moscow that I came to myself—as though we really might find something different there."

"Oh, my friends!" he would exclaim to us sometimes with fervour, "you cannot imagine what wrath and sadness overcome your whole soul when a great idea, which you have long cherished as holy, is caught up by the ignorant and dragged forth before fools like themselves into the street, and you suddenly meet it in the market unrecognisable, in the mud, absurdly set up, without proportion, without harmony, the plaything of foolish louts! No! In our day it was not so, and it was not this for which we

strove. No, no, not this at all. I don't recognise it.... Our day will come again and will turn all the tottering fabric of to-day into a true path. If not, what will happen?..."

VII

Immediately on their return from Petersburg Varvara Petrovna sent her friend abroad to "recruit"; and, indeed, it was necessary for them to part for a time, she felt that. Stepan Trofimovitch was delighted to go.

"There I shall revive!" he exclaimed. "There, at last, I shall set to work!" But in the first of his letters from Berlin he struck his usual note:

"My heart is broken!" he wrote to Varvara Petrovna. "I can forget nothing! Here, in Berlin, everything brings back to me my old past, my first raptures and my first agonies. Where is she? Where are they both? Where are you two angels of whom I was never worthy? Where is my son, my beloved son? And last of all, where am I, where is my old self, strong as steel, firm as a rock, when now some Andreev, our orthodox clown with a beard, *peut briser mon existence en deux*"—and so on.

As for Stepan Trofimovitch's son, he had only seen him twice in his life, the first time when he was born and the second time lately in Petersburg, where the young man was preparing to enter the university. The boy had been all his life, as we have said already, brought up by his aunts (at Varvara Petrovna's expense) in a remote province, nearly six hundred miles from Skvoreshniki. As for Andreev, he was nothing more or less than our local shopkeeper, a very eccentric fellow, a self-taught archæologist who had a passion for collecting Russian antiquities and sometimes tried to outshine Stepan Trofimovitch in erudition and in the progressiveness of his opinions. This worthy shopkeeper, with a grey beard and silver-rimmed spectacles, still owed Stepan Trofimovitch four hundred roubles for some acres of timber he had bought on the latter's little estate (near Skvoreshniki). Though Varvara Petrovna had liberally provided her friend with funds when she sent him to Berlin, yet Stepan Trofimovitch had, before starting, particularly reckoned on getting that four hundred roubles, probably for his secret expenditure, and was ready to cry when Andreev asked leave to defer payment for a month, which he had a right to do, since he had brought the first installments of the money almost six months in advance to meet Stepan Trofimovitch's special need at the time.

Varvara Petrovna read this first letter greedily, and underlining in pencil the exclamation: "Where are they both?" numbered it and put it away in a drawer. He had, of course, referred to his two deceased wives. The second letter she received from Berlin was in a different strain:

“I am working twelve hours out of the twenty-four.” (“Eleven would be enough,” muttered Varvara Petrovna.) “I’m rummaging in the libraries, collating, copying, rushing about. I’ve visited the professors. I have renewed my acquaintance with the delightful Dundasov family. What a charming creature Lizaveta Nikolaevna is even now! She sends you her greetings. Her young husband and three nephews are all in Berlin. I sit up talking till daybreak with the young people and we have almost Athenian evenings, Athenian, I mean, only in their intellectual subtlety and refinement. Everything is in noble style; a great deal of music, Spanish airs, dreams of the regeneration of all humanity, ideas of eternal beauty, of the Sistine Madonna, light interspersed with darkness, but there are spots even on the sun! Oh, my friend, my noble, faithful friend! In heart I am with you and am yours; with you alone, always, *en tout pays*, even in *le pays de Makar et de ses veaux*, of which we often used to talk in agitation in Petersburg, do you remember, before we came away. I think of it with a smile. Crossing the frontier I felt myself in safety, a sensation, strange and new, for the first time after so many years”—and so on and so on.

“Come, it’s all nonsense!” Varvara Petrovna commented, folding up that letter too. “If he’s up till daybreak with his Athenian nights, he isn’t at his books for twelve hours a day. Was he drunk when he wrote it? That Dundasov woman dares to send me greetings! But there, let him amuse himself!”

The phrase “*dans le pays de Makar et de ses veaux*” meant: “wherever Makar may drive his calves.” Stepan Trofimovitch sometimes purposely translated Russian proverbs and traditional sayings into French in the most stupid way, though no doubt he was able to understand and translate them better. But he did it from a feeling that it was chic, and thought it witty.

But he did not amuse himself for long. He could not hold out for four months, and was soon flying back to Skvoreshniki. His last letters consisted of nothing but outpourings of the most sentimental love for his absent friend, and were literally wet with tears. There are natures extremely attached to home like lap-dogs. The meeting of the friends was enthusiastic. Within two days everything was as before and even duller than before. “My friend,” Stepan Trofimovitch said to me a fortnight after, in dead secret, “I have discovered something awful for me ... something new: *je suis un simple* dependent, *et rien de plus! Mais r-r-rien de plus.*”

VIII

After this we had a period of stagnation which lasted nine years. The hysterical outbreaks and sobbings on my shoulder that recurred at regular intervals did not in the least mar our prosperity. I wonder that Stepan Trofimovitch did not grow stout

during this period. His nose was a little redder, and his manner had gained in urbanity, that was all. By degrees a circle of friends had formed around him, although it was never a very large one. Though Varvara Petrovna had little to do with the circle, yet we all recognised her as our patroness. After the lesson she had received in Petersburg, she settled down in our town for good. In winter she lived in her town house and spent the summer on her estate in the neighbourhood. She had never enjoyed so much consequence and prestige in our provincial society as during the last seven years of this period, that is up to the time of the appointment of our present governor. Our former governor, the mild Ivan Ossipovitch, who will never be forgotten among us, was a near relation of Varvara Petrovna's, and had at one time been under obligations to her. His wife trembled at the very thought of displeasing her, while the homage paid her by provincial society was carried almost to a pitch that suggested idolatry. So Stepan Trofimovitch, too, had a good time. He was a member of the club, lost at cards majestically, and was everywhere treated with respect, though many people regarded him only as a "learned man." Later on, when Varvara Petrovna allowed him to live in a separate house, we enjoyed greater freedom than before. Twice a week we used to meet at his house. We were a merry party, especially when he was not sparing of the champagne. The wine came from the shop of the same Andreev. The bill was paid twice a year by Varvara Petrovna, and on the day it was paid Stepan Trofimovitch almost invariably suffered from an attack of his "summer cholera."

One of the first members of our circle was Liputin, an elderly provincial official, and a great liberal, who was reputed in the town to be an atheist. He had married for the second time a young and pretty wife with a dowry, and had, besides, three grown-up daughters. He brought up his family in the fear of God, and kept a tight hand over them. He was extremely stingy, and out of his salary had bought himself a house and amassed a fortune. He was an uncomfortable sort of man, and had not been in the service. He was not much respected in the town, and was not received in the best circles. Moreover, he was a scandal-monger, and had more than once had to smart for his back-biting, for which he had been badly punished by an officer, and again by a country gentleman, the respectable head of a family. But we liked his wit, his inquiring mind, his peculiar, malicious liveliness. Varvara Petrovna disliked him, but he always knew how to make up to her.

Nor did she care for Shatov, who became one of our circle during the last years of this period. Shatov had been a student and had been expelled from the university after some disturbance. In his childhood he had been a student of Stepan Trofimovitch's and was by birth a serf of Varvara Petrovna's, the son of a former valet of hers, Pavel Fyodoritch, and was greatly indebted to her bounty. She disliked him for his pride and

ingratitude and could never forgive him for not having come straight to her on his expulsion from the university. On the contrary he had not even answered the letter she had expressly sent him at the time, and preferred to be a drudge in the family of a merchant of the new style, with whom he went abroad, looking after his children more in the position of a nurse than of a tutor. He was very eager to travel at the time. The children had a governess too, a lively young Russian lady, who also became one of the household on the eve of their departure, and had been engaged chiefly because she was so cheap. Two months later the merchant turned her out of the house for "free thinking." Shatov took himself off after her and soon afterwards married her in Geneva. They lived together about three weeks, and then parted as free people recognising no bonds, though, no doubt, also through poverty. He wandered about Europe alone for a long time afterwards, living God knows how; he is said to have blacked boots in the street, and to have been a porter in some dockyard. At last, a year before, he had returned to his native place among us and settled with an old aunt, whom he buried a month later. His sister Dasha, who had also been brought up by Varvara Petrovna, was a favourite of hers, and treated with respect and consideration in her house. He saw his sister rarely and was not on intimate terms with her. In our circle he was always sullen, and never talkative; but from time to time, when his convictions were touched upon, he became morbidly irritable and very unrestrained in his language.

"One has to tie Shatov up and then argue with him," Stepan Trofimovitch would sometimes say in joke, but he liked him.

Shatov had radically changed some of his former socialistic convictions abroad and had rushed to the opposite extreme. He was one of those idealistic beings common in Russia, who are suddenly struck by some overmastering idea which seems, as it were, to crush them at once, and sometimes forever. They are never equal to coping with it, but put passionate faith in it, and their whole life passes afterwards, as it were, in the last agonies under the weight of the stone that has fallen upon them and half crushed them. In appearance Shatov was in complete harmony with his convictions: he was short, awkward, had a shock of flaxen hair, broad shoulders, thick lips, very thick overhanging white eyebrows, a wrinkled forehead, and a hostile, obstinately downcast, as it were shamefaced, expression in his eyes. His hair was always in a wild tangle and stood up in a shock which nothing could smooth. He was seven- or eight-and-twenty.

"I no longer wonder that his wife ran away from him," Varvara Petrovna enunciated on one occasion after gazing intently at him. He tried to be neat in his dress, in spite of his extreme poverty. He refrained again from appealing to Varvara Petrovna, and struggled

along as best he could, doing various jobs for tradespeople. At one time he served in a shop, at another he was on the point of going as an assistant clerk on a freight steamer, but he fell ill just at the time of sailing. It is hard to imagine what poverty he was capable of enduring without thinking about it at all. After his illness Varvara Petrovna sent him a hundred roubles, anonymously and in secret. He found out the secret, however, and after some reflection took the money and went to Varvara Petrovna to thank her. She received him with warmth, but on this occasion, too, he shamefully disappointed her. He only stayed five minutes, staring blankly at the ground and smiling stupidly in profound silence, and suddenly, at the most interesting point, without listening to what she was saying, he got up, made an uncouth sideways bow, helpless with confusion, caught against the lady's expensive inlaid work-table, upsetting it on the floor and smashing it to atoms, and walked out nearly dead with shame. Liputin blamed him severely afterwards for having accepted the hundred roubles and having even gone to thank Varvara Petrovna for them, instead of having returned the money with contempt, because it had come from his former despotic mistress. He lived in solitude on the outskirts of the town, and did not like any of us to go and see him. He used to turn up invariably at Stepan Trofimovitch's evenings, and borrowed newspapers and books from him.

There was another young man who always came, one Virginsky, a clerk in the service here, who had something in common with Shatov, though on the surface he seemed his complete opposite in every respect. He was a "family man" too. He was a pathetic and very quiet young man though he was thirty; he had considerable education though he was chiefly self-taught. He was poor, married, and in the service, and supported the aunt and sister of his wife. His wife and all the ladies of his family professed the very latest convictions, but in rather a crude form. It was a case of "an idea dragged forth into the street," as Stepan Trofimovitch had expressed it upon a former occasion. They got it all out of books, and at the first hint coming from any of our little progressive corners in Petersburg they were prepared to throw anything overboard, so soon as they were advised to do so. Madame Virginsky practised as a midwife in the town. She had lived a long while in Petersburg as a girl. Virginsky himself was a man of rare single-heartedness, and I have seldom met more honest fervour.

"I will never, never, abandon these bright hopes," he used to say to me with shining eyes. Of these "bright hopes" he always spoke quietly, in a blissful half-whisper, as it were secretly. He was rather tall, but extremely thin and narrow-shouldered, and had extraordinarily lank hair of a reddish hue. All Stepan Trofimovitch's condescending gibes at some of his opinions he accepted mildly, answered him sometimes very

seriously, and often nonplussed him. Stepan Trofimovitch treated him very kindly, and indeed he behaved like a father to all of us. “You are all half-hearted chickens,” he observed to Virginsky in joke. “All who are like you, though in you, Virginsky, I have not observed that narrow-mindedness I found in Petersburg, *chez ces séminaristes*. But you’re a half-hatched chicken all the same. Shatov would give anything to hatch out, but he’s half-hatched too.”

“And I?” Liputin inquired.

“You’re simply the golden mean which will get on anywhere in its own way.” Liputin was offended.

The story was told of Virginsky, and it was unhappily only too true, that before his wife had spent a year in lawful wedlock with him she announced that he was superseded and that she preferred Lebyadkin. This Lebyadkin, a stranger to the town, turned out afterwards to be a very dubious character, and not a retired captain as he represented himself to be. He could do nothing but twist his moustache, drink, and chatter the most inept nonsense that can possibly be imagined. This fellow, who was utterly lacking in delicacy, at once settled in his house, glad to live at another man’s expense, ate and slept there and came, in the end, to treating the master of the house with condescension. It was asserted that when Virginsky’s wife had announced to him that he was superseded he said to her:

“My dear, hitherto I have only loved you, but now I respect you,” but I doubt whether this renunciation, worthy of ancient Rome, was ever really uttered. On the contrary they say that he wept violently. A fortnight after he was superseded, all of them, in a “family party,” went one day for a picnic to a wood outside the town to drink tea with their friends. Virginsky was in a feverishly lively mood and took part in the dances. But suddenly, without any preliminary quarrel, he seized the giant Lebyadkin with both hands, by the hair, just as the latter was dancing a can-can solo, pushed him down, and began dragging him along with shrieks, shouts, and tears. The giant was so panic-stricken that he did not attempt to defend himself, and hardly uttered a sound all the time he was being dragged along. But afterwards he resented it with all the heat of an honourable man. Virginsky spent a whole night on his knees begging his wife’s forgiveness. But this forgiveness was not granted, as he refused to apologise to Lebyadkin; moreover, he was upbraided for the meanness of his ideas and his foolishness, the latter charge based on the fact that he knelt down in the interview with his wife. The captain soon disappeared and did not reappear in our town till quite lately, when he came with his sister, and with entirely different aims; but of him later. It was no wonder that the poor young husband sought our society and found comfort in

it. But he never spoke of his home-life to us. On one occasion only, returning with me from Stepan Trofimovitch's, he made a remote allusion to his position, but clutching my hand at once he cried ardently:

"It's of no consequence. It's only a personal incident. It's no hindrance to the 'cause,' not the slightest!"

Stray guests visited our circle too; a Jew, called Lyamshin, and a Captain Kartusov came. An old gentleman of inquiring mind used to come at one time, but he died. Liputin brought an exiled Polish priest called Slontsevsky, and for a time we received him on principle, but afterwards we didn't keep it up.

IX

At one time it was reported about the town that our little circle was a hotbed of nihilism, profligacy, and godlessness, and the rumour gained more and more strength. And yet we did nothing but indulge in the most harmless, agreeable, typically Russian, light-hearted liberal chatter. "The higher liberalism" and the "higher liberal," that is, a liberal without any definite aim, is only possible in Russia.

Stepan Trofimovitch, like every witty man, needed a listener, and, besides that, he needed the consciousness that he was fulfilling the lofty duty of disseminating ideas. And finally he had to have someone to drink champagne with, and over the wine to exchange light-hearted views of a certain sort, about Russia and the "Russian spirit," about God in general, and the "Russian God" in particular, to repeat for the hundredth time the same Russian scandalous stories that every one knew and every one repeated. We had no distaste for the gossip of the town which often, indeed, led us to the most severe and loftily moral verdicts. We fell into generalising about humanity, made stern reflections on the future of Europe and mankind in general, authoritatively predicted that after Cæsarism France would at once sink into the position of a second-rate power, and were firmly convinced that this might terribly easily and quickly come to pass. We had long ago predicted that the Pope would play the part of a simple archbishop in a united Italy, and were firmly convinced that this thousand-year-old question had, in our age of humanitarianism, industry, and railways, become a trifling matter. But, of course, "Russian higher liberalism" could not look at the question in any other way. Stepan Trofimovitch sometimes talked of art, and very well, though rather abstractly. He sometimes spoke of the friends of his youth—all names noteworthy in the history of Russian progress. He talked of them with emotion and reverence, though sometimes with envy. If we were very much bored, the Jew, Lyamshin (a little post-office clerk), a wonderful performer on the piano, sat down to play, and in the intervals would imitate a pig, a thunderstorm, a confinement with the

first cry of the baby, and so on, and so on; it was only for this that he was invited, indeed. If we had drunk a great deal—and that did happen sometimes, though not often—we flew into raptures, and even on one occasion sang the "Marseillaise" in chorus to the accompaniment of Lyamshin, though I don't know how it went off. The great day, the nineteenth of February, we welcomed enthusiastically, and for a long time beforehand drank toasts in its honour. But that was long ago, before the advent of Shatov or Virginsky, when Stepan Trofimovitch was still living in the same house with Varvara Petrovna. For some time before the great day Stepan Trofimovitch fell into the habit of muttering to himself well-known, though rather far-fetched, lines which must have been written by some liberal landowner of the past:

"The peasant with his axe is coming, Something terrible will happen."

Something of that sort, I don't remember the exact words. Varvara Petrovna overheard him on one occasion, and crying, "Nonsense, nonsense!" she went out of the room in a rage. Liputin, who happened to be present, observed malignantly to Stepan Trofimovitch:

"It'll be a pity if their former serfs really do some mischief to *messieurs les* landowners to celebrate the occasion," and he drew his forefinger round his throat.

"*Cher ami,"* Stepan Trofimovitch observed, "believe me that—this (he repeated the gesture) will never be of any use to our landowners nor to any of us in general. We shall never be capable of organising anything even without our heads, though our heads hinder our understanding more than anything."

I may observe that many people among us anticipated that something extraordinary, such as Liputin predicted, would take place on the day of the emancipation, and those who held this view were the so-called "authorities" on the peasantry and the government. I believe Stepan Trofimovitch shared this idea, so much so that almost on the eve of the great day he began asking Varvara Petrovna's leave to go abroad; in fact he began to be uneasy. But the great day passed, and some time passed after it, and the condescending smile reappeared on Stepan Trofimovitch's lips. In our presence he delivered himself of some noteworthy thoughts on the character of the Russian in general, and the Russian peasant in particular.

"Like hasty people we have been in too great a hurry with our peasants," he said in conclusion of a series of remarkable utterances. "We have made them the fashion, and a whole section of writers have for several years treated them as though they were newly discovered curiosities. We have put laurel-wreaths on lousy heads. The Russian village has given us only 'Kamarinsky' in a thousand years. A remarkable Russian poet

who was also something of a wit, seeing the great Rachel on the stage for the first time cried in ecstasy, 'I wouldn't exchange Rachel for a peasant!' I am prepared to go further. I would give all the peasants in Russia for one Rachel. It's high time to look things in the face more soberly, and not to mix up our national rustic pitch with *bouquet de l'Impératrice*."

Liputin agreed at once, but remarked that one had to perjure oneself and praise the peasant all the same for the sake of being progressive, that even ladies in good society shed tears reading "Poor Anton," and that some of them even wrote from Paris to their bailiffs that they were, henceforward, to treat the peasants as humanely as possible.

It happened, and as ill-luck would have it just after the rumours of the Anton Petrov affair had reached us, that there was some disturbance in our province too, only about ten miles from Skvoreshniki, so that a detachment of soldiers was sent down in a hurry.

This time Stepan Trofimovitch was so much upset that he even frightened us. He cried out at the club that more troops were needed, that they ought to be telegraphed for from another province; he rushed off to the governor to protest that he had no hand in it, begged him not to allow his name on account of old associations to be brought into it, and offered to write about his protest to the proper quarter in Petersburg. Fortunately it all passed over quickly and ended in nothing, but I was surprised at Stepan Trofimovitch at the time.

Three years later, as every one knows, people were beginning to talk of nationalism, and "public opinion" first came upon the scene. Stepan Trofimovitch laughed a great deal.

"My friends," he instructed us, "if our nationalism has 'dawned' as they keep repeating in the papers—it's still at school, at some German 'Peterschule,' sitting over a German book and repeating its everlasting German lesson, and its German teacher will make it go down on its knees when he thinks fit. I think highly of the German teacher. But nothing has happened and nothing of the kind has dawned and everything is going on in the old way, that is, as ordained by God. To my thinking that should be enough for Russia, *pour notre Sainte Russie*. Besides, all this Slavism and nationalism is too old to be new. Nationalism, if you like, has never existed among us except as a distraction for gentlemen's clubs, and Moscow ones at that. I'm not talking of the days of Igor, of course. And besides it all comes of idleness. Everything in Russia comes of idleness, everything good and fine even. It all springs from the charming, cultured, whimsical idleness of our gentry! I'm ready to repeat it for thirty thousand years. We don't know how to live by our own labour. And as for the fuss they're making now about the 'dawn'

of some sort of public opinion, has it so suddenly dropped from heaven without any warning? How is it they don't understand that before we can have an opinion of our own we must have work, our own work, our own initiative in things, our own experience. Nothing is to be gained for nothing. If we work we shall have an opinion of our own. But as we never shall work, our opinions will be formed for us by those who have hitherto done the work instead of us, that is, as always, Europe, the everlasting Germans—our teachers for the last two centuries. Moreover, Russia is too big a tangle for us to unravel alone without the Germans, and without hard work. For the last twenty years I've been sounding the alarm, and the summons to work. I've given up my life to that appeal, and, in my folly I put faith in it. Now I have lost faith in it, but I sound the alarm still, and shall sound it to the tomb. I will pull at the bell-ropes until they toll for my own requiem!"

"Alas! We could do nothing but assent. We applauded our teacher and with what warmth, indeed! And, after all, my friends, don't we still hear to-day, every hour, at every step, the same "charming," "clever," "liberal," old Russian nonsense? Our teacher believed in God.

"I can't understand why they make me out an infidel here," he used to say sometimes. "I believe in God, *mais distinguons*, I believe in Him as a Being who is conscious of Himself in me only. I cannot believe as my Nastasya (the servant) or like some country gentleman who believes 'to be on the safe side,' or like our dear Shatov—but no, Shatov doesn't come into it. Shatov believes 'on principle,' like a Moscow Slavophil. As for Christianity, for all my genuine respect for it, I'm not a Christian. I am more of an antique pagan, like the great Goethe, or like an ancient Greek. The very fact that Christianity has failed to understand woman is enough, as George Sand has so splendidly shown in one of her great novels. As for the bowings, fasting and all the rest of it, I don't understand what they have to do with me. However busy the informers may be here, I don't care to become a Jesuit. In the year 1847 Byelinsky, who was abroad, sent his famous letter to Gogol, and warmly reproached him for believing in some sort of God. *Entre nous soit dit,* I can imagine nothing more comic than the moment when Gogol (the Gogol of that period!) read that phrase, and ... the whole letter! But dismissing the humorous aspect, and, as I am fundamentally in agreement, I point to them and say—these were men! They knew how to love their people, they knew how to suffer for them, they knew how to sacrifice everything for them, yet they knew how to differ from them when they ought, and did not filch certain ideas from them. Could Byelinsky have sought salvation in Lenten oil, or peas with radish!..." But at this point Shatov interposed.

“Those men of yours never loved the people, they didn’t suffer for them, and didn’t sacrifice anything for them, though they may have amused themselves by imagining it!” he growled sullenly, looking down, and moving impatiently in his chair.

“They didn’t love the people!” yelled Stepan Trofimovitch. “Oh, how they loved Russia!”

“Neither Russia nor the people!” Shatov yelled too, with flashing eyes. “You can’t love what you don’t know and they had no conception of the Russian people. All of them peered at the Russian people through their fingers, and you do too; Byelinsky especially: from that very letter to Gogol one can see it. Byelinsky, like the Inquisitive Man in Krylov’s fable, did not notice the elephant in the museum of curiosities, but concentrated his whole attention on the French Socialist beetles; he did not get beyond them. And yet perhaps he was cleverer than any of you. You’ve not only overlooked the people, you’ve taken up an attitude of disgusting contempt for them, if only because you could not imagine any but the French people, the Parisians indeed, and were ashamed that the Russians were not like them. That’s the naked truth. And he who has no people has no God. You may be sure that all who cease to understand their own people and lose their connection with them at once lose to the same extent the faith of their fathers, and become atheistic or indifferent. I’m speaking the truth! This is a fact which will be realised. That’s why all of you and all of us now are either beastly atheists or careless, dissolute imbeciles, and nothing more. And you too, Stepan Trofimovitch, I don’t make an exception of you at all! In fact, it is on your account I am speaking, let me tell you that!”

As a rule, after uttering such monologues (which happened to him pretty frequently) Shatov snatched up his cap and rushed to the door, in the full conviction that everything was now over, and that he had cut short all friendly relations with Stepan Trofimovitch forever. But the latter always succeeded in stopping him in time.

“Hadn’t we better make it up, Shatov, after all these endearments,” he would say, benignly holding out his hand to him from his arm-chair.

Shatov, clumsy and bashful, disliked sentimentality. Externally he was rough, but inwardly, I believe, he had great delicacy. Although he often went too far, he was the first to suffer for it. Muttering something between his teeth in response to Stepan Trofimovitch’s appeal, and shuffling with his feet like a bear, he gave a sudden and unexpected smile, put down his cap, and sat down in the same chair as before, with his eyes stubbornly fixed on the ground. Wine was, of course, brought in, and Stepan Trofimovitch proposed some suitable toast, for instance the memory of some leading man of the past.

CHAPTER II. PRINCE HARRY. MATCHMAKING.

I

THERE WAS ANOTHER being in the world to whom Varvara Petrovna was as much attached as she was to Stepan Trofimovitch, her only son, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch Stavrogin. It was to undertake his education that Stepan Trofimovitch had been engaged. The boy was at that time eight years old, and his frivolous father, General Stavrogin, was already living apart from Varvara Petrovna, so that the child grew up entirely in his mother's care. To do Stepan Trofimovitch justice, he knew how to win his pupil's heart. The whole secret of this lay in the fact that he was a child himself. I was not there in those days, and he continually felt the want of a real friend. He did not hesitate to make a friend of this little creature as soon as he had grown a little older. It somehow came to pass quite naturally that there seemed to be no discrepancy of age between them. More than once he awaked his ten- or eleven-year-old friend at night, simply to pour out his wounded feelings and weep before him, or to tell him some family secret, without realising that this was an outrageous proceeding. They threw themselves into each other's arms and wept. The boy knew that his mother loved him very much, but I doubt whether he cared much for her. She talked little to him and did not often interfere with him, but he was always morbidly conscious of her intent, searching eyes fixed upon him. Yet the mother confided his whole instruction and moral education to Stepan Trofimovitch. At that time her faith in him was unshaken. One can't help believing that the tutor had rather a bad influence on his pupil's nerves. When at sixteen he was taken to a lyceum he was fragile-looking and pale, strangely quiet and dreamy. (Later on he was distinguished by great physical strength.) One must assume too that the friends went on weeping at night, throwing themselves in each other's arms, though their tears were not always due to domestic difficulties. Stepan Trofimovitch succeeded in reaching the deepest chords in his pupil's heart, and had aroused in him a vague sensation of that eternal, sacred yearning which some elect souls can never give up for cheap gratification when once they have tasted and known it. (There are some connoisseurs who prize this yearning more than the most complete satisfaction of it, if such were possible.) But in any case it was just as well that the pupil and the preceptor were, though none too soon, parted.

For the first two years the lad used to come home from the lyceum for the holidays. While Varvara Petrovna and Stepan Trofimovitch were staying in Petersburg he was

sometimes present at the literary evenings at his mother's, he listened and looked on. He spoke little, and was quiet and shy as before. His manner to Stepan Trofimovitch was as affectionately attentive as ever, but there was a shade of reserve in it. He unmistakably avoided distressing, lofty subjects or reminiscences of the past. By his mother's wish he entered the army on completing the school course, and soon received a commission in one of the most brilliant regiments of the Horse Guards. He did not come to show himself to his mother in his uniform, and his letters from Petersburg began to be infrequent. Varvara Petrovna sent him money without stint, though after the emancipation the revenue from her estate was so diminished that at first her income was less than half what it had been before. She had, however, a considerable sum laid by through years of economy. She took great interest in her son's success in the highest Petersburg society. Where she had failed, the wealthy young officer with expectations succeeded. He renewed acquaintances which she had hardly dared to dream of, and was welcomed everywhere with pleasure. But very soon rather strange rumours reached Varvara Petrovna. The young man had suddenly taken to riotous living with a sort of frenzy. Not that he gambled or drank too much; there was only talk of savage recklessness, of running over people in the street with his horses, of brutal conduct to a lady of good society with whom he had a liaison and whom he afterwards publicly insulted. There was a callous nastiness about this affair. It was added, too, that he had developed into a regular bully, insulting people for the mere pleasure of insulting them. Varvara Petrovna was greatly agitated and distressed. Stepan Trofimovitch assured her that this was only the first riotous effervescence of a too richly endowed nature, that the storm would subside and that this was only like the youth of Prince Harry, who caroused with Falstaff, Poins, and Mrs. Quickly, as described by Shakespeare.

This time Varvara Petrovna did not cry out, "Nonsense, nonsense!" as she was very apt to do in later years in response to Stepan Trofimovitch. On the contrary she listened very eagerly, asked him to explain this theory more exactly, took up Shakespeare herself and with great attention read the immortal chronicle. But it did not comfort her, and indeed she did not find the resemblance very striking. With feverish impatience she awaited answers to some of her letters. She had not long to wait for them. The fatal news soon reached her that "Prince Harry" had been involved in two duels almost at once, was entirely to blame for both of them, had killed one of his adversaries on the spot and had maimed the other and was awaiting his trial in consequence. The case ended in his being degraded to the ranks, deprived of the rights of a nobleman, and transferred to an infantry line regiment, and he only escaped worse punishment by special favour.

In 1863 he somehow succeeded in distinguishing himself; he received a cross, was promoted to be a non-commissioned officer, and rose rapidly to the rank of an officer. During this period Varvara Petrovna despatched perhaps hundreds of letters to the capital, full of prayers and supplications. She even stooped to some humiliation in this extremity. After his promotion the young man suddenly resigned his commission, but he did not come back to Skvoreshniki again, and gave up writing to his mother altogether. They learned by roundabout means that he was back in Petersburg, but that he was not to be met in the same society as before; he seemed to be in hiding. They found out that he was living in strange company, associating with the dregs of the population of Petersburg, with slip-shod government clerks, discharged military men, beggars of the higher class, and drunkards of all sorts—that he visited their filthy families, spent days and nights in dark slums and all sorts of low haunts, that he had sunk very low, that he was in rags, and that apparently he liked it. He did not ask his mother for money, he had his own little estate—once the property of his father, General Stavrogin, which yielded at least some revenue, and which, it was reported, he had let to a German from Saxony. At last his mother besought him to come to her, and "Prince Harry" made his appearance in our town. I had never set eyes on him before, but now I got a very distinct impression of him. He was a very handsome young man of five-and-twenty, and I must own I was impressed by him. I had expected to see a dirty ragamuffin, sodden with drink and debauchery. He was on the contrary, the most elegant gentleman I had ever met, extremely well dressed, with an air and manner only to be found in a man accustomed to culture and refinement. I was not the only person surprised. It was a surprise to all the townspeople to whom, of course, young Stavrogin's whole biography was well known in its minutest details, though one could not imagine how they had got hold of them, and, what was still more surprising, half of their stories about him turned out to be true.

All our ladies were wild over the new visitor. They were sharply divided into two parties, one of which adored him while the other half regarded him with a hatred that was almost blood-thirsty: but both were crazy about him. Some of them were particularly fascinated by the idea that he had perhaps a fateful secret hidden in his soul; others were positively delighted at the fact that he was a murderer. It appeared too that he had had a very good education and was indeed a man of considerable culture. No great acquirements were needed, of course, to astonish us. But he could judge also of very interesting everyday affairs, and, what was of the utmost value, he judged of them with remarkable good sense. I must mention as a peculiar fact that almost from the first day we all of us thought him a very sensible fellow. He was not very talkative, he was elegant without exaggeration, surprisingly modest, and at the

same time bold and self-reliant, as none of us were. Our dandies gazed at him with envy, and were completely eclipsed by him. His face, too, impressed me. His hair was of a peculiarly intense black, his light-coloured eyes were peculiarly light and calm, his complexion was peculiarly soft and white, the red in his cheeks was too bright and clear, his teeth were like pearls, and his lips like coral—one would have thought that he must be a paragon of beauty, yet at the same time there seemed something repellent about him. It was said that his face suggested a mask; so much was said though, among other things they talked of his extraordinary physical strength. He was rather tall. Varvara Petrovna looked at him with pride, yet with continual uneasiness. He spent about six months among us—listless, quiet, rather morose. He made his appearance in society, and with unfailing propriety performed all the duties demanded by our provincial etiquette. He was related, on his father's side, to the governor, and was received by the latter as a near kinsman. But a few months passed and the wild beast showed his claws.

I may observe by the way, in parenthesis, that Ivan Ossipovitch, our dear mild governor, was rather like an old woman, though he was of good family and highly connected—which explains the fact that he remained so long among us, though he steadily avoided all the duties of his office. From his munificence and hospitality he ought rather to have been a marshal of nobility of the good old days than a governor in such busy times as ours. It was always said in the town that it was not he, but Varvara Petrovna who governed the province. Of course this was said sarcastically; however, it was certainly a falsehood. And, indeed, much wit was wasted on the subject among us. On the contrary, in later years, Varvara Petrovna purposely and consciously withdrew from anything like a position of authority, and, in spite of the extraordinary respect in which she was held by the whole province, voluntarily confined her influence within strict limits set up by herself. Instead of these higher responsibilities she suddenly took up the management of her estate, and, within two or three years, raised the revenue from it almost to what it had yielded in the past. Giving up her former romantic impulses (trips to Petersburg, plans for founding a magazine, and so on) she began to be careful and to save money. She kept even Stepan Trofimovitch at a distance, allowing him to take lodgings in another house (a change for which he had long been worrying her under various pretexts). Little by little Stepan Trofimovitch began to call her a prosaic woman, or more jestingly, "My prosaic friend." I need hardly say he only ventured on such jests in an extremely respectful form, and on rare, and carefully chosen, occasions.

All of us in her intimate circle felt—Stepan Trofimovitch more acutely than any of us—that her son had come to her almost, as it were, as a new hope, and even as a sort of

new aspiration. Her passion for her son dated from the time of his successes in Petersburg society, and grew more intense from the moment that he was degraded in the army. Yet she was evidently afraid of him, and seemed like a slave in his presence. It could be seen that she was afraid of something vague and mysterious which she could not have put into words, and she often stole searching glances at "Nicolas," scrutinising him reflectively ... and behold—the wild beast suddenly showed his claws.

II

Suddenly, apropos of nothing, our prince was guilty of incredible outrages upon various persons and, what was most striking these outrages were utterly unheard of, quite inconceivable, unlike anything commonly done, utterly silly and mischievous, quite unprovoked and objectless. One of the most respected of our club members, on our committee of management, Pyotr Pavlovitch Gaganov, an elderly man of high rank in the service, had formed the innocent habit of declaring vehemently on all sorts of occasions: "No, you can't lead me by the nose!" Well, there is no harm in that. But one day at the club, when he brought out this phrase in connection with some heated discussion in the midst of a little group of members (all persons of some consequence) Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, who was standing on one side, alone and unnoticed, suddenly went up to Pyotr Pavlovitch, took him unexpectedly and firmly with two fingers by the nose, and succeeded in leading him two or three steps across the room. He could have had no grudge against Mr. Gaganov. It might be thought to be a mere schoolboy prank, though, of course, a most unpardonable one. Yet, describing it afterwards, people said that he looked almost dreamy at the very instant of the operation, "as though he had gone out of his mind," but that was recalled and reflected upon long afterwards. In the excitement of the moment all they recalled was the minute after, when he certainly saw it all as it really was, and far from being confused smiled gaily and maliciously "without the slightest regret." There was a terrific outcry; he was surrounded. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch kept turning round, looking about him, answering nobody, and glancing curiously at the persons exclaiming around him. At last he seemed suddenly, as it were, to sink into thought again—so at least it was reported—frowned, went firmly up to the affronted Pyotr Pavlovitch, and with evident vexation said in a rapid mutter:

"You must forgive me, of course ... I really don't know what suddenly came over me ... it's silly."

The carelessness of his apology was almost equivalent to a fresh insult. The outcry was greater than ever. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch shrugged his shoulders and went away. All this was very stupid, to say nothing of its gross indecency—

A calculated and premeditated indecency as it seemed at first sight—and therefore a premeditated and utterly brutal insult to our whole society. So it was taken to be by every one. We began by promptly and unanimously striking young Stavrogin's name off the list of club members. Then it was decided to send an appeal in the name of the whole club to the governor, begging him at once (without waiting for the case to be formally tried in court) to use "the administrative power entrusted to him" to restrain this dangerous ruffian, "this duelling bully from the capital, and so protect the tranquillity of all the gentry of our town from injurious encroachments." It was added with angry resentment that "a law might be found to control even Mr. Stavrogin." This phrase was prepared by way of a thrust at the governor on account of Varvara Petrovna. They elaborated it with relish. As ill luck would have it, the governor was not in the town at the time. He had gone to a little distance to stand godfather to the child of a very charming lady, recently left a widow in an interesting condition. But it was known that he would soon be back. In the meanwhile they got up a regular ovation for the respected and insulted gentleman; people embraced and kissed him; the whole town called upon him. It was even proposed to give a subscription dinner in his honour, and they only gave up the idea at his earnest request—reflecting possibly at last that the man had, after all, been pulled by the nose and that that was really nothing to congratulate him upon. Yet, how had it happened? How could it have happened? It is remarkable that no one in the whole town put down this savage act to madness. They must have been predisposed to expect such actions from Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, even when he was sane. For my part I don't know to this day how to explain it, in spite of the event that quickly followed and apparently explained everything, and conciliated every one. I will add also that, four years later, in reply to a discreet question from me about the incident at the club, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch answered, frowning: "I wasn't quite well at the time." But there is no need to anticipate events.

The general outburst of hatred with which every one fell upon the "ruffian and duelling bully from the capital" also struck me as curious. They insisted on seeing an insolent design and deliberate intention to insult our whole society at once. The truth was no one liked the fellow, but, on the contrary, he had set every one against him—and one wonders how. Up to the last incident he had never quarrelled with anyone, nor insulted anyone, but was as courteous as a gentleman in a fashion-plate, if only the latter were able to speak. I imagine that he was hated for his pride. Even our ladies,

who had begun by adoring him, railed against him now, more loudly than the men. Varvara Petrovna was dreadfully overwhelmed. She confessed afterwards to Stepan Trofimovitch that she had had a foreboding of all this long before, that every day for the last six months she had been expecting "just something of that sort," a remarkable admission on the part of his own mother. "It's begun!" she thought to herself with a shudder. The morning after the incident at the club she cautiously but firmly approached the subject with her son, but the poor woman was trembling all over in spite of her firmness. She had not slept all night and even went out early to Stepan Trofimovitch's lodgings to ask his advice, and shed tears there, a thing which she had never been known to do before anyone. She longed for "Nicolas" to say something to her, to deign to give some explanation. Nikolay, who was always so polite and respectful to his mother, listened to her for some time scowling, but very seriously. He suddenly got up without saying a word, kissed her hand and went away. That very evening, as though by design, he perpetrated another scandal. It was of a more harmless and ordinary character than the first. Yet, owing to the state of the public mind, it increased the outcry in the town.

Our friend Liputin turned up and called on Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch immediately after the latter's interview with his mother, and earnestly begged for the honour of his company at a little party he was giving for his wife's birthday that evening. Varvara Petrovna had long watched with a pang at her heart her son's taste for such low company, but she had not dared to speak of it to him. He had made several acquaintances besides Liputin in the third rank of our society, and even in lower depths—he had a propensity for making such friends. He had never been in Liputin's house before, though he had met the man himself. He guessed that Liputin's invitation now was the consequence of the previous day's scandal, and that as a local liberal he was delighted at the scandal, genuinely believing that that was the proper way to treat stewards at the club, and that it was very well done. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch smiled and promised to come.

A great number of guests had assembled. The company was not very presentable, but very sprightly. Liputin, vain and envious, only entertained visitors twice a year, but on those occasions he did it without stint. The most honoured of the invited guests, Stepan Trofimovitch, was prevented by illness from being present. Tea was handed, and there were refreshments and vodka in plenty. Cards were played at three tables, and while waiting for supper the young people got up a dance. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch led out Madame Liputin—a very pretty little woman who was dreadfully shy of him—took two turns round the room with her, sat down beside her, drew her into conversation and made her laugh. Noticing at last how pretty she was

when she laughed, he suddenly, before all the company, seized her round the waist and kissed her on the lips two or three times with great relish. The poor frightened lady fainted. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch took his hat and went up to the husband, who stood petrified in the middle of the general excitement. Looking at him he, too, became confused and muttering hurriedly "Don't be angry," went away. Liputin ran after him in the entry, gave him his fur-coat with his own hands, and saw him down the stairs, bowing. But next day a rather amusing sequel followed this comparatively harmless prank—a sequel from which Liputin gained some credit, and of which he took the fullest possible advantage.

At ten o'clock in the morning Liputin's servant Agafya, an easy-mannered, lively, rosy-cheeked peasant woman of thirty, made her appearance at Stavrogin's house, with a message for Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. She insisted on seeing "his honour himself." He had a very bad headache, but he went out. Varvara Petrovna succeeded in being present when the message was given.

"Sergay Vassilyevitch" (Liputin's name), Agafya rattled off briskly, "bade me first of all give you his respectful greetings and ask after your health, what sort of night your honour spent after yesterday's doings, and how your honour feels now after yesterday's doings?"

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch smiled.

"Give him my greetings and thank him, and tell your master from me, Agafya, that he's the most sensible man in the town."

"And he told me to answer that," Agafya caught him up still more briskly, "that he knows that without your telling him, and wishes you the same."

"Really! But how could he tell what I should say to you?"

"I can't say in what way he could tell, but when I had set off and had gone right down the street, I heard something, and there he was, running after me without his cap. 'I say, Agafya, if by any chance he says to you, "Tell your master that he has more sense than all the town," you tell him at once, don't forget, "The master himself knows that very well, and wishes you the same."'"

III

At last the interview with the governor took place too. Our dear, mild, Ivan Ossipovitch had only just returned and only just had time to hear the angry complaint from the club. There was no doubt that something must be done, but he was troubled. The hospitable old man seemed also rather afraid of his young kinsman. He made up his

mind, however, to induce him to apologise to the club and to his victim in satisfactory form, and, if required, by letter, and then to persuade him to leave us for a time, travelling, for instance, to improve his mind, in Italy, or in fact anywhere abroad. In the waiting-room in which on this occasion he received Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch (who had been at other times privileged as a relation to wander all over the house unchecked), Alyosha Telyatnikov, a clerk of refined manners, who was also a member of the governor's household, was sitting in a corner opening envelopes at a table, and in the next room, at the window nearest to the door, a stout and sturdy colonel, a former friend and colleague of the governor, was sitting alone reading the Golos, paying no attention, of course, to what was taking place in the waiting-room; in fact, he had his back turned. Ivan Ossipovitch approached the subject in a roundabout way, almost in a whisper, but kept getting a little muddled. Nikolay looked anything but cordial, not at all as a relation should. He was pale and sat looking down and continually moving his eyebrows as though trying to control acute pain.

"You have a kind heart and a generous one, Nicolas," the old man put in among other things, "you're a man of great culture, you've grown up in the highest circles, and here too your behaviour has hitherto been a model, which has been a great consolation to your mother, who is so precious to all of us.... And now again everything has appeared in such an unaccountable light, so detrimental to all! I speak as a friend of your family, as an old man who loves you sincerely and a relation, at whose words you cannot take offence.... Tell me, what drives you to such reckless proceedings so contrary to all accepted rules and habits? What can be the meaning of such acts which seem almost like outbreaks of delirium?"

Nikolay listened with vexation and impatience. All at once there was a gleam of something sly and mocking in his eyes.

"I'll tell you what drives me to it," he said sullenly, and looking round him he bent down to Ivan Ossipovitch's ear. The refined Alyosha Telyatnikov moved three steps farther away towards the window, and the colonel coughed over the Golos. Poor Ivan Ossipovitch hurriedly and trustfully inclined his ear; he was exceedingly curious. And then something utterly incredible, though on the other side only too unmistakable, took place. The old man suddenly felt that, instead of telling him some interesting secret, Nikolay had seized the upper part of his ear between his teeth and was nipping it rather hard. He shuddered, and breath failed him.

"Nicolas, this is beyond a joke!" he moaned mechanically in a voice not his own.

Alyosha and the colonel had not yet grasped the situation, besides they couldn't see, and fancied up to the end that the two were whispering together; and yet the old

man's desperate face alarmed them. They looked at one another with wide-open eyes, not knowing whether to rush to his assistance as agreed or to wait. Nikolay noticed this perhaps, and bit the harder.

"Nicolas! Nicolas!" his victim moaned again, "come ... you've had your joke, that's enough!"

In another moment the poor governor would certainly have died of terror; but the monster had mercy on him, and let go his ear. The old man's deadly terror lasted for a full minute, and it was followed by a sort of fit. Within half an hour Nikolay was arrested and removed for the time to the guard-room, where he was confined in a special cell, with a special sentinel at the door. This decision was a harsh one, but our mild governor was so angry that he was prepared to take the responsibility even if he had to face Varvara Petrovna. To the general amazement, when this lady arrived at the governor's in haste and in nervous irritation to discuss the matter with him at once, she was refused admittance, whereupon, without getting out of the carriage, she returned home, unable to believe her senses.

And at last everything was explained! At two o'clock in the morning the prisoner, who had till then been calm and had even slept, suddenly became noisy, began furiously beating on the door with his fists,—with unnatural strength wrenched the iron grating off the door, broke the window, and cut his hands all over. When the officer on duty ran with a detachment of men and the keys and ordered the cell to be opened that they might rush in and bind the maniac, it appeared that he was suffering from acute brain fever. He was taken home to his mother.

Everything was explained at once. All our three doctors gave it as their opinion that the patient might well have been in a delirious state for three days before, and that though he might have apparently been in possession of full consciousness and cunning, yet he might have been deprived of common sense and will, which was indeed borne out by the facts. So it turned out that Liputin had guessed the truth sooner than any one. Ivan Ossipovitch, who was a man of delicacy and feeling, was completely abashed. But what was striking was that he, too, had considered Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch capable of any mad action even when in the full possession of his faculties. At the club, too, people were ashamed and wondered how it was they had failed to "see the elephant" and had missed the only explanation of all these marvels: there were, of course, sceptics among them, but they could not long maintain their position.

Nikolay was in bed for more than two months. A famous doctor was summoned from Moscow for a consultation; the whole town called on Varvara Petrovna. She forgave them. When in the spring Nikolay had completely recovered and assented without

discussion to his mother's proposal that he should go for a tour to Italy, she begged him further to pay visits of farewell to all the neighbours, and so far as possible to apologise where necessary. Nikolay agreed with great alacrity. It became known at the club that he had had a most delicate explanation with Pyotr Pavlovitch Gaganov, at the house of the latter, who had been completely satisfied with his apology. As he went round to pay these calls Nikolay was very grave and even gloomy. Every one appeared to receive him sympathetically, but everybody seemed embarrassed and glad that he was going to Italy. Ivan Ossipovitch was positively tearful, but was, for some reason, unable to bring himself to embrace him, even at the final leave-taking. It is true that some of us retained the conviction that the scamp had simply been making fun of us, and that the illness was neither here nor there. He went to see Liputin too.

"Tell me," he said, "how could you guess beforehand what I should say about your sense and prime Agafya with an answer to it?"

"Why," laughed Liputin, "it was because I recognised that you were a clever man, and so I foresaw what your answer would be."

"Anyway, it was a remarkable coincidence. But, excuse me, did you consider me a sensible man and not insane when you sent Agafya?"

"For the cleverest and most rational, and I only pretended to believe that you were insane.... And you guessed at once what was in my mind, and sent a testimonial to my wit through Agafya."

"Well, there you're a little mistaken. I really was ... unwell ..." muttered Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, frowning. "Bah!" he cried, "do you suppose I'm capable of attacking people when I'm in my senses? What object would there be in it?"

Liputin shrank together and didn't know what to answer. Nikolay turned pale or, at least, so it seemed to Liputin.

"You have a very peculiar way of looking at things, anyhow," Nikolay went on, "but as for Agafya, I understand, of course, that you simply sent her to be rude to me."

"I couldn't challenge you to a duel, could I?"

"Oh, no, of course! I seem to have heard that you're not fond of duels...."

"Why borrow from the French?" said Liputin, doubling up again.

"You're for nationalism, then?"

Liputin shrank into himself more than ever.

“Bah, bah! What do I see?” cried Nicolas, noticing a volume of Considérant in the most conspicuous place on the table. “You don’t mean to say you’re a Fourierist! I’m afraid you must be! And isn’t this too borrowing from the French?” he laughed, tapping the book with his finger.

“No, that’s not taken from the French,” Liputin cried with positive fury, jumping up from his chair. “That is taken from the universal language of humanity, not simply from the French. From the language of the universal social republic and harmony of mankind, let me tell you! Not simply from the French!”

“Foo! hang it all! There’s no such language!” laughed Nikolay.

Sometimes a trifle will catch the attention and exclusively absorb it for a time. Most of what I have to tell of young Stavrogin will come later. But I will note now as a curious fact that of all the impressions made on him by his stay in our town, the one most sharply imprinted on his memory was the unsightly and almost abject figure of the little provincial official, the coarse and jealous family despot, the miserly money-lender who picked up the candle-ends and scraps left from dinner, and was at the same time a passionate believer in some visionary future “social harmony,” who at night gloated in ecstasies over fantastic pictures of a future phalanstery, in the approaching realisation of which, in Russia, and in our province, he believed as firmly as in his own existence. And that in the very place where he had saved up to buy himself a “little home,” where he had married for the second time, getting a dowry with his bride, where perhaps, for a hundred miles round there was not one man, himself included, who was the very least like a future member “of the universal human republic and social harmony.”

“God knows how these people come to exist!” Nikolay wondered, recalling sometimes the unlooked-for Fourierist.

IV

Our prince travelled for over three years, so that he was almost forgotten in the town. We learned from Stepan Trofimovitch that he had travelled all over Europe, that he had even been in Egypt and had visited Jerusalem, and then had joined some scientific expedition to Iceland, and he actually did go to Iceland. It was reported too that he had spent one winter attending lectures in a German university. He did not write often to his mother, twice a year, or even less, but Varvara Petrovna was not angry or offended at this. She accepted submissively and without repining the relations that had been established once for all between her son and herself. She fretted for her “Nicolas” and dreamed of him continually. She kept her dreams and lamentations to

herself. She seemed to have become less intimate even with Stepan Trofimovitch. She was forming secret projects, and seemed to have become more careful about money than ever. She was more than ever given to saving money and being angry at Stepan Trofimovitch's losses at cards.

At last, in the April of this year, she received a letter from Paris from Praskovya Ivanovna Drozdov, the widow of the general and the friend of Varvara Petrovna's childhood. Praskovya Ivanovna, whom Varvara Petrovna had not seen or corresponded with for eight years, wrote, informing her that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had become very intimate with them and a great friend of her only daughter, Liza, and that he was intending to accompany them to Switzerland, to Verney-Montreux, though in the household of Count K. (a very influential personage in Petersburg), who was now staying in Paris. He was received like a son of the family, so that he almost lived at the count's. The letter was brief, and the object of it was perfectly clear, though it contained only a plain statement of the above-mentioned facts without drawing any inferences from them. Varvara Petrovna did not pause long to consider; she made up her mind instantly, made her preparations, and taking with her her protégée, Dasha (Shatov's sister), she set off in the middle of April for Paris, and from there went on to Switzerland. She returned in July, alone, leaving Dasha with the Drozdovs. She brought us the news that the Drozdovs themselves had promised to arrive among us by the end of August.

The Drozdovs, too, were landowners of our province, but the official duties of General Ivan Ivanovitch Drozdov (who had been a friend of Varvara Petrovna's and a colleague of her husband's) had always prevented them from visiting their magnificent estate. On the death of the general, which had taken place the year before, the inconsolable widow had gone abroad with her daughter, partly in order to try the grape-cure which she proposed to carry out at Verney-Montreux during the latter half of the summer. On their return to Russia they intended to settle in our province for good. She had a large house in the town which had stood empty for many years with the windows nailed up. They were wealthy people. Praskovya Ivanovna had been, in her first marriage, a Madame Tushin, and like her school-friend, Varvara Petrovna, was the daughter of a government contractor of the old school, and she too had been an heiress at her marriage. Tushin, a retired cavalry captain, was also a man of means, and of some ability. At his death he left a snug fortune to his only daughter Liza, a child of seven. Now that Lizaveta Nikolaevna was twenty-two her private fortune might confidently be reckoned at 200,000 roubles, to say nothing of the property—which was bound to come to her at the death of her mother, who had no children by her second marriage. Varvara Petrovna seemed to be very well satisfied with her expedition. In her own

opinion she had succeeded in coming to a satisfactory understanding with Praskovya Ivanovna, and immediately on her arrival she confided everything to Stepan Trofimovitch. She was positively effusive with him as she had not been for a very long time.

“Hurrah!” cried Stepan Trofimovitch, and snapped his fingers.

He was in a perfect rapture, especially as he had spent the whole time of his friend’s absence in extreme dejection. On setting off she had not even taken leave of him properly, and had said nothing of her plan to “that old woman,” dreading, perhaps, that he might chatter about it. She was cross with him at the time on account of a considerable gambling debt which she had suddenly discovered. But before she left Switzerland she had felt that on her return she must make up for it to her forsaken friend, especially as she had treated him very curtly for a long time past. Her abrupt and mysterious departure had made a profound and poignant impression on the timid heart of Stepan Trofimovitch, and to make matters worse he was beset with other difficulties at the same time. He was worried by a very considerable money obligation, which had weighed upon him for a long time and which he could never hope to meet without Varvara Petrovna’s assistance. Moreover, in the May of this year, the term of office of our mild and gentle Ivan Ossipovitch came to an end. He was superseded under rather unpleasant circumstances. Then, while Varvara Petrovna was still away, there followed the arrival of our new governor, Andrey Antonovitch von Lembke, and with that a change began at once to be perceptible in the attitude of almost the whole of our provincial society towards Varvara Petrovna, and consequently towards Stepan Trofimovitch. He had already had time anyway to make some disagreeable though valuable observations, and seemed very apprehensive alone without Varvara Petrovna. He had an agitating suspicion that he had already been mentioned to the governor as a dangerous man. He knew for a fact that some of our ladies meant to give up calling on Varvara Petrovna. Of our governor’s wife (who was only expected to arrive in the autumn) it was reported that though she was, so it was heard, proud, she was a real aristocrat, and “not like that poor Varvara Petrovna.” Everybody seemed to know for a fact, and in the greatest detail, that our governor’s wife and Varvara Petrovna had met already in society and had parted enemies, so that the mere mention of Madame von Lembke’s name would, it was said, make a painful impression on Varvara Petrovna. The confident and triumphant air of Varvara Petrovna, the contemptuous indifference with which she heard of the opinions of our provincial ladies and the agitation in local society, revived the flagging spirits of Stepan Trofimovitch and cheered him up at once. With peculiar, gleefully-obsequious humour, he was beginning to describe the new governor’s arrival.

“You are no doubt aware, *excellente amie*,” he said, jauntily and coquettishly drawling his words, “what is meant by a Russian administrator, speaking generally, and what is meant by a new Russian administrator, that is the newly-baked, newly-established … *ces interminables mots Russes!* But I don’t think you can know in practice what is meant by administrative ardour, and what sort of thing that is.”

“Administrative ardour? I don’t know what that is.”

“Well … *Vous savez chez nous … En un mot,* set the most insignificant nonentity to sell miserable tickets at a railway station, and the nonentity will at once feel privileged to look down on you like a Jupiter, *pour montrer son pouvoir* when you go to take a ticket. ‘Now then,’ he says, ‘I shall show you my power’ … and in them it comes to a genuine, administrative ardour. *En un mot,* I’ve read that some verger in one of our Russian churches abroad—*mais c’est très curieux*—drove, literally drove a distinguished English family, *les dames charmantes*, out of the church before the beginning of the Lenten service … *vous savez ces chants et le livre de Job* … on the simple pretext that ‘foreigners are not allowed to loaf about a Russian church, and that they must come at the time fixed….’ And he sent them into fainting fits…. That verger was suffering from an attack of administrative ardour, *et il a montré son pouvoir*.”

“Cut it short if you can, Stepan Trofimovitch.”

“Mr. von Lembke is making a tour of the province now. *En un mot,* this Andrey Antonovitch, though he is a russified German and of the Orthodox persuasion, and even—I will say that for him—a remarkably handsome man of about forty …”

“What makes you think he’s a handsome man? He has eyes like a sheep’s.”

“Precisely so. But in this I yield, of course, to the opinion of our ladies.”

“Let’s get on, Stepan Trofimovitch, I beg you! By the way, you’re wearing a red neck-tie. Is it long since you’ve taken to it?”

“I’ve … I’ve only put it on to-day.”

“And do you take your constitutional? Do you go for a four-mile walk every day as the doctor told you to?”

“N-not … always.”

“I knew you didn’t! I felt sure of that when I was in Switzerland!” she cried irritably. “Now you must go not four but six miles a day! You’ve grown terribly slack, terribly, terribly! You’re not simply getting old, you’re getting decrepit…. You shocked me when I first saw you just now, in spite of your red tie, *quelle idee rouge*! Go on about Von

Lembke if you've really something to tell me, and do finish some time, I entreat you, I'm tired."

"*En un mot,* I only wanted to say that he is one of those administrators who begin to have power at forty, who, till they're forty, have been stagnating in insignificance and then suddenly come to the front through suddenly acquiring a wife, or some other equally desperate means.... That is, he has gone away now ... that is, I mean to say, it was at once whispered in both his ears that I am a corrupter of youth, and a hot-bed of provincial atheism.... He began making inquiries at once."

"Is that true?"

"I took steps about it, in fact. When he was 'informed' that you 'ruled the province,' *vous savez,* he allowed himself to use the expression that 'there shall be nothing of that sort in the future.'"

"Did he say that?"

"That 'there shall be nothing of the sort in future,' and, *avec cette morgue*.... His wife, Yulia Mihailovna, we shall behold at the end of August, she's coming straight from Petersburg."

"From abroad. We met there."

"Vraiment?"

"In Paris and in Switzerland. She's related to the Drozdovs."

"Related! What an extraordinary coincidence! They say she is ambitious and ... supposed to have great connections."

"Nonsense! Connections indeed! She was an old maid without a farthing till she was five-and-forty. But now she's hooked her Von Lembke, and, of course, her whole object is to push him forward. They're both intriguers."

"And they say she's two years older than he is?"

"Five. Her mother used to wear out her skirts on my doorsteps in Moscow; she used to beg for an invitation to our balls as a favour when my husband was living. And this creature used to sit all night alone in a corner without dancing, with her turquoise fly on her forehead, so that simply from pity I used to have to send her her first partner at two o'clock in the morning. She was five-and-twenty then, and they used to rig her out in short skirts like a little girl. It was improper to have them about at last."

"I seem to see that fly."

“I tell you, as soon as I arrived I was in the thick of an intrigue. You read Madame Drozdov’s letter, of course. What could be clearer? What did I find? That fool Praskovya herself—she always was a fool—looked at me as much as to ask why I’d come. You can fancy how surprised I was. I looked round, and there was that Lembke woman at her tricks, and that cousin of hers—old Drozdov’s nephew—it was all clear. You may be sure I changed all that in a twinkling, and Praskovya is on my side again, but what an intrigue!”

“In which you came off victor, however. Bismarck!”

“Without being a Bismarck I’m equal to falseness and stupidity wherever I meet it, falseness, and Praskovya’s folly. I don’t know when I’ve met such a flabby woman, and what’s more her legs are swollen, and she’s a good-natured simpleton, too. What can be more foolish than a good-natured simpleton?”

“A spiteful fool, *ma bonne amie,* a spiteful fool is still more foolish,” Stepan Trofimovitch protested magnanimously.

“You’re right, perhaps. Do you remember Liza?”

“Charmante enfant!”

“But she’s not an *enfant* now, but a woman, and a woman of character. She’s a generous, passionate creature, and what I like about her, she stands up to that confiding fool, her mother. There was almost a row over that cousin.”

“Bah, and of course he’s no relation of Lizaveta Nikolaevna’s at all.... Has he designs on her?”

“You see, he’s a young officer, not by any means talkative, modest in fact. I always want to be just. I fancy he is opposed to the intrigue himself, and isn’t aiming at anything, and it was only the Von Lembke’s tricks. He had a great respect for Nicolas. You understand, it all depends on Liza. But I left her on the best of terms with Nicolas, and he promised he would come to us in November. So it’s only the Von Lembke who is intriguing, and Praskovya is a blind woman. She suddenly tells me that all my suspicions are fancy. I told her to her face she was a fool. I am ready to repeat it at the day of judgment. And if it hadn’t been for Nicolas begging me to leave it for a time, I wouldn’t have come away without unmasking that false woman. She’s been trying to ingratiate herself with Count K. through Nicolas. She wants to come between mother and son. But Liza’s on our side, and I came to an understanding with Praskovya. Do you know that Karmazinov is a relation of hers?”

“What? A relation of Madame von Lembke?”

“Yes, of hers. Distant.”

“Karmazinov, the novelist?”

“Yes, the writer. Why does it surprise you? Of course he considers himself a great man. Stuck-up creature! She’s coming here with him. Now she’s making a fuss of him out there. She’s got a notion of setting up a sort of literary society here. He’s coming for a month, he wants to sell his last piece of property here. I very nearly met him in Switzerland, and was very anxious not to. Though I hope he will deign to recognise me. He wrote letters to me in the old days, he has been in my house. I should like you to dress better, Stepan Trofimovitch; you’re growing more slovenly every day.... Oh, how you torment me! What are you reading now?”

“I ... I ...”

“I understand. The same as ever, friends and drinking, the club and cards, and the reputation of an atheist. I don’t like that reputation, Stepan Trofimovitch; I don’t care for you to be called an atheist, particularly now. I didn’t care for it in old days, for it’s all nothing but empty chatter. It must be said at last.”

“Mais, ma chère ...”

“Listen, Stepan Trofimovitch, of course I’m ignorant compared with you on all learned subjects, but as I was travelling here I thought a great deal about you. I’ve come to one conclusion.”

“What conclusion?”

“That you and I are not the wisest people in the world, but that there are people wiser than we are.”

“Witty and apt. If there are people wiser than we are, then there are people more right than we are, and we may be mistaken, you mean? *Mais, ma bonne amie,* granted that I may make a mistake, yet have I not the common, human, eternal, supreme right of freedom of conscience? I have the right not to be bigoted or superstitious if I don’t wish to, and for that I shall naturally be hated by certain persons to the end of time. *Et puis, comme on trouve toujours plus de moines que de raison,* and as I thoroughly agree with that ...”

“What, what did you say?”

“I said, *on trouve toujours plus de moines que de raison,* and as I thoroughly ...”

“I’m sure that’s not your saying. You must have taken it from somewhere.”

“It was Pascal said that.”

“Just as I thought … it’s not your own. Why don’t you ever say anything like that yourself, so shortly and to the point, instead of dragging things out to such a length? That’s much better than what you said just now about administrative ardour …”

“Ma foi, chère …” why? In the first place probably because I’m not a Pascal after all, *et puis* … secondly, we Russians never can say anything in our own language…. We never have said anything hitherto, at any rate….”

“H’m! That’s not true, perhaps. Anyway, you’d better make a note of such phrases, and remember them, you know, in case you have to talk…. Ach, Stephan Trofimovitch. I have come to talk to you seriously, quite seriously.”

“Chère, chère amie!”

“Now that all these Von Lembkes and Karmazinovs…. Oh, my goodness, how you have deteriorated!… Oh, my goodness, how you do torment me!… I should have liked these people to feel a respect for you, for they’re not worth your little finger—but the way you behave!… What will they see? What shall I have to show them? Instead of nobly standing as an example, keeping up the tradition of the past, you surround yourself with a wretched rabble, you have picked up impossible habits, you’ve grown feeble, you can’t do without wine and cards, you read nothing but Paul de Kock, and write nothing, while all of them write; all your time’s wasted in gossip. How can you bring yourself to be friends with a wretched creature like your inseparable Liputin?”

“Why is he *mine* and *inseparable*?” Stepan Trofimovitch protested timidly.

“Where is he now?” Varvara Petrovna went on, sharply and sternly.

“He … he has an infinite respect for you, and he’s gone to S——k, to receive an inheritance left him by his mother.”

“He seems to do nothing but get money. And how’s Shatov? Is he just the same?”

“Irascible, mais bon.”

“I can’t endure your Shatov. He’s spiteful and he thinks too much of himself.”

“How is Darya Pavlovna?”

“You mean Dasha? What made you think of her?” Varvara Petrovna looked at him inquisitively. “She’s quite well. I left her with the Drozdovs. I heard something about your son in Switzerland. Nothing good.”

“Oh, c’est un histoire bien bête! Je vous attendais, ma bonne amie, pour vous raconter …”

“Enough, Stepan Trofimovitch. Leave me in peace. I’m worn out. We shall have time to talk to our heart’s content, especially of what’s unpleasant. You’ve begun to splutter when you laugh, it’s a sign of senility! And what a strange way of laughing you’ve taken to!… Good Heavens, what a lot of bad habits you’ve fallen into! Karmazinov won’t come and see you! And people are only too glad to make the most of anything as it is…. You’ve betrayed yourself completely now. Well, come, that’s enough, that’s enough, I’m tired. You really might have mercy upon one!”

Stepan Trofimovitch “had mercy,” but he withdrew in great perturbation.

V

Our friend certainly had fallen into not a few bad habits, especially of late. He had obviously and rapidly deteriorated; and it was true that he had become slovenly. He drank more and had become more tearful and nervous; and had grown too impressionable on the artistic side. His face had acquired a strange facility for changing with extraordinary quickness, from the most solemn expression, for instance, to the most absurd, and even foolish. He could not endure solitude, and was always craving for amusement. One had always to repeat to him some gossip, some local anecdote, and every day a new one. If no one came to see him for a long time he wandered disconsolately about the rooms, walked to the window, puckering up his lips, heaved deep sighs, and almost fell to whimpering at last. He was always full of forebodings, was afraid of something unexpected and inevitable; he had become timorous; he began to pay great attention to his dreams.

He spent all that day and evening in great depression, he sent for me, was very much agitated, talked a long while, gave me a long account of things, but all rather disconnected. Varvara Petrovna had known for a long time that he concealed nothing from me. It seemed to me at last that he was worried about something particular, and was perhaps unable to form a definite idea of it himself. As a rule when we met *tête-à-tête* and he began making long complaints to me, a bottle was almost always brought in after a little time, and things became much more comfortable. This time there was no wine, and he was evidently struggling all the while against the desire to send for it.

“And why is she always so cross?” he complained every minute, like a child. *“Tous les hommes de génie et de progrès en Russie étaient, sont, et seront toujours des* gamblers *et des* drunkards *qui boivent* in outbreaks … and I’m not such a gambler after all, and I’m not such a drunkard. She reproaches me for not writing anything.

Strange idea!... She asks why I lie down? She says I ought to stand, 'an example and reproach.' *Mais, entre nous soit dit,* what is a man to do who is destined to stand as a 'reproach,' if not to lie down? Does she understand that?"

And at last it became clear to me what was the chief particular trouble which was worrying him so persistently at this time. Many times that evening he went to the looking-glass, and stood a long while before it. At last he turned from the looking-glass to me, and with a sort of strange despair, said: "*Mon cher, je suis un* broken-down man." Yes, certainly, up to that time, up to that very day there was one thing only of which he had always felt confident in spite of the "new views," and of the "change in Varvara Petrovna's ideas," that was, the conviction that still he had a fascination for her feminine heart, not simply as an exile or a celebrated man of learning, but as a handsome man. For twenty years this soothing and flattering opinion had been rooted in his mind, and perhaps of all his convictions this was the hardest to part with. Had he any presentiment that evening of the colossal ordeal which was preparing for him in the immediate future?

VI

I will now enter upon the description of that almost forgotten incident with which my story properly speaking begins.

At last at the very end of August the Drozdovs returned. Their arrival made a considerable sensation in local society, and took place shortly before their relation, our new governor's wife, made her long-expected appearance. But of all these interesting events I will speak later. For the present I will confine myself to saying that Praskovya Ivanovna brought Varvara Petrovna, who was expecting her so impatiently, a most perplexing problem: Nikolay had parted from them in July, and, meeting Count K. on the Rhine, had set off with him and his family for Petersburg. (N.B.—The Count's three daughters were all of marriageable age.)

"Lizaveta is so proud and obstinate that I could get nothing out of her," Praskovya Ivanovna said in conclusion. "But I saw for myself that something had happened between her and Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. I don't know the reasons, but I fancy, my dear Varvara Petrovna, that you will have to ask your Darya Pavlovna for them. To my thinking Liza was offended. I'm glad. I can tell you that I've brought you back your favourite at last and handed her over to you; it's a weight off my mind."

These venomous words were uttered with remarkable irritability. It was evident that the "flabby" woman had prepared them and gloated beforehand over the effect they would produce. But Varvara Petrovna was not the woman to be disconcerted by

sentimental effects and enigmas. She sternly demanded the most precise and satisfactory explanations. Praskovya Ivanovna immediately lowered her tone and even ended by dissolving into tears and expressions of the warmest friendship. This irritable but sentimental lady, like Stepan Trofimovitch, was forever yearning for true friendship, and her chief complaint against her daughter Lizaveta Nikolaevna was just that "her daughter was not a friend to her."

But from all her explanations and outpourings nothing certain could be gathered but that there actually had been some sort of quarrel between Liza and Nikolay, but of the nature of the quarrel Praskovya Ivanovna was obviously unable to form a definite idea. As for her imputations against Darya Pavlovna, she not only withdrew them completely in the end, but even particularly begged Varvara Petrovna to pay no attention to her words, because "they had been said in irritation." In fact, it had all been left very far from clear—suspicious, indeed. According to her account the quarrel had arisen from Liza's "obstinate and ironical character." "Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch is proud, too, and though he was very much in love, yet he could not endure sarcasm, and began to be sarcastic himself. Soon afterwards we made the acquaintance of a young man, the nephew, I believe, of your 'Professor' and, indeed, the surname's the same."

"The son, not the nephew," Varvara Petrovna corrected her.

Even in old days Praskovya Ivanovna had been always unable to recall Stepan Trofimovitch's name, and had always called him the "Professor."

"Well, his son, then; so much the better. Of course, it's all the same to me. An ordinary young man, very lively and free in his manners, but nothing special in him. Well, then, Liza herself did wrong, she made friends with the young man with the idea of making Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch jealous. I don't see much harm in that; it's the way of girls, quite usual, even charming in them. Only instead of being jealous Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch made friends with the young man himself, just as though he saw nothing and didn't care. This made Liza furious. The young man soon went away (he was in a great hurry to get somewhere) and Liza took to picking quarrels with Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch at every opportunity. She noticed that he used sometimes to talk to Dasha; and, well, she got in such a frantic state that even my life wasn't worth living, my dear. The doctors have forbidden my being irritated, and I was so sick of their lake they make such a fuss about, it simply gave me toothache, I had such rheumatism. It's stated in print that the Lake of Geneva does give people the toothache. It's a feature of the place. Then Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch suddenly got a letter from the countess and he left us at once. He packed up in one day. They parted in a friendly way, and Liza

became very cheerful and frivolous, and laughed a great deal seeing him off; only that was all put on. When he had gone she became very thoughtful, and she gave up speaking of him altogether and wouldn't let me mention his name. And I should advise you, dear Varvara Petrovna, not to approach the subject with Liza, you'll only do harm. But if you hold your tongue she'll begin to talk of it herself, and then you'll learn more. I believe they'll come together again, if only Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch doesn't put off coming, as he promised."

"I'll write to him at once. If that's how it was, there was nothing in the quarrel; all nonsense! And I know Darya too well. It's nonsense!"

"I'm sorry for what I said about Dashenka, I did wrong. Their conversations were quite ordinary and they talked out loud, too. But it all upset me so much at the time, my dear. And Liza, I saw, got on with her again as affectionately as before...."

That very day Varvara Petrovna wrote to Nikolay, and begged him to come, if only one month, earlier than the date he had fixed. But yet she still felt that there was something unexplained and obscure in the matter. She pondered over it all the evening and all night. Praskovya's opinion seemed to her too innocent and sentimental. "Praskovya has always been too sentimental from the old schooldays upwards," she reflected. "Nicolas is not the man to run away from a girl's taunts. There's some other reason for it, if there really has been a breach between them. That officer's here though, they've brought him with them. As a relation he lives in their house. And, as for Darya, Praskovya was in too much haste to apologise. She must have kept something to herself, which she wouldn't tell me."

By the morning Varvara Petrovna had matured a project for putting a stop once for all to one misunderstanding at least; a project amazing in its unexpectedness. What was in her heart when she conceived it? It would be hard to decide and I will not undertake to explain beforehand all the incongruities of which it was made up. I simply confine myself as chronicler to recording events precisely as they happened, and it is not my fault if they seem incredible. Yet I must once more testify that by the morning there was not the least suspicion of Dasha left in Varvara Petrovna's mind, though in reality there never had been any—she had too much confidence in her. Besides, she could not admit the idea that "Nicolas" could be attracted by her Darya. Next morning when Darya Pavlovna was pouring out tea at the table Varvara Petrovna looked for a long while intently at her and, perhaps for the twentieth time since the previous day, repeated to herself: "It's all nonsense!"

All she noticed was that Dasha looked rather tired, and that she was even quieter and more apathetic than she used to be. After their morning tea, according to their

invariable custom, they sat down to needlework. Varvara Petrovna demanded from her a full account of her impressions abroad, especially of nature, of the inhabitants, of the towns, the customs, their arts and commerce—of everything she had time to observe. She asked no questions about the Drozdovs or how she had got on with them. Dasha, sitting beside her at the work-table helping her with the embroidery, talked for half an hour in her even, monotonous, but rather weak voice.

“Darya!” Varvara Petrovna interrupted suddenly, “is there nothing special you want to tell me?”

“No, nothing,” said Dasha, after a moment’s thought, and she glanced at Varvara Petrovna with her light-coloured eyes.

“Nothing on your soul, on your heart, or your conscience?”

“Nothing,” Dasha repeated, quietly, but with a sort of sullen firmness.

“I knew there wasn’t! Believe me, Darya, I shall never doubt you. Now sit still and listen. In front of me, on that chair. I want to see the whole of you. That’s right. Listen, do you want to be married?”

Dasha responded with a long, inquiring, but not greatly astonished look.

“Stay, hold your tongue. In the first place there is a very great difference in age, but of course you know better than anyone what nonsense that is. You’re a sensible girl, and there must be no mistakes in your life. Besides, he’s still a handsome man ... In short, Stepan Trofimovitch, for whom you have always had such a respect. Well?”

Dasha looked at her still more inquiringly, and this time not simply with surprise; she blushed perceptibly.

“Stay, hold your tongue, don’t be in a hurry! Though you will have money under my will, yet when I die, what will become of you, even if you have money? You’ll be deceived and robbed of your money, you’ll be lost in fact. But married to him you’re the wife of a distinguished man. Look at him on the other hand. Though I’ve provided for him, if I die what will become of him? But I could trust him to you. Stay, I’ve not finished. He’s frivolous, shilly-shally, cruel, egoistic, he has low habits. But mind you think highly of him, in the first place because there are many worse. I don’t want to get you off my hands by marrying you to a rascal, you don’t imagine anything of that sort, do you? And, above all, because I ask you, you’ll think highly of him,”—

She broke off suddenly and irritably. “Do you hear? Why won’t you say something?”

Dasha still listened and did not speak.

“Stay, wait a little. He’s an old woman, but you know, that’s all the better for you. Besides, he’s a pathetic old woman. He doesn’t deserve to be loved by a woman at all, but he deserves to be loved for his helplessness, and you must love him for his helplessness. You understand me, don’t you? Do you understand me?”

Dasha nodded her head affirmatively.

“I knew you would. I expected as much of you. He will love you because he ought, he ought; he ought to adore you.” Varvara Petrovna almost shrieked with peculiar exasperation. “Besides, he will be in love with you without any ought about it. I know him. And another thing, I shall always be here. You may be sure I shall always be here. He will complain of you, he’ll begin to say things against you behind your back, he’ll whisper things against you to any stray person he meets, he’ll be for ever whining and whining; he’ll write you letters from one room to another, two a day, but he won’t be able to get on without you all the same, and that’s the chief thing. Make him obey you. If you can’t make him you’ll be a fool. He’ll want to hang himself and threaten, to—don’t you believe it. It’s nothing but nonsense. Don’t believe it; but still keep a sharp look-out, you never can tell, and one day he may hang himself. It does happen with people like that. It’s not through strength of will but through weakness that people hang themselves, and so never drive him to an extreme, that’s the first rule in married life. Remember, too, that he’s a poet. Listen, Dasha, there’s no greater happiness than self-sacrifice. And besides, you’ll be giving me great satisfaction and that’s the chief thing. Don’t think I’ve been talking nonsense. I understand what I’m saying. I’m an egoist, you be an egoist, too. Of course I’m not forcing you. It’s entirely for you to decide. As you say, so it shall be. Well, what’s the good of sitting like this. Speak!”

“I don’t mind, Varvara Petrovna, if I really must be married,” said Dasha firmly.

“Must? What are you hinting at?” Varvara Petrovna looked sternly and intently at her.

Dasha was silent, picking at her embroidery canvas with her needle.

“Though you’re a clever girl, you’re talking nonsense; though it is true that I have certainly set my heart on marrying you, yet it’s not because it’s necessary, but simply because the idea has occurred to me, and only to Stepan Trofimovitch. If it had not been for Stepan Trofimovitch, I should not have thought of marrying you yet, though you are twenty.... Well?”

“I’ll do as you wish, Varvara Petrovna.”

“Then you consent! Stay, be quiet. Why are you in such a hurry? I haven’t finished. In my will I’ve left you fifteen thousand roubles. I’ll give you that at once, on your

wedding-day. You will give eight thousand of it to him; that is, not to him but to me. He has a debt of eight thousand. I'll pay it, but he must know that it is done with your money. You'll have seven thousand left in your hands. Never let him touch a farthing of it. Don't pay his debts ever. If once you pay them, you'll never be free of them. Besides, I shall always be here. You shall have twelve hundred roubles a year from me, with extras, fifteen hundred, besides board and lodging, which shall be at my expense, just as he has it now. Only you must set up your own servants. Your yearly allowance shall be paid to you all at once straight into your hands. But be kind, and sometimes give him something, and let his friends come to see him once a week, but if they come more often, turn them out. But I shall be here, too. And if I die, your pension will go on till his death, do you hear, till his death, for it's his pension, not yours. And besides the seven thousand you'll have now, which you ought to keep untouched if you're not foolish, I'll leave you another eight thousand in my will. And you'll get nothing more than that from me, it's right that you should know it. Come, you consent, eh? Will you say something at last?"

"I have told you already, Varvara Petrovna."

"Remember that you're free to decide. As you like, so it shall be."

"Then, may I ask, Varvara Petrovna, has Stepan Trofimovitch said anything yet?"

"No, he hasn't said anything, he doesn't know ... but he will speak directly."

She jumped up at once and threw on a black shawl. Dasha flushed a little again, and watched her with questioning eyes. Varvara Petrovna turned suddenly to her with a face flaming with anger.

"You're a fool!" She swooped down on her like a hawk. "An ungrateful fool! What's in your mind? Can you imagine that I'd compromise you, in any way, in the smallest degree. Why, he shall crawl on his knees to ask you, he must be dying of happiness, that's how it shall be arranged. Why, you know that I'd never let you suffer. Or do you suppose he'll take you for the sake of that eight thousand, and that I'm hurrying off to sell you? You're a fool, a fool! You're all ungrateful fools. Give me my umbrella!"

And she flew off to walk by the wet brick pavements and the wooden planks to Stepan Trofimovitch's.

VII

It was true that she would never have let Dasha suffer; on the contrary, she considered now that she was acting as her benefactress. The most generous and legitimate indignation was glowing in her soul, when, as she put on her shawl, she

caught fixed upon her the embarrassed and mistrustful eyes of her protégée. She had genuinely loved the girl from her childhood upwards. Praskovya Ivanovna had with justice called Darya Pavlovna her favourite. Long ago Varvara Petrovna had made up her mind once for all that "Darya's disposition was not like her brother's" (not, that is, like Ivan Shatov's), that she was quiet and gentle, and capable of great self-sacrifice; that she was distinguished by a power of devotion, unusual modesty, rare reasonableness, and, above all, by gratitude. Till that time Dasha had, to all appearances, completely justified her expectations.

"In that life there will be no mistakes," said Varvara Petrovna when the girl was only twelve years old, and as it was characteristic of her to attach herself doggedly and passionately to any dream that fascinated her, any new design, any idea that struck her as noble, she made up her mind at once to educate Dasha as though she were her own daughter. She at once set aside a sum of money for her, and sent for a governess, Miss Criggs, who lived with them until the girl was sixteen, but she was for some reason suddenly dismissed. Teachers came for her from the High School, among them a real Frenchman, who taught Dasha French. He, too, was suddenly dismissed, almost turned out of the house. A poor lady, a widow of good family, taught her to play the piano. Yet her chief tutor was Stepan Trofimovitch.

In reality he first discovered Dasha. He began teaching the quiet child even before Varvara Petrovna had begun to think about her. I repeat again, it was wonderful how children took to him. Lizaveta Nikolaevna Tushin had been taught by him from the age of eight till eleven (Stepan Trofimovitch took no fees, of course, for his lessons, and would not on any account have taken payment from the Drozdovs). But he fell in love with the charming child and used to tell her poems of a sort about the creation of the world, about the earth, and the history of humanity. His lectures about the primitive peoples and primitive man were more interesting than the Arabian Nights. Liza, who was ecstatic over these stories, used to mimic Stepan Trofimovitch very funnily at home. He heard of this and once peeped in on her unawares. Liza, overcome with confusion, flung herself into his arms and shed tears; Stepan Trofimovitch wept too with delight. But Liza soon after went away, and only Dasha was left. When Dasha began to have other teachers, Stepan Trofimovitch gave up his lessons with her, and by degrees left off noticing her. Things went on like this for a long time. Once when she was seventeen he was struck by her prettiness. It happened at Varvara Petrovna's table. He began to talk to the young girl, was much pleased with her answers, and ended by offering to give her a serious and comprehensive course of lessons on the history of Russian literature. Varvara Petrovna approved, and thanked him for his excellent idea, and Dasha was delighted. Stepan Trofimovitch proceeded to make

special preparations for the lectures, and at last they began. They began with the most ancient period. The first lecture went off enchantingly. Varvara Petrovna was present. When Stepan Trofimovitch had finished, and as he was going informed his pupil that the next time he would deal with “The Story of the Expedition of Igor,” Varvara Petrovna suddenly got up and announced that there would be no more lessons. Stepan Trofimovitch winced, but said nothing, and Dasha flushed crimson. It put a stop to the scheme, however. This had happened just three years before Varvara Petrovna’s unexpected fancy.

Poor Stepan Trofimovitch was sitting alone free from all misgivings. Plunged in mournful reveries he had for some time been looking out of the window to see whether any of his friends were coming. But nobody would come. It was drizzling. It was turning cold, he would have to have the stove heated. He sighed. Suddenly a terrible apparition flashed upon his eyes:

Varvara Petrovna in such weather and at such an unexpected hour to see him! And on foot! He was so astounded that he forgot to put on his coat, and received her as he was, in his everlasting pink-wadded dressing-jacket.

“Ma bonne amie!” he cried faintly, to greet her. “You’re alone; I’m glad; I can’t endure your friends. How you do smoke! Heavens, what an atmosphere! You haven’t finished your morning tea and it’s nearly twelve o’clock. It’s your idea of bliss—disorder! You take pleasure in dirt. What’s that torn paper on the floor? Nastasya, Nastasya! What is your Nastasya about? Open the window, the casement, the doors, fling everything wide open. And we’ll go into the drawing-room. I’ve come to you on a matter of importance. And you sweep up, my good woman, for once in your life.”

“They make such a muck!” Nastasya whined in a voice of plaintive exasperation.

“Well, you must sweep, sweep it up fifteen times a day! You’ve a wretched drawing-room” (when they had gone into the drawing-room). “Shut the door properly. She’ll be listening. You must have it repapered. Didn’t I send a paperhanger to you with patterns? Why didn’t you choose one? Sit down, and listen. Do sit down, I beg you. Where are you off to? Where are you off to? Where are you off to?”

“I’ll be back directly,” Stepan Trofimovitch cried from the next room. “Here I am again.”

“Ah,—you’ve changed your coat.” She scanned him mockingly. (He had flung his coat on over the dressing-jacket.) “Well, certainly that’s more suited to our subject. Do sit down, I entreat you.”

She told him everything at once, abruptly and impressively. She hinted at the eight thousand of which he stood in such terrible need. She told him in detail of the dowry. Stepan Trofimovitch sat trembling, opening his eyes wider and wider. He heard it all, but he could not realise it clearly. He tried to speak, but his voice kept breaking. All he knew was that everything would be as she said, that to protest and refuse to agree would be useless, and that he was a married man irrevocably.

"Mais, ma bonne amie! ... for the third time, and at my age ... and to such a child." He brought out at last, *"Mais, c'est une enfant!"*

"A child who is twenty years old, thank God. Please don't roll your eyes, I entreat you, you're not on the stage. You're very clever and learned, but you know nothing at all about life. You will always want a nurse to look after you. I shall die, and what will become of you? She will be a good nurse to you; she's a modest girl, strong-willed, reasonable; besides, I shall be here too, I shan't die directly. She's fond of home, she's an angel of gentleness. This happy thought came to me in Switzerland. Do you understand if I tell you myself that she is an angel of gentleness!" she screamed with sudden fury. "Your house is dirty, she will bring in order, cleanliness. Everything will shine like a mirror. Good gracious, do you expect me to go on my knees to you with such a treasure, to enumerate all the advantages, to court you! Why, you ought to be on your knees.... Oh, you shallow, shallow, faint-hearted man!"

"But ... I'm an old man!"

"What do your fifty-three years matter! Fifty is the middle of life, not the end of it. You are a handsome man and you know it yourself. You know, too, what a respect she has for you. If I die, what will become of her? But married to you she'll be at peace, and I shall be at peace. You have renown, a name, a loving heart. You receive a pension which I look upon as an obligation. You will save her perhaps, you will save her! In any case you will be doing her an honour. You will form her for life, you will develop her heart, you will direct her ideas. How many people come to grief nowadays because their ideas are wrongly directed. By that time your book will be ready, and you will at once set people talking about you again."

"I am, in fact," he muttered, at once flattered by Varvara Petrovna's adroit insinuations. "I was just preparing to sit down to my 'Tales from Spanish History.'"

"Well, there you are. It's just come right."

"But ... she? Have you spoken to her?"

“Don’t worry about her. And there’s no need for you to be inquisitive. Of course, you must ask her yourself, entreat her to do you the honour, you understand? But don’t be uneasy. I shall be here. Besides, you love her.”

Stepan Trofimovitch felt giddy. The walls were going round. There was one terrible idea underlying this to which he could not reconcile himself.

“Excellente amie,” his voice quivered suddenly. “I could never have conceived that you would make up your mind to give me in marriage to another … woman.”

“You’re not a girl, Stepan Trofimovitch. Only girls are given in marriage. You are taking a wife,” Varvara Petrovna hissed malignantly.

“Oui, j’ai pris un mot pour un autre. Mais c’est égal.” He gazed at her with a hopeless air.

“I see that *c’est égal*,” she muttered contemptuously through her teeth. “Good heavens! Why he’s going to faint. Nastasya, Nastasya, water!”

But water was not needed. He came to himself. Varvara Petrovna took up her umbrella.

“I see it’s no use talking to you now….”

“Oui, oui, je suis incapable.”

“But by to-morrow you’ll have rested and thought it over. Stay at home. If anything happens let me know, even if it’s at night. Don’t write letters, I shan’t read them. To-morrow I’ll come again at this time alone, for a final answer, and I trust it will be satisfactory. Try to have nobody here and no untidiness, for the place isn’t fit to be seen. Nastasya, Nastasya!”

The next day, of course, he consented, and, indeed, he could do nothing else. There was one circumstance …

VIII

Stepan Trofimovitch’s estate, as we used to call it (which consisted of fifty souls, reckoning in the old fashion, and bordered on Skvoreshniki), was not really his at all, but his first wife’s, and so belonged now to his son Pyotr Stepanovitch Verhovensky. Stepan Trofimovitch was simply his trustee, and so, when the nestling was full-fledged, he had given his father a formal authorisation to manage the estate. This transaction was a profitable one for the young man. He received as much as a thousand roubles a year by way of revenue from the estate, though under the new

regime it could not have yielded more than five hundred, and possibly not that. God knows how such an arrangement had arisen. The whole sum, however, was sent the young man by Varvara Petrovna, and Stepan Trofimovitch had nothing to do with a single rouble of it. On the other hand, the whole revenue from the land remained in his pocket, and he had, besides, completely ruined the estate, letting it to a mercenary rogue, and without the knowledge of Varvara Petrovna selling the timber which gave the estate its chief value. He had some time before sold the woods bit by bit. It was worth at least eight thousand, yet he had only received five thousand for it. But he sometimes lost too much at the club, and was afraid to ask Varvara Petrovna for the money. She clenched her teeth when she heard at last of everything. And now, all at once, his son announced that he was coming himself to sell his property for what he could get for it, and commissioned his father to take steps promptly to arrange the sale. It was clear that Stepan Trofimovitch, being a generous and disinterested man, felt ashamed of his treatment of *ce cher enfant* (whom he had seen for the last time nine years before as a student in Petersburg). The estate might originally have been worth thirteen or fourteen thousand. Now it was doubtful whether anyone would give five for it. No doubt Stepan Trofimovitch was fully entitled by the terms of the trust to sell the wood, and taking into account the incredibly large yearly revenue of a thousand roubles which had been sent punctually for so many years, he could have put up a good defence of his management. But Stepan Trofimovitch was a generous man of exalted impulses. A wonderfully fine inspiration occurred to his mind: when Petrusha returned, to lay on the table before him the maximum price of fifteen thousand roubles without a hint at the sums that had been sent him hitherto, and warmly and with tears to press *ce cher fils* to his heart, and so to make an end of all accounts between them. He began cautiously and indirectly unfolding this picture before Varvara Petrovna. He hinted that this would add a peculiarly noble note to their friendship … to their "idea." This would set the parents of the last generation—and people of the last generation generally—in such a disinterested and magnanimous light in comparison with the new frivolous and socialistic younger generation. He said a great deal more, but Varvara Petrovna was obstinately silent. At last she informed him airily that she was prepared to buy their estate, and to pay for it the maximum price, that is, six or seven thousand (though four would have been a fair price for it). Of the remaining eight thousand which had vanished with the woods she said not a word.

This conversation took place a month before the match was proposed to him. Stepan Trofimovitch was overwhelmed, and began to ponder. There might in the past have been a hope that his son would not come, after all—an outsider, that is to say, might have hoped so. Stepan Trofimovitch as a father would have indignantly rejected the

insinuation that he could entertain such a hope. Anyway queer rumours had hitherto been reaching us about Petrusha. To begin with, on completing his studies at the university six years before, he had hung about in Petersburg without getting work. Suddenly we got the news that he had taken part in issuing some anonymous manifesto and that he was implicated in the affair. Then he suddenly turned up abroad in Switzerland at Geneva—he had escaped, very likely.

"It's surprising to me," Stepan Trofimovitch commented, greatly disconcerted. "Petrusha, *c'est une si pauvre tête!* He's good, noble-hearted, very sensitive, and I was so delighted with him in Petersburg, comparing him with the young people of to-day. But *c'est un pauvre sire, tout de même*.... And you know it all comes from that same half-bakedness, that sentimentality. They are fascinated, not by realism, but by the emotional ideal side of socialism, by the religious note in it, so to say, by the poetry of it ... second-hand, of course. And for me, for me, think what it means! I have so many enemies here and more still *there*, they'll put it down to the father's influence. Good God! Petrusha a revolutionist! What times we live in!"

Very soon, however, Petrusha sent his exact address from Switzerland for money to be sent him as usual; so he could not be exactly an exile. And now, after four years abroad, he was suddenly making his appearance again in his own country, and announced that he would arrive shortly, so there could be no charge against him. What was more, someone seemed to be interested in him and protecting him. He wrote now from the south of Russia, where he was busily engaged in some private but important business. All this was capital, but where was his father to get that other seven or eight thousand, to make up a suitable price for the estate? And what if there should be an outcry, and instead of that imposing picture it should come to a lawsuit? Something told Stepan Trofimovitch that the sensitive Petrusha would not relinquish anything that was to his interest. "Why is it—as I've noticed," Stepan Trofimovitch whispered to me once, "why is it that all these desperate socialists and communists are at the same time such incredible skinflints, so avaricious, so keen over property, and, in fact, the more socialistic, the more extreme they are, the keener they are over property ... why is it? Can that, too, come from sentimentalism?" I don't know whether there is any truth in this observation of Stepan Trofimovitch's. I only know that Petrusha had somehow got wind of the sale of the woods and the rest of it, and that Stepan Trofimovitch was aware of the fact. I happened, too, to read some of Petrusha's letters to his father. He wrote extremely rarely, once a year, or even less often. Only recently, to inform him of his approaching visit, he had sent two letters, one almost immediately after the other. All his letters were short, dry, consisting only of instructions, and as the father and son had, since their meeting in Petersburg,

adopted the fashionable “thou” and “thee,” Petrusha’s letters had a striking resemblance to the missives that used to be sent by landowners of the old school from the town to their serfs whom they had left in charge of their estates. And now suddenly this eight thousand which would solve the difficulty would be wafted to him by Varvara Petrovna’s proposition. And at the same time she made him distinctly feel that it never could be wafted to him from anywhere else. Of course Stepan Trofimovitch consented.

He sent for me directly she had gone and shut himself up for the whole day, admitting no one else. He cried, of course, talked well and talked a great deal, contradicted himself continually, made a casual pun, and was much pleased with it. Then he had a slight attack of his “summer cholera”—everything in fact followed the usual course. Then he brought out the portrait of his German bride, now twenty years deceased, and began plaintively appealing to her: “Will you forgive me?” In fact he seemed somehow distracted. Our grief led us to get a little drunk. He soon fell into a sweet sleep, however. Next morning he tied his cravat in masterly fashion, dressed with care, and went frequently to look at himself in the glass. He sprinkled his handkerchief with scent, only a slight dash of it, however, and as soon as he saw Varvara Petrovna out of the window he hurriedly took another handkerchief and hid the scented one under the pillow.

“Excellent!” Varvara Petrovna approved, on receiving his consent. “In the first place you show a fine decision, and secondly you’ve listened to the voice of reason, to which you generally pay so little heed in your private affairs. There’s no need of haste, however,” she added, scanning the knot of his white tie, “for the present say nothing, and I will say nothing. It will soon be your birthday; I will come to see you with her. Give us tea in the evening, and please without wine or other refreshments, but I’ll arrange it all myself. Invite your friends, but we’ll make the list together. You can talk to her the day before, if necessary. And at your party we won’t exactly announce it, or make an engagement of any sort, but only hint at it, and let people know without any sort of ceremony. And then the wedding a fortnight later, as far as possible without any fuss…. You two might even go away for a time after the wedding, to Moscow, for instance. I’ll go with you, too, perhaps … The chief thing is, keep quiet till then.”

Stepan Trofimovitch was surprised. He tried to falter that he could not do like that, that he must talk it over with his bride. But Varvara Petrovna flew at him in exasperation.

“What for? In the first place it may perhaps come to nothing.”

“Come to nothing!” muttered the bridegroom, utterly dumbfoundered.

“Yes. I’ll see.... But everything shall be as I’ve told you, and don’t be uneasy. I’ll prepare her myself. There’s really no need for you. Everything necessary shall be said and done, and there’s no need for you to meddle. Why should you? In what character? Don’t come and don’t write letters. And not a sight or sound of you, I beg. I will be silent too.”

She absolutely refused to explain herself, and went away, obviously upset. Stepan Trofimovitch’s excessive readiness evidently impressed her. Alas! he was utterly unable to grasp his position, and the question had not yet presented itself to him from certain other points of view. On the contrary a new note was apparent in him, a sort of conquering and jaunty air. He swaggered.

“I do like that!” he exclaimed, standing before me, and flinging wide his arms. “Did you hear? She wants to drive me to refusing at last. Why, I may lose patience, too, and ... refuse! ‘Sit still, there’s no need for you to go to her.’ But after all, why should I be married? Simply because she’s taken an absurd fancy into her heart. But I’m a serious man, and I can refuse to submit to the idle whims of a giddy-woman! I have duties to my son and ... and to myself! I’m making a sacrifice. Does she realise that? I have agreed, perhaps, because I am weary of life and nothing matters to me. But she may exasperate me, and then it will matter. I shall resent it and refuse. *Et enfin, le ridicule* ... what will they say at the club? What will ... what will ... Laputin say? ‘Perhaps nothing will come of it’—what a thing to say! That beats everything. That’s really ... what is one to say to that?... *Je suis un forçat, un Badinguet, un* man pushed to the wall....”

And at the same time a sort of capricious complacency, something frivolous and playful, could be seen in the midst of all these plaintive exclamations. In the evening we drank too much again.