

CHAPTER IV. ALL IN EXPECTATION

I

The impression made on the whole neighbourhood by the story of the duel, which was rapidly noised abroad, was particularly remarkable from the unanimity with which every one hastened to take up the cudgels for Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch. Many of his former enemies declared themselves his friends. The chief reason for this change of front in public opinion was chiefly due to one person, who had hitherto not expressed her opinion, but who now very distinctly uttered a few words, which at once gave the event a significance exceedingly interesting to the vast majority. This was how it happened. On the day after the duel, all the town was assembled at the Marshal of Nobility's in honour of his wife's nameday. Yulia Mihailovna was present, or, rather, presided, accompanied by Lizaveta Nikolaevna, radiant with beauty and peculiar gaiety, which struck many of our ladies at once as particularly suspicious at this time. And I may mention, by the way, her engagement to Mavriky Nikolaevitch was by now an established fact. To a playful question from a retired general of much consequence, of whom we shall have more to say later, Lizaveta Nikolaevna frankly replied that evening that she was engaged. And only imagine, not one of our ladies would believe in her engagement. They all persisted in assuming a romance of some sort, some fatal family secret, something that had happened in Switzerland, and for some reason imagined that Yulia Mihailovna must have had some hand in it. It was difficult to understand why these rumours, or rather fancies, persisted so obstinately, and why Yulia Mihailovna was so positively connected with it. As soon as she came in, all turned to her with strange looks, brimful of expectation. It must be observed that owing to the freshness of the event, and certain circumstances accompanying it, at the party people talked of it with some circumspection, in undertones. Besides, nothing yet was known of the line taken by the authorities. As far as was known, neither of the combatants had been troubled by the police. Every one knew, for instance, that Gaganov had set off home early in the morning to Duhovo, without being hindered. Meanwhile, of course, all were eager for someone to be the first to speak of it aloud, and so to open the door to the general impatience. They rested their hopes on the general above-mentioned, and they were not disappointed.

This general, a landowner, though not a wealthy one, was one of the most imposing members of our club, and a man of an absolutely unique turn of mind. He flirted in the old-fashioned way with the young ladies, and was particularly fond, in large assemblies, of speaking aloud with all the weightiness of a general, on subjects to which others were alluding in discreet whispers. This was, so to say, his special rôle in local society. He drawled, too, and spoke with peculiar suavety, probably having

picked up the habit from Russians travelling abroad, or from those wealthy landowners of former days who had suffered most from the emancipation. Stepan Trofimovitch had observed that the more completely a landowner was ruined, the more suavely he lisped and drawled his words. He did, as a fact, lisp and drawl himself, but was not aware of it in himself.

The general spoke like a person of authority. He was, besides, a distant relation of Gaganov's, though he was on bad terms with him, and even engaged in litigation with him. He had, moreover, in the past, fought two duels himself, and had even been degraded to the ranks and sent to the Caucasus on account of one of them. Some mention was made of Varvara Petrovna's having driven out that day and the day before, after being kept indoors "by illness," though the allusion was not to her, but to the marvellous matching of her four grey horses of the Stavrogins' own breeding. The general suddenly observed that he had met "young Stavrogin" that day, on horseback.... Every one was instantly silent. The general munched his lips, and suddenly proclaimed, twisting in his fingers his presentation gold snuff-box.

"I'm sorry I wasn't here some years ago ... I mean when I was at Carlsbad ... H'm! I'm very much interested in that young man about whom I heard so many rumours at that time. H'm! And, I say, is it true that he's mad? Some one told me so then. Suddenly I'm told that he has been insulted by some student here, in the presence of his cousins, and he slipped under the table to get away from him. And yesterday I heard from Stepan Vysotsky that Stavrogin had been fighting with Gaganov. And simply with the gallant object of offering himself as a target to an infuriated man, just to get rid of him. H'm! Quite in the style of the guards of the twenties. Is there any house where he visits here?"

The general paused as though expecting an answer. A way had been opened for the public impatience to express itself.

"What could be simpler?" cried Yulia Mihailovna, raising her voice, irritated that all present had turned their eyes upon her, as though at a word of command. "Can one wonder that Stavrogin fought Gaganov and took no notice of the student? He couldn't challenge a man who used to be his serf!"

A noteworthy saying! A clear and simple notion, yet it had entered nobody's head till that moment. It was a saying that had extraordinary consequences. All scandal and gossip, all the petty tittle-tattle was thrown into the background, another significance had been detected. A new character was revealed whom all had misjudged; a character, almost ideally severe in his standards. Mortally insulted by a student, that is, an educated man, no longer a serf, he despised the affront because his assailant

had once been his serf. Society had gossiped and slandered him; shallow-minded people had looked with contempt on a man who had been struck in the face. He had despised a public opinion, which had not risen to the level of the highest standards, though it discussed them.

“And, meantime, you and I, Ivan Alexandrovitch, sit and discuss the correct standards,” one old club member observed to another, with a warm and generous glow of self-reproach.

“Yes, Pyotr Mihailovitch, yes,” the other chimed in with zest, “talk of the younger generation!”

“It’s not a question of the younger generation,” observed a third, putting in his spoke, “it’s nothing to do with the younger generation; he’s a star, not one of the younger generation; that’s the way to look at it.”

“And it’s just that sort we need; they’re rare people.” The chief point in all this was that the “new man,” besides showing himself an unmistakable nobleman, was the wealthiest landowner in the province, and was, therefore, bound to be a leading man who could be of assistance. I’ve already alluded in passing to the attitude of the landowners of our province. People were enthusiastic:

“He didn’t merely refrain from challenging the student. He put his hands behind him, note that particularly, your excellency,” somebody pointed out.

“And he didn’t haul him up before the new law-courts, either,” added another.

“In spite of the fact that for a personal insult to a nobleman he’d have got fifteen roubles damages! He he he!”

“No, I’ll tell you a secret about the new courts,” cried a third, in a frenzy of excitement, “if anyone’s caught robbing or swindling and convicted, he’d better run home while there’s yet time, and murder his mother. He’ll be acquitted of everything at once, and ladies will wave their batiste handkerchiefs from the platform. It’s the absolute truth!”

“It’s the truth. It’s the truth!”

The inevitable anecdotes followed: Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch’s friendly relations with Count K. were recalled. Count K.’s stern and independent attitude to recent reforms was well known, as well as his remarkable public activity, though that had somewhat fallen off of late. And now, suddenly, every one was positive that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was betrothed to one of the count’s daughters, though nothing had given grounds for such a supposition. And as for some wonderful adventures in

Switzerland with Lizaveta Nikolaevna, even the ladies quite dropped all reference to it. I must mention, by the way, that the Drozdovs had by this time succeeded in paying all the visits they had omitted at first. Every one now confidently considered Lizaveta Nikolaevna a most ordinary girl, who paraded her delicate nerves. Her fainting on the day of Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's arrival was explained now as due to her terror at the student's outrageous behaviour. They even increased the prosaicness of that to which before they had striven to give such a fantastic colour. As for a lame woman who had been talked of, she was forgotten completely. They were ashamed to remember her.

"And if there had been a hundred lame girls—we've all been young once!"

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch's respectfulness to his mother was enlarged upon. Various virtues were discovered in him. People talked with approbation of the learning he had acquired in the four years he had spent in German universities. Gaganov's conduct was declared utterly tactless: "not knowing friend from foe." Yulia Mihailovna's keen insight was unhesitatingly admitted.

So by the time Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch made his appearance among them he was received by every one with naïve solemnity. In all eyes fastened upon him could be read eager anticipation. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch at once wrapped himself in the most austere silence, which, of course, gratified every one much more than if he had talked till doomsday. In a word, he was a success, he was the fashion. If once one has figured in provincial society, there's no retreating into the background. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch began to fulfil all his social duties in the province punctiliously as before. He was not found cheerful company: "a man who has seen suffering; a man not like other people; he has something to be melancholy about." Even the pride and disdainful aloofness for which he had been so detested four years before was now liked and respected.

Varvara Petrovna was triumphant. I don't know whether she grieved much over the shattering of her dreams concerning Lizaveta Nikolaevna. Family pride, of course, helped her to get over it. One thing was strange: Varvara Petrovna was suddenly convinced that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch really had "made his choice" at Count K.'s. And what was strangest of all, she was led to believe it by rumours which reached her on no better authority than other people. She was afraid to ask Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch a direct question. Two or three times, however, she could not refrain from slyly and good-humouredly reproaching him for not being open with her. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch smiled and remained silent. The silence was taken as a sign of assent. And yet, all the time she never forgot the cripple. The thought of her lay like a stone on her heart, a nightmare, she was tortured by strange misgivings and surmises,

and all this at the same time as she dreamed of Count K.'s daughters. But of this we shall speak later. Varvara Petrovna began again, of course, to be treated with extreme deference and respect in society, but she took little advantage of it and went out rarely.

She did, however, pay a visit of ceremony to the governor's wife. Of course, no one had been more charmed and delighted by Yulia Mihailovna's words spoken at the marshal's soiree than she. They lifted a load of care off her heart, and had at once relieved much of the distress she had been suffering since that luckless Sunday.

"I misunderstood that woman," she declared, and with her characteristic impulsiveness she frankly told Yulia Mihailovna that she had come to *thank her*. Yulia Mihailovna was flattered, but she behaved with dignity. She was beginning about this time to be very conscious of her own importance, too much so, in fact. She announced, for example, in the course of conversation, that she had never heard of Stepan Trofimovitch as a leading man or a savant.

"I know young Verhovensky, of course, and make much of him. He's imprudent, but then he's young; he's thoroughly well-informed, though. He's not an out-of-date, old-fashioned critic, anyway." Varvara Petrovna hastened to observe that Stepan Trofimovitch had never been a critic, but had, on the contrary, spent all his life in her house. He was renowned through circumstances of his early career, "only too well known to the whole world," and of late for his researches in Spanish history. Now he intended to write also on the position of modern German universities, and, she believed, something about the Dresden Madonna too. In short, Varvara Petrovna refused to surrender Stepan Trofimovitch to the tender mercies of Yulia Mihailovna.

"The Dresden Madonna? You mean the Sistine Madonna? *Chère* Varvara Petrovna, I spent two hours sitting before that picture and came away utterly disillusioned. I could make nothing of it and was in complete amazement. Karmazinov, too, says it's hard to understand it. They all see nothing in it now, Russians and English alike. All its fame is just the talk of the last generation."

"Fashions are changed then?"

"What I think is that one mustn't despise our younger generation either. They cry out that they're communists, but what I say is that we must appreciate them and mustn't be hard on them. I read everything now—the papers, communism, the natural sciences—I get everything because, after all, one must know where one's living and with whom one has to do. One mustn't spend one's whole life on the heights of one's own fancy. I've come to the conclusion, and adopted it as a principle, that one must

be kind to the young people and so keep them from the brink. Believe me, Varvara Petrovna, that none but we who make up good society can by our kindness and good influence keep them from the abyss towards which they are brought by the intolerance of all these old men. I am glad though to learn from you about Stepan Trofimovitch. You suggest an idea to me: he may be useful at our literary matinée, you know I'm arranging for a whole day of festivities, a subscription entertainment for the benefit of the poor governesses of our province. They are scattered about Russia; in our district alone we can reckon up six of them. Besides that, there are two girls in the telegraph office, two are being trained in the academy, the rest would like to be but have not the means. The Russian woman's fate is a terrible one, Varvara Petrovna! It's out of that they're making the university question now, and there's even been a meeting of the Imperial Council about it. In this strange Russia of ours one can do anything one likes; and that, again, is why it's only by the kindness and the direct warm sympathy of all the better classes that we can direct this great common cause in the true path. Oh, heavens, have we many noble personalities among us! There are some, of course, but they are scattered far and wide. Let us unite and we shall be stronger. In one word, I shall first have a literary matinée, then a light luncheon, then an interval, and in the evening a ball. We meant to begin the evening by living pictures, but it would involve a great deal of expense, and so, to please the public, there will be one or two quadrilles in masks and fancy dresses, representing well-known literary schools. This humorous idea was suggested by Karmazinov. He has been a great help to me. Do you know he's going to read us the last thing he's written, which no one has seen yet. He is laying down the pen, and will write no more. This last essay is his farewell to the public. It's a charming little thing called 'Merci.' The title is French; he thinks that more amusing and even subtler. I do, too. In fact I advised it. I think Stepan Trofimovitch might read us something too, if it were quite short and ... not so very learned. I believe Pyotr Stepanovitch and some one else too will read something. Pyotr Stepanovitch shall run round to you and tell you the programme. Better still, let me bring it to you myself."

"Allow me to put my name down in your subscription list too. I'll tell Stepan Trofimovitch and will beg him to consent."

Varvara Petrovna returned home completely fascinated. She was ready to stand up for Yulia Mihailovna through thick and thin, and for some reason was already quite put out with Stepan Trofimovitch, while he, poor man, sat at home, all unconscious.

"I'm in love with her. I can't understand how I could be so mistaken in that woman," she said to Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch and Pyotr Stepanovitch, who dropped in that evening.

“But you must make peace with the old man all the same,” Pyotr Stepanovitch submitted. “He’s in despair. You’ve quite sent him to Coventry. Yesterday he met your carriage and bowed, and you turned away. We’ll trot him out, you know; I’m reckoning on him for something, and he may still be useful.”

“Oh, he’ll read something.”

“I don’t mean only that. And I was meaning to drop in on him to-day. So shall I tell him?”

“If you like. I don’t know, though, how you’ll arrange it,” she said irresolutely. “I was meaning to have a talk with him myself, and wanted to fix the time and place.”

She frowned.

“Oh, it’s not worth while fixing a time. I’ll simply give him the message.”

“Very well, do. Add that I certainly will fix a time to see him though. Be sure to say that too.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch ran off, grinning. He was, in fact, to the best of my recollection, particularly spiteful all this time, and ventured upon extremely impatient sallies with almost every one. Strange to say, every one, somehow, forgave him. It was generally accepted that he was not to be looked at from the ordinary standpoint. I may remark that he took up an extremely resentful attitude about Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch’s duel. It took him unawares. He turned positively green when he was told of it. Perhaps his vanity was wounded: he only heard of it next day when every one knew of it.

“You had no right to fight, you know,” he whispered to Stavrogin, five days later, when he chanced to meet him at the club. It was remarkable that they had not once met during those five days, though Pyotr Stepanovitch had dropped in at Varvara Petrovna’s almost every day.

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch looked at him in silence with an absent-minded air, as though not understanding what was the matter, and he went on without stopping. He was crossing the big hall of the club on his way to the refreshment room.

“You’ve been to see Shatov too.... You mean to make it known about Marya Timofyevna,” Pyotr Stepanovitch muttered, running after him, and, as though not thinking of what he was doing he clutched at his shoulder.

Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch shook his hand off and turned round quickly to him with a menacing scowl. Pyotr Stepanovitch looked at him with a strange, prolonged smile. It all lasted only one moment. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch walked on.

II

He went to the “old man” straight from Varvara Petrovna’s, and he was in such haste simply from spite, that he might revenge himself for an insult of which I had no idea at that time. The fact is that at their last interview on the Thursday of the previous week, Stepan Trofimovitch, though the dispute was one of his own beginning, had ended by turning Pyotr Stepanovitch out with his stick. He concealed the incident from me at the time. But now, as soon as Pyotr Stepanovitch ran in with his everlasting grin, which was so naïvely condescending, and his unpleasantly inquisitive eyes peering into every corner, Stepan Trofimovitch at once made a signal aside to me, not to leave the room. This was how their real relations came to be exposed before me, for on this occasion I heard their whole conversation.

Stepan Trofimovitch was sitting stretched out on a lounge. He had grown thin and sallow since that Thursday. Pyotr Stepanovitch seated himself beside him with a most familiar air, unceremoniously tucking his legs up under him, and taking up more room on the lounge than deference to his father should have allowed. Stepan Trofimovitch moved aside, in silence, and with dignity.

On the table lay an open book. It was the novel, “What’s to be done?” Alas, I must confess one strange weakness in my friend; the fantasy that he ought to come forth from his solitude and fight a last battle was getting more and more hold upon his deluded imagination. I guessed that he had got the novel and was *studying* it solely in order that when the inevitable conflict with the “shriekers” came about he might know their methods and arguments beforehand, from their very “catechism,” and in that way be prepared to confute them all triumphantly, *before her eyes*. Oh, how that book tortured him! He sometimes flung it aside in despair, and leaping up, paced about the room almost in a frenzy.

“I agree that the author’s fundamental idea is a true one,” he said to me feverishly, “but that only makes it more awful. It’s just our idea, exactly ours; we first sowed the seed, nurtured it, prepared the way, and, indeed, what could they say new, after us? But, heavens! How it’s all expressed, distorted, mutilated!” he exclaimed, tapping the book with his fingers. “Were these the conclusions we were striving for? Who can understand the original idea in this?”

“Improving your mind?” sniggered Pyotr Stepanovitch, taking the book from the table and reading the title. “It’s high time. I’ll bring you better, if you like.”

Stepan Trofimovitch again preserved a dignified silence. I was sitting on a sofa in the corner.

Pyotr Stepanovitch quickly explained the reason of his coming. Of course, Stepan Trofimovitch was absolutely staggered, and he listened in alarm, which was mixed with extreme indignation.

“And that Yulia Mihailovna counts on my coming to read for her!”

“Well, they’re by no means in such need of you. On the contrary, it’s by way of an attention to you, so as to make up to Varvara Petrovna. But, of course, you won’t dare to refuse, and I expect you want to yourself,” he added with a grin. “You old fogies are all so devilishly ambitious. But, I say though, you must look out that it’s not too boring. What have you got? Spanish history, or what is it? You’d better let me look at it three days beforehand, or else you’ll put us to sleep perhaps.”

The hurried and too barefaced coarseness of these thrusts was obviously premeditated. He affected to behave as though it were impossible to talk to Stepan Trofimovitch in different and more delicate language. Stepan Trofimovitch resolutely persisted in ignoring his insults, but what his son told him made a more and more overwhelming impression upon him.

“And she, she herself sent me this message through you?” he asked, turning pale.

“Well, you see, she means to fix a time and place for a mutual explanation, the relics of your sentimentalising. You’ve been coquetting with her for twenty years and have trained her to the most ridiculous habits. But don’t trouble yourself, it’s quite different now. She keeps saying herself that she’s only beginning now to ‘have her eyes opened.’ I told her in so many words that all this friendship of yours is nothing but a mutual pouring forth of sloppiness. She told me lots, my boy. Foo! what a flunkey’s place you’ve been filling all this time. I positively blushed for you.”

“I filling a flunkey’s place?” cried Stepan Trofimovitch, unable to restrain himself.

“Worse, you’ve been a parasite, that is, a voluntary flunkey too lazy to work, while you’ve an appetite for money. She, too, understands all that now. It’s awful the things she’s been telling me about you, anyway. I did laugh, my boy, over your letters to her; shameful and disgusting. But you’re all so depraved, so depraved! There’s always something depraving in charity—you’re a good example of it!”

“She showed you my letters!”

“All; though, of course, one couldn’t read them all. Foo, what a lot of paper you’ve covered! I believe there are more than two thousand letters there. And do you know, old chap, I believe there was one moment when she’d have been ready to marry you. You let slip your chance in the silliest way. Of course, I’m speaking from your point of

view, though, anyway, it would have been better than now when you've almost been married to 'cover another man's sins,' like a buffoon, for a jest, for money."

"For money! She, she says it was for money!" Stepan Trofimovitch wailed in anguish.

"What else, then? But, of course, I stood up for you. That's your only line of defence, you know. She sees for herself that you needed money like every one else, and that from that point of view maybe you were right. I proved to her as clear as twice two makes four that it was a mutual bargain. She was a capitalist and you were a sentimental buffoon in her service. She's not angry about the money, though you have milked her like a goat. She's only in a rage at having believed in you for twenty years, at your having so taken her in over these noble sentiments, and made her tell lies for so long. She never will admit that she told lies of herself, but you'll catch it the more for that. I can't make out how it was you didn't see that you'd have to have a day of reckoning. For after all you had some sense. I advised her yesterday to put you in an almshouse, a genteel one, don't disturb yourself; there'll be nothing humiliating; I believe that's what she'll do. Do you remember your last letter to me, three weeks ago?"

"Can you have shown her that?" cried Stepan Trofimovitch, leaping up in horror.

"Rather! First thing. The one in which you told me she was exploiting you, envious of your talent; oh, yes, and that about 'other men's sins.' You have got a conceit though, my boy! How I did laugh. As a rule your letters are very tedious. You write a horrible style. I often don't read them at all, and I've one lying about to this day, unopened. I'll send it to you to-morrow. But that one, that last letter of yours was the tiptop of perfection! How I did laugh! Oh, how I laughed!"

"Monster, monster!" wailed Stepan Trofimovitch.

"Foo, damn it all, there's no talking to you. I say, you're getting huffy again as you were last Thursday."

Stepan Trofimovitch drew himself up, menacingly.

"How dare you speak to me in such language?"

"What language? It's simple and clear."

"Tell me, you monster, are you my son or not?"

"You know that best. To be sure all fathers are disposed to be blind in such cases."

"Silence! Silence!" cried Stepan Trofimovitch, shaking all over.

“You see you’re screaming and swearing at me as you did last Thursday. You tried to lift your stick against me, but you know, I found that document. I was rummaging all the evening in my trunk from curiosity. It’s true there’s nothing definite, you can take that comfort. It’s only a letter of my mother’s to that Pole. But to judge from her character ...”

“Another word and I’ll box your ears.”

“What a set of people!” said Pyotr Stepanovitch, suddenly addressing himself to me. “You see, this is how we’ve been ever since last Thursday. I’m glad you’re here this time, anyway, and can judge between us. To begin with, a fact: he reproaches me for speaking like this of my mother, but didn’t he egg me on to it? In Petersburg before I left the High School, didn’t he wake me twice in the night, to embrace me, and cry like a woman, and what do you suppose he talked to me about at night? Why, the same modest anecdotes about my mother! It was from him I first heard them.”

“Oh, I meant that in a higher sense! Oh, you didn’t understand me! You understood nothing, nothing.”

“But, anyway, it was meaner in you than in me, meaner, acknowledge that. You see, it’s nothing to me if you like. I’m speaking from your point of view. Don’t worry about my point of view. I don’t blame my mother; if it’s you, then it’s you, if it’s a Pole, then it’s a Pole, it’s all the same to me. I’m not to blame because you and she managed so stupidly in Berlin. As though you could have managed things better. Aren’t you an absurd set, after that? And does it matter to you whether I’m your son or not? Listen,” he went on, turning to me again, “he’s never spent a penny on me all his life; till I was sixteen he didn’t know me at all; afterwards he robbed me here, and now he cries out that his heart has been aching over me all his life, and carries on before me like an actor. I’m not Varvara Petrovna, mind you.”

He got up and took his hat.

“I curse you henceforth!”

Stepan Trofimovitch, as pale as death, stretched out his hand above him.

“Ach, what folly a man will descend to!” cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, actually surprised. “Well, good-bye, old fellow, I shall never come and see you again. Send me the article beforehand, don’t forget, and try and let it be free from nonsense. Facts, facts, facts. And above all, let it be short. Good-bye.”

III

Outside influences, too, had come into play in the matter, however. Pyotr Stepanovitch certainly had some designs on his parent. In my opinion he calculated upon reducing the old man to despair, and so to driving him to some open scandal of a certain sort. This was to serve some remote and quite other object of his own, of which I shall speak hereafter. All sorts of plans and calculations of this kind were swarming in masses in his mind at that time, and almost all, of course, of a fantastic character. He had designs on another victim besides Stepan Trofimovitch. In fact, as appeared afterwards, his victims were not few in number, but this one he reckoned upon particularly, and it was Mr. von Lembke himself.

Andrey Antonovitch von Lembke belonged to that race, so favoured by nature, which is reckoned by hundreds of thousands at the Russian census, and is perhaps unconscious that it forms throughout its whole mass a strictly organised union. And this union, of course, is not planned and premeditated, but exists spontaneously in the whole race, without words or agreements as a moral obligation consisting in mutual support given by all members of the race to one another, at all times and places, and under all circumstances. Andrey Antonovitch had the honour of being educated in one of those more exalted Russian educational institutions which are filled with the youth from families well provided with wealth or connections. Almost immediately on finishing their studies the pupils were appointed to rather important posts in one of the government departments. Andrey Antonovitch had one uncle a colonel of engineers, and another a baker. But he managed to get into this aristocratic school, and met many of his fellow-countrymen in a similar position. He was a good-humoured companion, was rather stupid at his studies, but always popular. And when many of his companions in the upper forms—chiefly Russians—had already learnt to discuss the loftiest modern questions, and looked as though they were only waiting to leave school to settle the affairs of the universe, Andrey Antonovitch was still absorbed in the most innocent schoolboy interests. He amused them all, it is true, by his pranks, which were of a very simple character, at the most a little coarse, but he made it his object to be funny. At one time he would blow his nose in a wonderful way when the professor addressed a question to him, thereby making his schoolfellows and the professor laugh. Another time, in the dormitory, he would act some indecent living picture, to the general applause, or he would play the overture to “Fra Diavolo” with his nose rather skilfully. He was distinguished, too, by intentional untidiness, thinking this, for some reason, witty. In his very last year at school he began writing Russian poetry.

Of his native language he had only an ungrammatical knowledge, like many of his race in Russia. This turn for versifying drew him to a gloomy and depressed schoolfellow,

the son of a poor Russian general, who was considered in the school to be a great future light in literature. The latter patronised him. But it happened that three years after leaving school this melancholy schoolfellow, who had flung up his official career for the sake of Russian literature, and was consequently going about in torn boots, with his teeth chattering with cold, wearing a light summer overcoat in the late autumn, met, one day on the Anitchin bridge, his former protégé, "Lembka," as he always used to be called at school. And, what do you suppose? He did not at first recognise him, and stood still in surprise. Before him stood an irreproachably dressed young man with wonderfully well-kept whiskers of a reddish hue, with pince-nez, with patent-leather boots, and the freshest of gloves, in a full overcoat from Sharmer's, and with a portfolio under his arm. Lembke was cordial to his old schoolfellow, gave him his address, and begged him to come and see him some evening. It appeared, too, that he was by now not "Lembka" but "Von Lembke." The schoolfellow came to see him, however, simply from malice perhaps. On the staircase, which was covered with red felt and was rather ugly and by no means smart, he was met and questioned by the house-porter. A bell rang loudly upstairs. But instead of the wealth which the visitor expected, he found Lembke in a very little side-room, which had a dark and dilapidated appearance, partitioned into two by a large dark green curtain, and furnished with very old though comfortable furniture, with dark green blinds on high narrow windows. Von Lembke lodged in the house of a very distant relation, a general who was his patron. He met his visitor cordially, was serious and exquisitely polite. They talked of literature, too, but kept within the bounds of decorum. A manservant in a white tie brought them some weak tea and little dry, round biscuits. The schoolfellow, from spite, asked for some seltzer water. It was given him, but after some delays, and Lembke was somewhat embarrassed at having to summon the footman a second time and give him orders. But of himself he asked his visitor whether he would like some supper, and was obviously relieved when he refused and went away. In short, Lembke was making his career, and was living in dependence on his fellow-countryman, the influential general.

He was at that time sighing for the general's fifth daughter, and it seemed to him that his feeling was reciprocated. But Amalia was none the less married in due time to an elderly factory-owner, a German, and an old comrade of the general's. Andrey Antonovitch did not shed many tears, but made a paper theatre. The curtain drew up, the actors came in, and gesticulated with their arms. There were spectators in the boxes, the orchestra moved their bows across their fiddles by machinery, the conductor waved his baton, and in the stalls officers and dandies clapped their hands. It was all made of cardboard, it was all thought out and executed by Lembke

himself. He spent six months over this theatre. The general arranged a friendly party on purpose. The theatre was exhibited, all the general's five daughters, including the newly married Amalia with her factory-owner, numerous fraus and frauleins with their men folk, attentively examined and admired the theatre, after which they danced. Lembke was much gratified and was quickly consoled.

The years passed by and his career was secured. He always obtained good posts and always under chiefs of his own race; and he worked his way up at last to a very fine position for a man of his age. He had, for a long time, been wishing to marry and looking about him carefully. Without the knowledge of his superiors he had sent a novel to the editor of a magazine, but it had not been accepted. On the other hand, he cut out a complete toy railway, and again his creation was most successful. Passengers came on to the platform with bags and portmanteaux, with dogs and children, and got into the carriages. The guards and porters moved away, the bell was rung, the signal was given, and the train started off. He was a whole year busy over this clever contrivance. But he had to get married all the same. The circle of his acquaintance was fairly wide, chiefly in the world of his compatriots, but his duties brought him into Russian spheres also, of course. Finally, when he was in his thirty-ninth year, he came in for a legacy. His uncle the baker died, and left him thirteen thousand roubles in his will. The one thing needful was a suitable post. In spite of the rather elevated style of his surroundings in the service, Mr. von Lembke was a very modest man. He would have been perfectly satisfied with some independent little government post, with the right to as much government timber as he liked, or something snug of that sort, and he would have been content all his life long. But now, instead of the Minna or Ernestine he had expected, Yulia Mihailovna suddenly appeared on the scene. His career was instantly raised to a more elevated plane. The modest and precise man felt that he too was capable of ambition.

Yulia Mihailovna had a fortune of two hundred serfs, to reckon in the old style, and she had besides powerful friends. On the other hand Lembke was handsome, and she was already over forty. It is remarkable that he fell genuinely in love with her by degrees as he became more used to being betrothed to her. On the morning of his wedding day he sent her a poem. She liked all this very much, even the poem; it's no joke to be forty. He was very quickly raised to a certain grade and received a certain order of distinction, and then was appointed governor of our province.

Before coming to us Yulia Mihailovna worked hard at moulding her husband. In her opinion he was not without abilities, he knew how to make an entrance and to appear to advantage, he understood how to listen and be silent with profundity, had acquired a quite distinguished deportment, could make a speech, indeed had even some odds

and ends of thought, and had caught the necessary gloss of modern liberalism. What worried her, however, was that he was not very open to new ideas, and after the long, everlasting plodding for a career, was unmistakably beginning to feel the need of repose. She tried to infect him with her own ambition, and he suddenly began making a toy church: the pastor came out to preach the sermon, the congregation listened with their hands before them, one lady was drying her tears with her handkerchief, one old gentleman was blowing his nose; finally the organ pealed forth. It had been ordered from Switzerland, and made expressly in spite of all expense. Yulia Mihailovna, in positive alarm, carried off the whole structure as soon as she knew about it, and locked it up in a box in her own room. To make up for it she allowed him to write a novel on condition of its being kept secret. From that time she began to reckon only upon herself. Unhappily there was a good deal of shallowness and lack of judgment in her attitude. Destiny had kept her too long an old maid. Now one idea after another fluttered through her ambitious and rather over-excited brain. She cherished designs, she positively desired to rule the province, dreamed of becoming at once the centre of a circle, adopted political sympathies. Von Lembke was actually a little alarmed, though, with his official tact, he quickly divined that he had no need at all to be uneasy about the government of the province itself. The first two or three months passed indeed very satisfactorily. But now Pyotr Stepanovitch had turned up, and something queer began to happen.

The fact was that young Verhovensky, from the first step, had displayed a flagrant lack of respect for Andrey Antonovitch, and had assumed a strange right to dictate to him; while Yulia Mihailovna, who had always till then been so jealous of her husband's dignity, absolutely refused to notice it; or, at any rate, attached no consequence to it. The young man became a favourite, ate, drank, and almost slept in the house. Von Lembke tried to defend himself, called him "young man" before other people, and slapped him patronisingly on the shoulder, but made no impression. Pyotr Stepanovitch always seemed to be laughing in his face even when he appeared on the surface to be talking seriously to him, and he would say the most startling things to him before company. Returning home one day he found the young man had installed himself in his study and was asleep on the sofa there, uninvited. He explained that he had come in, and finding no one at home had "had a good sleep."

Von Lembke was offended and again complained to his wife. Laughing at his irritability she observed tartly that he evidently did not know how to keep up his own dignity; and that with her, anyway, "the boy" had never permitted himself any undue familiarity, "he was naïve and fresh indeed, though not regardful of the conventions of society." Von Lembke sulked. This time she made peace between them. Pyotr Stepanovitch did not

go so far as to apologise, but got out of it with a coarse jest, which might at another time have been taken for a fresh offence, but was accepted on this occasion as a token of repentance. The weak spot in Andrey Antonovitch's position was that he had blundered in the first instance by divulging the secret of his novel to him. Imagining him to be an ardent young man of poetic feeling and having long dreamed of securing a listener, he had, during the early days of their acquaintance, on one occasion read aloud two chapters to him. The young man had listened without disguising his boredom, had rudely yawned, had vouchsafed no word of praise; but on leaving had asked for the manuscript that he might form an opinion of it at his leisure, and Andrey Antonovitch had given it him. He had not returned the manuscript since, though he dropped in every day, and had turned off all inquiries with a laugh. Afterwards he declared that he had lost it in the street. At the time Yulia Mihailovna was terribly angry with her husband when she heard of it.

"Perhaps you told him about the church too?" she burst out almost in dismay.

Von Lembke unmistakably began to brood, and brooding was bad for him, and had been forbidden by the doctors. Apart from the fact that there were signs of trouble in the province, of which we will speak later, he had private reasons for brooding, his heart was wounded, not merely his official dignity. When Andrey Antonovitch had entered upon married life, he had never conceived the possibility of conjugal strife, or dissension in the future. It was inconsistent with the dreams he had cherished all his life of his Minna or Ernestine. He felt that he was unequal to enduring domestic storms. Yulia Mihailovna had an open explanation with him at last.

"You can't be angry at this," she said, "if only because you've still as much sense as he has, and are immeasurably higher in the social scale. The boy still preserves many traces of his old free-thinking habits; I believe it's simply mischief; but one can do nothing suddenly, in a hurry; you must do things by degrees. We must make much of our young people; I treat them with affection and hold them back from the brink."

"But he says such dreadful things," Von Lembke objected. "I can't behave tolerantly when he maintains in my presence and before other people that the government purposely drenches the people with vodka in order to brutalise them, and so keep them from revolution. Fancy my position when I'm forced to listen to that before every one."

As he said this, Von Lembke recalled a conversation he had recently had with Pyotr Stepanovitch. With the innocent object of displaying his Liberal tendencies he had shown him his own private collection of every possible kind of manifesto, Russian and foreign, which he had carefully collected since the year 1859, not simply from a love of

collecting but from a laudable interest in them. Pyotr Stepanovitch, seeing his object, expressed the opinion that there was more sense in one line of some manifestoes than in a whole government department, "not even excluding yours, maybe."

Lembke winced.

"But this is premature among us, premature," he pronounced almost imploringly, pointing to the manifestoes.

"No, it's not premature; you see you're afraid, so it's not premature."

"But here, for instance, is an incitement to destroy churches."

"And why not? You're a sensible man, and of course you don't believe in it yourself, but you know perfectly well that you need religion to brutalise the people. Truth is honest than falsehood...."

"I agree, I agree, I quite agree with you, but it is premature, premature in this country ..." said Von Lembke, frowning.

"And how can you be an official of the government after that, when you agree to demolishing churches, and marching on Petersburg armed with staves, and make it all simply a question of date?"

Lembke was greatly put out at being so crudely caught.

"It's not so, not so at all," he cried, carried away and more and more mortified in his amour-propre. "You're young, and know nothing of our aims, and that's why you're mistaken. You see, my dear Pyotr Stepanovitch, you call us officials of the government, don't you? Independent officials, don't you? But let me ask you, how are we acting? Ours is the responsibility, but in the long run we serve the cause of progress just as you do. We only hold together what you are unsettling, and what, but for us, would go to pieces in all directions. We are not your enemies, not a bit of it. We say to you, go forward, progress, you may even unsettle things, that is, things that are antiquated and in need of reform. But we will keep you, when need be, within necessary limits, and so save you from yourselves, for without us you would set Russia tottering, robbing her of all external decency, while our task is to preserve external decency. Understand that we are mutually essential to one another. In England the Whigs and Tories are in the same way mutually essential to one another. Well, you're Whigs and we're Tories. That's how I look at it."

Andrey Antonovitch rose to positive eloquence. He had been fond of talking in a Liberal and intellectual style even in Petersburg, and the great thing here was that there was no one to play the spy on him.

Pyotr Stepanovitch was silent, and maintained an unusually grave air. This excited the orator more than ever.

“Do you know that I, the ‘person responsible for the province,’” he went on, walking about the study, “do you know I have so many duties I can’t perform one of them, and, on the other hand, I can say just as truly that there’s nothing for me to do here. The whole secret of it is, that everything depends upon the views of the government. Suppose the government were ever to found a republic, from policy, or to pacify public excitement, and at the same time to increase the power of the governors, then we governors would swallow up the republic; and not the republic only. Anything you like we’ll swallow up. I, at least, feel that I am ready. In one word, if the government dictates to me by telegram, *activité dévorante*, I’ll supply *activité dévorante*. I’ve told them here straight in their faces: ‘Dear sirs, to maintain the equilibrium and to develop all the provincial institutions one thing is essential; the increase of the power of the governor.’ You see it’s necessary that all these institutions, the zemstvos, the law-courts, should have a two-fold existence, that is, on the one hand, it’s necessary they should exist (I agree that it is necessary), on the other hand, it’s necessary that they shouldn’t. It’s all according to the views of the government. If the mood takes them so that institutions seem suddenly necessary, I shall have them at once in readiness. The necessity passes and no one will find them under my rule. That’s what I understand by *activité dévorante*, and you can’t have it without an increase of the governor’s power. We’re talking *tête-à-tête*. You know I’ve already laid before the government in Petersburg the necessity of a special sentinel before the governor’s house. I’m awaiting an answer.”

“You ought to have two,” Pyotr Stepanovitch commented.

“Why two?” said Von Lembke, stopping short before him.

“One’s not enough to create respect for you. You certainly ought to have two.”

Andrey Antonovitch made a wry face.

“You ... there’s no limit to the liberties you take, Pyotr Stepanovitch. You take advantage of my good-nature, you say cutting things, and play the part of a *bourru bienfaisant*...”

“Well, that’s as you please,” muttered Pyotr Stepanovitch; “anyway you pave the way for us and prepare for our success.”

“Now, who are ‘we,’ and what success?” said Von Lembke, staring at him in surprise. But he got no answer.

Yulia Mihailovna, receiving a report of the conversation, was greatly displeased.

“But I can’t exercise my official authority upon your favourite,” Andrey Antonovitch protested in self-defence, “especially when we’re *tête-à-tête*.... I may say too much ... in the goodness of my heart.”

“From too much goodness of heart. I didn’t know you’d got a collection of manifestoes. Be so good as to show them to me.”

“But ... he asked to have them for one day.”

“And you’ve let him have them, again!” cried Yulia Mihailovna getting angry. “How tactless!”

“I’ll send someone to him at once to get them.”

“He won’t give them up.”

“I’ll insist on it,” cried Von Lembke, boiling over, and he jumped up from his seat.

“Who’s he that we should be so afraid of him, and who am I that I shouldn’t dare to do any thing?”

“Sit down and calm yourself,” said Yulia Mihailovna, checking him. “I will answer your first question. He came to me with the highest recommendations. He’s talented, and sometimes says extremely clever things. Karmazinov tells me that he has connections almost everywhere, and extraordinary influence over the younger generation in Petersburg and Moscow. And if through him I can attract them all and group them round myself, I shall be saving them from perdition by guiding them into a new outlet for their ambitions. He’s devoted to me with his whole heart and is guided by me in everything.”

“But while they’re being petted ... the devil knows what they may not do. Of course, it’s an idea ...” said Von Lembke, vaguely defending himself, “but ... but here I’ve heard that manifestoes of some sort have been found in X district.”

“But there was a rumour of that in the summer—manifestoes, false bank-notes, and all the rest of it, but they haven’t found one of them so far. Who told you?”

“I heard it from Von Blum.”

“Ah, don’t talk to me of your Blum. Don’t ever dare mention him again!”

Yulia Mihailovna flew into a rage, and for a moment could not speak. Von Blum was a clerk in the governor’s office whom she particularly hated. Of that later.

“Please don’t worry yourself about Verhovensky,” she said in conclusion. “If he had taken part in any mischief he wouldn’t talk as he does to you, and every one else here. Talkers are not dangerous, and I will even go so far as to say that if anything were to happen I should be the first to hear of it through him. He’s quite fanatically devoted to me.”

I will observe, anticipating events that, had it not been for Yulia Mihailovna’s obstinacy and self-conceit, probably nothing of all the mischief these wretched people succeeded in bringing about amongst us would have happened. She was responsible for a great deal.

CHAPTER V. ON THE EVE OF THE FETE

I

The date of the fête which Yulia Mihailovna was getting up for the benefit of the governesses of our province had been several times fixed and put off. She had invariably bustling round her Pyotr Stepanovitch and a little clerk, Lyamshin, who used at one time to visit Stepan Trofimovitch, and had suddenly found favour in the governor’s house for the way he played the piano and now was of use running errands. Liputin was there a good deal too, and Yulia Mihailovna destined him to be the editor of a new independent provincial paper. There were also several ladies, married and single, and lastly, even Karmazinov who, though he could not be said to bustle, announced aloud with a complacent air that he would agreeably astonish every one when the literary quadrille began. An extraordinary multitude of donors and subscribers had turned up, all the select society of the town; but even the unselect were admitted, if only they produced the cash. Yulia Mihailovna observed that sometimes it was a positive duty to allow the mixing of classes, “for otherwise who is to enlighten them?”

A private drawing-room committee was formed, at which it was decided that the fête was to be of a democratic character. The enormous list of subscriptions tempted them to lavish expenditure. They wanted to do something on a marvellous scale—

that's why it was put off. They were still undecided where the ball was to take place, whether in the immense house belonging to the marshal's wife, which she was willing to give up to them for the day, or at Varvara Petrovna's mansion at Skvoreshniki. It was rather a distance to Skvoreshniki, but many of the committee were of opinion that it would be "freer" there. Varvara Petrovna would dearly have liked it to have been in her house. It's difficult to understand why this proud woman seemed almost making up to Yulia Mihailovna. Probably what pleased her was that the latter in her turn seemed almost fawning upon Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch and was more gracious to him than to anyone. I repeat again that Pyotr Stepanovitch was always, in continual whispers, strengthening in the governor's household an idea he had insinuated there already, that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was a man who had very mysterious connections with very mysterious circles, and that he had certainly come here with some commission from them.

People here seemed in a strange state of mind at the time. Among the ladies especially a sort of frivolity was conspicuous, and it could not be said to be a gradual growth. Certain very free-and-easy notions seemed to be in the air. There was a sort of dissipated gaiety and levity, and I can't say it was always quite pleasant. A lax way of thinking was the fashion. Afterwards when it was all over, people blamed Yulia Mihailovna, her circle, her attitude. But it can hardly have been altogether due to Yulia Mihailovna. On the contrary; at first many people vied with one another in praising the new governor's wife for her success in bringing local society together, and for making things more lively. Several scandalous incidents took place, for which Yulia Mihailovna was in no way responsible, but at the time people were amused and did nothing but laugh, and there was no one to check them. A rather large group of people, it is true, held themselves aloof, and had views of their own on the course of events. But even these made no complaint at the time; they smiled, in fact.

I remember that a fairly large circle came into existence, as it were, spontaneously, the centre of which perhaps was really to be found in Yulia Mihailovna's drawing-room. In this intimate circle which surrounded her, among the younger members of it, of course, it was considered admissible to play all sorts of pranks, sometimes rather free-and-easy ones, and, in fact, such conduct became a principle among them. In this circle there were even some very charming ladies. The young people arranged picnics, and even parties, and sometimes went about the town in a regular cavalcade, in carriages and on horseback. They sought out adventures, even got them up themselves, simply for the sake of having an amusing story to tell. They treated our town as though it were a sort of Glupov. People called them the jeerers or sneerers, because they did not stick at anything. It happened, for instance, that the wife of a

local lieutenant, a little brunette, very young though she looked worn out from her husband's ill-treatment, at an evening party thoughtlessly sat down to play whist for high stakes in the fervent hope of winning enough to buy herself a mantle, and instead of winning, lost fifteen roubles. Being afraid of her husband, and having no means of paying, she plucked up the courage of former days and ventured on the sly to ask for a loan, on the spot, at the party, from the son of our mayor, a very nasty youth, precociously vicious. The latter not only refused it, but went laughing aloud to tell her husband. The lieutenant, who certainly was poor, with nothing but his salary, took his wife home and avenged himself upon her to his heart's content in spite of her shrieks, wails, and entreaties on her knees for forgiveness. This revolting story excited nothing but mirth all over the town, and though the poor wife did not belong to Yulia Mihailovna's circle, one of the ladies of the "cavalcade," an eccentric and adventurous character who happened to know her, drove round, and simply carried her off to her own house. Here she was at once taken up by our madcaps, made much of, loaded with presents, and kept for four days without being sent back to her husband. She stayed at the adventurous lady's all day long, drove about with her and all the sportive company in expeditions about the town, and took part in dances and merry-making. They kept egging her on to haul her husband before the court and to make a scandal. They declared that they would all support her and would come and bear witness. The husband kept quiet, not daring to oppose them. The poor thing realised at last that she had got into a hopeless position and, more dead than alive with fright, on the fourth day she ran off in the dusk from her protectors to her lieutenant. It's not definitely known what took place between husband and wife, but two shutters of the low-pitched little house in which the lieutenant lodged were not opened for a fortnight. Yulia Mihailovna was angry with the mischief-makers when she heard about it all, and was greatly displeased with the conduct of the adventurous lady, though the latter had presented the lieutenant's wife to her on the day she carried her off. However, this was soon forgotten.

Another time a petty clerk, a respectable head of a family, married his daughter, a beautiful girl of seventeen, known to every one in the town, to another petty clerk, a young man who came from a different district. But suddenly it was learned that the young husband had treated the beauty very roughly on the wedding night, chastising her for what he regarded as a stain on his honour. Lyamshin, who was almost a witness of the affair, because he got drunk at the wedding and so stayed the night, as soon as day dawned, ran round with the diverting intelligence.

Instantly a party of a dozen was made up, all of them on horseback, some on hired Cossack horses, Pyotr Stepanovitch, for instance, and Liputin, who, in spite of his grey

hairs, took part in almost every scandalous adventure of our reckless youngsters. When the young couple appeared in the street in a droshky with a pair of horses to make the calls which are obligatory in our town on the day after a wedding, in spite of anything that may happen, the whole cavalcade, with merry laughter, surrounded the droshky and followed them about the town all the morning. They did not, it's true, go into the house, but waited for them outside, on horseback. They refrained from marked insult to the bride or bridegroom, but still they caused a scandal. The whole town began talking of it. Every one laughed, of course. But at this Von Lembke was angry, and again had a lively scene with Yulia Mihailovna. She, too, was extremely angry, and formed the intention of turning the scapegraces out of her house. But next day she forgave them all after persuasions from Pyotr Stepanovitch and some words from Karmazinov, who considered the affair rather amusing.

"It's in harmony with the traditions of the place," he said. "Anyway it's characteristic and ... bold; and look, every one's laughing, you're the only person indignant."

But there were pranks of a certain character that were absolutely past endurance.

A respectable woman of the artisan class, who went about selling gospels, came into the town. People talked about her, because some interesting references to these gospel women had just appeared in the Petersburg papers. Again the same buffoon, Lyamshin, with the help of a divinity student, who was taking a holiday while waiting for a post in the school, succeeded, on the pretence of buying books from the gospel woman, in thrusting into her bag a whole bundle of indecent and obscene photographs from abroad, sacrificed expressly for the purpose, as we learned afterwards, by a highly respectable old gentleman (I will omit his name) with an order on his breast, who, to use his own words, loved "a healthy laugh and a merry jest." When the poor woman went to take out the holy books in the bazaar, the photographs were scattered about the place. There were roars of laughter and murmurs of indignation. A crowd collected, began abusing her, and would have come to blows if the police had not arrived in the nick of time. The gospel woman was taken to the lock-up, and only in the evening, thanks to the efforts of Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who had learned with indignation the secret details of this loathsome affair, she was released and escorted out of the town. At this point Yulia Mihailovna would certainly have forbidden Lyamshin her house, but that very evening the whole circle brought him to her with the intelligence that he had just composed a new piece for the piano, and persuaded her at least to hear it. The piece turned out to be really amusing, and bore the comic title of "The Franco-Prussian War." It began with the menacing strains of the "Marseillaise":

“Qu’un sang impur abreuve nos sillons.”

There is heard the pompous challenge, the intoxication of future victories. But suddenly mingling with the masterly variations on the national hymn, somewhere from some corner quite close, on one side come the vulgar strains of “Mein lieber Augustin.” The “Marseillaise” goes on unconscious of them. The “Marseillaise” is at the climax of its intoxication with its own grandeur; but Augustin gains strength; Augustin grows more and more insolent, and suddenly the melody of Augustin begins to blend with the melody of the “Marseillaise.” The latter begins, as it were, to get angry; becoming aware of Augustin at last she tries to fling him off, to brush him aside like a tiresome insignificant fly. But “Mein lieber Augustin” holds his ground firmly, he is cheerful and self-confident, he is gleeful and impudent, and the “Marseillaise” seems suddenly to become terribly stupid. She can no longer conceal her anger and mortification; it is a wail of indignation, tears, and curses, with hands outstretched to Providence.

“Pas un pouce de notre terrain; pas une de nos forteresses.”

But she is forced to sing in time with “Mein lieber Augustin.” Her melody passes in a sort of foolish way into Augustin; she yields and dies away. And only by snatches there is heard again:

“Qu’un sang impur ...”

But at once it passes very offensively into the vulgar waltz. She submits altogether. It is Jules Favre sobbing on Bismarck’s bosom and surrendering every thing.... But at this point Augustin too grows fierce; hoarse sounds are heard; there is a suggestion of countless gallons of beer, of a frenzy of self-glorification, demands for millions, for fine cigars, champagne, and hostages. Augustin passes into a wild yell.... “The Franco-Prussian War” is over. Our circle applauded, Yulia Mihailovna smiled, and said, “Now, how is one to turn him out?” Peace was made. The rascal really had talent. Stepan Trofimovitch assured me on one occasion that the very highest artistic talents may exist in the most abominable blackguards, and that the one thing does not interfere with the other. There was a rumour afterwards that Lyamshin had stolen this burlesque from a talented and modest young man of his acquaintance, whose name remained unknown. But this is beside the mark. This worthless fellow who had hung about Stepan Trofimovitch for years, who used at his evening parties, when invited, to mimic Jews of various types, a deaf peasant woman making her confession, or the birth of a child, now at Yulia Mihailovna’s caricatured Stepan Trofimovitch himself in a killing way, under the title of “A Liberal of the Forties.” Everybody shook with laughter, so that in the end it was quite impossible to turn him out: he had become too

necessary a person. Besides he fawned upon Pyotr Stepanovitch in a slavish way, and he, in his turn, had obtained by this time a strange and unaccountable influence over Yulia Mihailovna.

I wouldn't have talked about this scoundrel, and, indeed, he would not be worth dwelling upon, but there was another revolting story, so people declare, in which he had a hand, and this story I cannot omit from my record.

One morning the news of a hideous and revolting sacrilege was all over the town. At the entrance to our immense marketplace there stands the ancient church of Our Lady's Nativity, which was a remarkable antiquity in our ancient town. At the gates of the precincts there is a large ikon of the Mother of God fixed behind a grating in the wall. And behold, one night the ikon had been robbed, the glass of the case was broken, the grating was smashed and several stones and pearls (I don't know whether they were very precious ones) had been removed from the crown and the setting. But what was worse, besides the theft a senseless, scoffing sacrilege had been perpetrated. Behind the broken glass of the ikon they found in the morning, so it was said, a live mouse. Now, four months since, it has been established beyond doubt that the crime was committed by the convict Fedka, but for some reason it is added that Lyamshin took part in it. At the time no one spoke of Lyamshin or had any suspicion of him. But now every one says it was he who put the mouse there. I remember all our responsible officials were rather staggered. A crowd thronged round the scene of the crime from early morning. There was a crowd continually before it, not a very huge one, but always about a hundred people, some coming and some going. As they approached they crossed themselves and bowed down to the ikon. They began to give offerings, and a church dish made its appearance, and with the dish a monk. But it was only about three o'clock in the afternoon it occurred to the authorities that it was possible to prohibit the crowds standing about, and to command them when they had prayed, bowed down and left their offerings, to pass on. Upon Von Lembke this unfortunate incident made the gloomiest impression. As I was told, Yulia Mihailovna said afterwards it was from this ill-omened morning that she first noticed in her husband that strange depression which persisted in him until he left our province on account of illness two months ago, and, I believe, haunts him still in Switzerland, where he has gone for a rest after his brief career amongst us.

I remember at one o'clock in the afternoon I crossed the marketplace; the crowd was silent and their faces solemn and gloomy. A merchant, fat and sallow, drove up, got out of his carriage, made a bow to the ground, kissed the ikon, offered a rouble, sighing, got back into his carriage and drove off. Another carriage drove up with two ladies accompanied by two of our scapegraces. The young people (one of whom was

not quite young) got out of their carriage too, and squeezed their way up to the ikon, pushing people aside rather carelessly. Neither of the young men took off his hat, and one of them put a pince-nez on his nose. In the crowd there was a murmur, vague but unfriendly. The dandy with the pince-nez took out of his purse, which was stuffed full of bank-notes, a copper farthing and flung it into the dish. Both laughed, and, talking loudly, went back to their carriage. At that moment Lizaveta Nikolaevna galloped up, escorted by Mavriky Nikolaevitch. She jumped off her horse, flung the reins to her companion, who, at her bidding, remained on his horse, and approached the ikon at the very moment when the farthing had been flung down. A flush of indignation suffused her cheeks; she took off her round hat and her gloves, fell straight on her knees before the ikon on the muddy pavement, and reverently bowed down three times to the earth. Then she took out her purse, but as it appeared she had only a few small coins in it she instantly took off her diamond ear-rings and put them in the dish.

“May I? May I? For the adornment of the setting?” she asked the monk.

“It is permitted,” replied the latter, “every gift is good.” The crowd was silent, expressing neither dissent nor approval.

Liza got on her horse again, in her muddy riding-habit, and galloped away.

II

Two days after the incident I have described I met her in a numerous company, who were driving out on some expedition in three coaches, surrounded by others on horseback. She beckoned to me, stopped her carriage, and pressingly urged me to join their party. A place was found for me in the carriage, and she laughingly introduced me to her companions, gorgeously attired ladies, and explained to me that they were all going on a very interesting expedition. She was laughing, and seemed somewhat excessively happy. Just lately she had been very lively, even playful, in fact.

The expedition was certainly an eccentric one. They were all going to a house the other side of the river, to the merchant Sevastyanov's. In the lodge of this merchant's house our saint and prophet, Semyon Yakovlevitch, who was famous not only amongst us but in the surrounding provinces and even in Petersburg and Moscow, had been living for the last ten years, in retirement, ease, and comfort. Every one went to see him, especially visitors to the neighbourhood, extracting from him some crazy utterance, bowing down to him, and leaving an offering. These offerings were sometimes considerable, and if Semyon Yakovlevitch did not himself assign them to some other purpose were piously sent to some church or more often to the monastery of Our

Lady. A monk from the monastery was always in waiting upon Semyon Yakovlevitch with this object.

All were in expectation of great amusement. No one of the party had seen Semyon Yakovlevitch before, except Lyamshin, who declared that the saint had given orders that he should be driven out with a broom, and had with his own hand flung two big baked potatoes after him. Among the party I noticed Pyotr Stepanovitch, again riding a hired Cossack horse, on which he sat extremely badly, and Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, also on horseback. The latter did not always hold aloof from social diversions, and on such occasions always wore an air of gaiety, although, as always, he spoke little and seldom. When our party had crossed the bridge and reached the hotel of the town, someone suddenly announced that in one of the rooms of the hotel they had just found a traveller who had shot himself, and were expecting the police. At once the suggestion was made that they should go and look at the suicide. The idea met with approval: our ladies had never seen a suicide. I remember one of them said aloud on the occasion, "Everything's so boring, one can't be squeamish over one's amusements, as long as they're interesting." Only a few of them remained outside. The others went in a body into the dirty corridor, and amongst the others I saw, to my amazement, Lizaveta Nikolaevna. The door of the room was open, and they did not, of course, dare to prevent our going in to look at the suicide. He was quite a young lad, not more than nineteen. He must have been very good-looking, with thick fair hair, with a regular oval face, and a fine, pure forehead. The body was already stiff, and his white young face looked like marble. On the table lay a note, in his handwriting, to the effect that no one was to blame for his death, that he had killed himself because he had "squandered" four hundred roubles. The word "squandered" was used in the letter; in the four lines of his letter there were three mistakes in spelling. A stout country gentleman, evidently a neighbour, who had been staying in the hotel on some business of his own, was particularly distressed about it. From his words it appeared that the boy had been sent by his family, that is, a widowed mother, sisters, and aunts, from the country to the town in order that, under the supervision of a female relation in the town, he might purchase and take home with him various articles for the trousseau of his eldest sister, who was going to be married. The family had, with sighs of apprehension, entrusted him with the four hundred roubles, the savings of ten years, and had sent him on his way with exhortations, prayers, and signs of the cross. The boy had till then been well-behaved and trustworthy. Arriving three days before at the town, he had not gone to his relations, had put up at the hotel, and gone straight to the club in the hope of finding in some back room a "travelling banker," or at least some game of cards for money. But that evening there was no "banker" there or

gambling going on. Going back to the hotel about midnight he asked for champagne, Havana cigars, and ordered a supper of six or seven dishes. But the champagne made him drunk, and the cigar made him sick, so that he did not touch the food when it was brought to him, and went to bed almost unconscious. Waking next morning as fresh as an apple, he went at once to the gipsies' camp, which was in a suburb beyond the river, and of which he had heard the day before at the club. He did not reappear at the hotel for two days. At last, at five o'clock in the afternoon of the previous day, he had returned drunk, had at once gone to bed, and had slept till ten o'clock in the evening. On waking up he had asked for a cutlet, a bottle of Chateau d'Yquem, and some grapes, paper, and ink, and his bill. No one noticed anything special about him; he was quiet, gentle, and friendly. He must have shot himself at about midnight, though it was strange that no one had heard the shot, and they only raised the alarm at midday, when, after knocking in vain, they had broken in the door. The bottle of Chateau d'Yquem was half empty, there was half a plateful of grapes left too. The shot had been fired from a little three-chambered revolver, straight into the heart. Very little blood had flowed. The revolver had dropped from his hand on to the carpet. The boy himself was half lying in a corner of the sofa. Death must have been instantaneous. There was no trace of the anguish of death in the face; the expression was serene, almost happy, as though there were no cares in his life. All our party stared at him with greedy curiosity. In every misfortune of one's neighbour there is always something cheering for an onlooker—whoever he may be. Our ladies gazed in silence, their companions distinguished themselves by their wit and their superb equanimity. One observed that his was the best way out of it, and that the boy could not have hit upon anything more sensible; another observed that he had had a good time if only for a moment. A third suddenly blurted out the inquiry why people had begun hanging and shooting themselves among us of late, as though they had suddenly lost their roots, as though the ground were giving way under every one's feet. People looked coldly at this raisonneur. Then Lyamshin, who prided himself on playing the fool, took a bunch of grapes from the plate; another, laughing, followed his example, and a third stretched out his hand for the Chateau d'Yquem. But the head of police arriving checked him, and even ordered that the room should be cleared. As every one had seen all they wanted they went out without disputing, though Lyamshin began pestering the police captain about something. The general merrymaking, laughter, and playful talk were twice as lively on the latter half of the way.

We arrived at Semyon Yakovlevitch's just at one o'clock. The gate of the rather large house stood unfastened, and the approach to the lodge was open. We learnt at once that Semyon Yakovlevitch was dining, but was receiving guests. The whole crowd of us

went in. The room in which the saint dined and received visitors had three windows, and was fairly large. It was divided into two equal parts by a wooden lattice-work partition, which ran from wall to wall, and was three or four feet high. Ordinary visitors remained on the outside of this partition, but lucky ones were by the saint's invitation admitted through the partition doors into his half of the room. And if so disposed he made them sit down on the sofa or on his old leather chairs. He himself invariably sat in an old-fashioned shabby Voltaire arm-chair. He was a rather big, bloated-looking, yellow-faced man of five and fifty, with a bald head and scanty flaxen hair. He wore no beard; his right cheek was swollen, and his mouth seemed somehow twisted awry. He had a large wart on the left side of his nose; narrow eyes, and a calm, stolid, sleepy expression. He was dressed in European style, in a black coat, but had no waistcoat or tie. A rather coarse, but white shirt, peeped out below his coat. There was something the matter with his feet, I believe, and he kept them in slippers. I've heard that he had at one time been a clerk, and received a rank in the service. He had just finished some fish soup, and was beginning his second dish of potatoes in their skins, eaten with salt. He never ate anything else, but he drank a great deal of tea, of which he was very fond. Three servants provided by the merchant were running to and fro about him. One of them was in a swallow-tail, the second looked like a workman, and the third like a verger. There was also a very lively boy of sixteen. Besides the servants there was present, holding a jug, a reverend, grey-headed monk, who was a little too fat. On one of the tables a huge samovar was boiling, and a tray with almost two dozen glasses was standing near it. On another table opposite offerings had been placed: some loaves and also some pounds of sugar, two pounds of tea, a pair of embroidered slippers, a foulard handkerchief, a length of cloth, a piece of linen, and so on. Money offerings almost all went into the monk's jug. The room was full of people, at least a dozen visitors, of whom two were sitting with Semyon Yakovlevitch on the other side of the partition. One was a grey-headed old pilgrim of the peasant class, and the other a little, dried-up monk, who sat demurely, with his eyes cast down. The other visitors were all standing on the near side of the partition, and were mostly, too, of the peasant class, except one elderly and poverty-stricken lady, one landowner, and a stout merchant, who had come from the district town, a man with a big beard, dressed in the Russian style, though he was known to be worth a hundred thousand.

All were waiting for their chance, not daring to speak of themselves. Four were on their knees, but the one who attracted most attention was the landowner, a stout man of forty-five, kneeling right at the partition, more conspicuous than any one, waiting reverently for a propitious word or look from Semyon Yakovlevitch. He had been there for about an hour already, but the saint still did not notice him.

Our ladies crowded right up to the partition, whispering gaily and laughingly together. They pushed aside or got in front of all the other visitors, even those on their knees, except the landowner, who remained obstinately in his prominent position even holding on to the partition. Merry and greedily inquisitive eyes were turned upon Semyon Yakovlevitch, as well as lorgnettes, pince-nez, and even opera-glasses. Lyamshin, at any rate, looked through an opera-glass. Semyon Yakovlevitch calmly and lazily scanned all with his little eyes.

“Milovzors! Milovzors!” he deigned to pronounce, in a hoarse bass, and slightly staccato.

All our party laughed: “What’s the meaning of ‘Milovzors’?” But Semyon Yakovlevitch relapsed into silence, and finished his potatoes. Presently he wiped his lips with his napkin, and they handed him tea.

As a rule, he did not take tea alone, but poured out some for his visitors, but by no means for all, usually pointing himself to those he wished to honour. And his choice always surprised people by its unexpectedness. Passing by the wealthy and the high-placed, he sometimes pitched upon a peasant or some decrepit old woman. Another time he would pass over the beggars to honour some fat wealthy merchant. Tea was served differently, too, to different people, sugar was put into some of the glasses and handed separately with others, while some got it without any sugar at all. This time the favoured one was the monk sitting by him, who had sugar put in; and the old pilgrim, to whom it was given without any sugar. The fat monk with the jug, from the monastery, for some reason had none handed to him at all, though up till then he had had his glass every day.

“Semyon Yakovlevitch, do say something to me. I’ve been longing to make your acquaintance for ever so long,” carolled the gorgeously dressed lady from our carriage, screwing up her eyes and smiling. She was the lady who had observed that one must not be squeamish about one’s amusements, so long as they were interesting. Semyon Yakovlevitch did not even look at her. The kneeling landowner uttered a deep, sonorous sigh, like the sound of a big pair of bellows.

“With sugar in it!” said Semyon Yakovlevitch suddenly, pointing to the wealthy merchant. The latter moved forward and stood beside the kneeling gentleman.

“Some more sugar for him!” ordered Semyon Yakovlevitch, after the glass had already been poured out. They put some more in. “More, more, for him!” More was put in a third time, and again a fourth. The merchant began submissively drinking his syrup.

“Heavens!” whispered the people, crossing themselves. The kneeling gentleman again heaved a deep, sonorous sigh.

“Father! Semyon Yakovlevitch!” The voice of the poor lady rang out all at once plaintively, though so sharply that it was startling. Our party had shoved her back to the wall. “A whole hour, dear father, I’ve been waiting for grace. Speak to me. Consider my case in my helplessness.”

“Ask her,” said Semyon Yakovlevitch to the verger, who went to the partition.

“Have you done what Semyon Yakovlevitch bade you last time?” he asked the widow in a soft and measured voice.

“Done it! Father Semyon Yakovlevitch. How can one do it with them?” wailed the widow. “They’re cannibals; they’re lodging a complaint against me, in the court; they threaten to take it to the senate. That’s how they treat their own mother!”

“Give her!” Semyon Yakovlevitch pointed to a sugar-loaf. The boy skipped up, seized the sugar-loaf and dragged it to the widow.

“Ach, father; great is your merciful kindness. What am I to do with so much?” wailed the widow.

“More, more,” said Semyon Yakovlevitch lavishly.

They dragged her another sugar-loaf. “More, more!” the saint commanded. They took her a third, and finally a fourth. The widow was surrounded with sugar on all sides. The monk from the monastery sighed; all this might have gone to the monastery that day as it had done on former occasions.

“What am I to do with so much,” the widow sighed obsequiously. “It’s enough to make one person sick!... Is it some sort of a prophecy, father?”

“Be sure it’s by way of a prophecy,” said someone in the crowd.

“Another pound for her, another!” Semyon Yakovlevitch persisted.

There was a whole sugar-loaf still on the table, but the saint ordered a pound to be given, and they gave her a pound.

“Lord have mercy on us!” gasped the people, crossing themselves. “It’s surely a prophecy.”

“Sweeten your heart for the future with mercy and loving kindness, and then come to make complaints against your own children; bone of your bone. That’s what we must

take this emblem to mean," the stout monk from the monastery, who had had no tea given to him, said softly but self-complacently, taking upon himself the rôle of interpreter in an access of wounded vanity.

"What are you saying, father?" cried the widow, suddenly infuriated. "Why, they dragged me into the fire with a rope round me when the Verhishins' house was burnt, and they locked up a dead cat in my chest. They are ready to do any villainy...."

"Away with her! Away with her!" Semyon Yakovlevitch said suddenly, waving his hands.

The verger and the boy dashed through the partition. The verger took the widow by the arm, and without resisting she trailed to the door, keeping her eyes fixed on the loaves of sugar that had been bestowed on her, which the boy dragged after her.

"One to be taken away. Take it away," Semyon Yakovlevitch commanded to the servant like a workman, who remained with him. The latter rushed after the retreating woman, and the three servants returned somewhat later bringing back one loaf of sugar which had been presented to the widow and now taken away from her. She carried off three, however.

"Semyon Yakovlevitch," said a voice at the door. "I dreamt of a bird, a jackdaw; it flew out of the water and flew into the fire. What does the dream mean?"

"Frost," Semyon Yakovlevitch pronounced.

"Semyon Yakovlevitch, why don't you answer me all this time? I've been interested in you ever so long," the lady of our party began again.

"Ask him!" said Semyon Yakovlevitch, not heeding her, but pointing to the kneeling gentleman.

The monk from the monastery to whom the order was given moved sedately to the kneeling figure.

"How have you sinned? And was not some command laid upon you?"

"Not to fight; not to give the rein to my hands," answered the kneeling gentleman hoarsely.

"Have you obeyed?" asked the monk.

"I cannot obey. My own strength gets the better of me."

“Away with him, away with him! With a broom, with a broom!” cried Semyon Yakovlevitch, waving his hands. The gentleman rushed out of the room without waiting for this penalty.

“He’s left a gold piece where he knelt,” observed the monk, picking up a half-imperial.

“For him!” said the saint, pointing to the rich merchant. The latter dared not refuse it, and took it.

“Gold to gold,” the monk from the monastery could not refrain from saying.

“And give him some with sugar in it,” said the saint, pointing to Mavriky Nikolaevitch. The servant poured out the tea and took it by mistake to the dandy with the pince-nez.

“The long one, the long one!” Semyon Yakovlevitch corrected him.

Mavriky Nikolaevitch took the glass, made a military half-bow, and began drinking it. I don’t know why, but all our party burst into peals of laughter.

“Mavriky Nikolaevitch,” cried Liza, addressing him suddenly. “That kneeling gentleman has gone away. You kneel down in his place.”

Mavriky Nikolaevitch looked at her in amazement.

“I beg you to. You’ll do me the greatest favour. Listen, Mavriky Nikolaevitch,” she went on, speaking in an emphatic, obstinate, excited, and rapid voice. “You must kneel down; I must see you kneel down. If you won’t, don’t come near me. I insist, I insist!”

I don’t know what she meant by it; but she insisted upon it relentlessly, as though she were in a fit. Mavriky Nikolaevitch, as we shall see later, set down these capricious impulses, which had been particularly frequent of late, to outbreaks of blind hatred for him, not due to spite, for, on the contrary, she esteemed him, loved him, and respected him, and he knew that himself—but from a peculiar unconscious hatred which at times she could not control.

In silence he gave his cup to an old woman standing behind him, opened the door of the partition, and, without being invited, stepped into Semyon Yakovlevitch’s private apartment, and knelt down in the middle of the room in sight of all. I imagine that he was deeply shocked in his candid and delicate heart by Liza’s coarse and mocking freak before the whole company. Perhaps he imagined that she would feel ashamed of herself, seeing his humiliation, on which she had so insisted. Of course no one but he would have dreamt of bringing a woman to reason by so naïve and risky a proceeding. He remained kneeling with his imperturbable gravity—long, tall,

awkward, and ridiculous. But our party did not laugh. The unexpectedness of the action produced a painful shock. Every one looked at Liza.

“Anoint, anoint!” muttered Semyon Yakovlevitch.

Liza suddenly turned white, cried out, and rushed through the partition. Then a rapid and hysterical scene followed. She began pulling Mavriky Nikolaevitch up with all her might, tugging at his elbows with both hands.

“Get up! Get up!” she screamed, as though she were crazy. “Get up at once, at once. How dare you?”

Mavriky Nikolaevitch got up from his knees. She clutched his arms above the elbow and looked intently into his face. There was terror in her expression.

“Milovzors! Milovzors!” Semyon Yakovlevitch repeated again.

She dragged Mavriky Nikolaevitch back to the other part of the room at last. There was some commotion in all our company. The lady from our carriage, probably intending to relieve the situation, loudly and shrilly asked the saint for the third time, with an affected smile:

“Well, Semyon Yakovlevitch, won’t you utter some saying for me? I’ve been reckoning so much on you.”

“Out with the —, out with the —,” said Semyon Yakovlevitch, suddenly addressing her, with an extremely indecent word. The words were uttered savagely, and with horrifying distinctness. Our ladies shrieked, and rushed headlong away, while the gentlemen escorting them burst into Homeric laughter. So ended our visit to Semyon Yakovlevitch.

At this point, however, there took place, I am told, an extremely enigmatic incident, and, I must own, it was chiefly on account of it that I have described this expedition so minutely.

I am told that when all flocked out, Liza, supported by Mavriky Nikolaevitch, was jostled against Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch in the crush in the doorway. I must mention that since that Sunday morning when she fainted they had not approached each other, nor exchanged a word, though they had met more than once. I saw them brought together in the doorway. I fancied they both stood still for an instant, and looked, as it were, strangely at one another, but I may not have seen rightly in the crowd. It is asserted, on the contrary, and quite seriously, that Liza, glancing at Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, quickly raised her hand to the level of his face, and would certainly

have struck him if he had not drawn back in time. Perhaps she was displeased with the expression of his face, or the way he smiled, particularly just after such an episode with Mavriky Nikolaevitch. I must admit I saw nothing myself, but all the others declared they had, though they certainly could not all have seen it in such a crush, though perhaps some may have. But I did not believe it at the time. I remember, however, that Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was rather pale all the way home.

III

Almost at the same time, and certainly on the same day, the interview at last took place between Stepan Trofimovitch and Varvara Petrovna. She had long had this meeting in her mind, and had sent word about it to her former friend, but for some reason she had kept putting it off till then. It took place at Skvoreshniki; Varvara Petrovna arrived at her country house all in a bustle; it had been definitely decided the evening before that the fête was to take place at the marshal's, but Varvara Petrovna's rapid brain at once grasped that no one could prevent her from afterwards giving her own special entertainment at Skvoreshniki, and again assembling the whole town. Then every one could see for themselves whose house was best, and in which more taste was displayed in receiving guests and giving a ball. Altogether she was hardly to be recognised. She seemed completely transformed, and instead of the unapproachable "noble lady" (Stepan Trofimovitch's expression) seemed changed into the most commonplace, whimsical society woman. But perhaps this may only have been on the surface.

When she reached the empty house she had gone through all the rooms, accompanied by her faithful old butler, Alexey Yegorytch, and by Fomushka, a man who had seen much of life and was a specialist in decoration. They began to consult and deliberate: what furniture was to be brought from the town house, what things, what pictures, where they were to be put, how the conservatories and flowers could be put to the best use, where to put new curtains, where to have the refreshment rooms, whether one or two, and so on and so on. And, behold, in the midst of this exciting bustle she suddenly took it into her head to send for Stepan Trofimovitch.

The latter had long before received notice of this interview and was prepared for it, and he had every day been expecting just such a sudden summons. As he got into the carriage he crossed himself: his fate was being decided. He found his friend in the big drawing-room on the little sofa in the recess, before a little marble table with a pencil and paper in her hands. Fomushka, with a yard measure, was measuring the height of the galleries and the windows, while Varvara Petrovna herself was writing down the numbers and making notes on the margin. She nodded in Stepan Trofimovitch's

direction without breaking off from what she was doing, and when the latter muttered some sort of greeting, she hurriedly gave him her hand, and without looking at him motioned him to a seat beside her.

“I sat waiting for five minutes, ‘mastering my heart,’” he told me afterwards. “I saw before me not the woman whom I had known for twenty years. An absolute conviction that all was over gave me a strength which astounded even her. I swear that she was surprised at my stoicism in that last hour.”

Varvara Petrovna suddenly put down her pencil on the table and turned quickly to Stepan Trofimovitch.

“Stepan Trofimovitch, we have to talk of business. I’m sure you have prepared all your fervent words and various phrases, but we’d better go straight to the point, hadn’t we?”

She had been in too great a hurry to show the tone she meant to take. And what might not come next?

“Wait, be quiet; let me speak. Afterwards you shall, though really I don’t know what you can answer me,” she said in a rapid patter. “The twelve hundred roubles of your pension I consider a sacred obligation to pay you as long as you live. Though why a sacred obligation, simply a contract; that would be a great deal more real, wouldn’t it? If you like, we’ll write it out. Special arrangements have been made in case of my death. But you are receiving from me at present lodging, servants, and your maintenance in addition. Reckoning that in money it would amount to fifteen hundred roubles, wouldn’t it? I will add another three hundred roubles, making three thousand roubles in all. Will that be enough a year for you? I think that’s not too little? In any extreme emergency I would add something more. And so, take your money, send me back my servants, and live by yourself where you like in Petersburg, in Moscow, abroad, or here, only not with me. Do you hear?”

“Only lately those lips dictated to me as imperatively and as suddenly very different demands,” said Stepan Trofimovitch slowly and with sorrowful distinctness. “I submitted ... and danced the Cossack dance to please you. *Oui, la comparaison peut être permise. C’était comme un petit Cosaque du Don qui sautait sur sa propre tombe.* Now ...”

“Stop, Stepan Trofimovitch, you are horribly long-winded. You didn’t dance, but came to see me in a new tie, new linen, gloves, scented and pomatumed. I assure you that you were very anxious to get married yourself; it was written on your face, and I assure you a most unseemly expression it was. If I did not mention it to you at the time, it was

simply out of delicacy. But you wished it, you wanted to be married, in spite of the abominable things you wrote about me and your betrothed. Now it's very different. And what has the Cosaque du Don to do with it, and what tomb do you mean? I don't understand the comparison. On the contrary, you have only to live. Live as long as you can. I shall be delighted."

"In an almshouse?"

"In an almshouse? People don't go into almshouses with three thousand roubles a year. Ah, I remember," she laughed. "Pyotr Stepanovitch did joke about an almshouse once. Bah, there certainly is a special almshouse, which is worth considering. It's for persons who are highly respectable; there are colonels there, and there's positively one general who wants to get into it. If you went into it with all your money, you would find peace, comfort, servants to wait on you. There you could occupy yourself with study, and could always make up a party for cards."

"*Passons.*"

"*Passons?*" Varvara Petrovna winced. "But, if so, that's all. You've been informed that we shall live henceforward entirely apart."

"And that's all?" he said. "All that's left of twenty years? Our last farewell?"

"You're awfully fond of these exclamations, Stepan Trofimovitch. It's not at all the fashion. Nowadays people talk roughly but simply. You keep harping on our twenty years! Twenty years of mutual vanity, and nothing more. Every letter you've written me was written not for me but for posterity. You're a stylist, and not a friend, and friendship is only a splendid word. In reality—a mutual exchange of sloppiness...."

"Good heavens! How many sayings not your own! Lessons learned by heart! They've already put their uniform on you too. You, too, are rejoicing; you, too, are basking in the sunshine. *Chère, chère*, for what a mess of pottage you have sold them your freedom!"

"I'm not a parrot, to repeat other people's phrases!" cried Varvara Petrovna, boiling over. "You may be sure I have stored up many sayings of my own. What have you been doing for me all these twenty years? You refused me even the books I ordered for you, though, except for the binder, they would have remained uncut. What did you give me to read when I asked you during those first years to be my guide? Always Kapfig, and nothing but Kapfig. You were jealous of my culture even, and took measures. And all the while every one's laughing at you. I must confess I always considered you only as a critic. You are a literary critic and nothing more. When on the way to Petersburg I told

you that I meant to found a journal and to devote my whole life to it, you looked at me ironically at once, and suddenly became horribly supercilious.”

“That was not that, not that.... we were afraid then of persecution....”

“It was just that. And you couldn’t have been afraid of persecution in Petersburg at that time. Do you remember that in February, too, when the news of the emancipation came, you ran to me in a panic, and demanded that I should at once give you a written statement that the proposed magazine had nothing to do with you; that the young people had been coming to see me and not you; that you were only a tutor who lived in the house, only because he had not yet received his salary. Isn’t that so? Do remember that? You have distinguished yourself all your life, Stepan Trofimovitch.”

“That was only a moment of weakness, a moment when we were alone,” he exclaimed mournfully. “But is it possible, is it possible, to break off everything for the sake of such petty impressions? Can it be that nothing more has been left between us after those long years?”

“You are horribly calculating; you keep trying to leave me in your debt. When you came back from abroad you looked down upon me and wouldn’t let me utter a word, but when I came back myself and talked to you afterwards of my impressions of the Madonna, you wouldn’t hear me, you began smiling condescendingly into your cravat, as though I were incapable of the same feelings as you.”

“It was not so. It was probably not so. *J’ai oublié!*”

“No; it was so,” she answered, “and, what’s more, you’ve nothing to pride yourself on. That’s all nonsense, and one of your fancies. Now, there’s no one, absolutely no one, in ecstasies over the Madonna; no one wastes time over it except old men who are hopelessly out of date. That’s established.”

“Established, is it?”

“It’s of no use whatever. This jug’s of use because one can pour water into it. This pencil’s of use because you can write anything with it. But that woman’s face is inferior to any face in nature. Try drawing an apple, and put a real apple beside it. Which would you take? You wouldn’t make a mistake, I’m sure. This is what all our theories amount to, now that the first light of free investigation has dawned upon them.”

“Indeed, indeed.”

“You laugh ironically. And what used you to say to me about charity? Yet the enjoyment derived from charity is a haughty and immoral enjoyment. The rich man’s enjoyment in his wealth, his power, and in the comparison of his importance with the poor. Charity corrupts giver and taker alike; and, what’s more, does not attain its object, as it only increases poverty. Fathers who don’t want to work crowd round the charitable like gamblers round the gambling-table, hoping for gain, while the pitiful farthings that are flung them are a hundred times too little. Have you given away much in your life? Less than a rouble, if you try and think. Try to remember when last you gave away anything; it’ll be two years ago, maybe four. You make an outcry and only hinder things. Charity ought to be forbidden by law, even in the present state of society. In the new regime there will be no poor at all.”

“Oh, what an eruption of borrowed phrases! So it’s come to the new regime already? Unhappy woman, God help you!”

“Yes; it has, Stepan Trofimovitch. You carefully concealed all these new ideas from me, though every one’s familiar with them nowadays. And you did it simply out of jealousy, so as to have power over me. So that now even that Yulia is a hundred miles ahead of me. But now my eyes have been opened. I have defended you, Stepan Trofimovitch, all I could, but there is no one who does not blame you.”

“Enough!” said he, getting up from his seat. “Enough! And what can I wish you now, unless it’s repentance?”

“Sit still a minute, Stepan Trofimovitch. I have another question to ask you. You’ve been told of the invitation to read at the literary matinée. It was arranged through me. Tell me what you’re going to read?”

“Why, about that very Queen of Queens, that ideal of humanity, the Sistine Madonna, who to your thinking is inferior to a glass or a pencil.”

“So you’re not taking something historical?” said Varvara Petrovna in mournful surprise. “But they won’t listen to you. You’ve got that Madonna on your brain. You seem bent on putting every one to sleep! Let me assure you, Stepan Trofimovitch, I am speaking entirely in your own interest. It would be a different matter if you would take some short but interesting story of mediæval court life from Spanish history, or, better still, some anecdote, and pad it out with other anecdotes and witty phrases of your own. There were magnificent courts then; ladies, you know, poisonings. Karmazinov says it would be strange if you couldn’t read something interesting from Spanish history.”

“Karmazinov—that fool who has written himself out—looking for a subject for me!”

“Karmazinov, that almost imperial intellect. You are too free in your language, Stepan Trofimovitch.”

“Your Karmazinov is a spiteful old woman whose day is over. *Chère, chère*, how long have you been so enslaved by them? Oh God!”

“I can’t endure him even now for the airs he gives himself. But I do justice to his intellect. I repeat, I have done my best to defend you as far as I could. And why do you insist on being absurd and tedious? On the contrary, come on to the platform with a dignified smile as the representative of the last generation, and tell them two or three anecdotes in your witty way, as only you can tell things sometimes. Though you may be an old man now, though you may belong to a past age, though you may have dropped behind them, in fact, yet you’ll recognise it yourself, with a smile, in your preface, and all will see that you’re an amiable, good-natured, witty relic ... in brief, a man of the old savour, and so far advanced as to be capable of appreciating at their value all the absurdities of certain ideas which you have hitherto followed. Come, as a favour to me, I beg you.”

“*Chère*, enough. Don’t ask me. I can’t. I shall speak of the Madonna, but I shall raise a storm that will either crush them all or shatter me alone.”

“It will certainly be you alone, Stepan Trofimovitch.”

“Such is my fate. I will speak of the contemptible slave, of the stinking, depraved flunkey who will first climb a ladder with scissors in his hands, and slash to pieces the divine image of the great ideal, in the name of equality, envy, and ... digestion. Let my curse thunder out upon them, and then—then ...”

“The madhouse?”

“Perhaps. But in any case, whether I shall be left vanquished or victorious, that very evening I shall take my bag, my beggar’s bag. I shall leave all my goods and chattels, all your presents, all your pensions and promises of future benefits, and go forth on foot to end my life a tutor in a merchant’s family or to die somewhere of hunger in a ditch. I have said it. *Alea jacta est*.” He got up again.

“I’ve been convinced for years,” said Varvara Petrovna, getting up with flashing eyes, “that your only object in life is to put me and my house to shame by your calumnies! What do you mean by being a tutor in a merchant’s family or dying in a ditch? It’s spite, calumny, and nothing more.”

“You have always despised me. But I will end like a knight, faithful to my lady. Your good opinion has always been dearer to me than anything. From this moment I will take nothing, but will worship you disinterestedly.”

“How stupid that is!”

“You have never respected me. I may have had a mass of weaknesses. Yes, I have sponged on you. I speak the language of nihilism, but sponging has never been the guiding motive of my action. It has happened so of itself. I don’t know how.... I always imagined there was something higher than meat and drink between us, and—I’ve never, never been a scoundrel! And so, to take the open road, to set things right. I set off late, late autumn out of doors, the mist lies over the fields, the hoarfrost of old age covers the road before me, and the wind howls about the approaching grave.... But so forward, forward, on my new way

*‘Filled with purest love and fervour,
Faith which my sweet dream did yield.’*

Oh, my dreams. Farewell. Twenty years. *Alea jacta est!*”

His face was wet with a sudden gush of tears. He took his hat.

“I don’t understand Latin,” said Varvara Petrovna, doing her best to control herself.

Who knows, perhaps, she too felt like crying. But caprice and indignation once more got the upper hand.

“I know only one thing, that all this is childish nonsense. You will never be capable of carrying out your threats, which are a mass of egoism. You will set off nowhere, to no merchant; you’ll end very peaceably on my hands, taking your pension, and receiving your utterly impossible friends on Tuesdays. Good-bye, Stepan Trofimovitch.”

“*Alea jacta est!*” He made her a deep bow, and returned home, almost dead with emotion.

CHAPTER VI. PYOTR STEPANOVITCH IS BUSY

I

The date of the fête was definitely fixed, and Von Lembke became more and more depressed. He was full of strange and sinister forebodings, and this made Yulia Mihailovna seriously uneasy. Indeed, things were not altogether satisfactory. Our mild governor had left the affairs of the province a little out of gear; at the moment we were threatened with cholera; serious outbreaks of cattle plague had appeared in several places; fires were prevalent that summer in towns and villages; whilst among the peasantry foolish rumours of incendiarism grew stronger and stronger. Cases of robbery were twice as numerous as usual. But all this, of course, would have been perfectly ordinary had there been no other and more weighty reasons to disturb the equanimity of Andrey Antonovitch, who had till then been in good spirits.

What struck Yulia Mihailovna most of all was that he became more silent and, strange to say, more secretive every day. Yet it was hard to imagine what he had to hide. It is true that he rarely opposed her and as a rule followed her lead without question. At her instigation, for instance, two or three regulations of a risky and hardly legal character were introduced with the object of strengthening the authority of the governor. There were several ominous instances of transgressions being condoned with the same end in view; persons who deserved to be sent to prison and Siberia were, solely because she insisted, recommended for promotion. Certain complaints and inquiries were deliberately and systematically ignored. All this came out later on. Not only did Lembke sign everything, but he did not even go into the question of the share taken by his wife in the execution of his duties. On the other hand, he began at times to be restive about "the most trifling matters," to the surprise of Yulia Mihailovna. No doubt he felt the need to make up for the days of suppression by brief moments of mutiny. Unluckily, Yulia Mihailovna was unable, for all her insight, to understand this honourable punctiliousness in an honourable character. Alas, she had no thought to spare for that, and that was the source of many misunderstandings.

There are some things of which it is not suitable for me to write, and indeed I am not in a position to do so. It is not my business to discuss the blunders of administration either, and I prefer to leave out this administrative aspect of the subject altogether. In the chronicle I have begun I've set before myself a different task. Moreover a great deal will be brought to light by the Commission of Inquiry which has just been appointed for our province; it's only a matter of waiting a little. Certain explanations, however, cannot be omitted.

But to return to Yulia Mihailovna. The poor lady (I feel very sorry for her) might have attained all that attracted and allured her (renown and so on) without any such violent and eccentric actions as she resolved upon at the very first step. But either from an exaggerated passion for the romantic or from the frequently blighted hopes of her

youth, she felt suddenly, at the change of her fortunes, that she had become one of the specially elect, almost God's anointed, "over whom there gleamed a burning tongue of fire," and this tongue of flame was the root of the mischief, for, after all, it is not like a chignon, which will fit any woman's head. But there is nothing of which it is more difficult to convince a woman than of this; on the contrary, anyone who cares to encourage the delusion in her will always be sure to meet with success. And people vied with one another in encouraging the delusion in Yulia Mihailovna. The poor woman became at once the sport of conflicting influences, while fully persuaded of her own originality. Many clever people feathered their nests and took advantage of her simplicity during the brief period of her rule in the province. And what a jumble there was under this assumption of independence! She was fascinated at the same time by the aristocratic element and the system of big landed properties and the increase of the governor's power, and the democratic element, and the new reforms and discipline, and free-thinking and stray Socialistic notions, and the correct tone of the aristocratic salon and the free-and-easy, almost pot-house, manners of the young people that surrounded her. She dreamed of "giving happiness" and reconciling the irreconcilable, or, rather, of uniting all and everything in the adoration of her own person. She had favourites too; she was particularly fond of Pyotr Stepanovitch, who had recourse at times to the grossest flattery in dealing with her. But she was attracted by him for another reason, an amazing one, and most characteristic of the poor lady: she was always hoping that he would reveal to her a regular conspiracy against the government. Difficult as it is to imagine such a thing, it really was the case. She fancied for some reason that there must be a nihilist plot concealed in the province. By his silence at one time and his hints at another Pyotr Stepanovitch did much to strengthen this strange idea in her. She imagined that he was in communication with every revolutionary element in Russia but at the same time passionately devoted to her. To discover the plot, to receive the gratitude of the government, to enter on a brilliant career, to influence the young "by kindness," and to restrain them from extremes—all these dreams existed side by side in her fantastic brain. She had saved Pyotr Stepanovitch, she had conquered him (of this she was for some reason firmly convinced); she would save others. None, none of them should perish, she should save them all; she would pick them out; she would send in the right report of them; she would act in the interests of the loftiest justice, and perhaps posterity and Russian liberalism would bless her name; yet the conspiracy would be discovered. Every advantage at once.

Still it was essential that Andrey Antonovitch should be in rather better spirits before the festival. He must be cheered up and reassured. For this purpose she sent Pyotr

Stepanovitch to him in the hope that he would relieve his depression by some means of consolation best known to himself, perhaps by giving him some information, so to speak, first hand. She put implicit faith in his dexterity.

It was some time since Pyotr Stepanovitch had been in Mr. von Lembke's study. He popped in on him just when the sufferer was in a most stubborn mood.

II

A combination of circumstances had arisen which Mr. von Lembke was quite unable to deal with. In the very district where Pyotr Stepanovitch had been having a festive time a sub-lieutenant had been called up to be censured by his immediate superior, and the reproof was given in the presence of the whole company. The sub-lieutenant was a young man fresh from Petersburg, always silent and morose, of dignified appearance though small, stout, and rosy-cheeked. He resented the reprimand and suddenly, with a startling shriek that astonished the whole company, he charged at his superior officer with his head bent down like a wild beast's, struck him, and bit him on the shoulder with all his might; they had difficulty in getting him off. There was no doubt that he had gone out of his mind; anyway, it became known that of late he had been observed performing incredibly strange actions. He had, for instance, flung two ikons belonging to his landlady out of his lodgings and smashed up one of them with an axe; in his own room he had, on three stands resembling lecterns, laid out the works of Vogt, Moleschott, and Buchner, and before each lectern he used to burn a church wax-candle. From the number of books found in his rooms it could be gathered that he was a well-read man. If he had had fifty thousand francs he would perhaps have sailed to the island of Marquisas like the "cadet" to whom Herzen alludes with such sprightly humour in one of his writings. When he was seized, whole bundles of the most desperate manifestoes were found in his pockets and his lodgings.

Manifestoes are a trivial matter too, and to my thinking not worth troubling about. We have seen plenty of them. Besides, they were not new manifestoes; they were, it was said later, just the same as had been circulated in the X province, and Liputin, who had travelled in that district and the neighbouring province six weeks previously, declared that he had seen exactly the same leaflets there then. But what struck Andrey Antonovitch most was that the overseer of Shpigulin's factory had brought the police just at the same time two or three packets of exactly the same leaflets as had been found on the lieutenant. The bundles, which had been dropped in the factory in the night, had not been opened, and none of the factory-hands had had time to read

one of them. The incident was a trivial one, but it set Andrey Antonovitch pondering deeply. The position presented itself to him in an unpleasantly complicated light.

In this factory the famous “Shpigulin scandal” was just then brewing, which made so much talk among us and got into the Petersburg and Moscow papers with all sorts of variations. Three weeks previously one of the hands had fallen ill and died of Asiatic cholera; then several others were stricken down. The whole town was in a panic, for the cholera was coming nearer and nearer and had reached the neighbouring province. I may observe that satisfactory sanitary measures had been, so far as possible, taken to meet the unexpected guest. But the factory belonging to the Shpigulins, who were millionaires and well-connected people, had somehow been overlooked. And there was a sudden outcry from every one that this factory was the hot-bed of infection, that the factory itself, and especially the quarters inhabited by the workpeople, were so inveterately filthy that even if cholera had not been in the neighbourhood there might well have been an outbreak there. Steps were immediately taken, of course, and Andrey Antonovitch vigorously insisted on their being carried out without delay within three weeks. The factory was cleansed, but the Shpigulins, for some unknown reason, closed it. One of the Shpigulin brothers always lived in Petersburg and the other went away to Moscow when the order was given for cleansing the factory. The overseer proceeded to pay off the workpeople and, as it appeared, cheated them shamelessly. The hands began to complain among themselves, asking to be paid fairly, and foolishly went to the police, though without much disturbance, for they were not so very much excited. It was just at this moment that the manifestoes were brought to Andrey Antonovitch by the overseer.

Pyotr Stepanovitch popped into the study unannounced, like an intimate friend and one of the family; besides, he had a message from Yulia Mihailovna. Seeing him, Lembke frowned grimly and stood still at the table without welcoming him. Till that moment he had been pacing up and down the study and had been discussing something *tête-à-tête* with his clerk Blum, a very clumsy and surly German whom he had brought with him from Petersburg, in spite of the violent opposition of Yulia Mihailovna. On Pyotr Stepanovitch’s entrance the clerk had moved to the door, but had not gone out. Pyotr Stepanovitch even fancied that he exchanged significant glances with his chief.

“Aha, I’ve caught you at last, you secretive monarch of the town!” Pyotr Stepanovitch cried out laughing, and laid his hand over the manifesto on the table. “This increases your collection, eh?”

Andrey Antonovitch flushed crimson; his face seemed to twitch.

“Leave off, leave off at once!” he cried, trembling with rage. “And don’t you dare ... sir ...”

“What’s the matter with you? You seem to be angry!”

“Allow me to inform you, sir, that I’ve no intention of putting up with your *sans façon* henceforward, and I beg you to remember ...”

“Why, damn it all, he is in earnest!”

“Hold your tongue, hold your tongue”—Von Lembke stamped on the carpet—“and don’t dare ...”

God knows what it might have come to. Alas, there was one circumstance involved in the matter of which neither Pyotr Stepanovitch nor even Yulia Mihailovna herself had any idea. The luckless Andrey Antonovitch had been so greatly upset during the last few days that he had begun to be secretly jealous of his wife and Pyotr Stepanovitch. In solitude, especially at night, he spent some very disagreeable moments.

“Well, I imagined that if a man reads you his novel two days running till after midnight and wants to hear your opinion of it, he has of his own act discarded official relations, anyway.... Yulia Mihailovna treats me as a friend; there’s no making you out,” Pyotr Stepanovitch brought out, with a certain dignity indeed. “Here is your novel, by the way.” He laid on the table a large heavy manuscript rolled up in blue paper.

Lembke turned red and looked embarrassed.

“Where did you find it?” he asked discreetly, with a rush of joy which he was unable to suppress, though he did his utmost to conceal it.

“Only fancy, done up like this, it rolled under the chest of drawers. I must have thrown it down carelessly on the chest when I went out. It was only found the day before yesterday, when the floor was scrubbed. You did set me a task, though!”

Lembke dropped his eyes sternly.

“I haven’t slept for the last two nights, thanks to you. It was found the day before yesterday, but I kept it, and have been reading it ever since. I’ve no time in the day, so I’ve read it at night. Well, I don’t like it; it’s not my way of looking at things. But that’s no matter; I’ve never set up for being a critic, but I couldn’t tear myself away from it, my dear man, though I didn’t like it! The fourth and fifth chapters are ... they really are ... damn it all, they are beyond words! And what a lot of humour you’ve packed into it; it made me laugh! How you can make fun of things *sans que cela paraisse!* As for the ninth and tenth chapters, it’s all about love; that’s not my line, but it’s effective though.

I was nearly blubbering over Egrenev's letter, though you've shown him up so cleverly.... You know, it's touching, though at the same time you want to show the false side of him, as it were, don't you? Have I guessed right? But I could simply beat you for the ending. For what are you setting up? Why, the same old idol of domestic happiness, begetting children and making money; 'they were married and lived happy ever afterwards'—come, it's too much! You will enchant your readers, for even I couldn't put the book down; but that makes it all the worse! The reading public is as stupid as ever, but it's the duty of sensible people to wake them up, while you ... But that's enough. Good-bye. Don't be cross another time; I came in to you because I had a couple of words to say to you, but you are so unaccountable ...”

Andrey Antonovitch meantime took his novel and locked it up in an oak bookcase, seizing the opportunity to wink to Blum to disappear. The latter withdrew with a long, mournful face.

“I am not unaccountable, I am simply ... nothing but annoyances,” he muttered, frowning but without anger, and sitting down to the table. “Sit down and say what you have to say. It's a long time since I've seen you, Pyotr Stepanovitch, only don't burst upon me in the future with such manners ... sometimes, when one has business, it's ...”

“My manners are always the same....”

“I know, and I believe that you mean nothing by it, but sometimes one is worried.... Sit down.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch immediately lolled back on the sofa and drew his legs under him.

III

“What sort of worries? Surely not these trifles?” He nodded towards the manifesto. “I can bring you as many of them as you like; I made their acquaintance in X province.”

“You mean at the time you were staying there?”

“Of course, it was not in my absence. I remember there was a hatchet printed at the top of it. Allow me.” (He took up the manifesto.) “Yes, there's the hatchet here too; that's it, the very same.”

“Yes, here's a hatchet. You see, a hatchet.”

“Well, is it the hatchet that scares you?”

“No, it’s not ... and I am not scared; but this business ... it is a business; there are circumstances.”

“What sort? That it’s come from the factory? He he! But do you know, at that factory the workpeople will soon be writing manifestoes for themselves.”

“What do you mean?” Von Lembke stared at him severely.

“What I say. You’ve only to look at them. You are too soft, Andrey Antonovitch; you write novels. But this has to be handled in the good old way.”

“What do you mean by the good old way? What do you mean by advising me? The factory has been cleaned; I gave the order and they’ve cleaned it.”

“And the workmen are in rebellion. They ought to be flogged, every one of them; that would be the end of it.”

“In rebellion? That’s nonsense; I gave the order and they’ve cleaned it.”

“Ech, you are soft, Andrey Antonovitch!”

“In the first place, I am not so soft as you think, and in the second place ...” Von Lembke was piqued again. He had exerted himself to keep up the conversation with the young man from curiosity, wondering if he would tell him anything new.

“Ha ha, an old acquaintance again,” Pyotr Stepanovitch interrupted, pouncing on another document that lay under a paper-weight, something like a manifesto, obviously printed abroad and in verse. “Oh, come, I know this one by heart, ‘A Noble Personality.’ Let me have a look at it—yes, ‘A Noble Personality’ it is. I made acquaintance with that personality abroad. Where did you unearth it?”

“You say you’ve seen it abroad?” Von Lembke said eagerly.

“I should think so, four months ago, or may be five.”

“You seem to have seen a great deal abroad.” Von Lembke looked at him subtly.

Pyotr Stepanovitch, not heeding him, unfolded the document and read the poem aloud:

“A NOBLE PERSONALITY

“He was not of rank exalted,

He was not of noble birth,

He was bred among the people

*In the breast of Mother Earth.
But the malice of the nobles
And the Tsar's revengeful wrath
Drove him forth to grief and torture
On the martyr's chosen path.
He set out to teach the people
Freedom, love, equality,
To exhort them to resistance;
But to flee the penalty
Of the prison, whip and gallows,
To a foreign land he went.
While the people waited hoping
From Smolensk to far Tashkent,
Waited eager for his coming
To rebel against their fate,
To arise and crush the Tsardom
And the nobles' vicious hate,
To share all the wealth in common,
And the antiquated thrall
Of the church, the home and marriage
To abolish once for all."*

"You got it from that officer, I suppose, eh?" asked Pyotr Stepanovitch.

"Why, do you know that officer, then, too?"

"I should think so. I had a gay time with him there for two days; he was bound to go out of his mind."

"Perhaps he did not go out of his mind."

“You think he didn’t because he began to bite?”

“But, excuse me, if you saw those verses abroad and then, it appears, at that officer’s ...”

“What, puzzling, is it? You are putting me through an examination, Andrey Antonovitch, I see. You see,” he began suddenly with extraordinary dignity, “as to what I saw abroad I have already given explanations, and my explanations were found satisfactory, otherwise I should not have been gratifying this town with my presence. I consider that the question as regards me has been settled, and I am not obliged to give any further account of myself, not because I am an informer, but because I could not help acting as I did. The people who wrote to Yulia Mihailovna about me knew what they were talking about, and they said I was an honest man.... But that’s neither here nor there; I’ve come to see you about a serious matter, and it’s as well you’ve sent your chimney-sweep away. It’s a matter of importance to me, Andrey Antonovitch. I shall have a very great favour to ask of you.”

“A favour? H’m ... by all means; I am waiting and, I confess, with curiosity. And I must add, Pyotr Stepanovitch, that you surprise me not a little.”

Von Lembke was in some agitation. Pyotr Stepanovitch crossed his legs.

“In Petersburg,” he began, “I talked freely of most things, but there were things—this, for instance” (he tapped the “Noble Personality” with his finger) “about which I held my tongue—in the first place, because it wasn’t worth talking about, and secondly, because I only answered questions. I don’t care to put myself forward in such matters; in that I see the distinction between a rogue and an honest man forced by circumstances. Well, in short, we’ll dismiss that. But now ... now that these fools ... now that this has come to the surface and is in your hands, and I see that you’ll find out all about it—for you are a man with eyes and one can’t tell beforehand what you’ll do—and these fools are still going on, I ... I ... well, the fact is, I’ve come to ask you to save one man, a fool too, most likely mad, for the sake of his youth, his misfortunes, in the name of your humanity.... You can’t be so humane only in the novels you manufacture!” he said, breaking off with coarse sarcasm and impatience.

In fact, he was seen to be a straightforward man, awkward and impolitic from excess of humane feeling and perhaps from excessive sensitiveness—above all, a man of limited intelligence, as Von Lembke saw at once with extraordinary subtlety. He had indeed long suspected it, especially when during the previous week he had, sitting alone in his study at night, secretly cursed him with all his heart for the inexplicable way in which he had gained Yulia Mihailovna’s good graces.

“For whom are you interceding, and what does all this mean?” he inquired majestically, trying to conceal his curiosity.

“It ... it’s ... damn it! It’s not my fault that I trust you! Is it my fault that I look upon you as a most honourable and, above all, a sensible man ... capable, that is, of understanding ... damn ...”

The poor fellow evidently could not master his emotion.

“You must understand at last,” he went on, “you must understand that in pronouncing his name I am betraying him to you—I am betraying him, am I not? I am, am I not?”

“But how am I to guess if you don’t make up your mind to speak out?”

“That’s just it; you always cut the ground from under one’s feet with your logic, damn it.... Well, here goes ... this ‘noble personality,’ this ‘student’ ... is Shatov ... that’s all.”

“Shatov? How do you mean it’s Shatov?”

“Shatov is the ‘student’ who is mentioned in this. He lives here, he was once a serf, the man who gave that slap...”

“I know, I know.” Lembke screwed up his eyes. “But excuse me, what is he accused of? Precisely and, above all, what is your petition?”

“I beg you to save him, do you understand? I used to know him eight years ago, I might almost say I was his friend,” cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, completely carried away. “But I am not bound to give you an account of my past life,” he added, with a gesture of dismissal. “All this is of no consequence; it’s the case of three men and a half, and with those that are abroad you can’t make up a dozen. But what I am building upon is your humanity and your intelligence. You will understand and you will put the matter in its true light, as the foolish dream of a man driven crazy ... by misfortunes, by continued misfortunes, and not as some impossible political plot or God knows what!”

He was almost gasping for breath.

“H’m. I see that he is responsible for the manifestoes with the axe,” Lembke concluded almost majestically. “Excuse me, though, if he were the only person concerned, how could he have distributed it both here and in other districts and in the X province ... and, above all, where did he get them?”

“But I tell you that at the utmost there are not more than five people in it—a dozen perhaps. How can I tell?”

“You don’t know?”

“How should I know?—damn it all.”

“Why, you knew that Shatov was one of the conspirators.”

“Ech!” Pyotr Stepanovitch waved his hand as though to keep off the overwhelming penetration of the inquirer. “Well, listen. I’ll tell you the whole truth: of the manifestoes I know nothing—that is, absolutely nothing. Damn it all, don’t you know what nothing means?... That sub-lieutenant, to be sure, and somebody else and someone else here ... and Shatov perhaps and someone else too—well, that’s the lot of them ... a wretched lot.... But I’ve come to intercede for Shatov. He must be saved, for this poem is his, his own composition, and it was through him it was published abroad; that I know for a fact, but of the manifestoes I really know nothing.”

“If the poem is his work, no doubt the manifestoes are too. But what data have you for suspecting Mr. Shatov?”

Pyotr Stepanovitch, with the air of a man driven out of all patience, pulled a pocket-book out of his pocket and took a note out of it.

“Here are the facts,” he cried, flinging it on the table.

Lembke unfolded it; it turned out to be a note written six months before from here to some address abroad. It was a brief note, only two lines:

“I can’t print ‘A Noble Personality’ here, and in fact I can do nothing; print it abroad.

“Iv. Shatov.”

Lembke looked intently at Pyotr Stepanovitch. Varvara Petrovna had been right in saying that he had at times the expression of a sheep.

“You see, it’s like this,” Pyotr Stepanovitch burst out. “He wrote this poem here six months ago, but he couldn’t get it printed here, in a secret printing press, and so he asks to have it printed abroad.... That seems clear.”

“Yes, that’s clear, but to whom did he write? That’s not clear yet,” Lembke observed with the most subtle irony.

“Why, Kirillov, of course; the letter was written to Kirillov abroad.... Surely you knew that? What’s so annoying is that perhaps you are only putting it on before me, and most likely you knew all about this poem and everything long ago! How did it come to be on your table? It found its way there somehow! Why are you torturing me, if so?”

He feverishly mopped his forehead with his handkerchief.

“I know something, perhaps.” Lembke parried dexterously. “But who is this Kirillov?”

“An engineer who has lately come to the town. He was Stavrogin’s second, a maniac, a madman; your sub-lieutenant may really only be suffering from temporary delirium, but Kirillov is a thoroughgoing madman—thoroughgoing, that I guarantee. Ah, Andrey Antonovitch, if the government only knew what sort of people these conspirators all are, they wouldn’t have the heart to lay a finger on them. Every single one of them ought to be in an asylum; I had a good look at them in Switzerland and at the congresses.”

“From which they direct the movement here?”

“Why, who directs it? Three men and a half. It makes one sick to think of them. And what sort of movement is there here? Manifestoes! And what recruits have they made? Sub-lieutenants in brain fever and two or three students! You are a sensible man: answer this question. Why don’t people of consequence join their ranks? Why are they all students and half-baked boys of twenty-two? And not many of those. I dare say there are thousands of bloodhounds on their track, but have they tracked out many of them? Seven! I tell you it makes one sick.”

Lembke listened with attention but with an expression that seemed to say, “You don’t feed nightingales on fairy-tales.”

“Excuse me, though. You asserted that the letter was sent abroad, but there’s no address on it; how do you come to know that it was addressed to Mr. Kirillov and abroad too and ... and ... that it really was written by Mr. Shatov?”

“Why, fetch some specimen of Shatov’s writing and compare it. You must have some signature of his in your office. As for its being addressed to Kirillov, it was Kirillov himself showed it me at the time.”

“Then you were yourself ...”

“Of course I was, myself. They showed me lots of things out there. And as for this poem, they say it was written by Herzen to Shatov when he was still wandering abroad, in memory of their meeting, so they say, by way of praise and recommendation—damn it all ... and Shatov circulates it among the young people as much as to say, ‘This was Herzen’s opinion of me.’”

“Ha ha!” cried Lembke, feeling he had got to the bottom of it at last. “That’s just what I was wondering: one can understand the manifesto, but what’s the object of the poem?”

“Of course you’d see it. Goodness knows why I’ve been babbling to you. Listen. Spare Shatov for me and the rest may go to the devil—even Kirillov, who is in hiding now, shut up in Filipov’s house, where Shatov lodges too. They don’t like me because I’ve turned round ... but promise me Shatov and I’ll dish them all up for you. I shall be of use, Andrey Antonovitch! I reckon nine or ten men make up the whole wretched lot. I am keeping an eye on them myself, on my own account. We know of three already: Shatov, Kirillov, and that sub-lieutenant. The others I am only watching carefully ... though I am pretty sharp-sighted too. It’s the same over again as it was in the X province: two students, a schoolboy, two noblemen of twenty, a teacher, and a half-pay major of sixty, crazy with drink, have been caught with manifestoes; that was all—you can take my word for it, that was all; it was quite a surprise that that was all. But I must have six days. I have reckoned it out—six days, not less. If you want to arrive at any result, don’t disturb them for six days and I can kill all the birds with one stone for you; but if you flutter them before, the birds will fly away. But spare me Shatov. I speak for Shatov.... The best plan would be to fetch him here secretly, in a friendly way, to your study and question him without disguising the facts.... I have no doubt he’ll throw himself at your feet and burst into tears! He is a highly strung and unfortunate fellow; his wife is carrying on with Stavrogin. Be kind to him and he will tell you everything, but I must have six days.... And, above all, above all, not a word to Yulia Mihailovna. It’s a secret. May it be a secret?”

“What?” cried Lembke, opening wide his eyes. “Do you mean to say you said nothing of this to Yulia Mihailovna?”

“To her? Heaven forbid! Ech, Andrey Antonovitch! You see, I value her friendship and I have the highest respect for her ... and all the rest of it ... but I couldn’t make such a blunder. I don’t contradict her, for, as you know yourself, it’s dangerous to contradict her. I may have dropped a word to her, for I know she likes that, but to suppose that I mentioned names to her as I have to you or anything of that sort! My good sir! Why am I appealing to you? Because you are a man, anyway, a serious person with old-fashioned firmness and experience in the service. You’ve seen life. You must know by heart every detail of such affairs, I expect, from what you’ve seen in Petersburg. But if I were to mention those two names, for instance, to her, she’d stir up such a hubbub.... You know, she would like to astonish Petersburg. No, she’s too hot-headed, she really is.”

“Yes, she has something of that *fougue*,” Andrey Antonovitch muttered with some satisfaction, though at the same time he resented this unmannerly fellow’s daring to express himself rather freely about Yulia Mihailovna. But Pyotr Stepanovitch probably imagined that he had not gone far enough and that he must exert himself further to flatter Lembke and make a complete conquest of him.

“*Fougue* is just it,” he assented. “She may be a woman of genius, a literary woman, but she would scare our sparrows. She wouldn’t be able to keep quiet for six hours, let alone six days. Ech, Andrey Antonovitch, don’t attempt to tie a woman down for six days! You do admit that I have some experience—in this sort of thing, I mean; I know something about it, and you know that I may very well know something about it. I am not asking for six days for fun but with an object.”

“I have heard ...” (Lembke hesitated to utter his thought) “I have heard that on your return from abroad you made some expression ... as it were of repentance, in the proper quarter?”

“Well, that’s as it may be.”

“And, of course, I don’t want to go into it.... But it has seemed to me all along that you’ve talked in quite a different style—about the Christian faith, for instance, about social institutions, about the government even....”

“I’ve said lots of things, no doubt, I am saying them still; but such ideas mustn’t be applied as those fools do it, that’s the point. What’s the good of biting his superior’s shoulder! You agreed with me yourself, only you said it was premature.”

“I didn’t mean that when I agreed and said it was premature.”

“You weigh every word you utter, though. He he! You are a careful man!” Pyotr Stepanovitch observed gaily all of a sudden. “Listen, old friend. I had to get to know you; that’s why I talked in my own style. You are not the only one I get to know like that. Maybe I needed to find out your character.”

“What’s my character to you?”

“How can I tell what it may be to me?” He laughed again. “You see, my dear and highly respected Andrey Antonovitch, you are cunning, but it’s not come to *that* yet and it certainly never will come to it, you understand? Perhaps you do understand. Though I did make an explanation in the proper quarter when I came back from abroad, and I really don’t know why a man of certain convictions should not be able to work for the advancement of his sincere convictions ... but nobody *there* has yet instructed me to investigate your character and I’ve not undertaken any such job from *them*. Consider:

I need not have given those two names to you. I might have gone straight *there*; that is where I made my first explanations. And if I'd been acting with a view to financial profit or my own interest in any way, it would have been a bad speculation on my part, for now they'll be grateful to you and not to me at headquarters. I've done it solely for Shatov's sake," Pyotr Stepanovitch added generously, "for Shatov's sake, because of our old friendship.... But when you take up your pen to write to headquarters, you may put in a word for me, if you like.... I'll make no objection, he he! *Adieu*, though; I've stayed too long and there was no need to gossip so much!" he added with some amiability, and he got up from the sofa.

"On the contrary, I am very glad that the position has been defined, so to speak." Von Lembke too got up and he too looked pleasant, obviously affected by the last words. "I accept your services and acknowledge my obligation, and you may be sure that anything I can do by way of reporting your zeal ..."

"Six days—the great thing is to put it off for six days, and that you shouldn't stir for those six days, that's what I want."

"So be it."

"Of course, I don't tie your hands and shouldn't venture to. You are bound to keep watch, only don't flutter the nest too soon; I rely on your sense and experience for that. But I should think you've plenty of bloodhounds and trackers of your own in reserve, ha ha!" Pyotr Stepanovitch blurted out with the gaiety and irresponsibility of youth.

"Not quite so." Lembke parried amiably. "Young people are apt to suppose that there is a great deal in the background.... But, by the way, allow me one little word: if this Kirillov was Stavrogin's second, then Mr. Stavrogin too ..."

"What about Stavrogin?"

"I mean, if they are such friends?"

"Oh, no, no, no! There you are quite out of it, though you are cunning. You really surprise me. I thought that you had some information about it.... H'm ... Stavrogin—it's quite the opposite, quite.... *Avis au lecteur*."

"Do you mean it? And can it be so?" Lembke articulated mistrustfully. "Yulia Mihailovna told me that from what she heard from Petersburg he is a man acting on some sort of instructions, so to speak...."

“I know nothing about it; I know nothing, absolutely nothing. *Adieu. Avis au lecteur!*”
Abruptly and obviously Pyotr Stepanovitch declined to discuss it.

He hurried to the door.

“Stay, Pyotr Stepanovitch, stay,” cried Lembke. “One other tiny matter and I won’t detain you.”

He drew an envelope out of a table drawer.

“Here is a little specimen of the same kind of thing, and I let you see it to show how completely I trust you. Here, and tell me your opinion.”

In the envelope was a letter, a strange anonymous letter addressed to Lembke and only received by him the day before. With intense vexation Pyotr Stepanovitch read as follows:

“Your excellency,—For such you are by rank. Herewith I make known that there is an attempt to be made on the life of personages of general’s rank and on the Fatherland. For it’s working up straight for that. I myself have been disseminating unceasingly for a number of years. There’s infidelity too. There’s a rebellion being got up and there are some thousands of manifestoes, and for every one of them there will be a hundred running with their tongues out, unless they’ve been taken away beforehand by the police. For they’ve been promised a mighty lot of benefits, and the simple people are foolish, and there’s vodka too. The people will attack one after another, taking them to be guilty, and, fearing both sides, I repent of what I had no share in, my circumstances being what they are. If you want information to save the Fatherland, and also the Church and the ikons, I am the only one that can do it. But only on condition that I get a pardon from the Secret Police by telegram at once, me alone, but the rest may answer for it. Put a candle every evening at seven o’clock in the porter’s window for a signal. Seeing it, I shall believe and come to kiss the merciful hand from Petersburg. But on condition there’s a pension for me, for else how am I to live? You won’t regret it for it will mean a star for you. You must go secretly or they’ll wring your neck. Your excellency’s desperate servant falls at your feet.

“Repentant free-thinker incognito.”

Von Lembke explained that the letter had made its appearance in the porter’s room when it was left empty the day before.

“So what do you think?” Pyotr Stepanovitch asked almost rudely.

“I think it’s an anonymous skit by way of a hoax.”

“Most likely it is. There’s no taking you in.”

“What makes me think that is that it’s so stupid.”

“Have you received such documents here before?”

“Once or twice, anonymous letters.”

“Oh, of course they wouldn’t be signed. In a different style? In different handwritings?”

“Yes.”

“And were they buffoonery like this one?”

“Yes, and you know ... very disgusting.”

“Well, if you had them before, it must be the same thing now.”

“Especially because it’s so stupid. Because these people are educated and wouldn’t write so stupidly.”

“Of course, of course.”

“But what if this is someone who really wants to turn informer?”

“It’s not very likely,” Pyotr Stepanovitch rapped out dryly. “What does he mean by a telegram from the Secret Police and a pension? It’s obviously a hoax.”

“Yes, yes,” Lembke admitted, abashed.

“I tell you what: you leave this with me. I can certainly find out for you before I track out the others.”

“Take it,” Lembke assented, though with some hesitation.

“Have you shown it to anyone?”

“Is it likely! No.”

“Not to Yulia Mihailovna?”

“Oh, Heaven forbid! And for God’s sake don’t you show it her!” Lembke cried in alarm.

“She’ll be so upset ... and will be dreadfully angry with me.”

“Yes, you’ll be the first to catch it; she’d say you brought it on yourself if people write like that to you. I know what women’s logic is. Well, good-bye. I dare say I shall bring you the writer in a couple of days or so. Above all, our compact!”

Though Pyotr Stepanovitch was perhaps far from being a stupid man, Fedka the convict had said of him truly “that he would make up a man himself and go on living with him too.” He came away from Lembke fully persuaded that for the next six days, anyway, he had put his mind at rest, and this interval was absolutely necessary for his own purposes. But it was a false idea and founded entirely on the fact that he had made up for himself once for all an Andrey Antonovitch who was a perfect simpleton.

Like every morbidly suspicious man, Andrey Antonovitch was always exceedingly and joyfully trustful the moment he got on to sure ground. The new turn of affairs struck him at first in a rather favourable light in spite of some fresh and troublesome complications. Anyway, his former doubts fell to the ground. Besides, he had been so tired for the last few days, so exhausted and helpless, that his soul involuntarily yearned for rest. But alas! he was again uneasy. The long time he had spent in Petersburg had left ineradicable traces in his heart. The official and even the secret history of the “younger generation” was fairly familiar to him—he was a curious man and used to collect manifestoes—but he could never understand a word of it. Now he felt like a man lost in a forest. Every instinct told him that there was something in Pyotr Stepanovitch’s words utterly incongruous, anomalous, and grotesque, “though there’s no telling what may not happen with this ‘younger generation,’ and the devil only knows what’s going on among them,” he mused, lost in perplexity.

And at this moment, to make matters worse, Blum poked his head in. He had been waiting not far off through the whole of Pyotr Stepanovitch’s visit. This Blum was actually a distant relation of Andrey Antonovitch, though the relationship had always been carefully and timorously concealed. I must apologise to the reader for devoting a few words here to this insignificant person. Blum was one of that strange class of “unfortunate” Germans who are unfortunate not through lack of ability but through some inexplicable ill luck. “Unfortunate” Germans are not a myth, but really do exist even in Russia, and are of a special type. Andrey Antonovitch had always had a quite touching sympathy for him, and wherever he could, as he rose himself in the service, had promoted him to subordinate positions under him; but Blum had never been successful. Either the post was abolished after he had been appointed to it, or a new chief took charge of the department; once he was almost arrested by mistake with other people. He was precise, but he was gloomy to excess and to his own detriment. He was tall and had red hair; he stooped and was depressed and even sentimental; and in spite of his being humbled by his life, he was obstinate and persistent as an ox, though always at the wrong moment. For Andrey Antonovitch he, as well as his wife and numerous family, had cherished for many years a reverent devotion. Except Andrey Antonovitch no one had ever liked him. Yulia Mihailovna would have discarded

him from the first, but could not overcome her husband's obstinacy. It was the cause of their first conjugal quarrel. It had happened soon after their marriage, in the early days of their honeymoon, when she was confronted with Blum, who, together with the humiliating secret of his relationship, had been until then carefully concealed from her. Andrey Antonovitch besought her with clasped hands, told her pathetically all the story of Blum and their friendship from childhood, but Yulia Mihailovna considered herself disgraced forever, and even had recourse to fainting. Von Lembke would not budge an inch, and declared that he would not give up Blum or part from him for anything in the world, so that she was surprised at last and was obliged to put up with Blum. It was settled, however, that the relationship should be concealed even more carefully than before if possible, and that even Blum's Christian name and patronymic should be changed, because he too was for some reason called Andrey Antonovitch. Blum knew no one in the town except the German chemist, had not called on anyone, and led, as he always did, a lonely and niggardly existence. He had long been aware of Andrey Antonovitch's literary peccadilloes. He was generally summoned to listen to secret *tête-à-tête* readings of his novel; he would sit like a post for six hours at a stretch, perspiring and straining his utmost to keep awake and smile. On reaching home he would groan with his long-legged and lanky wife over their benefactor's unhappy weakness for Russian literature.

Andrey Antonovitch looked with anguish at Blum.

"I beg you to leave me alone, Blum," he began with agitated haste, obviously anxious to avoid any renewal of the previous conversation which had been interrupted by Pyotr Stepanovitch.

"And yet this may be arranged in the most delicate way and with no publicity; you have full power." Blum respectfully but obstinately insisted on some point, stooping forward and coming nearer and nearer by small steps to Andrey Antonovitch.

"Blum, you are so devoted to me and so anxious to serve me that I am always in a panic when I look at you."

"You always say witty things, and sleep in peace satisfied with what you've said, but that's how you damage yourself."

"Blum, I have just convinced myself that it's quite a mistake, quite a mistake."

"Not from the words of that false, vicious young man whom you suspect yourself? He has won you by his flattering praise of your talent for literature."

“Blum, you understand nothing about it; your project is absurd, I tell you. We shall find nothing and there will be a fearful upset and laughter too, and then Yulia Mihailovna ...”

“We shall certainly find everything we are looking for.” Blum advanced firmly towards him, laying his right hand on his heart. “We will make a search suddenly early in the morning, carefully showing every consideration for the person himself and strictly observing all the prescribed forms of the law. The young men, Lyamshin and Telyatnikov, assert positively that we shall find all we want. They were constant visitors there. Nobody is favourably disposed to Mr. Verhovensky. Madame Stavrogin has openly refused him her graces, and every honest man, if only there is such a one in this coarse town, is persuaded that a hotbed of infidelity and social doctrines has always been concealed there. He keeps all the forbidden books, Ryliev’s ‘Reflections,’ all Herzen’s works.... I have an approximate catalogue, in case of need.”

“Oh heavens! Every one has these books; how simple you are, my poor Blum.”

“And many manifestoes,” Blum went on without heeding the observation. “We shall end by certainly coming upon traces of the real manifestoes here. That young Verhovensky I feel very suspicious of.”

“But you are mixing up the father and the son. They are not on good terms. The son openly laughs at his father.”

“That’s only a mask.”

“Blum, you’ve sworn to torment me! Think! he is a conspicuous figure here, after all. He’s been a professor, he is a well-known man. He’ll make such an uproar and there will be such gibes all over the town, and we shall make a mess of it all.... And only think how Yulia Mihailovna will take it.” Blum pressed forward and did not listen. “He was only a lecturer, only a lecturer, and of a low rank when he retired.” He smote himself on the chest. “He has no marks of distinction. He was discharged from the service on suspicion of plots against the government. He has been under secret supervision, and undoubtedly still is so. And in view of the disorders that have come to light now, you are undoubtedly bound in duty. You are losing your chance of distinction by letting slip the real criminal.”

“Yulia Mihailovna! Get away, Blum,” Von Lembke cried suddenly, hearing the voice of his spouse in the next room. Blum started but did not give in.

“Allow me, allow me,” he persisted, pressing both hands still more tightly on his chest.

“Get away!” hissed Andrey Antonovitch. “Do what you like ... afterwards. Oh, my God!”

The curtain was raised and Yulia Mihailovna made her appearance. She stood still majestically at the sight of Blum, casting a haughty and offended glance at him, as though the very presence of this man was an affront to her. Blum respectfully made her a deep bow without speaking and, doubled up with veneration, moved towards the door on tiptoe with his arms held a little away from him.

Either because he really took Andrey Antonovitch’s last hysterical outbreak as a direct permission to act as he was asking, or whether he strained a point in this case for the direct advantage of his benefactor, because he was too confident that success would crown his efforts; anyway, as we shall see later on, this conversation of the governor with his subordinate led to a very surprising event which amused many people, became public property, moved Yulia Mihailovna to fierce anger, utterly disconcerting Andrey Antonovitch and reducing him at the crucial moment to a state of deplorable indecision.