

It was a busy day for Pyotr Stepanovitch. From Von Lembke he hastened to Bogoyavlensky Street, but as he went along Bykovy Street, past the house where Karmazinov was staying, he suddenly stopped, grinned, and went into the house. The servant told him that he was expected, which interested him, as he had said nothing beforehand of his coming.

But the great writer really had been expecting him, not only that day but the day before and the day before that. Three days before he had handed him his manuscript *Merci* (which he had meant to read at the literary matinée at Yulia Mihailovna's fête). He had done this out of amiability, fully convinced that he was agreeably flattering the young man's vanity by letting him read the great work beforehand. Pyotr Stepanovitch had noticed long before that this vainglorious, spoiled gentleman, who was so offensively unapproachable for all but the elect, this writer "with the intellect of a statesman," was simply trying to curry favour with him, even with avidity. I believe the young man guessed at last that Karmazinov considered him, if not the leader of the whole secret revolutionary movement in Russia, at least one of those most deeply initiated into the secrets of the Russian revolution who had an incontestable influence on the younger generation. The state of mind of "the cleverest man in Russia" interested Pyotr Stepanovitch, but hitherto he had, for certain reasons, avoided explaining himself.

The great writer was staying in the house belonging to his sister, who was the wife of a *kammerherr* and had an estate in the neighbourhood. Both she and her husband had the deepest reverence for their illustrious relation, but to their profound regret both of them happened to be in Moscow at the time of his visit, so that the honour of receiving him fell to the lot of an old lady, a poor relation of the *kammerherr's*, who had for years lived in the family and looked after the housekeeping. All the household had moved about on tiptoe since Karmazinov's arrival. The old lady sent news to Moscow almost every day, how he had slept, what he had deigned to eat, and had once sent a telegram to announce that after a dinner-party at the mayor's he was obliged to take a spoonful of a well-known medicine. She rarely plucked up courage to enter his room, though he behaved courteously to her, but dryly, and only talked to her of what was necessary.

When Pyotr Stepanovitch came in, he was eating his morning cutlet with half a glass of red wine. Pyotr Stepanovitch had been to see him before and always found him eating this cutlet, which he finished in his presence without ever offering him

anything. After the cutlet a little cup of coffee was served. The footman who brought in the dishes wore a swallow-tail coat, noiseless boots, and gloves.

“Ha ha!” Karmazinov got up from the sofa, wiping his mouth with a table-napkin, and came forward to kiss him with an air of unmixed delight—after the characteristic fashion of Russians if they are very illustrious. But Pyotr Stepanovitch knew by experience that, though Karmazinov made a show of kissing him, he really only proffered his cheek, and so this time he did the same: the cheeks met. Karmazinov did not show that he noticed it, sat down on the sofa, and affably offered Pyotr Stepanovitch an easy chair facing him, in which the latter stretched himself at once.

“You don’t ... wouldn’t like some lunch?” inquired Karmazinov, abandoning his usual habit but with an air, of course, which would prompt a polite refusal. Pyotr Stepanovitch at once expressed a desire for lunch. A shade of offended surprise darkened the face of his host, but only for an instant; he nervously rang for the servant and, in spite of all his breeding, raised his voice scornfully as he gave orders for a second lunch to be served.

“What will you have, cutlet or coffee?” he asked once more.

“A cutlet and coffee, and tell him to bring some more wine, I am hungry,” answered Pyotr Stepanovitch, calmly scrutinising his host’s attire. Mr. Karmazinov was wearing a sort of indoor wadded jacket with pearl buttons, but it was too short, which was far from becoming to his rather comfortable stomach and the solid curves of his hips. But tastes differ. Over his knees he had a checkered woollen plaid reaching to the floor, though it was warm in the room.

“Are you unwell?” commented Pyotr Stepanovitch.

“No, not unwell, but I am afraid of being so in this climate,” answered the writer in his squeaky voice, though he uttered each word with a soft cadence and agreeable gentlemanly lisp. “I’ve been expecting you since yesterday.”

“Why? I didn’t say I’d come.”

“No, but you have my manuscript. Have you ... read it?”

“Manuscript? Which one?”

Karmazinov was terribly surprised.

“But you’ve brought it with you, haven’t you?” He was so disturbed that he even left off eating and looked at Pyotr Stepanovitch with a face of dismay.

“Ah, that *Bonjour* you mean....”

“*Merci.*”

“Oh, all right. I’d quite forgotten it and hadn’t read it; I haven’t had time. I really don’t know, it’s not in my pockets ... it must be on my table. Don’t be uneasy, it will be found.”

“No, I’d better send to your rooms at once. It might be lost; besides, it might be stolen.”

“Oh, who’d want it! But why are you so alarmed? Why, Yulia Mihailovna told me you always have several copies made—one kept at a notary’s abroad, another in Petersburg, a third in Moscow, and then you send some to a bank, I believe.”

“But Moscow might be burnt again and my manuscript with it. No, I’d better send at once.”

“Stay, here it is!” Pyotr Stepanovitch pulled a roll of note-paper out of a pocket at the back of his coat. “It’s a little crumpled. Only fancy, it’s been lying there with my pocket-handkerchief ever since I took it from you; I forgot it.”

Karmazinov greedily snatched the manuscript, carefully examined it, counted the pages, and laid it respectfully beside him on a special table, for the time, in such a way that he would not lose sight of it for an instant.

“You don’t read very much, it seems?” he hissed, unable to restrain himself.

“No, not very much.”

“And nothing in the way of Russian literature?”

“In the way of Russian literature? Let me see, I have read something.... ‘On the Way’ or ‘Away!’ or ‘At the Parting of the Ways’—something of the sort; I don’t remember. It’s a long time since I read it, five years ago. I’ve no time.”

A silence followed.

“When I came I assured every one that you were a very intelligent man, and now I believe every one here is wild over you.”

“Thank you,” Pyotr Stepanovitch answered calmly.

Lunch was brought in. Pyotr Stepanovitch pounced on the cutlet with extraordinary appetite, had eaten it in a trice, tossed off the wine and swallowed his coffee.

“This boor,” thought Karmazinov, looking at him askance as he munched the last morsel and drained the last drops—“this boor probably understood the biting taunt in my words ... and no doubt he has read the manuscript with eagerness; he is simply lying with some object. But possibly he is not lying and is only genuinely stupid. I like a genius to be rather stupid. Mayn’t he be a sort of genius among them? Devil take the fellow!”

He got up from the sofa and began pacing from one end of the room to the other for the sake of exercise, as he always did after lunch.

“Leaving here soon?” asked Pyotr Stepanovitch from his easy chair, lighting a cigarette.

“I really came to sell an estate and I am in the hands of my bailiff.”

“You left, I believe, because they expected an epidemic out there after the war?”

“N-no, not entirely for that reason,” Mr. Karmazinov went on, uttering his phrases with an affable intonation, and each time he turned round in pacing the corner there was a faint but jaunty quiver of his right leg. “I certainly intend to live as long as I can.” He laughed, not without venom. “There is something in our Russian nobility that makes them wear out very quickly, from every point of view. But I wish to wear out as late as possible, and now I am going abroad for good; there the climate is better, the houses are of stone, and everything stronger. Europe will last my time, I think. What do you think?”

“How can I tell?”

“H’m. If the Babylon out there really does fall, and great will be the fall thereof (about which I quite agree with you, yet I think it will last my time), there’s nothing to fall here in Russia, comparatively speaking. There won’t be stones to fall, everything will crumble into dirt. Holy Russia has less power of resistance than anything in the world. The Russian peasantry is still held together somehow by the Russian God; but according to the latest accounts the Russian God is not to be relied upon, and scarcely survived the emancipation; it certainly gave Him a severe shock. And now, what with railways, what with you ... I’ve no faith in the Russian God.”

“And how about the European one?”

“I don’t believe in any. I’ve been slandered to the youth of Russia. I’ve always sympathised with every movement among them. I was shown the manifestoes here. Every one looks at them with perplexity because they are frightened at the way things are put in them, but every one is convinced of their power even if they don’t admit it to

themselves. Everybody has been rolling downhill, and every one has known for ages that they have nothing to clutch at. I am persuaded of the success of this mysterious propaganda, if only because Russia is now pre-eminently the place in all the world where anything you like may happen without any opposition. I understand only too well why wealthy Russians all flock abroad, and more and more so every year. It's simply instinct. If the ship is sinking, the rats are the first to leave it. Holy Russia is a country of wood, of poverty ... and of danger, the country of ambitious beggars in its upper classes, while the immense majority live in poky little huts. She will be glad of any way of escape; you have only to present it to her. It's only the government that still means to resist, but it brandishes its cudgel in the dark and hits its own men. Everything here is doomed and awaiting the end. Russia as she is has no future. I have become a German and I am proud of it."

"But you began about the manifestoes. Tell me everything; how do you look at them?"

"Every one is afraid of them, so they must be influential. They openly unmask what is false and prove that there is nothing to lay hold of among us, and nothing to lean upon. They speak aloud while all is silent. What is most effective about them (in spite of their style) is the incredible boldness with which they look the truth straight in the face. To look facts straight in the face is only possible to Russians of this generation. No, in Europe they are not yet so bold; it is a realm of stone, there there is still something to lean upon. So far as I see and am able to judge, the whole essence of the Russian revolutionary idea lies in the negation of honour. I like its being so boldly and fearlessly expressed. No, in Europe they wouldn't understand it yet, but that's just what we shall clutch at. For a Russian a sense of honour is only a superfluous burden, and it always has been a burden through all his history. The open 'right to dishonour' will attract him more than anything. I belong to the older generation and, I must confess, still cling to honour, but only from habit. It is only that I prefer the old forms, granted it's from timidity; you see one must live somehow what's left of one's life."

He suddenly stopped.

"I am talking," he thought, "while he holds his tongue and watches me. He has come to make me ask him a direct question. And I shall ask him."

"Yulia Mihailovna asked me by some stratagem to find out from you what the surprise is that you are preparing for the ball to-morrow," Pyotr Stepanovitch asked suddenly.

"Yes, there really will be a surprise and I certainly shall astonish ..." said Karmazinov with increased dignity. "But I won't tell you what the secret is."

Pyotr Stepanovitch did not insist.

“There is a young man here called Shatov,” observed the great writer. “Would you believe it, I haven’t seen him.”

“A very nice person. What about him?”

“Oh, nothing. He talks about something. Isn’t he the person who gave Stavrogin that slap in the face?”

“Yes.”

“And what’s your opinion of Stavrogin?”

“I don’t know; he is such a flirt.”

Karmazinov detested Stavrogin because it was the latter’s habit not to take any notice of him.

“That flirt,” he said, chuckling, “if what is advocated in your manifestoes ever comes to pass, will be the first to be hanged.”

“Perhaps before,” Pyotr Stepanovitch said suddenly.

“Quite right too,” Karmazinov assented, not laughing, and with pronounced gravity.

“You have said so once before, and, do you know, I repeated it to him.”

“What, you surely didn’t repeat it?” Karmazinov laughed again.

“He said that if he were to be hanged it would be enough for you to be flogged, not simply as a complement but to hurt, as they flog the peasants.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch took his hat and got up from his seat. Karmazinov held out both hands to him at parting.

“And what if all that you are ... plotting for is destined to come to pass ...” he piped suddenly, in a honeyed voice with a peculiar intonation, still holding his hands in his. “How soon could it come about?”

“How could I tell?” Pyotr Stepanovitch answered rather roughly. They looked intently into each other’s eyes.

“At a guess? Approximately?” Karmazinov piped still more sweetly.

“You’ll have time to sell your estate and time to clear out too,” Pyotr Stepanovitch muttered still more roughly. They looked at one another even more intently.

There was a minute of silence.

“It will begin early next May and will be over by October,” Pyotr Stepanovitch said suddenly.

“I thank you sincerely,” Karmazinov pronounced in a voice saturated with feeling, pressing his hands.

“You will have time to get out of the ship, you rat,” Pyotr Stepanovitch was thinking as he went out into the street. “Well, if that ‘imperial intellect’ inquires so confidently of the day and the hour and thanks me so respectfully for the information I have given, we mustn’t doubt of ourselves. [He grinned.] H’m! But he really isn’t stupid ... and he is simply a rat escaping; men like that don’t tell tales!”

He ran to Filipov’s house in Bogoyavlensky Street.

VI

Pyotr Stepanovitch went first to Kirillov’s. He found him, as usual, alone, and at the moment practising gymnastics, that is, standing with his legs apart, brandishing his arms above his head in a peculiar way. On the floor lay a ball. The tea stood cold on the table, not cleared since breakfast. Pyotr Stepanovitch stood for a minute on the threshold.

“You are very anxious about your health, it seems,” he said in a loud and cheerful tone, going into the room. “What a jolly ball, though; foo, how it bounces! Is that for gymnastics too?”

Kirillov put on his coat.

“Yes, that’s for the good of my health too,” he muttered dryly. “Sit down.”

“I’m only here for a minute. Still, I’ll sit down. Health is all very well, but I’ve come to remind you of our agreement. The appointed time is approaching ... in a certain sense,” he concluded awkwardly.

“What agreement?”

“How can you ask?” Pyotr Stepanovitch was startled and even dismayed.

“It’s not an agreement and not an obligation. I have not bound myself in any way; it’s a mistake on your part.”

“I say, what’s this you’re doing?” Pyotr Stepanovitch jumped up.

“What I choose.”

“What do you choose?”

“The same as before.”

“How am I to understand that? Does that mean that you are in the same mind?”

“Yes. Only there’s no agreement and never has been, and I have not bound myself in any way. I could do as I like and I can still do as I like.”

Kirillov explained himself curtly and contemptuously.

“I agree, I agree; be as free as you like if you don’t change your mind.” Pyotr Stepanovitch sat down again with a satisfied air. “You are angry over a word. You’ve become very irritable of late; that’s why I’ve avoided coming to see you. I was quite sure, though, you would be loyal.”

“I dislike you very much, but you can be perfectly sure—though I don’t regard it as loyalty and disloyalty.”

“But do you know” (Pyotr Stepanovitch was startled again) “we must talk things over thoroughly again so as not to get in a muddle. The business needs accuracy, and you keep giving me such shocks. Will you let me speak?”

“Speak,” snapped Kirillov, looking away.

“You made up your mind long ago to take your life ... I mean, you had the idea in your mind. Is that the right expression? Is there any mistake about that?”

“I have the same idea still.”

“Excellent. Take note that no one has forced it on you.”

“Rather not; what nonsense you talk.”

“I dare say I express it very stupidly. Of course, it would be very stupid to force anybody to it. I’ll go on. You were a member of the society before its organisation was changed, and confessed it to one of the members.”

“I didn’t confess it, I simply said so.”

“Quite so. And it would be absurd to confess such a thing. What a confession! You simply said so. Excellent.”

“No, it’s not excellent, for you are being tedious. I am not obliged to give you any account of myself and you can’t understand my ideas. I want to put an end to my life, because that’s my idea, because I don’t want to be afraid of death, because ... because there’s no need for you to know. What do you want? Would you like tea? It’s cold. Let me get you another glass.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch actually had taken up the teapot and was looking for an empty glass. Kirillov went to the cupboard and brought a clean glass.

“I’ve just had lunch at Karmazinov’s,” observed his visitor, “then I listened to him talking, and perspired and got into a sweat again running here. I am fearfully thirsty.”

“Drink. Cold tea is good.”

Kirillov sat down on his chair again and again fixed his eyes on the farthest corner.

“The idea had arisen in the society,” he went on in the same voice, “that I might be of use if I killed myself, and that when you get up some bit of mischief here, and they are looking for the guilty, I might suddenly shoot myself and leave a letter saying I did it all, so that you might escape suspicion for another year.”

“For a few days, anyway; one day is precious.”

“Good. So for that reason they asked me, if I would, to wait. I said I’d wait till the society fixed the day, because it makes no difference to me.”

“Yes, but remember that you bound yourself not to make up your last letter without me and that in Russia you would be at my ... well, at my disposition, that is for that purpose only. I need hardly say, in everything else, of course, you are free,” Pyotr Stepanovitch added almost amiably.

“I didn’t bind myself, I agreed, because it makes no difference to me.”

“Good, good. I have no intention of wounding your vanity, but ...”

“It’s not a question of vanity.”

“But remember that a hundred and twenty thalers were collected for your journey, so you’ve taken money.”

“Not at all.” Kirillov fired up. “The money was not on that condition. One doesn’t take money for that.”

“People sometimes do.”

“That’s a lie. I sent a letter from Petersburg, and in Petersburg I paid you a hundred and twenty thalers; I put it in your hand ... and it has been sent off there, unless you’ve kept it for yourself.”

“All right, all right, I don’t dispute anything; it has been sent off. All that matters is that you are still in the same mind.”

“Exactly the same. When you come and tell me it’s time, I’ll carry it all out. Will it be very soon?”

“Not very many days.... But remember, we’ll make up the letter together, the same night.”

“The same day if you like. You say I must take the responsibility for the manifestoes on myself?”

“And something else too.”

“I am not going to make myself out responsible for everything.”

“What won’t you be responsible for?” said Pyotr Stepanovitch again.

“What I don’t choose; that’s enough. I don’t want to talk about it any more.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch controlled himself and changed the subject.

“To speak of something else,” he began, “will you be with us this evening? It’s Virginsky’s name-day; that’s the pretext for our meeting.”

“I don’t want to.”

“Do me a favour. Do come. You must. We must impress them by our number and our looks. You have a face ... well, in one word, you have a fateful face.”

“You think so?” laughed Kirillov. “Very well, I’ll come, but not for the sake of my face. What time is it?”

“Oh, quite early, half-past six. And, you know, you can go in, sit down, and not speak to any one, however many there may be there. Only, I say, don’t forget to bring pencil and paper with you.”

“What’s that for?”

“Why, it makes no difference to you, and it’s my special request. You’ll only have to sit still, speaking to no one, listen, and sometimes seem to make a note. You can draw something, if you like.”

“What nonsense! What for?”

“Why, since it makes no difference to you! You keep saying that it’s just the same to you.”

“No, what for?”

“Why, because that member of the society, the inspector, has stopped at Moscow and I told some of them here that possibly the inspector may turn up to-night; and they’ll think that you are the inspector. And as you’ve been here three weeks already, they’ll be still more surprised.”

“Stage tricks. You haven’t got an inspector in Moscow.”

“Well, suppose I haven’t—damn him!—what business is that of yours and what bother will it be to you? You are a member of the society yourself.”

“Tell them I am the inspector; I’ll sit still and hold my tongue, but I won’t have the pencil and paper.”

“But why?”

“I don’t want to.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch was really angry; he turned positively green, but again he controlled himself. He got up and took his hat.

“Is that fellow with you?” he brought out suddenly, in a low voice.

“Yes.”

“That’s good. I’ll soon get him away. Don’t be uneasy.”

“I am not uneasy. He is only here at night. The old woman is in the hospital, her daughter-in-law is dead. I’ve been alone for the last two days. I’ve shown him the place in the paling where you can take a board out; he gets through, no one sees.”

“I’ll take him away soon.”

“He says he has got plenty of places to stay the night in.”

“That’s rot; they are looking for him, but here he wouldn’t be noticed. Do you ever get into talk with him?”

“Yes, at night. He abuses you tremendously. I’ve been reading the ‘Apocalypse’ to him at night, and we have tea. He listened eagerly, very eagerly, the whole night.”

“Hang it all, you’ll convert him to Christianity!”

“He is a Christian as it is. Don’t be uneasy, he’ll do the murder. Whom do you want to murder?”

“No, I don’t want him for that, I want him for something different.... And does Shatov know about Fedka?”

“I don’t talk to Shatov, and I don’t see him.”

“Is he angry?”

“No, we are not angry, only we shun one another. We lay too long side by side in America.”

“I am going to him directly.”

“As you like.”

“Stavrogin and I may come and see you from there, about ten o’clock.”

“Do.”

“I want to talk to him about something important.... I say, make me a present of your ball; what do you want with it now? I want it for gymnastics too. I’ll pay you for it if you like.”

“You can take it without.”

Pyotr Stepanovitch put the ball in the back pocket of his coat.

“But I’ll give you nothing against Stavrogin,” Kirillov muttered after his guest, as he saw him out. The latter looked at him in amazement but did not answer.

Kirillov’s last words perplexed Pyotr Stepanovitch extremely; he had not time yet to discover their meaning, but even while he was on the stairs of Shatov’s lodging he tried to remove all trace of annoyance and to assume an amiable expression. Shatov was at home and rather unwell. He was lying on his bed, though dressed.

“What bad luck!” Pyotr Stepanovitch cried out in the doorway. “Are you really ill?”

The amiable expression of his face suddenly vanished; there was a gleam of spite in his eyes.

“Not at all.” Shatov jumped up nervously. “I am not ill at all ... a little headache ...”

He was disconcerted; the sudden appearance of such a visitor positively alarmed him.

“You mustn’t be ill for the job I’ve come about,” Pyotr Stepanovitch began quickly and, as it were, peremptorily. “Allow me to sit down.” (He sat down.) “And you sit down again on your bedstead; that’s right. There will be a party of our fellows at Virginsky’s to-night on the pretext of his birthday; it will have no political character, however—we’ve seen to that. I am coming with Nikolay Stavrogin. I would not, of course, have

dragged you there, knowing your way of thinking at present ... simply to save your being worried, not because we think you would betray us. But as things have turned out, you will have to go. You'll meet there the very people with whom we shall finally settle how you are to leave the society and to whom you are to hand over what is in your keeping. We'll do it without being noticed; I'll take you aside into a corner; there'll be a lot of people and there's no need for every one to know. I must confess I've had to keep my tongue wagging on your behalf; but now I believe they've agreed, on condition you hand over the printing press and all the papers, of course. Then you can go where you please."

Shatov listened, frowning and resentful. The nervous alarm of a moment before had entirely left him.

"I don't acknowledge any sort of obligation to give an account to the devil knows whom," he declared definitely. "No one has the authority to set me free."

"Not quite so. A great deal has been entrusted to you. You hadn't the right to break off simply. Besides, you made no clear statement about it, so that you put them in an ambiguous position."

"I stated my position clearly by letter as soon as I arrived here."

"No, it wasn't clear," Pyotr Stepanovitch retorted calmly. "I sent you 'A Noble Personality' to be printed here, and meaning the copies to be kept here till they were wanted; and the two manifestoes as well. You returned them with an ambiguous letter which explained nothing."

"I refused definitely to print them."

"Well, not definitely. You wrote that you couldn't, but you didn't explain for what reason. 'I can't' doesn't mean 'I don't want to.' It might be supposed that you were simply unable through circumstances. That was how they took it, and considered that you still meant to keep up your connection with the society, so that they might have entrusted something to you again and so have compromised themselves. They say here that you simply meant to deceive them, so that you might betray them when you got hold of something important. I have defended you to the best of my powers, and have shown your brief note as evidence in your favour. But I had to admit on rereading those two lines that they were misleading and not conclusive."

"You kept that note so carefully then?"

"My keeping it means nothing; I've got it still."

“Well, I don’t care, damn it!” Shatov cried furiously. “Your fools may consider that I’ve betrayed them if they like—what is it to me? I should like to see what you can do to me?”

“Your name would be noted, and at the first success of the revolution you would be hanged.”

“That’s when you get the upper hand and dominate Russia?”

“You needn’t laugh. I tell you again, I stood up for you. Anyway, I advise you to turn up to-day. Why waste words through false pride? Isn’t it better to part friends? In any case you’ll have to give up the printing press and the old type and papers—that’s what we must talk about.”

“I’ll come,” Shatov muttered, looking down thoughtfully.

Pyotr Stepanovitch glanced askance at him from his place.

“Will Stavrogin be there?” Shatov asked suddenly, raising his head.

“He is certain to be.”

“Ha ha!”

Again they were silent for a minute. Shatov grinned disdainfully and irritably.

“And that contemptible ‘Noble Personality’ of yours, that I wouldn’t print here. Has it been printed?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“To make the schoolboys believe that Herzen himself had written it in your album?”

“Yes, Herzen himself.”

Again they were silent for three minutes. At last Shatov got up from the bed.

“Go out of my room; I don’t care to sit with you.”

“I’m going,” Pyotr Stepanovitch brought out with positive alacrity, getting up at once.

“Only one word: Kirillov is quite alone in the lodge now, isn’t he, without a servant?”

“Quite alone. Get along; I can’t stand being in the same room with you.”

“Well, you are a pleasant customer now!” Pyotr Stepanovitch reflected gaily as he went out into the street, “and you will be pleasant this evening too, and that just suits

me; nothing better could be wished, nothing better could be wished! The Russian God Himself seems helping me.”

VII

He had probably been very busy that day on all sorts of errands and probably with success, which was reflected in the self-satisfied expression of his face when at six o'clock that evening he turned up at Stavrogin's. But he was not at once admitted: Stavrogin had just locked himself in the study with Mavriky Nikolaevitch. This news instantly made Pyotr Stepanovitch anxious. He seated himself close to the study door to wait for the visitor to go away. He could hear conversation but could not catch the words. The visit did not last long; soon he heard a noise, the sound of an extremely loud and abrupt voice, then the door opened and Mavriky Nikolaevitch came out with a very pale face. He did not notice Pyotr Stepanovitch, and quickly passed by. Pyotr Stepanovitch instantly ran into the study.

I cannot omit a detailed account of the very brief interview that had taken place between the two “rivals”—an interview which might well have seemed impossible under the circumstances, but which had yet taken place.

This is how it had come about. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch had been enjoying an after-dinner nap on the couch in his study when Alexey Yegorytch had announced the unexpected visitor. Hearing the name, he had positively leapt up, unwilling to believe it. But soon a smile gleamed on his lips—a smile of haughty triumph and at the same time of a blank, incredulous wonder. The visitor, Mavriky Nikolaevitch, seemed struck by the expression of that smile as he came in; anyway, he stood still in the middle of the room as though uncertain whether to come further in or to turn back. Stavrogin succeeded at once in transforming the expression of his face, and with an air of grave surprise took a step towards him. The visitor did not take his outstretched hand, but awkwardly moved a chair and, not uttering a word, sat down without waiting for his host to do so. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch sat down on the sofa facing him obliquely and, looking at Mavriky Nikolaevitch, waited in silence.

“If you can, marry Lizaveta Nikolaevna,” Mavriky Nikolaevitch brought out suddenly at last, and what was most curious, it was impossible to tell from his tone whether it was an entreaty, a recommendation, a surrender, or a command.

Stavrogin still remained silent, but the visitor had evidently said all he had come to say and gazed at him persistently, waiting for an answer.

“If I am not mistaken (but it's quite certain), Lizaveta Nikolaevna is already betrothed to you,” Stavrogin said at last.

“Promised and betrothed,” Mavriky Nikolaevitch assented firmly and clearly.

“You have ... quarrelled? Excuse me, Mavriky Nikolaevitch.”

“No, she ‘loves and respects me’; those are her words. Her words are more precious than anything.”

“Of that there can be no doubt.”

“But let me tell you, if she were standing in the church at her wedding and you were to call her, she’d give up me and every one and go to you.”

“From the wedding?”

“Yes, and after the wedding.”

“Aren’t you making a mistake?”

“No. Under her persistent, sincere, and intense hatred for you love is flashing out at every moment ... and madness ... the sincerest infinite love and ... madness! On the contrary, behind the love she feels for me, which is sincere too, every moment there are flashes of hatred ... the most intense hatred! I could never have fancied all these transitions ... before.”

“But I wonder, though, how could you come here and dispose of the hand of Lizaveta Nikolaevna? Have you the right to do so? Has she authorised you?”

Mavriky Nikolaevitch frowned and for a minute he looked down.

“That’s all words on your part,” he brought out suddenly, “words of revenge and triumph; I am sure you can read between the lines, and is this the time for petty vanity? Haven’t you satisfaction enough? Must I really dot my i’s and go into it all? Very well, I will dot my i’s, if you are so anxious for my humiliation. I have no right, it’s impossible for me to be authorised; Lizaveta Nikolaevna knows nothing about it and her betrothed has finally lost his senses and is only fit for a madhouse, and, to crown everything, has come to tell you so himself. You are the only man in the world who can make her happy, and I am the one to make her unhappy. You are trying to get her, you are pursuing her, but—I don’t know why—you won’t marry her. If it’s because of a lovers’ quarrel abroad and I must be sacrificed to end it, sacrifice me. She is too unhappy and I can’t endure it. My words are not a sanction, not a prescription, and so it’s no slur on your pride. If you care to take my place at the altar, you can do it without any sanction from me, and there is no ground for me to come to you with a mad proposal, especially as our marriage is utterly impossible after the step I am taking now. I cannot lead her to the altar feeling myself an abject wretch. What I am doing

here and my handing her over to you, perhaps her bitterest foe, is to my mind something so abject that I shall never get over it.”

“Will you shoot yourself on our wedding day?”

“No, much later. Why stain her bridal dress with my blood? Perhaps I shall not shoot myself at all, either now or later.”

“I suppose you want to comfort me by saying that?”

“You? What would the blood of one more mean to you?” He turned pale and his eyes gleamed. A minute of silence followed.

“Excuse me for the questions I’ve asked you,” Stavrogin began again; “some of them I had no business to ask you, but one of them I think I have every right to put to you. Tell me, what facts have led you to form a conclusion as to my feelings for Lizaveta Nikolaevna? I mean to a conviction of a degree of feeling on my part as would justify your coming here ... and risking such a proposal.”

“What?” Mavriky Nikolaevitch positively started. “Haven’t you been trying to win her? Aren’t you trying to win her, and don’t you want to win her?”

“Generally speaking, I can’t speak of my feeling for this woman or that to a third person or to anyone except the woman herself. You must excuse it, it’s a constitutional peculiarity. But to make up for it, I’ll tell you the truth about everything else; I am married, and it’s impossible for me either to marry or to try ‘to win’ anyone.”

Mavriky Nikolaevitch was so astounded that he started back in his chair and for some time stared fixedly into Stavrogin’s face.

“Only fancy, I never thought of that,” he muttered. “You said then, that morning, that you were not married ... and so I believed you were not married.”

He turned terribly pale; suddenly he brought his fist down on the table with all his might.

“If after that confession you don’t leave Lizaveta Nikolaevna alone, if you make her unhappy, I’ll kill you with my stick like a dog in a ditch!”

He jumped up and walked quickly out of the room. Pyotr Stepanovitch, running in, found his host in a most unexpected frame of mind.

“Ah, that’s you!” Stavrogin laughed loudly; his laughter seemed to be provoked simply by the appearance of Pyotr Stepanovitch as he ran in with such impulsive curiosity.

“Were you listening at the door? Wait a bit. What have you come about? I promised you something, didn’t I? Ah, bah! I remember, to meet ‘our fellows.’ Let us go. I am delighted. You couldn’t have thought of anything more appropriate.” He snatched up his hat and they both went at once out of the house.

“Are you laughing beforehand at the prospect of seeing ‘our fellows’?” chirped gaily Pyotr Stepanovitch, dodging round him with obsequious alacrity, at one moment trying to walk beside his companion on the narrow brick pavement and at the next running right into the mud of the road; for Stavrogin walked in the middle of the pavement without observing that he left no room for anyone else.

“I am not laughing at all,” he answered loudly and gaily; “on the contrary, I am sure that you have the most serious set of people there.”

“‘Surly dullards,’ as you once deigned to express it.”

“Nothing is more amusing sometimes than a surly dullard.”

“Ah, you mean Mavriky Nikolaevitch? I am convinced he came to give up his betrothed to you, eh? I egged him on to do it, indirectly, would you believe it? And if he doesn’t give her up, we’ll take her, anyway, won’t we—eh?”

Pyotr Stepanovitch knew no doubt that he was running some risk in venturing on such sallies, but when he was excited he preferred to risk anything rather than to remain in uncertainty. Stavrogin only laughed.

“You still reckon you’ll help me?” he asked.

“If you call me. But you know there’s one way, and the best one.”

“Do I know your way?”

“Oh no, that’s a secret for the time. Only remember, a secret has its price.”

“I know what it costs,” Stavrogin muttered to himself, but he restrained himself and was silent.

“What it costs? What did you say?” Pyotr Stepanovitch was startled.

“I said, ‘Damn you and your secret!’ You’d better be telling me who will be there. I know that we are going to a name-day party, but who will be there?”

“Oh, all sorts! Even Kirillov.”

“All members of circles?”

“Hang it all, you are in a hurry! There’s not one circle formed yet.”

“How did you manage to distribute so many manifestoes then?”

“Where we are going only four are members of the circle. The others on probation are spying on one another with jealous eagerness, and bring reports to me. They are a trustworthy set. It’s all material which we must organise, and then we must clear out. But you wrote the rules yourself, there’s no need to explain.”

“Are things going badly then? Is there a hitch?”

“Going? Couldn’t be better. It will amuse you: the first thing which has a tremendous effect is giving them titles. Nothing has more influence than a title. I invent ranks and duties on purpose; I have secretaries, secret spies, treasurers, presidents, registrars, their assistants—they like it awfully, it’s taken capitally. Then, the next force is sentimentalism, of course. You know, amongst us socialism spreads principally through sentimentalism. But the trouble is these lieutenants who bite; sometimes you put your foot in it. Then come the out-and-out rogues; well, they are a good sort, if you like, and sometimes very useful; but they waste a lot of one’s time, they want incessant looking after. And the most important force of all—the cement that holds everything together—is their being ashamed of having an opinion of their own. That is a force! And whose work is it, whose precious achievement is it, that not one idea of their own is left in their heads! They think originality a disgrace.”

“If so, why do you take so much trouble?”

“Why, if people lie simply gaping at every one, how can you resist annexing them? Can you seriously refuse to believe in the possibility of success? Yes, you have the faith, but one wants will. It’s just with people like this that success is possible. I tell you I could make them go through fire; one has only to din it into them that they are not advanced enough. The fools reproach me that I have taken in every one here over the central committee and ‘the innumerable branches.’ You once blamed me for it yourself, but where’s the deception? You and I are the central committee and there will be as many branches as we like.”

“And always the same sort of rabble!”

“Raw material. Even they will be of use.”

“And you are still reckoning on me?”

“You are the chief, you are the head; I shall only be a subordinate, your secretary. We shall take to our barque, you know; the oars are of maple, the sails are of silk, at the helm sits a fair maiden, Lizaveta Nikolaevna ... hang it, how does it go in the ballad?”

“He is stuck,” laughed Stavrogin. “No, I’d better give you my version. There you reckon on your fingers the forces that make up the circles. All that business of titles and sentimentalism is a very good cement, but there is something better; persuade four members of the circle to do for a fifth on the pretence that he is a traitor, and you’ll tie them all together with the blood they’ve shed as though it were a knot. They’ll be your slaves, they won’t dare to rebel or call you to account. Ha ha ha!”

“But you ... you shall pay for those words,” Pyotr Stepanovitch thought to himself, “and this very evening, in fact. You go too far.”

This or something like this must have been Pyotr Stepanovitch’s reflection. They were approaching Virginsky’s house.

“You’ve represented me, no doubt, as a member from abroad, an inspector in connection with the *Internationale*?” Stavrogin asked suddenly.

“No, not an inspector; you won’t be an inspector; but you are one of the original members from abroad, who knows the most important secrets—that’s your rôle. You are going to speak, of course?”

“What’s put that idea into your head?”

“Now you are bound to speak.”

Stavrogin positively stood still in the middle of the street in surprise, not far from a street lamp. Pyotr Stepanovitch faced his scrutiny calmly and defiantly. Stavrogin cursed and went on.

“And are you going to speak?” he suddenly asked Pyotr Stepanovitch.

“No, I am going to listen to you.”

“Damn you, you really are giving me an idea!”

“What idea?” Pyotr Stepanovitch asked quickly.

“Perhaps I will speak there, but afterwards I will give you a hiding—and a sound one too, you know.”

“By the way, I told Karmazinov this morning that you said he ought to be thrashed, and not simply as a form but to hurt, as they flog peasants.”

“But I never said such a thing; ha ha!”

“No matter. *Se non è vero ...*”

“Well, thanks. I am truly obliged.”

“And another thing. Do you know, Karmazinov says that the essence of our creed is the negation of honour, and that by the open advocacy of a right to be dishonourable a Russian can be won over more easily than by anything.”

“An excellent saying! Golden words!” cried Stavrogin. “He’s hit the mark there! The right to dishonour—why, they’d all flock to us for that, not one would stay behind! And listen, Verhovensky, you are not one of the higher police, are you?”

“Anyone who has a question like that in his mind doesn’t utter it.”

“I understand, but we are by ourselves.”

“No, so far I am not one of the higher police. Enough, here we are. Compose your features, Stavrogin; I always do mine when I go in. A gloomy expression, that’s all, nothing more is wanted; it’s a very simple business.”

CHAPTER VII. A MEETING

I

VIRGINSKY LIVED IN HIS OWN house, or rather his wife’s, in Muravyin Street. It was a wooden house of one story, and there were no lodgers in it. On the pretext of Virginsky’s-name-day party, about fifteen guests were assembled; but the entertainment was not in the least like an ordinary provincial name-day party. From the very beginning of their married life the husband and wife had agreed once for all that it was utterly stupid to invite friends to celebrate name-days, and that “there is nothing to rejoice about in fact.” In a few years they had succeeded in completely cutting themselves off from all society. Though he was a man of some ability, and by no means very poor, he somehow seemed to every one an eccentric fellow who was fond of solitude, and, what’s more, “stuck up in conversation.” Madame Virginsky was a midwife by profession—and by that very fact was on the lowest rung of the social ladder, lower even than the priest’s wife in spite of her husband’s rank as an officer. But she was conspicuously lacking in the humility befitting her position. And after her very stupid and unpardonably open liaison on principle with Captain Lebyadkin, a

notorious rogue, even the most indulgent of our ladies turned away from her with marked contempt. But Madame Virginsky accepted all this as though it were what she wanted. It is remarkable that those very ladies applied to Arina Prohorovna (that is, Madame Virginsky) when they were in an interesting condition, rather than to any one of the other three *accoucheuses* of the town. She was sent for even by country families living in the neighbourhood, so great was the belief in her knowledge, luck, and skill in critical cases. It ended in her practising only among the wealthiest ladies; she was greedy of money. Feeling her power to the full, she ended by not putting herself out for anyone. Possibly on purpose, indeed, in her practice in the best houses she used to scare nervous patients by the most incredible and nihilistic disregard of good manners, or by jeering at “everything holy,” at the very time when “everything holy” might have come in most useful. Our town doctor, Rozanov—he too was an *accoucheur*—asserted most positively that on one occasion when a patient in labour was crying out and calling on the name of the Almighty, a free-thinking sally from Arina Prohorovna, fired off like a pistol-shot, had so terrifying an effect on the patient that it greatly accelerated her delivery.

But though she was a nihilist, Madame Virginsky did not, when occasion arose, disdain social or even old-fashioned superstitions and customs if they could be of any advantage to herself. She would never, for instance, have stayed away from a baby’s christening, and always put on a green silk dress with a train and adorned her chignon with curls and ringlets for such events, though at other times she positively revelled in slovenliness. And though during the ceremony she always maintained “the most insolent air,” so that she put the clergy to confusion, yet when it was over she invariably handed champagne to the guests (it was for that that she came and dressed up), and it was no use trying to take the glass without a contribution to her “porridge bowl.”

The guests who assembled that evening at Virginsky’s (mostly men) had a casual and exceptional air. There was no supper nor cards. In the middle of the large drawing-room, which was papered with extremely old blue paper, two tables had been put together and covered with a large though not quite clean table-cloth, and on them two samovars were boiling. The end of the table was taken up by a huge tray with twenty-five glasses on it and a basket with ordinary French bread cut into a number of slices, as one sees it in genteel boarding-schools for boys or girls. The tea was poured out by a maiden lady of thirty, Arina Prohorovna’s sister, a silent and malevolent creature, with flaxen hair and no eyebrows, who shared her sister’s progressive ideas and was an object of terror to Virginsky himself in domestic life. There were only three ladies in the room: the lady of the house, her eyebrowless sister, and Virginsky’s sister, a girl

who had just arrived from Petersburg. Arina Prohorovna, a good-looking and buxom woman of seven-and-twenty, rather dishevelled, in an everyday greenish woollen dress, was sitting scanning the guests with her bold eyes, and her look seemed in haste to say, "You see I am not in the least afraid of anything." Miss Virginsky, a rosy-cheeked student and a nihilist, who was also good-looking, short, plump and round as a little ball, had settled herself beside Arina Prohorovna, almost in her travelling clothes. She held a roll of paper in her hand, and scrutinised the guests with impatient and roving eyes. Virginsky himself was rather unwell that evening, but he came in and sat in an easy chair by the tea-table. All the guests were sitting down too, and the orderly way in which they were ranged on chairs suggested a meeting. Evidently all were expecting something and were filling up the interval with loud but irrelevant conversation. When Stavrogin and Verhovensky appeared there was a sudden hush.

But I must be allowed to give a few explanations to make things clear.

I believe that all these people had come together in the agreeable expectation of hearing something particularly interesting, and had notice of it beforehand. They were the flower of the reddest Radicalism of our ancient town, and had been carefully picked out by Virginsky for this "meeting." I may remark, too, that some of them (though not very many) had never visited him before. Of course most of the guests had no clear idea why they had been summoned. It was true that at that time all took Pyotr Stepanovitch for a fully authorised emissary from abroad; this idea had somehow taken root among them at once and naturally flattered them. And yet among the citizens assembled ostensibly to keep a name-day, there were some who had been approached with definite proposals. Pyotr Verhovensky had succeeded in getting together a "quintet" amongst us like the one he had already formed in Moscow and, as appeared later, in our province among the officers. It was said that he had another in X province. This quintet of the elect were sitting now at the general table, and very skilfully succeeded in giving themselves the air of being quite ordinary people, so that no one could have known them. They were—since it is no longer a secret—first Liputin, then Virginsky himself, then Shigalov (a gentleman with long ears, the brother of Madame Virginsky), Lyamshin, and lastly a strange person called Tolkatchenko, a man of forty, who was famed for his vast knowledge of the people, especially of thieves and robbers. He used to frequent the taverns on purpose (though not only with the object of studying the people), and plumed himself on his shabby clothes, tarred boots, and crafty wink and a flourish of peasant phrases. Lyamshin had once or twice brought him to Stepan Trofimovitch's gatherings, where, however, he did not make a great sensation. He used to make his appearance in the town from time to time, chiefly when he was out of a job; he was employed on the railway.

Every one of these fine champions had formed this first group in the fervent conviction that their quintet was only one of hundreds and thousands of similar groups scattered all over Russia, and that they all depended on some immense central but secret power, which in its turn was intimately connected with the revolutionary movement all over Europe. But I regret to say that even at that time there was beginning to be dissension among them. Though they had ever since the spring been expecting Pyotr Verhovensky, whose coming had been heralded first by Tolkatchenko and then by the arrival of Shigalov, though they had expected extraordinary miracles from him, and though they had responded to his first summons without the slightest criticism, yet they had no sooner formed the quintet than they all somehow seemed to feel insulted; and I really believe it was owing to the promptitude with which they consented to join. They had joined, of course, from a not ignoble feeling of shame, for fear people might say afterwards that they had not dared to join; still they felt Pyotr Verhovensky ought to have appreciated their heroism and have rewarded it by telling them some really important bits of news at least. But Verhovensky was not at all inclined to satisfy their legitimate curiosity, and told them nothing but what was necessary; he treated them in general with great sternness and even rather casually. This was positively irritating, and Comrade Shigalov was already egging the others on to insist on his “explaining himself,” though, of course, not at Virginsky’s, where so many outsiders were present.

I have an idea that the above-mentioned members of the first quintet were disposed to suspect that among the guests of Virginsky’s that evening some were members of other groups, unknown to them, belonging to the same secret organisation and founded in the town by the same Verhovensky; so that in fact all present were suspecting one another, and posed in various ways to one another, which gave the whole party a very perplexing and even romantic air. Yet there were persons present who were beyond all suspicion. For instance, a major in the service, a near relation of Virginsky, a perfectly innocent person who had not been invited but had come of himself for the name-day celebration, so that it was impossible not to receive him. But Virginsky was quite unperturbed, as the major was “incapable of betraying them”; for in spite of his stupidity he had all his life been fond of dropping in wherever extreme Radicals met; he did not sympathise with their ideas himself, but was very fond of listening to them. What’s more, he had even been compromised indeed. It had happened in his youth that whole bundles of manifestoes and of numbers of *The Bell* had passed through his hands, and although he had been afraid even to open them, yet he would have considered it absolutely contemptible to refuse to distribute them—and there are such people in Russia even to this day.

The rest of the guests were either types of honourable amour-propre crushed and embittered, or types of the generous impulsiveness of ardent youth. There were two or three teachers, of whom one, a lame man of forty-five, a master in the high school, was a very malicious and strikingly vain person; and two or three officers. Of the latter, one very young artillery officer who had only just come from a military training school, a silent lad who had not yet made friends with anyone, turned up now at Virginsky's with a pencil in his hand, and, scarcely taking any part in the conversation, continually made notes in his notebook. Everybody saw this, but every one pretended not to. There was, too, an idle divinity student who had helped Lyamshin to put indecent photographs into the gospel-woman's pack. He was a solid youth with a free-and-easy though mistrustful manner, with an unchangeably satirical smile, together with a calm air of triumphant faith in his own perfection. There was also present, I don't know why, the mayor's son, that unpleasant and prematurely exhausted youth to whom I have referred already in telling the story of the lieutenant's little wife. He was silent the whole evening. Finally there was a very enthusiastic and tousle-headed schoolboy of eighteen, who sat with the gloomy air of a young man whose dignity has been wounded, evidently distressed by his eighteen years. This infant was already the head of an independent group of conspirators which had been formed in the highest class of the gymnasium, as it came out afterwards to the surprise of every one.

I haven't mentioned Shatov. He was there at the farthest corner of the table, his chair pushed back a little out of the row. He gazed at the ground, was gloomily silent, refused tea and bread, and did not for one instant let his cap go out of his hand, as though to show that he was not a visitor, but had come on business, and when he liked would get up and go away. Kirillov was not far from him. He, too, was very silent, but he did not look at the ground; on the contrary, he scrutinised intently every speaker with his fixed, lustreless eyes, and listened to everything without the slightest emotion or surprise. Some of the visitors who had never seen him before stole thoughtful glances at him. I can't say whether Madame Virginsky knew anything about the existence of the quintet. I imagine she knew everything and from her husband. The girl-student, of course, took no part in anything; but she had an anxiety of her own: she intended to stay only a day or two and then to go on farther and farther from one university town to another "to show active sympathy with the sufferings of poor students and to rouse them to protest." She was taking with her some hundreds of copies of a lithographed appeal, I believe of her own composition. It is remarkable that the schoolboy conceived an almost murderous hatred for her from the first moment, though he saw her for the first time in his life; and she felt the same for him. The major was her uncle, and met her to-day for the first time after ten years. When

Stavrogin and Verhovensky came in, her cheeks were as red as cranberries: she had just quarrelled with her uncle over his views on the woman question.

II

With conspicuous nonchalance Verhovensky lounged in the chair at the upper end of the table, almost without greeting anyone. His expression was disdainful and even haughty. Stavrogin bowed politely, but in spite of the fact that they were all only waiting for them, everybody, as though acting on instruction, appeared scarcely to notice them. The lady of the house turned severely to Stavrogin as soon as he was seated.

“Stavrogin, will you have tea?”

“Please,” he answered.

“Tea for Stavrogin,” she commanded her sister at the samovar. “And you, will you?” (This was to Verhovensky.)

“Of course. What a question to ask a visitor! And give me cream too; you always give one such filthy stuff by way of tea, and with a name-day party in the house!”

“What, you believe in keeping name-days too!” the girl-student laughed suddenly.

“We were just talking of that.”

“That’s stale,” muttered the schoolboy at the other end of the table.

“What’s stale? To disregard conventions, even the most innocent is not stale; on the contrary, to the disgrace of every one, so far it’s a novelty,” the girl-student answered instantly, darting forward on her chair. “Besides, there are no innocent conventions,” she added with intensity.

“I only meant,” cried the schoolboy with tremendous excitement, “to say that though conventions of course are stale and must be eradicated, yet about name-days everybody knows that they are stupid and very stale to waste precious time upon, which has been wasted already all over the world, so that it would be as well to sharpen one’s wits on something more useful...”

“You drag it out so, one can’t understand what you mean,” shouted the girl.

“I think that every one has a right to express an opinion as well as every one else, and if I want to express my opinion like anybody else ...”

“No one is attacking your right to give an opinion,” the lady of the house herself cut in sharply. “You were only asked not to ramble because no one can make out what you mean.”

“But allow me to remark that you are not treating me with respect. If I couldn’t fully express my thought, it’s not from want of thought but from too much thought,” the schoolboy muttered, almost in despair, losing his thread completely.

“If you don’t know how to talk, you’d better keep quiet,” blurted out the girl.

The schoolboy positively jumped from his chair.

“I only wanted to state,” he shouted, crimson with shame and afraid to look about him, “that you only wanted to show off your cleverness because Mr. Stavrogin came in—so there!”

“That’s a nasty and immoral idea and shows the worthlessness of your development. I beg you not to address me again,” the girl rattled off.

“Stavrogin,” began the lady of the house, “they’ve been discussing the rights of the family before you came—this officer here”—she nodded towards her relation, the major—“and, of course, I am not going to worry you with such stale nonsense, which has been dealt with long ago. But how have the rights and duties of the family come about in the superstitious form in which they exist at present? That’s the question. What’s your opinion?”

“What do you mean by ‘come about’?” Stavrogin asked in his turn.

“We know, for instance, that the superstition about God came from thunder and lightning.” The girl-student rushed into the fray again, staring at Stavrogin with her eyes almost jumping out of her head. “It’s well known that primitive man, scared by thunder and lightning, made a god of the unseen enemy, feeling their weakness before it. But how did the superstition of the family arise? How did the family itself arise?”

“That’s not quite the same thing....” Madame Virginsky tried to check her.

“I think the answer to this question wouldn’t be quite discreet,” answered Stavrogin.

“How so?” said the girl-student, craning forward suddenly. But there was an audible titter in the group of teachers, which was at once caught up at the other end by Lyamshin and the schoolboy and followed by a hoarse chuckle from the major.

“You ought to write vaudevilles,” Madame Virginsky observed to Stavrogin.

“It does you no credit, I don’t know what your name is,” the girl rapped out with positive indignation.

“And don’t you be too forward,” boomed the major. “You are a young lady and you ought to behave modestly, and you keep jumping about as though you were sitting on a needle.”

“Kindly hold your tongue and don’t address me familiarly with your nasty comparisons. I’ve never seen you before and I don’t recognise the relationship.”

“But I am your uncle; I used to carry you about when you were a baby!”

“I don’t care what babies you used to carry about. I didn’t ask you to carry me. It must have been a pleasure to you to do so, you rude officer. And allow me to observe, don’t dare to address me so familiarly, unless it’s as a fellow-citizen. I forbid you to do it, once for all.”

“There, they are all like that!” cried the major, banging the table with his fist and addressing Stavrogin, who was sitting opposite. “But, allow me, I am fond of Liberalism and modern ideas, and I am fond of listening to clever conversation; masculine conversation, though, I warn you. But to listen to these women, these nightly windmills—no, that makes me ache all over! Don’t wriggle about!” he shouted to the girl, who was leaping up from her chair. “No, it’s my turn to speak, I’ve been insulted.”

“You can’t say anything yourself, and only hinder other people talking,” the lady of the house grumbled indignantly.

“No, I will have my say,” said the major hotly, addressing Stavrogin. “I reckon on you, Mr. Stavrogin, as a fresh person who has only just come on the scene, though I haven’t the honour of knowing you. Without men they’ll perish like flies—that’s what I think. All their woman question is only lack of originality. I assure you that all this woman question has been invented for them by men in foolishness and to their own hurt. I only thank God I am not married. There’s not the slightest variety in them, they can’t even invent a simple pattern; they have to get men to invent them for them! Here I used to carry her in my arms, used to dance the mazurka with her when she was ten years old; to-day she’s come, naturally I fly to embrace her, and at the second word she tells me there’s no God. She might have waited a little, she was in too great a hurry! Clever people don’t believe, I dare say; but that’s from their cleverness. But you, chicken, what do you know about God, I said to her. ‘Some student taught you, and if he’d taught you to light the lamp before the ikons you would have lighted it.’”

“You keep telling lies, you are a very spiteful person. I proved to you just now the untenability of your position,” the girl answered contemptuously, as though disdainful of further explanations with such a man. “I told you just now that we’ve all been taught in the Catechism if you honour your father and your parents you will live long and have wealth. That’s in the Ten Commandments. If God thought it necessary to offer rewards for love, your God must be immoral. That’s how I proved it to you. It wasn’t the second word, and it was because you asserted your rights. It’s not my fault if you are stupid and don’t understand even now. You are offended and you are spiteful—and that’s what explains all your generation.”

“You’re a goose!” said the major.

“And you are a fool!”

“You can call me names!”

“Excuse me, Kapiton Maximitch, you told me yourself you don’t believe in God,” Liputin piped from the other end of the table.

“What if I did say so—that’s a different matter. I believe, perhaps, only not altogether. Even if I don’t believe altogether, still I don’t say God ought to be shot. I used to think about God before I left the hussars. From all the poems you would think that hussars do nothing but carouse and drink. Yes, I did drink, maybe, but would you believe it, I used to jump out of bed at night and stood crossing myself before the images with nothing but my socks on, praying to God to give me faith; for even then I couldn’t be at peace as to whether there was a God or not. It used to fret me so! In the morning, of course, one would amuse oneself and one’s faith would seem to be lost again; and in fact I’ve noticed that faith always seems to be less in the daytime.”

“Haven’t you any cards?” asked Verhovensky, with a mighty yawn, addressing Madame Virginsky.

“I sympathise with your question, I sympathise entirely,” the girl-student broke in hotly, flushed with indignation at the major’s words.

“We are wasting precious time listening to silly talk,” snapped out the lady of the house, and she looked reprovingly at her husband.

The girl pulled herself together.

“I wanted to make a statement to the meeting concerning the sufferings of the students and their protest, but as time is being wasted in immoral conversation ...”

“There’s no such thing as moral or immoral,” the schoolboy brought out, unable to restrain himself as soon as the girl began.

“I knew that, Mr. Schoolboy, long before you were taught it.”

“And I maintain,” he answered savagely, “that you are a child come from Petersburg to enlighten us all, though we know for ourselves the commandment ‘honour thy father and thy mother,’ which you could not repeat correctly; and the fact that it’s immoral every one in Russia knows from Byelinsky.”

“Are we ever to have an end of this?” Madame Virginsky said resolutely to her husband. As the hostess, she blushed for the ineptitude of the conversation, especially as she noticed smiles and even astonishment among the guests who had been invited for the first time.

“Gentlemen,” said Virginsky, suddenly lifting up his voice, “if anyone wishes to say anything more nearly connected with our business, or has any statement to make, I call upon him to do so without wasting time.”

“I’ll venture to ask one question,” said the lame teacher suavely. He had been sitting particularly decorously and had not spoken till then. “I should like to know, are we some sort of meeting, or are we simply a gathering of ordinary mortals paying a visit? I ask simply for the sake of order and so as not to remain in ignorance.”

This “sly” question made an impression. People looked at each other, every one expecting someone else to answer, and suddenly all, as though at a word of command, turned their eyes to Verhovensky and Stavrogin.

“I suggest our voting on the answer to the question whether we are a meeting or not,” said Madame Virginsky.

“I entirely agree with the suggestion,” Liputin chimed in, “though the question is rather vague.”

“I agree too.”

“And so do I,” cried voices. “I too think it would make our proceedings more in order,” confirmed Virginsky.

“To the vote then,” said his wife. “Lyamshin, please sit down to the piano; you can give your vote from there when the voting begins.”

“Again!” cried Lyamshin. “I’ve strummed enough for you.”

“I beg you most particularly, sit down and play. Don’t you care to do anything for the cause?”

“But I assure you, Arina Prohorovna, nobody is eavesdropping. It’s only your fancy. Besides, the windows are high, and people would not understand if they did hear.”

“We don’t understand ourselves,” someone muttered. “But I tell you one must always be on one’s guard. I mean in case there should be spies,” she explained to Verhovensky. “Let them hear from the street that we have music and a name-day party.”

“Hang it all!” Lyamshin swore, and sitting down to the piano, began strumming a valse, banging on the keys almost with his fists, at random.

“I propose that those who want it to be a meeting should put up their right hands,” Madame Virginsky proposed.

Some put them up, others did not. Some held them up and then put them down again and then held them up again. “Foo! I don’t understand it at all,” one officer shouted. “I don’t either,” cried the other.

“Oh, I understand,” cried a third. “If it’s yes, you hold your hand up.”

“But what does ‘yes’ mean?”

“Means a meeting.”

“No, it means not a meeting.”

“I voted for a meeting,” cried the schoolboy to Madame Virginsky.

“Then why didn’t you hold up your hand?”

“I was looking at you. You didn’t hold up yours, so I didn’t hold up mine.”

“How stupid! I didn’t hold up my hand because I proposed it. Gentlemen, now I propose the contrary. Those who want a meeting, sit still and do nothing; those who don’t, hold up their right hands.”

“Those who don’t want it?” inquired the schoolboy. “Are you doing it on purpose?” cried Madame Virginsky wrathfully.

“No. Excuse me, those who want it, or those who don’t want it? For one must know that definitely,” cried two or three voices.

“Those who don’t want it—those who *don’t* want it.”

“Yes, but what is one to do, hold up one’s hand or not hold it up if one doesn’t want it?” cried an officer.

“Ech, we are not accustomed to constitutional methods yet!” remarked the major.

“Mr. Lyamshin, excuse me, but you are thumping so that no one can hear anything,” observed the lame teacher.

“But, upon my word, Arina Prohorovna, nobody is listening, really!” cried Lyamshin, jumping up. “I won’t play! I’ve come to you as a visitor, not as a drummer!”

“Gentlemen,” Virginsky went on, “answer verbally, are we a meeting or not?”

“We are! We are!” was heard on all sides. “If so, there’s no need to vote, that’s enough. Are you satisfied, gentlemen? Is there any need to put it to the vote?”

“No need—no need, we understand.”

“Perhaps someone doesn’t want it to be a meeting?”

“No, no; we all want it.”

“But what does ‘meeting’ mean?” cried a voice. No one answered.

“We must choose a chairman,” people cried from different parts of the room.

“Our host, of course, our host!”

“Gentlemen, if so,” Virginsky, the chosen chairman, began, “I propose my original motion. If anyone wants to say anything more relevant to the subject, or has some statement to make, let him bring it forward without loss of time.”

There was a general silence. The eyes of all were turned again on Verhovensky and Stavrogin.

“Verhovensky, have you no statement to make?” Madame Virginsky asked him directly.

“Nothing whatever,” he answered, yawning and stretching on his chair. “But I should like a glass of brandy.”

“Stavrogin, don’t you want to?”

“Thank you, I don’t drink.”

“I mean don’t you want to speak, not don’t you want brandy?”

“To speak, what about? No, I don’t want to.”

“They’ll bring you some brandy,” she answered Verhovensky.

The girl-student got up. She had darted up several times already.

“I have come to make a statement about the sufferings of poor students and the means of rousing them to protest.”

But she broke off. At the other end of the table a rival had risen, and all eyes turned to him. Shigalov, the man with the long ears, slowly rose from his seat with a gloomy and sullen air and mournfully laid on the table a thick notebook filled with extremely small handwriting. He remained standing in silence. Many people looked at the notebook in consternation, but Liputin, Virginsky, and the lame teacher seemed pleased.

“I ask leave to address the meeting,” Shigalov pronounced sullenly but resolutely.

“You have leave.” Virginsky gave his sanction.

The orator sat down, was silent for half a minute, and pronounced in a solemn voice,

“Gentlemen!”

“Here’s the brandy,” the sister who had been pouring out tea and had gone to fetch brandy rapped out, contemptuously and disdainfully putting the bottle before Verhovensky, together with the wineglass which she brought in her fingers without a tray or a plate.

The interrupted orator made a dignified pause.

“Never mind, go on, I am not listening,” cried Verhovensky, pouring himself out a glass.

“Gentlemen, asking your attention and, as you will see later, soliciting your aid in a matter of the first importance,” Shigalov began again, “I must make some prefatory remarks.”

“Arina Prohorovna, haven’t you some scissors?” Pyotr Stepanovitch asked suddenly.

“What do you want scissors for?” she asked, with wide-open eyes.

“I’ve forgotten to cut my nails; I’ve been meaning to for the last three days,” he observed, scrutinising his long and dirty nails with unruffled composure.

Arina Prohorovna crimsoned, but Miss Virginsky seemed pleased.

“I believe I saw them just now on the window.” She got up from the table, went and found the scissors, and at once brought them. Pyotr Stepanovitch did not even look at

her, took the scissors, and set to work with them. Arina Prohorovna grasped that these were realistic manners, and was ashamed of her sensitiveness. People looked at one another in silence. The lame teacher looked vindictively and enviously at Verhovensky. Shigalov went on.

“Dedicating my energies to the study of the social organisation which is in the future to replace the present condition of things, I’ve come to the conviction that all makers of social systems from ancient times up to the present year, 187-, have been dreamers, tellers of fairy-tales, fools who contradicted themselves, who understood nothing of natural science and the strange animal called man. Plato, Rousseau, Fourier, columns of aluminium, are only fit for sparrows and not for human society. But, now that we are all at last preparing to act, a new form of social organisation is essential. In order to avoid further uncertainty, I propose my own system of world-organisation. Here it is.” He tapped the notebook. “I wanted to expound my views to the meeting in the most concise form possible, but I see that I should need to add a great many verbal explanations, and so the whole exposition would occupy at least ten evenings, one for each of my chapters.” (There was the sound of laughter.) “I must add, besides, that my system is not yet complete.” (Laughter again.) “I am perplexed by my own data and my conclusion is a direct contradiction of the original idea with which I start. Starting from unlimited freedom, I arrive at unlimited despotism. I will add, however, that there can be no solution of the social problem but mine.”

The laughter grew louder and louder, but it came chiefly from the younger and less initiated visitors. There was an expression of some annoyance on the faces of Madame Virginsky, Liputin, and the lame teacher.

“If you’ve been unsuccessful in making your system consistent, and have been reduced to despair yourself, what could we do with it?” one officer observed warily.

“You are right, Mr. Officer”—Shigalov turned sharply to him—“especially in using the word despair. Yes, I am reduced to despair. Nevertheless, nothing can take the place of the system set forth in my book, and there is no other way out of it; no one can invent anything else. And so I hasten without loss of time to invite the whole society to listen for ten evenings to my book and then give their opinions of it. If the members are unwilling to listen to me, let us break up from the start—the men to take up service under government, the women to their cooking; for if you reject my solution you’ll find no other, none whatever! If they let the opportunity slip, it will simply be their loss, for they will be bound to come back to it again.”

There was a stir in the company. “Is he mad, or what?” voices asked.

“So the whole point lies in Shigalov’s despair,” Lyamshin commented, “and the essential question is whether he must despair or not?”

“Shigalov’s being on the brink of despair is a personal question,” declared the schoolboy.

“I propose we put it to the vote how far Shigalov’s despair affects the common cause, and at the same time whether it’s worth while listening to him or not,” an officer suggested gaily.

“That’s not right.” The lame teacher put in his spoke at last. As a rule he spoke with a rather mocking smile, so that it was difficult to make out whether he was in earnest or joking. “That’s not right, gentlemen. Mr. Shigalov is too much devoted to his task and is also too modest. I know his book. He suggests as a final solution of the question the division of mankind into two unequal parts. One-tenth enjoys absolute liberty and unbounded power over the other nine-tenths. The others have to give up all individuality and become, so to speak, a herd, and, through boundless submission, will by a series of regenerations attain primæval innocence, something like the Garden of Eden. They’ll have to work, however. The measures proposed by the author for depriving nine-tenths of mankind of their freedom and transforming them into a herd through the education of whole generations are very remarkable, founded on the facts of nature and highly logical. One may not agree with some of the deductions, but it would be difficult to doubt the intelligence and knowledge of the author. It’s a pity that the time required—ten evenings—is impossible to arrange for, or we might hear a great deal that’s interesting.”

“Can you be in earnest?” Madame Virginsky addressed the lame gentleman with a shade of positive uneasiness in her voice, “when that man doesn’t know what to do with people and so turns nine-tenths of them into slaves? I’ve suspected him for a long time.”

“You say that of your own brother?” asked the lame man.

“Relationship? Are you laughing at me?”

“And besides, to work for aristocrats and to obey them as though they were gods is contemptible!” observed the girl-student fiercely.

“What I propose is not contemptible; it’s paradise, an earthly paradise, and there can be no other on earth,” Shigalov pronounced authoritatively.

“For my part,” said Lyamshin, “if I didn’t know what to do with nine-tenths of mankind, I’d take them and blow them up into the air instead of putting them in paradise. I’d only

leave a handful of educated people, who would live happily ever afterwards on scientific principles.”

“No one but a buffoon can talk like that!” cried the girl, flaring up.

“He is a buffoon, but he is of use,” Madame Virginsky whispered to her.

“And possibly that would be the best solution of the problem,” said Shigalov, turning hotly to Lyamshin. “You certainly don’t know what a profound thing you’ve succeeded in saying, my merry friend. But as it’s hardly possible to carry out your idea, we must confine ourselves to an earthly paradise, since that’s what they call it.”

“This is pretty thorough rot,” broke, as though involuntarily, from Verhovensky. Without even raising his eyes, however, he went on cutting his nails with perfect nonchalance.

“Why is it rot?” The lame man took it up instantly, as though he had been lying in wait for his first words to catch at them. “Why is it rot? Mr. Shigalov is somewhat fanatical in his love for humanity, but remember that Fourier, still more Cabet and even Proudhon himself, advocated a number of the most despotic and even fantastic measures. Mr. Shigalov is perhaps far more sober in his suggestions than they are. I assure you that when one reads his book it’s almost impossible not to agree with some things. He is perhaps less far from realism than anyone and his earthly paradise is almost the real one—if it ever existed—for the loss of which man is always sighing.”

“I knew I was in for something,” Verhovensky muttered again.

“Allow me,” said the lame man, getting more and more excited. “Conversations and arguments about the future organisation of society are almost an actual necessity for all thinking people nowadays. Herzen was occupied with nothing else all his life. Byelinsky, as I know on very good authority, used to spend whole evenings with his friends debating and settling beforehand even the minutest, so to speak, domestic, details of the social organisation of the future.”

“Some people go crazy over it,” the major observed suddenly.

“We are more likely to arrive at something by talking, anyway, than by sitting silent and posing as dictators,” Liputin hissed, as though at last venturing to begin the attack.

“I didn’t mean Shigalov when I said it was rot,” Verhovensky mumbled. “You see, gentlemen,”—he raised his eyes a trifle—“to my mind all these books, Fourier, Cabet, all this talk about the right to work, and Shigalov’s theories—are all like novels of which one can write a hundred thousand—an æsthetic entertainment. I can understand that in this little town you are bored, so you rush to ink and paper.”

“Excuse me,” said the lame man, wriggling on his chair, “though we are provincials and of course objects of commiseration on that ground, yet we know that so far nothing has happened in the world new enough to be worth our weeping at having missed it. It is suggested to us in various pamphlets made abroad and secretly distributed that we should unite and form groups with the sole object of bringing about universal destruction. It’s urged that, however much you tinker with the world, you can’t make a good job of it, but that by cutting off a hundred million heads and so lightening one’s burden, one can jump over the ditch more safely. A fine idea, no doubt, but quite as impracticable as Shigalov’s theories, which you referred to just now so contemptuously.”

“Well, but I haven’t come here for discussion.” Verhovensky let drop this significant phrase, and, as though quite unaware of his blunder, drew the candle nearer to him that he might see better.

“It’s a pity, a great pity, that you haven’t come for discussion, and it’s a great pity that you are so taken up just now with your toilet.”

“What’s my toilet to you?”

“To remove a hundred million heads is as difficult as to transform the world by propaganda. Possibly more difficult, especially in Russia,” Liputin ventured again.

“It’s Russia they rest their hopes on now,” said an officer.

“We’ve heard they are resting their hopes on it,” interposed the lame man. “We know that a mysterious finger is pointing to our delightful country as the land most fitted to accomplish the great task. But there’s this: by the gradual solution of the problem by propaganda I shall gain something, anyway—I shall have some pleasant talk, at least, and shall even get some recognition from government for my services to the cause of society. But in the second way, by the rapid method of cutting off a hundred million heads, what benefit shall I get personally? If you began advocating that, your tongue might be cut out.”

“Yours certainly would be,” observed Verhovensky.

“You see. And as under the most favourable circumstances you would not get through such a massacre in less than fifty or at the best thirty years—for they are not sheep, you know, and perhaps they would not let themselves be slaughtered—wouldn’t it be better to pack one’s bundle and migrate to some quiet island beyond calm seas and there close one’s eyes tranquilly? Believe me”—he tapped the table significantly with his finger—“you will only promote emigration by such propaganda and nothing else!”

He finished evidently triumphant. He was one of the intellects of the province. Liputin smiled slyly, Virginsky listened rather dejectedly, the others followed the discussion with great attention, especially the ladies and officers. They all realised that the advocate of the hundred million heads theory had been driven into a corner, and waited to see what would come of it.

“That was a good saying of yours, though,” Verhovensky mumbled more carelessly than ever, in fact with an air of positive boredom. “Emigration is a good idea. But all the same, if in spite of all the obvious disadvantages you foresee, more and more come forward every day ready to fight for the common cause, it will be able to do without you. It’s a new religion, my good friend, coming to take the place of the old one. That’s why so many fighters come forward, and it’s a big movement. You’d better emigrate! And, you know, I should advise Dresden, not ‘the calm islands.’ To begin with, it’s a town that has never been visited by an epidemic, and as you are a man of culture, no doubt you are afraid of death. Another thing, it’s near the Russian frontier, so you can more easily receive your income from your beloved Fatherland. Thirdly, it contains what are called treasures of art, and you are a man of æsthetic tastes, formerly a teacher of literature, I believe. And, finally, it has a miniature Switzerland of its own—to provide you with poetic inspiration, for no doubt you write verse. In fact it’s a treasure in a nutshell!” There was a general movement, especially among the officers. In another instant they would have all begun talking at once. But the lame man rose irritably to the bait.

“No, perhaps I am not going to give up the common cause. You must understand that ...”

“What, would you join the quintet if I proposed it to you?” Verhovensky boomed suddenly, and he laid down the scissors.

Every one seemed startled. The mysterious man had revealed himself too freely. He had even spoken openly of the “quintet.”

“Every one feels himself to be an honest man and will not shirk his part in the common cause”—the lame man tried to wriggle out of it—“but ...”

“No, this is not a question which allows of a *but*,” Verhovensky interrupted harshly and peremptorily. “I tell you, gentlemen, I must have a direct answer. I quite understand that, having come here and having called you together myself, I am bound to give you explanations” (again an unexpected revelation), “but I can give you none till I know what is your attitude to the subject. To cut the matter short—for we can’t go on talking for another thirty years as people have done for the last thirty—I ask you which you

prefer: the slow way, which consists in the composition of socialistic romances and the academic ordering of the destinies of humanity a thousand years hence, while despotism will swallow the savoury morsels which would almost fly into your mouths of themselves if you'd take a little trouble; or do you, whatever it may imply, prefer a quicker way which will at last untie your hands, and will let humanity make its own social organisation in freedom and in action, not on paper? They shout 'a hundred million heads'; that may be only a metaphor; but why be afraid of it if, with the slow day-dream on paper, despotism in the course of some hundred years will devour not a hundred but five hundred million heads? Take note too that an incurable invalid will not be cured whatever prescriptions are written for him on paper. On the contrary, if there is delay, he will grow so corrupt that he will infect us too and contaminate all the fresh forces which one might still reckon upon now, so that we shall all at last come to grief together. I thoroughly agree that it's extremely agreeable to chatter liberally and eloquently, but action is a little trying.... However, I am no hand at talking; I came here with communications, and so I beg all the honourable company not to vote, but simply and directly to state which you prefer: walking at a snail's pace in the marsh, or putting on full steam to get across it?"

"I am certainly for crossing at full steam!" cried the schoolboy in an ecstasy.

"So am I," Lyamshin chimed in.

"There can be no doubt about the choice," muttered an officer, followed by another, then by someone else. What struck them all most was that Verhovensky had come "with communications" and had himself just promised to speak.

"Gentlemen, I see that almost all decide for the policy of the manifestoes," he said, looking round at the company.

"All, all!" cried the majority of voices.

"I confess I am rather in favour of a more humane policy," said the major, "but as all are on the other side, I go with all the rest."

"It appears, then, that even you are not opposed to it," said Verhovensky, addressing the lame man.

"I am not exactly ..." said the latter, turning rather red, "but if I do agree with the rest now, it's simply not to break up—"

"You are all like that! Ready to argue for six months to practise your Liberal eloquence and in the end you vote the same as the rest! Gentlemen, consider though, is it true that you are all ready?"

(Ready for what? The question was vague, but very alluring.)

“All are, of course!” voices were heard. But all were looking at one another.

“But afterwards perhaps you will resent having agreed so quickly? That’s almost always the way with you.”

The company was excited in various ways, greatly excited. The lame man flew at him.

“Allow me to observe, however, that answers to such questions are conditional. Even if we have given our decision, you must note that questions put in such a strange way ...”

“In what strange way?”

“In a way such questions are not asked.”

“Teach me how, please. But do you know, I felt sure you’d be the first to take offence.”

“You’ve extracted from us an answer as to our readiness for immediate action; but what right had you to do so? By what authority do you ask such questions?”

“You should have thought of asking that question sooner! Why did you answer? You agree and then you go back on it!”

“But to my mind the irresponsibility of your principal question suggests to me that you have no authority, no right, and only asked from personal curiosity.”

“What do you mean? What do you mean?” cried Verhovensky, apparently beginning to be much alarmed.

“Why, that the initiation of new members into anything you like is done, anyway, *tête-à-tête* and not in the company of twenty people one doesn’t know!” blurted out the lame man. He had said all that was in his mind because he was too irritated to restrain himself. Verhovensky turned to the general company with a capitally simulated look of alarm.

“Gentlemen, I deem it my duty to declare that all this is folly, and that our conversation has gone too far. I have so far initiated no one, and no one has the right to say of me that I initiate members. We were simply discussing our opinions. That’s so, isn’t it? But whether that’s so or not, you alarm me very much.” He turned to the lame man again. “I had no idea that it was unsafe here to speak of such practically innocent matters except *tête-à-tête*. Are you afraid of informers? Can there possibly be an informer among us here?”

The excitement became tremendous; all began talking.

“Gentlemen, if that is so,” Verhovensky went on, “I have compromised myself more than anyone, and so I will ask you to answer one question, if you care to, of course. You are all perfectly free.”

“What question? What question?” every one clamoured.

“A question that will make it clear whether we are to remain together, or take up our hats and go our several ways without speaking.”

“The question! The question!”

“If any one of us knew of a proposed political murder, would he, in view of all the consequences, go to give information, or would he stay at home and await events? Opinions may differ on this point. The answer to the question will tell us clearly whether we are to separate, or to remain together and for far longer than this one evening. Let me appeal to you first.” He turned to the lame man.

“Why to me first?”

“Because you began it all. Be so good as not to prevaricate; it won’t help you to be cunning. But please yourself, it’s for you to decide.”

“Excuse me, but such a question is positively insulting.”

“No, can’t you be more exact than that?”

“I’ve never been an agent of the Secret Police,” replied the latter, wriggling more than ever.

“Be so good as to be more definite, don’t keep us waiting.”

The lame man was so furious that he left off answering. Without a word he glared wrathfully from under his spectacles at his tormentor.

“Yes or no? Would you inform or not?” cried Verhovensky.

“Of course I wouldn’t,” the lame man shouted twice as loudly.

“And no one would, of course not!” cried many voices.

“Allow me to appeal to you, Mr. Major. Would you inform or not?” Verhovensky went on. “And note that I appeal to you on purpose.”

“I won’t inform.”

“But if you knew that someone meant to rob and murder someone else, an ordinary mortal, then you would inform and give warning?”

“Yes, of course; but that’s a private affair, while the other would be a political treachery. I’ve never been an agent of the Secret Police.”

“And no one here has,” voices cried again. “It’s an unnecessary question. Every one will make the same answer. There are no informers here.”

“What is that gentleman getting up for?” cried the girl-student.

“That’s Shatov. What are you getting up for?” cried the lady of the house.

Shatov did, in fact, stand up. He was holding his cap in his hand and looking at Verhovensky. Apparently he wanted to say something to him, but was hesitating. His face was pale and wrathful, but he controlled himself. He did not say one word, but in silence walked towards the door.

“Shatov, this won’t make things better for you!” Verhovensky called after him enigmatically.

“But it will for you, since you are a spy and a scoundrel!” Shatov shouted to him from the door, and he went out.

Shouts and exclamations again.

“That’s what comes of a test,” cried a voice.

“It’s been of use,” cried another.

“Hasn’t it been of use too late?” observed a third.

“Who invited him? Who let him in? Who is he? Who is Shatov? Will he inform, or won’t he?” There was a shower of questions.

“If he were an informer he would have kept up appearances instead of cursing it all and going away,” observed someone.

“See, Stavrogin is getting up too. Stavrogin has not answered the question either,” cried the girl-student.

Stavrogin did actually stand up, and at the other end of the table Kirillov rose at the same time.

“Excuse me, Mr. Stavrogin,” Madame Virginsky addressed him sharply, “we all answered the question, while you are going away without a word.”

“I see no necessity to answer the question which interests you,” muttered Stavrogin.

“But we’ve compromised ourselves and you won’t,” shouted several voices.

“What business is it of mine if you have compromised yourselves?” laughed Stavrogin, but his eyes flashed.

“What business? What business?” voices exclaimed.

Many people got up from their chairs.

“Allow me, gentlemen, allow me,” cried the lame man. “Mr. Verhovensky hasn’t answered the question either; he has only asked it.”

The remark produced a striking effect. All looked at one another. Stavrogin laughed aloud in the lame man’s face and went out; Kirillov followed him; Verhovensky ran after them into the passage.

“What are you doing?” he faltered, seizing Stavrogin’s hand and gripping it with all his might in his. Stavrogin pulled away his hand without a word.

“Be at Kirillov’s directly, I’ll come.... It’s absolutely necessary for me to see you!...”

“It isn’t necessary for me,” Stavrogin cut him short.

“Stavrogin will be there,” Kirillov said finally. “Stavrogin, it is necessary for you. I will show you that there.”

They went out.

CHAPTER VIII. IVAN THE TSAREVITCH

They had gone. Pyotr Stepanovitch was about to rush back to the meeting to bring order into chaos, but probably reflecting that it wasn’t worth bothering about, left everything, and two minutes later was flying after the other two. On the way he remembered a short cut to Filipov’s house. He rushed along it, up to his knees in mud, and did in fact arrive at the very moment when Stavrogin and Kirillov were coming in at the gate.

“You here already?” observed Kirillov. “That’s good. Come in.”

“How is it you told us you lived alone,” asked Stavrogin, passing a boiling samovar in the passage.

“You will see directly who it is I live with,” muttered Kirillov. “Go in.”

They had hardly entered when Verhovensky at once took out of his pocket the anonymous letter he had taken from Lembke, and laid it before Stavrogin. They all then sat down. Stavrogin read the letter in silence.

“Well?” he asked.

“That scoundrel will do as he writes,” Verhovensky explained. “So, as he is under your control, tell me how to act. I assure you he may go to Lembke to-morrow.”

“Well, let him go.”

“Let him go! And when we can prevent him, too!”

“You are mistaken. He is not dependent on me. Besides, I don’t care; he doesn’t threaten me in any way; he only threatens you.”

“You too.”

“I don’t think so.”

“But there are other people who may not spare you. Surely you understand that? Listen, Stavrogin. This is only playing with words. Surely you don’t grudge the money?”

“Why, would it cost money?”

“It certainly would; two thousand or at least fifteen hundred. Give it to me to-morrow or even to-day, and to-morrow evening I’ll send him to Petersburg for you. That’s just what he wants. If you like, he can take Marya Timofyevna. Note that.”

There was something distracted about him. He spoke, as it were, without caution, and he did not reflect on his words. Stavrogin watched him, wondering.

“I’ve no reason to send Marya Timofyevna away.”

“Perhaps you don’t even want to,” Pyotr Stepanovitch smiled ironically.

“Perhaps I don’t.”

“In short, will there be the money or not?” he cried with angry impatience, and as it were peremptorily, to Stavrogin. The latter scrutinised him gravely. “There won’t be the money.”

“Look here, Stavrogin! You know something, or have done something already! You are going it!”

His face worked, the corners of his mouth twitched, and he suddenly laughed an unprovoked and irrelevant laugh.

“But you’ve had money from your father for the estate,” Stavrogin observed calmly. “Maman sent you six or eight thousand for Stepan Trofimovitch. So you can pay the fifteen hundred out of your own money. I don’t care to pay for other people. I’ve given a lot as it is. It annoys me...” He smiled himself at his own words.

“Ah, you are beginning to joke!”

Stavrogin got up from his chair. Verhovensky instantly jumped up too, and mechanically stood with his back to the door as though barring the way to him. Stavrogin had already made a motion to push him aside and go out, when he stopped short.

“I won’t give up Shatov to you,” he said. Pyotr Stepanovitch started. They looked at one another.

“I told you this evening why you needed Shatov’s blood,” said Stavrogin, with flashing eyes. “It’s the cement you want to bind your groups together with. You drove Shatov away cleverly just now. You knew very well that he wouldn’t promise not to inform and he would have thought it mean to lie to you. But what do you want with me? What do you want with me? Ever since we met abroad you won’t let me alone. The explanation you’ve given me so far was simply raving. Meanwhile you are driving at my giving Lebyadkin fifteen hundred roubles, so as to give Fedka an opportunity to murder him. I know that you think I want my wife murdered too. You think to tie my hands by this crime, and have me in your power. That’s it, isn’t it? What good will that be to you? What the devil do you want with me? Look at me. Once for all, am I the man for you? And let me alone.”

“Has Fedka been to you himself?” Verhovensky asked breathlessly.

“Yes, he came. His price is fifteen hundred too.... But here; he’ll repeat it himself. There he stands.” Stavrogin stretched out his hand.

Pyotr Stepanovitch turned round quickly. A new figure, Fedka, wearing a sheep-skin coat, but without a cap, as though he were at home, stepped out of the darkness in the doorway. He stood there laughing and showing his even white teeth. His black eyes, with yellow whites, darted cautiously about the room watching the gentlemen. There was something he did not understand. He had evidently been just brought in by

Kirillov, and his inquiring eyes turned to the latter. He stood in the doorway, but was unwilling to come into the room.

“I suppose you got him ready here to listen to our bargaining, or that he may actually see the money in our hands. Is that it?” asked Stavrogin; and without waiting for an answer he walked out of the house. Verhovensky, almost frantic, overtook him at the gate.

“Stop! Not another step!” he cried, seizing him by the arm. Stavrogin tried to pull away his arm, but did not succeed. He was overcome with fury. Seizing Verhovensky by the hair with his left hand he flung him with all his might on the ground and went out at the gate. But he had not gone thirty paces before Verhovensky overtook him again.

“Let us make it up; let us make it up!” he murmured in a spasmodic whisper.

Stavrogin shrugged his shoulders, but neither answered nor turned round.

“Listen. I will bring you Lizaveta Nikolaevna to-morrow; shall I? No? Why don't you answer? Tell me what you want. I'll do it. Listen. I'll let you have Shatov. Shall I?”

“Then it's true that you meant to kill him?” cried Stavrogin.

“What do you want with Shatov? What is he to you?” Pyotr Stepanovitch went on, gasping, speaking rapidly. He was in a frenzy, and kept running forward and seizing Stavrogin by the elbow, probably unaware of what he was doing. “Listen. I'll let you have him. Let's make it up. Your price is a very great one, but ... Let's make it up!”

Stavrogin glanced at him at last, and was amazed. The eyes, the voice, were not the same as always, or as they had been in the room just now. What he saw was almost another face. The intonation of the voice was different. Verhovensky besought, implored. He was a man from whom what was most precious was being taken or had been taken, and who was still stunned by the shock.

“But what's the matter with you?” cried Stavrogin. The other did not answer, but ran after him and gazed at him with the same imploring but yet inflexible expression.

“Let's make it up!” he whispered once more. “Listen. Like Fedka, I have a knife in my boot, but I'll make it up with you!”

“But what do you want with me, damn you?” Stavrogin cried, with intense anger and amazement. “Is there some mystery about it? Am I a sort of talisman for you?”

“Listen. We are going to make a revolution,” the other muttered rapidly, and almost in delirium. “You don't believe we shall make a revolution? We are going to make such an

upheaval that everything will be uprooted from its foundation. Karmazinov is right that there is nothing to lay hold of. Karmazinov is very intelligent. Another ten such groups in different parts of Russia—and I am safe.”

“Groups of fools like that?” broke reluctantly from Stavrogin.

“Oh, don’t be so clever, Stavrogin; don’t be so clever yourself. And you know you are by no means so intelligent that you need wish others to be. You are afraid, you have no faith. You are frightened at our doing things on such a scale. And why are they fools? They are not such fools. No one has a mind of his own nowadays. There are terribly few original minds nowadays. Virginsky is a pure-hearted man, ten times as pure as you or I; but never mind about him. Liputin is a rogue, but I know one point about him. Every rogue has some point in him.... Lyamshin is the only one who hasn’t, but he is in my hands. A few more groups, and I should have money and passports everywhere; so much at least. Suppose it were only that? And safe places, so that they can search as they like. They might uproot one group but they’d stick at the next. We’ll set things in a ferment.... Surely you don’t think that we two are not enough?”

“Take Shigalov, and let me alone....”

“Shigalov is a man of genius! Do you know he is a genius like Fourier, but bolder than Fourier; stronger. I’ll look after him. He’s discovered ‘equality’!”

“He is in a fever; he is raving; something very queer has happened to him,” thought Stavrogin, looking at him once more. Both walked on without stopping.

“He’s written a good thing in that manuscript,” Verhovensky went on. “He suggests a system of spying. Every member of the society spies on the others, and it’s his duty to inform against them. Every one belongs to all and all to every one. All are slaves and equal in their slavery. In extreme cases he advocates slander and murder, but the great thing about it is equality. To begin with, the level of education, science, and talents is lowered. A high level of education and science is only possible for great intellects, and they are not wanted. The great intellects have always seized the power and been despots. Great intellects cannot help being despots and they’ve always done more harm than good. They will be banished or put to death. Cicero will have his tongue cut out, Copernicus will have his eyes put out, Shakespeare will be stoned—that’s Shigalovism. Slaves are bound to be equal. There has never been either freedom or equality without despotism, but in the herd there is bound to be equality, and that’s Shigalovism! Ha ha ha! Do you think it strange? I am for Shigalovism.”

Stavrogin tried to quicken his pace, and to reach home as soon as possible. "If this fellow is drunk, where did he manage to get drunk?" crossed his mind. "Can it be the brandy?"

"Listen, Stavrogin. To level the mountains is a fine idea, not an absurd one. I am for Shigalov. Down with culture. We've had enough science! Without science we have material enough to go on for a thousand years, but one must have discipline. The one thing wanting in the world is discipline. The thirst for culture is an aristocratic thirst. The moment you have family ties or love you get the desire for property. We will destroy that desire; we'll make use of drunkenness, slander, spying; we'll make use of incredible corruption; we'll stifle every genius in its infancy. We'll reduce all to a common denominator! Complete equality! 'We've learned a trade, and we are honest men; we need nothing more,' that was an answer given by English working-men recently. Only the necessary is necessary, that's the motto of the whole world henceforward. But it needs a shock. That's for us, the directors, to look after. Slaves must have directors. Absolute submission, absolute loss of individuality, but once in thirty years Shigalov would let them have a shock and they would all suddenly begin eating one another up, to a certain point, simply as a precaution against boredom. Boredom is an aristocratic sensation. The Shigalovians will have no desires. Desire and suffering are our lot, but Shigalovism is for the slaves."

"You exclude yourself?" Stavrogin broke in again.

"You, too. Do you know, I have thought of giving up the world to the Pope. Let him come forth, on foot, and barefoot, and show himself to the rabble, saying, 'See what they have brought me to!' and they will all rush after him, even the troops. The Pope at the head, with us round him, and below us—Shigalovism. All that's needed is that the Internationale should come to an agreement with the Pope; so it will. And the old chap will agree at once. There's nothing else he can do. Remember my words! Ha ha! Is it stupid? Tell me, is it stupid or not?"

"That's enough!" Stavrogin muttered with vexation.

"Enough! Listen. I've given up the Pope! Damn Shigalovism! Damn the Pope! We must have something more everyday. Not Shigalovism, for Shigalovism is a rare specimen of the jeweller's art. It's an ideal; it's in the future. Shigalov is an artist and a fool like every philanthropist. We need coarse work, and Shigalov despises coarse work. Listen. The Pope shall be for the west, and you shall be for us, you shall be for us!"

"Let me alone, you drunken fellow!" muttered Stavrogin, and he quickened his pace.

“Stavrogin, you are beautiful,” cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, almost ecstatically. “Do you know that you are beautiful! What’s the most precious thing about you is that you sometimes don’t know it. Oh, I’ve studied you! I often watch you on the sly! There’s a lot of simpleheartedness and naïveté about you still. Do you know that? There still is, there is! You must be suffering and suffering genuinely from that simple-heartedness. I love beauty. I am a nihilist, but I love beauty. Are nihilists incapable of loving beauty? It’s only idols they dislike, but I love an idol. You are my idol! You injure no one, and every one hates you. You treat every one as an equal, and yet every one is afraid of you—that’s good. Nobody would slap you on the shoulder. You are an awful aristocrat. An aristocrat is irresistible when he goes in for democracy! To sacrifice life, your own or another’s is nothing to you. You are just the man that’s needed. It’s just such a man as you that I need. I know no one but you. You are the leader, you are the sun and I am your worm.”

He suddenly kissed his hand. A shiver ran down Stavrogin’s spine, and he pulled away his hand in dismay. They stood still.

“Madman!” whispered Stavrogin.

“Perhaps I am raving; perhaps I am raving,” Pyotr Stepanovitch assented, speaking rapidly. “But I’ve thought of the first step! Shigalov would never have thought of it. There are lots of Shigalovs, but only one man, one man in Russia has hit on the first step and knows how to take it. And I am that man! Why do you look at me? I need you, you; without you I am nothing. Without you I am a fly, a bottled idea; Columbus without America.”

Stavrogin stood still and looked intently into his wild eyes.

“Listen. First of all we’ll make an upheaval,” Verhovensky went on in desperate haste, continually clutching at Stavrogin’s left sleeve. “I’ve already told you. We shall penetrate to the peasantry. Do you know that we are tremendously powerful already? Our party does not consist only of those who commit murder and arson, fire off pistols in the traditional fashion, or bite colonels. They are only a hindrance. I don’t accept anything without discipline. I am a scoundrel, of course, and not a socialist. Ha ha! Listen. I’ve reckoned them all up: a teacher who laughs with children at their God and at their cradle is on our side. The lawyer who defends an educated murderer because he is more cultured than his victims and could not help murdering them to get money is one of us. The schoolboys who murder a peasant for the sake of sensation are ours. The juries who acquit every criminal are ours. The prosecutor who trembles at a trial for fear he should not seem advanced enough is ours, ours. Among officials and literary men we have lots, lots, and they don’t know it themselves. On the other hand,

the docility of schoolboys and fools has reached an extreme pitch; the schoolmasters are bitter and bilious. On all sides we see vanity puffed up out of all proportion; brutal, monstrous appetites.... Do you know how many we shall catch by little, ready-made ideas? When I left Russia, Littré's dictum that crime is insanity was all the rage; I come back and I find that crime is no longer insanity, but simply common sense, almost a duty; anyway, a gallant protest. 'How can we expect a cultured man not to commit a murder, if he is in need of money.' But these are only the first fruits. The Russian God has already been vanquished by cheap vodka. The peasants are drunk, the mothers are drunk, the children are drunk, the churches are empty, and in the peasant courts one hears, 'Two hundred lashes or stand us a bucket of vodka.' Oh, this generation has only to grow up. It's only a pity we can't afford to wait, or we might have let them get a bit more tipsy! Ah, what a pity there's no proletariat! But there will be, there will be; we are going that way...."

"It's a pity, too, that we've grown greater fools," muttered Stavrogin, moving forward as before.

"Listen. I've seen a child of six years old leading home his drunken mother, whilst she swore at him with foul words. Do you suppose I am glad of that? When it's in our hands, maybe we'll mend things ... if need be, we'll drive them for forty years into the wilderness.... But one or two generations of vice are essential now; monstrous, abject vice by which a man is transformed into a loathsome, cruel, egoistic reptile. That's what we need! And what's more, a little 'fresh blood' that we may get accustomed to it. Why are you laughing? I am not contradicting myself. I am only contradicting the philanthropists and Shigalovism, not myself! I am a scoundrel, not a socialist. Ha ha ha! I'm only sorry there's no time. I promised Karmazinov to begin in May, and to make an end by October. Is that too soon? Ha ha! Do you know what, Stavrogin? Though the Russian people use foul language, there's nothing cynical about them so far. Do you know the serfs had more self-respect than Karmazinov? Though they were beaten they always preserved their gods, which is more than Karmazinov's done."

"Well, Verhovensky, this is the first time I've heard you talk, and I listen with amazement," observed Stavrogin. "So you are really not a socialist, then, but some sort of ... ambitious politician?"

"A scoundrel, a scoundrel! You are wondering what I am. I'll tell you what I am directly, that's what I am leading up to. It was not for nothing that I kissed your hand. But the people must believe that we know what we are after, while the other side do nothing but 'brandish their cudgels and beat their own followers.' Ah, if we only had more time! That's the only trouble, we have no time. We will proclaim destruction.... Why is it, why

is it that idea has such a fascination. But we must have a little exercise; we must. We'll set fires going.... We'll set legends going. Every scurvy 'group' will be of use. Out of those very groups I'll pick you out fellows so keen they'll not shrink from shooting, and be grateful for the honour of a job, too. Well, and there will be an upheaval! There's going to be such an upset as the world has never seen before.... Russia will be overwhelmed with darkness, the earth will weep for its old gods.... Well, then we shall bring forward ... whom?"

"Whom?"

"Ivan the Tsarevitch."

"Who-m?"

"Ivan the Tsarevitch. You! You!"

Stavrogin thought a minute.

"A pretender?" he asked suddenly, looking with intense surprise at his frantic companion. "Ah! so that's your plan at last!"

"We shall say that he is 'in hiding,'" Verhovensky said softly, in a sort of tender whisper, as though he really were drunk indeed. "Do you know the magic of that phrase, 'he is in hiding'? But he will appear, he will appear. We'll set a legend going better than the Skoptsis'. He exists, but no one has seen him. Oh, what a legend one can set going! And the great thing is it will be a new force at work! And we need that; that's what they are crying for. What can Socialism do: it's destroyed the old forces but hasn't brought in any new. But in this we have a force, and what a force! Incredible. We only need one lever to lift up the earth. Everything will rise up!"

"Then have you been seriously reckoning on me?" Stavrogin said with a malicious smile.

"Why do you laugh, and so spitefully? Don't frighten me. I am like a little child now. I can be frightened to death by one smile like that. Listen. I'll let no one see you, no one. So it must be. He exists, but no one has seen him; he is in hiding. And do you know, one might show you, to one out of a hundred-thousand, for instance. And the rumour will spread over all the land, 'We've seen him, we've seen him.'

"Ivan Filipovitch the God of Sabaoth,* has been seen, too, when he ascended into heaven in his chariot in the sight of men. They saw him with their own eyes. And you are not an Ivan Filipovitch. You are beautiful and proud as a God; you are seeking nothing for yourself, with the halo of a victim round you, 'in hiding.' The great thing is

the legend. You'll conquer them, you'll have only to look, and you will conquer them. He is 'in hiding,' and will come forth bringing a new truth. And, meanwhile, we'll pass two or three judgments as wise as Solomon's. The groups, you know, the quintets—we've no need of newspapers. If out of ten thousand petitions only one is granted, all would come with petitions. In every parish, every peasant will know that there is somewhere a hollow tree where petitions are to be put. And the whole land will resound with the cry, 'A new just law is to come,' and the sea will be troubled and the whole gimcrack show will fall to the ground, and then we shall consider how to build up an edifice of stone. For the first time! We are going to build it, we, and only we!"

** The reference is to the legend current in the sect of
Flagellants.—Translator's note.*

"Madness," said Stavrogin.

"Why, why don't you want it? Are you afraid? That's why I caught at you, because you are afraid of nothing. Is it unreasonable? But you see, so far I am Columbus without America. Would Columbus without America seem reasonable?"

Stavrogin did not speak. Meanwhile they had reached the house and stopped at the entrance.

"Listen," Verhovensky bent down to his ear. "I'll do it for you without the money. I'll settle Marya Timofyevna to-morrow!... Without the money, and to-morrow I'll bring you Liza. Will you have Liza to-morrow?"

"Is he really mad?" Stavrogin wondered smiling. The front door was opened.

"Stavrogin—is America ours?" said Verhovensky, seizing his hand for the last time.

"What for?" said Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, gravely and sternly.

"You don't care, I knew that!" cried Verhovensky in an access of furious anger. "You are lying, you miserable, profligate, perverted, little aristocrat! I don't believe you, you've the appetite of a wolf!... Understand that you've cost me such a price, I can't give you up now! There's no one on earth but you! I invented you abroad; I invented it all, looking at you. If I hadn't watched you from my corner, nothing of all this would have entered my head!"

Stavrogin went up the steps without answering.

"Stavrogin!" Verhovensky called after him, "I give you a day ... two, then ... three, then; more than three I can't—and then you're to answer!"

CHAPTER IX. A RAID AT STEPAN TROFIMOVITCH'S

Meanwhile an incident had occurred which astounded me and shattered Stepan Trofimovitch. At eight o'clock in the morning Nastasya ran round to me from him with the news that her master was "raided." At first I could not make out what she meant; I could only gather that the "raid" was carried out by officials, that they had come and taken his papers, and that a soldier had tied them up in a bundle and "wheeled them away in a barrow." It was a fantastic story. I hurried at once to Stepan Trofimovitch.

I found him in a surprising condition: upset and in great agitation, but at the same time unmistakably triumphant. On the table in the middle of the room the samovar was boiling, and there was a glass of tea poured out but untouched and forgotten. Stepan Trofimovitch was wandering round the table and peeping into every corner of the room, unconscious of what he was doing. He was wearing his usual red knitted jacket, but seeing me, he hurriedly put on his coat and waistcoat—a thing he had never done before when any of his intimate friends found him in his jacket. He took me warmly by the hand at once.

"Enfin un ami!" (He heaved a deep sigh.) *"Cher, I've sent to you only, and no one knows anything. We must give Nastasya orders to lock the doors and not admit anyone, except, of course them.... Vous comprenez?"*

He looked at me uneasily, as though expecting a reply. I made haste, of course, to question him, and from his disconnected and broken sentences, full of unnecessary parentheses, I succeeded in learning that at seven o'clock that morning an official of the province had 'all of a sudden' called on him.

"Pardon, j'ai oublié son nom. Il n'est pas du pays, but I think he came to the town with Lembke, quelque chose de bête et d'Allemand dans la physionomie. Il s'appelle Rosenthal."

"Wasn't it Blum?"

"Yes, that was his name. *Vous le connaissez? Quelque chose d'hébéte et de très content dans la figure, pourtant très sevère, roide et sérieux.* A type of the police, of the submissive subordinates, *je m'y connais.* I was still asleep, and, would you believe it, he asked to have a look at my books and manuscripts! *Oui, je m'en souviens, il a employé ce mot.* He did not arrest me, but only the books. *Il se tenait à distance,* and

when he began to explain his visit he looked as though I ... *enfin il avait l'air de croire que je tomberai sur lui immédiatement et que je commencerai à le battre comme plâtre. Tous ces gens du bas étage sont comme ça* when they have to do with a gentleman. I need hardly say I understood it all at once. *Voilà vingt ans que je m'y prépare.* I opened all the drawers and handed him all the keys; I gave them myself, I gave him all. *J'étais digne et calme.* From the books he took the foreign edition of Herzen, the bound volume of *The Bell*, four copies of my poem, *et enfin tout ça.* Then he took my letters and my papers *et quelques-unes de mes ébauches historiques, critiques et politiques.* All that they carried off. Nastasya says that a soldier wheeled them away in a barrow and covered them with an apron; *oui, c'est cela,* with an apron." It sounded like delirium. Who could make head or tail of it? I pelted him with questions again. Had Blum come alone, or with others? On whose authority? By what right? How had he dared? How did he explain it?

"*Il était seul, bien seul,* but there was someone else *dans l'antichambre, oui, je m'en souviens, et puis ...* Though I believe there was someone else besides, and there was a guard standing in the entry. You must ask Nastasya; she knows all about it better than I do. *J'étais surexcité, voyez-vous. Il parlait, il parlait ... un tas de chases;* he said very little though, it was I said all that.... I told him the story of my life, simply from that point of view, of course. *J'étais surexcité, mais digne, je vous assure....* I am afraid, though, I may have shed tears. They got the barrow from the shop next door."

"Oh, heavens! how could all this have happened? But for mercy's sake, speak more exactly, Stepan Trofimovitch. What you tell me sounds like a dream."

"*Cher,* I feel as though I were in a dream myself.... *Savez-vous! Il a prononcé le nom de Telyatnikof,* and I believe that that man was concealed in the entry. Yes, I remember, he suggested calling the prosecutor and Dmitri Dmitritch, I believe ... *qui me doit encore quinze roubles* I won at cards, *soit dit en passant. Enfin, je n'ai pas trop compris.* But I got the better of them, and what do I care for Dmitri Dmitritch? I believe I begged him very earnestly to keep it quiet; I begged him particularly, most particularly. I am afraid I demeaned myself, in fact, *comment croyez-vous? Enfin il a consenti.* Yes, I remember, he suggested that himself—that it would be better to keep it quiet, for he had only come 'to have a look round' *et rien de plus,* and nothing more, nothing more ... and that if they find nothing, nothing will happen. So that we ended it all *en amis, je suis tout à fait content.*"

"Why, then he suggested the usual course of proceedings in such cases and regular guarantees, and you rejected them yourself," I cried with friendly indignation.

“Yes, it’s better without the guarantees. And why make a scandal? Let’s keep it *en amis* so long as we can. You know, in our town, if they get to know it ... *mes ennemis, et puis, à quoi bon, le procureur, ce cochon de notre procureur, qui deux fois m’a manqué de politesse et qu’on a rossé à plaisir l’autre année chez cette charmante et belle Natalya Pavlovna quand il se cacha dans son boudoir. Et puis, mon ami,* don’t make objections and don’t depress me, I beg you, for nothing is more unbearable when a man is in trouble than for a hundred friends to point out to him what a fool he has made of himself. Sit down though and have some tea. I must admit I am awfully tired.... Hadn’t I better lie down and put vinegar on my head? What do you think?”

“Certainly,” I cried, “ice even. You are very much upset. You are pale and your hands are trembling. Lie down, rest, and put off telling me. I’ll sit by you and wait.”

He hesitated, but I insisted on his lying down. Nastasya brought a cup of vinegar. I wetted a towel and laid it on his head. Then Nastasya stood on a chair and began lighting a lamp before the ikon in the corner. I noticed this with surprise; there had never been a lamp there before and now suddenly it had made its appearance.

“I arranged for that as soon as they had gone away,” muttered Stepan Trofimovitch, looking at me slyly. “*Quand on a de ces choses-là dans sa chambre et qu’on vient vous arrêter* it makes an impression and they are sure to report that they have seen it....”

When she had done the lamp, Nastasya stood in the doorway, leaned her cheek in her right hand, and began gazing at him with a lachrymose air.

“*Eloignez-la* on some excuse,” he nodded to me from the sofa. “I can’t endure this Russian sympathy, *et puis ça m’embête.*”

But she went away of herself. I noticed that he kept looking towards the door and listening for sounds in the passage.

“*Il faut être prêt, voyez-vous,*” he said, looking at me significantly, “*chaque moment ...* they may come and take one and, phew!—a man disappears.”

“Heavens! who’ll come? Who will take you?”

“*Voyez-vous, mon cher,* I asked straight out when he was going away, what would they do to me now.”

“You’d better have asked them where you’d be exiled!” I cried out in the same indignation.

“That’s just what I meant when I asked, but he went away without answering. *Voyez-vous*: as for linen, clothes, warm things especially, that must be as they decide; if they tell me to take them—all right, or they might send me in a soldier’s overcoat. But I thrust thirty-five roubles” (he suddenly dropped his voice, looking towards the door by which Nastasya had gone out) “in a slit in my waistcoat pocket, here, feel.... I believe they won’t take the waistcoat off, and left seven roubles in my purse to keep up appearances, as though that were all I have. You see, it’s in small change and the coppers are on the table, so they won’t guess that I’ve hidden the money, but will suppose that that’s all. For God knows where I may have to sleep to-night!”

I bowed my head before such madness. It was obvious that a man could not be arrested and searched in the way he was describing, and he must have mixed things up. It’s true it all happened in the days before our present, more recent regulations. It is true, too, that according to his own account they had offered to follow the more regular procedure, but he “got the better of them” and refused.... Of course not long ago a governor might, in extreme cases.... But how could this be an extreme case? That’s what baffled me.

“No doubt they had a telegram from Petersburg,” Stepan Trofimovitch said suddenly.

“A telegram? About you? Because of the works of Herzen and your poem? Have you taken leave of your senses? What is there in that to arrest you for?”

I was positively angry. He made a grimace and was evidently mortified—not at my exclamation, but at the idea that there was no ground for arrest.

“Who can tell in our day what he may not be arrested for?” he muttered enigmatically.

A wild and nonsensical idea crossed my mind.

“Stepan Trofimovitch, tell me as a friend,” I cried, “as a real friend, I will not betray you: do you belong to some secret society or not?”

And on this, to my amazement, he was not quite certain whether he was or was not a member of some secret society.

“That depends, *voyez-vous*.”

“How do you mean ‘it depends’?”

“When with one’s whole heart one is an adherent of progress and ... who can answer it? You may suppose you don’t belong, and suddenly it turns out that you do belong to something.”

“Now is that possible? It’s a case of yes or no.”

“*Cela date de Pétersburg* when she and I were meaning to found a magazine there. That’s what’s at the root of it. She gave them the slip then, and they forgot us, but now they’ve remembered. *Cher, cher*, don’t you know me?” he cried hysterically. “And they’ll take us, put us in a cart, and march us off to Siberia forever, or forget us in prison.”

And he suddenly broke into bitter weeping. His tears positively streamed. He covered his face with his red silk handkerchief and sobbed, sobbed convulsively for five minutes. It wrung my heart. This was the man who had been a prophet among us for twenty years, a leader, a patriarch, the Kukolnik who had borne himself so loftily and majestically before all of us, before whom we bowed down with genuine reverence, feeling proud of doing so—and all of a sudden here he was sobbing, sobbing like a naughty child waiting for the rod which the teacher is fetching for him. I felt fearfully sorry for him. He believed in the reality of that “cart” as he believed that I was sitting by his side, and he expected it that morning, at once, that very minute, and all this on account of his Herzen and some poem! Such complete, absolute ignorance of everyday reality was touching and somehow repulsive.

At last he left off crying, got up from the sofa and began walking about the room again, continuing to talk to me, though he looked out of the window every minute and listened to every sound in the passage. Our conversation was still disconnected. All my assurances and attempts to console him rebounded from him like peas from a wall. He scarcely listened, but yet what he needed was that I should console him and keep on talking with that object. I saw that he could not do without me now, and would not let me go for anything. I remained, and we spent more than two hours together. In conversation he recalled that Blum had taken with him two manifestoes he had found.

“Manifestoes!” I said, foolishly frightened. “Do you mean to say you ...”

“Oh, ten were left here,” he answered with vexation (he talked to me at one moment in a vexed and haughty tone and at the next with dreadful plaintiveness and humiliation), “but I had disposed of eight already, and Blum only found two.” And he suddenly flushed with indignation. “*Vous me mettez avec ces gens-là!* Do you suppose I could be working with those scoundrels, those anonymous libellers, with my son Pyotr Stepanovitch, *avec ces esprits forts de lâcheté?* Oh, heavens!”

“Bah! haven’t they mixed you up perhaps?... But it’s nonsense, it can’t be so,” I observed.

“*Savez-vous,*” broke from him suddenly, “I feel at moments *que je ferai là-bas quelque esclandre*. Oh, don’t go away, don’t leave me alone! *Ma carrière est finie aujourd’hui, je le sens*. Do you know, I might fall on somebody there and bite him, like that lieutenant.”

He looked at me with a strange expression—alarmed, and at the same time anxious to alarm me. He certainly was getting more and more exasperated with somebody and about something as time went on and the police-cart did not appear; he was positively wrathful. Suddenly Nastasya, who had come from the kitchen into the passage for some reason, upset a clothes-horse there. Stepan Trofimovitch trembled and turned numb with terror as he sat; but when the noise was explained, he almost shrieked at Nastasya and, stamping, drove her back to the kitchen. A minute later he said, looking at me in despair: “I am ruined! *Cher*”—he sat down suddenly beside me and looked piteously into my face—“*cher*, it’s not Siberia I am afraid of, I swear. *Oh, je vous jure!*” (Tears positively stood in his eyes.) “It’s something else I fear.”

I saw from his expression that he wanted at last to tell me something of great importance which he had till now refrained from telling.

“I am afraid of disgrace,” he whispered mysteriously.

“What disgrace? On the contrary! Believe me, Stepan Trofimovitch, that all this will be explained to-day and will end to your advantage....”

“Are you so sure that they will pardon me?”

“Pardon you? What! What a word! What have you done? I assure you you’ve done nothing.”

“*Qu’en savez-vous*; all my life has been ... *cher* ... They’ll remember everything ... and if they find nothing, it will be *worse still*,” he added all of a sudden, unexpectedly.

“How do you mean it will be worse?”

“It will be worse.”

“I don’t understand.”

“My friend, let it be Siberia, Archangel, loss of rights—if I must perish, let me perish! But ... I am afraid of something else.” (Again whispering, a scared face, mystery.)

“But of what? Of what?”

“They’ll flog me,” he pronounced, looking at me with a face of despair.

“Who’ll flog you? What for? Where?” I cried, feeling alarmed that he was going out of his mind.

“Where? Why there ... where ‘that’s’ done.”

“But where is it done?”

“Eh, *cher*,” he whispered almost in my ear. “The floor suddenly gives way under you, you drop half through.... Every one knows that.”

“Legends!” I cried, guessing what he meant. “Old tales. Can you have believed them till now?” I laughed.

“Tales! But there must be foundation for them; flogged men tell no tales. I’ve imagined it ten thousand times.”

“But you, why you? You’ve done nothing, you know.”

“That makes it worse. They’ll find out I’ve done nothing and flog me for it.”

“And you are sure that you’ll be taken to Petersburg for that.”

“My friend, I’ve told you already that I regret nothing, *ma carrière est finie*. From that hour when she said good-bye to me at Skvoreshniki my life has had no value for me ... but disgrace, disgrace, *que dira-t-elle* if she finds out?”

He looked at me in despair. And the poor fellow flushed all over. I dropped my eyes too.

“She’ll find out nothing, for nothing will happen to you. I feel as if I were speaking to you for the first time in my life, Stepan Trofimovitch, you’ve astonished me so this morning.”

“But, my friend, this isn’t fear. For even if I am pardoned, even if I am brought here and nothing is done to me—then I am undone. *Elle me soupçonnera toute sa vie*—me, me, the poet, the thinker, the man whom she has worshipped for twenty-two years!”

“It will never enter her head.”

“It will,” he whispered with profound conviction. “We’ve talked of it several times in Petersburg, in Lent, before we came away, when we were both afraid.... *Elle me soupçonnera toute sa vie* ... and how can I disabuse her? It won’t sound likely. And in this wretched town who’d believe it, *c’est invraisemblable*.... *Et puis les femmes*, she will be pleased. She will be genuinely grieved like a true friend, but secretly she will be pleased.... I shall give her a weapon against me for the rest of my life. Oh, it’s all over

with me! Twenty years of such perfect happiness with her ... and now!" He hid his face in his hands.

"Stepan Trofimovitch, oughtn't you to let Varvara Petrovna know at once of what has happened?" I suggested.

"God preserve me!" he cried, shuddering and leaping up from his place. "On no account, never, after what was said at parting at Skvoreshniki—never!"

His eyes flashed.

We went on sitting together another hour or more, I believe, expecting something all the time—the idea had taken such hold of us. He lay down again, even closed his eyes, and lay for twenty minutes without uttering a word, so that I thought he was asleep or unconscious. Suddenly he got up impulsively, pulled the towel off his head, jumped up from the sofa, rushed to the looking-glass, with trembling hands tied his cravat, and in a voice of thunder called to Nastasya, telling her to give him his overcoat, his new hat and his stick.

"I can bear no more," he said in a breaking voice. "I can't, I can't! I am going myself."

"Where?" I cried, jumping up too.

"To Lembke. *Cher*, I ought, I am obliged. It's my duty. I am a citizen and a man, not a worthless chip. I have rights; I want my rights.... For twenty years I've not insisted on my rights. All my life I've neglected them criminally ... but now I'll demand them. He must tell me everything—everything. He received a telegram. He dare not torture me; if so, let him arrest me, let him arrest me!"

He stamped and vociferated almost with shrieks. "I approve of what you say," I said, speaking as calmly as possible, on purpose, though I was very much afraid for him.

"Certainly it is better than sitting here in such misery, but I can't approve of your state of mind. Just see what you look like and in what a state you are going there! *Il faut être digne et calme avec Lembke*. You really might rush at someone there and bite him."

"I am giving myself up. I am walking straight into the jaws of the lion...."

"I'll go with you."

"I expected no less of you, I accept your sacrifice, the sacrifice of a true friend; but only as far as the house, only as far as the house. You ought not, you have no right to compromise yourself further by being my confederate. *Oh, croyez-moi, je serai*

calme. I feel that I am at this moment *à la hauteur de tout ce que il y a de plus sacré...*”

“I may perhaps go into the house with you,” I interrupted him. “I had a message from their stupid committee yesterday through Vysotsky that they reckon on me and invite me to the *fête* to-morrow as one of the stewards or whatever it is ... one of the six young men whose duty it is to look after the trays, wait on the ladies, take the guests to their places, and wear a rosette of crimson and white ribbon on the left shoulder. I meant to refuse, but now why shouldn't I go into the house on the excuse of seeing Yulia Mihailovna herself about it?... So we will go in together.”

He listened, nodding, but I think he understood nothing. We stood on the threshold.

“*Cher*”—he stretched out his arm to the lamp before the ikon—“*cher*, I have never believed in this, but ... so be it, so be it!” He crossed himself. “*Allons!*”

“Well, that's better so,” I thought as I went out on to the steps with him. “The fresh air will do him good on the way, and we shall calm down, turn back, and go home to bed...”

But I reckoned without my host. On the way an adventure occurred which agitated Stepan Trofimovitch even more, and finally determined him to go on ... so that I should never have expected of our friend so much spirit as he suddenly displayed that morning. Poor friend, kind-hearted friend!