

CHAPTER X. FILIBUSTERS. A FATAL MORNING

I

The adventure that befell us on the way was also a surprising one. But I must tell the story in due order. An hour before Stepan Trofimovitch and I came out into the street, a crowd of people, the hands from Shpigulins' factory, seventy or more in number, had been marching through the town, and had been an object of curiosity to many spectators. They walked intentionally in good order and almost in silence. Afterwards it was asserted that these seventy had been elected out of the whole number of factory hands, amounting to about nine hundred, to go to the governor and to try and get from him, in the absence of their employer, a just settlement of their grievances against the manager, who, in closing the factory and dismissing the workmen, had cheated them all in an impudent way—a fact which has since been proved conclusively. Some people still deny that there was any election of delegates, maintaining that seventy was too large a number to elect, and that the crowd simply consisted of those who had been most unfairly treated, and that they only came to ask for help in their own case, so that the general "mutiny" of the factory workers, about which there was such an uproar later on, had never existed at all. Others fiercely maintained that these seventy men were not simple strikers but revolutionists, that is, not merely that they were the most turbulent, but that they must have been worked upon by seditious manifestoes. The fact is, it is still uncertain whether there had been any outside influence or incitement at work or not. My private opinion is that the workmen had not read the seditious manifestoes at all, and if they had read them, would not have understood one word, for one reason because the authors of such literature write very obscurely in spite of the boldness of their style. But as the workmen really were in a difficult plight and the police to whom they appealed would not enter into their grievances, what could be more natural than their idea of going in a body to "the general himself" if possible, with the petition at their head, forming up in an orderly way before his door, and as soon as he showed himself, all falling on their knees and crying out to him as to providence itself? To my mind there is no need to see in this a mutiny or even a deputation, for it's a traditional, historical mode of action; the Russian people have always loved to parley with "the general himself" for the mere satisfaction of doing so, regardless of how the conversation may end.

And so I am quite convinced that, even though Pyotr Stepanovitch, Liputin, and perhaps some others—perhaps even Fedka too—had been flitting about among the workpeople talking to them (and there is fairly good evidence of this), they had only approached two, three, five at the most, trying to sound them, and nothing had come of their conversation. As for the mutiny they advocated, if the factory-workers did

understand anything of their propaganda, they would have left off listening to it at once as to something stupid that had nothing to do with them. Fedka was a different matter: he had more success, I believe, than Pyotr Stepanovitch. Two workmen are now known for a fact to have assisted Fedka in causing the fire in the town which occurred three days afterwards, and a month later three men who had worked in the factory were arrested for robbery and arson in the province. But if in these cases Fedka did lure them to direct and immediate action, he could only have succeeded with these five, for we heard of nothing of the sort being done by others.

Be that as it may, the whole crowd of workpeople had at last reached the open space in front of the governor's house and were drawn up there in silence and good order. Then, gaping open-mouthed at the front door, they waited. I am told that as soon as they halted they took off their caps, that is, a good half-hour before the appearance of the governor, who, as ill-luck would have it, was not at home at the moment. The police made their appearance at once, at first individual policemen and then as large a contingent of them as could be gathered together; they began, of course, by being menacing, ordering them to break up. But the workmen remained obstinately, like a flock of sheep at a fence, and replied laconically that they had come to see "the general himself"; it was evident that they were firmly determined. The unnatural shouting of the police ceased, and was quickly succeeded by deliberations, mysterious whispered instructions, and stern, fussy perplexity, which wrinkled the brows of the police officers. The head of the police preferred to await the arrival of the "governor himself." It was not true that he galloped to the spot with three horses at full speed, and began hitting out right and left before he alighted from his carriage. It's true that he used to dash about and was fond of dashing about at full speed in a carriage with a yellow back, and while his trace-horses, who were so trained to carry their heads that they looked "positively perverted," galloped more and more frantically, rousing the enthusiasm of all the shopkeepers in the bazaar, he would rise up in the carriage, stand erect, holding on by a strap which had been fixed on purpose at the side, and with his right arm extended into space like a figure on a monument, survey the town majestically. But in the present case he did not use his fists, and though as he got out of the carriage he could not refrain from a forcible expression, this was simply done to keep up his popularity. There is a still more absurd story that soldiers were brought up with bayonets, and that a telegram was sent for artillery and Cossacks; those are legends which are not believed now even by those who invented them. It's an absurd story, too, that barrels of water were brought from the fire brigade, and that people were drenched with water from them. The simple fact is that Ilya Ilyitch shouted in his heat that he wouldn't let one of them come dry out of the water;

probably this was the foundation of the barrel legend which got into the columns of the Petersburg and Moscow newspapers. Probably the most accurate version was that at first all the available police formed a cordon round the crowd, and a messenger was sent for Lembke, a police superintendent, who dashed off in the carriage belonging to the head of the police on the way to Skvoreshniki, knowing that Lembke had gone there in his carriage half an hour before.

But I must confess that I am still unable to answer the question how they could at first sight, from the first moment, have transformed an insignificant, that is to say an ordinary, crowd of petitioners, even though there were several of them, into a rebellion which threatened to shake the foundations of the state. Why did Lembke himself rush at that idea when he arrived twenty minutes after the messenger? I imagine (but again it's only my private opinion) that it was to the interest of Ilya Ilyitch, who was a crony of the factory manager's, to represent the crowd in this light to Lembke, in order to prevent him from going into the case; and Lembke himself had put the idea into his head. In the course of the last two days, he had had two unusual and mysterious conversations with him. It is true they were exceedingly obscure, but Ilya Ilyitch was able to gather from them that the governor had thoroughly made up his mind that there were political manifestoes, and that Shpigulins' factory hands were being incited to a Socialist rising, and that he was so persuaded of it that he would perhaps have regretted it if the story had turned out to be nonsense. "He wants to get distinction in Petersburg," our wily Ilya Ilyitch thought to himself as he left Von Lembke; "well, that just suits me."

But I am convinced that poor Andrey Antonovitch would not have desired a rebellion even for the sake of distinguishing himself. He was a most conscientious official, who had lived in a state of innocence up to the time of his marriage. And was it his fault that, instead of an innocent allowance of wood from the government and an equally innocent Minnchen, a princess of forty summers had raised him to her level? I know almost for certain that the unmistakable symptoms of the mental condition which brought poor Andrey Antonovitch to a well-known establishment in Switzerland, where, I am told, he is now regaining his energies, were first apparent on that fatal morning. But once we admit that unmistakable signs of something were visible that morning, it may well be allowed that similar symptoms may have been evident the day before, though not so clearly. I happen to know from the most private sources (well, you may assume that Yulia Mihailovna later on, not in triumph but *almost* in remorse—for a woman is incapable of *complete* remorse—revealed part of it to me herself) that Andrey Antonovitch had gone into his wife's room in the middle of the previous night, past two o'clock in the morning, had waked her up, and had insisted on her listening to

his “ultimatum.” He demanded it so insistently that she was obliged to get up from her bed in indignation and curl-papers, and, sitting down on a couch, she had to listen, though with sarcastic disdain. Only then she grasped for the first time how far gone her Andrey Antonovitch was, and was secretly horrified. She ought to have thought what she was about and have been softened, but she concealed her horror and was more obstinate than ever. Like every wife she had her own method of treating Andrey Antonovitch, which she had tried more than once already and with it driven him to frenzy. Yulia Mihailovna’s method was that of contemptuous silence, for one hour, two, a whole day and almost for three days and nights—silence whatever happened, whatever he said, whatever he did, even if he had clambered up to throw himself out of a three-story window—a method unendurable for a sensitive man! Whether Yulia Mihailovna meant to punish her husband for his blunders of the last few days and the jealous envy he, as the chief authority in the town, felt for her administrative abilities; whether she was indignant at his criticism of her behaviour with the young people and local society generally, and lack of comprehension of her subtle and far-sighted political aims; or was angry with his stupid and senseless jealousy of Pyotr Stepanovitch—however that may have been, she made up her mind not to be softened even now, in spite of its being three o’clock at night, and though Andrey Antonovitch was in a state of emotion such as she had never seen him in before.

Pacing up and down in all directions over the rugs of her boudoir, beside himself, he poured out everything, everything, quite disconnectedly, it’s true, but everything that had been rankling in his heart, for—“it was outrageous.” He began by saying that he was a laughing-stock to every one and “was being led by the nose.”

“Curse the expression,” he squealed, at once catching her smile, “let it stand, it’s true.... No, madam, the time has come; let me tell you it’s not a time for laughter and feminine arts now. We are not in the boudoir of a mincing lady, but like two abstract creatures in a balloon who have met to speak the truth.” (He was no doubt confused and could not find the right words for his ideas, however just they were.) “It is you, madam, you who have destroyed my happy past. I took up this post simply for your sake, for the sake of your ambition.... You smile sarcastically? Don’t triumph, don’t be in a hurry. Let me tell you, madam, let me tell you that I should have been equal to this position, and not only this position but a dozen positions like it, for I have abilities; but with you, madam, with you—it’s impossible, for with you here I have no abilities. There cannot be two centres, and you have created two—one of mine and one in your boudoir—two centres of power, madam, but I won’t allow it, I won’t allow it! In the service, as in marriage, there must be one centre, two are impossible.... How have you repaid me?” he went on. “Our marriage has been nothing but your proving to me all the

time, every hour, that I am a nonentity, a fool, and even a rascal, and I have been all the time, every hour, forced in a degrading way to prove to you that I am not a nonentity, not a fool at all, and that I impress every one with my honourable character. Isn't that degrading for both sides?"

At this point he began rapidly stamping with both feet on the carpet, so that Yulia Mihailovna was obliged to get up with stern dignity. He subsided quickly, but passed to being pathetic and began sobbing (yes, sobbing!), beating himself on the breast almost for five minutes, getting more and more frantic at Yulia Mihailovna's profound silence. At last he made a fatal blunder, and let slip that he was jealous of Pyotr Stepanovitch. Realising that he had made an utter fool of himself, he became savagely furious, and shouted that he "would not allow them to deny God" and that he would "send her *salon* of irresponsible infidels packing," that the governor of a province was bound to believe in God "and so his wife was too," that he wouldn't put up with these young men; that "you, madam, for the sake of your own dignity, ought to have thought of your husband and to have stood up for his intelligence even if he were a man of poor abilities (and I'm by no means a man of poor abilities!), and yet it's your doing that every one here despises me, it was you put them all up to it!" He shouted that he would annihilate the woman question, that he would eradicate every trace of it, that to-morrow he would forbid and break up their silly *fête* for the benefit of the governesses (damn them!), that the first governess he came across to-morrow morning he would drive out of the province "with a Cossack! I'll make a point of it!" he shrieked. "Do you know," he screamed, "do you know that your rascals are inciting men at the factory, and that I know it? Let me tell you, I know the names of four of these rascals and that I am going out of my mind, hopelessly, hopelessly!..."

But at this point Yulia Mihailovna suddenly broke her silence and sternly announced that she had long been aware of these criminal designs, and that it was all foolishness, and that he had taken it too seriously, and that as for these mischievous fellows, she knew not only those four but all of them (it was a lie); but that she had not the faintest intention of going out of her mind on account of it, but, on the contrary, had all the more confidence in her intelligence and hoped to bring it all to a harmonious conclusion: to encourage the young people, to bring them to reason, to show them suddenly and unexpectedly that their designs were known, and then to point out to them new aims for rational and more noble activity.

Oh, how can I describe the effect of this on Andrey Antonovitch! Hearing that Pyotr Stepanovitch had duped him again and had made a fool of him so coarsely, that he had told her much more than he had told him, and sooner than him, and that perhaps Pyotr Stepanovitch was the chief instigator of all these criminal designs—he flew into

a frenzy. "Senseless but malignant woman," he cried, snapping his bonds at one blow, "let me tell you, I shall arrest your worthless lover at once, I shall put him in fetters and send him to the fortress, or—I shall jump out of a window before your eyes this minute!"

Yulia Mihailovna, turning green with anger, greeted this tirade at once with a burst of prolonged, ringing laughter, going off into peals such as one hears at the French theatre when a Parisian actress, imported for a fee of a hundred thousand to play a coquette, laughs in her husband's face for daring to be jealous of her.

Von Lembke rushed to the window, but suddenly stopped as though rooted to the spot, folded his arms across his chest, and, white as a corpse, looked with a sinister gaze at the laughing lady. "Do you know, Yulia, do you know," he said in a gasping and suppliant voice, "do you know that even I can do something?" But at the renewed and even louder laughter that followed his last words he clenched his teeth, groaned, and suddenly rushed, not towards the window, but at his spouse, with his fist raised! He did not bring it down—no, I repeat again and again, no; but it was the last straw. He ran to his own room, not knowing what he was doing, flung himself, dressed as he was, face downwards on his bed, wrapped himself convulsively, head and all, in the sheet, and lay so for two hours—incapable of sleep, incapable of thought, with a load on his heart and blank, immovable despair in his soul. Now and then he shivered all over with an agonising, feverish tremor. Disconnected and irrelevant things kept coming into his mind: at one minute he thought of the old clock which used to hang on his wall fifteen years ago in Petersburg and had lost the minute-hand; at another of the cheerful clerk, Millebois, and how they had once caught a sparrow together in Alexandrovsky Park and had laughed so that they could be heard all over the park, remembering that one of them was already a college assessor. I imagine that about seven in the morning he must have fallen asleep without being aware of it himself, and must have slept with enjoyment, with agreeable dreams.

Waking about ten o'clock, he jumped wildly out of bed remembered everything at once, and slapped himself on the head; he refused his breakfast, and would see neither Blum nor the chief of the police nor the clerk who came to remind him that he was expected to preside over a meeting that morning; he would listen to nothing, and did not want to understand. He ran like one possessed to Yulia Mihailovna's part of the house. There Sofya Antropovna, an old lady of good family who had lived for years with Yulia Mihailovna, explained to him that his wife had set off at ten o'clock that morning with a large company in three carriages to Varvara Petrovna Stavrogin's, to Skvoreshniki, to look over the place with a view to the second fête which was planned for a fortnight later, and that the visit to-day had been arranged with Varvara Petrovna

three days before. Overwhelmed with this news, Andrey Antonovitch returned to his study and impulsively ordered the horses. He could hardly wait for them to be got ready. His soul was hungering for Yulia Mihailovna—to look at her, to be near her for five minutes; perhaps she would glance at him, notice him, would smile as before, forgive him ... “O-oh! Aren’t the horses ready?” Mechanically he opened a thick book lying on the table. (He sometimes used to try his fortune in this way with a book, opening it at random and reading the three lines at the top of the right-hand page.) What turned up was: “*Tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes possibles.*”—Voltaire, *Candide*. He uttered an ejaculation of contempt and ran to get into the carriage. “Skvoreshniki!”

The coachman said afterwards that his master urged him on all the way, but as soon as they were getting near the mansion he suddenly told him to turn and drive back to the town, bidding him “Drive fast; please drive fast!” Before they reached the town wall “master told me to stop again, got out of the carriage, and went across the road into the field; I thought he felt ill but he stopped and began looking at the flowers, and so he stood for a time. It was strange, really; I began to feel quite uneasy.” This was the coachman’s testimony. I remember the weather that morning: it was a cold, clear, but windy September day; before Andrey Antonovitch stretched a forbidding landscape of bare fields from which the crop had long been harvested; there were a few dying yellow flowers, pitiful relics blown about by the howling wind. Did he want to compare himself and his fate with those wretched flowers battered by the autumn and the frost? I don’t think so; in fact I feel sure it was not so, and that he realised nothing about the flowers in spite of the evidence of the coachman and of the police superintendent, who drove up at that moment and asserted afterwards that he found the governor with a bunch of yellow flowers in his hand. This police superintendent, Flibusterov by name, was an ardent champion of authority who had only recently come to our town but had already distinguished himself and become famous by his inordinate zeal, by a certain vehemence in the execution of his duties, and his inveterate inebriety. Jumping out of the carriage, and not the least disconcerted at the sight of what the governor was doing, he blurted out all in one breath, with a frantic expression, yet with an air of conviction, that “There’s an upset in the town.”

“Eh? What?” said Andrey Antonovitch, turning to him with a stern face, but without a trace of surprise or any recollection of his carriage and his coachman, as though he had been in his own study.

“Police-superintendent Flibusterov, your Excellency. There’s a riot in the town.”

“Filibusters?” Andrey Antonovitch said thoughtfully.

“Just so, your Excellency. The Shpigulin men are making a riot.”

“The Shpigulin men!...”

The name “Shpigulin” seemed to remind him of something. He started and put his finger to his forehead: “The Shpigulin men!” In silence, and still plunged in thought, he walked without haste to the carriage, took his seat, and told the coachman to drive to the town. The police-superintendent followed in the droshky.

I imagine that he had vague impressions of many interesting things of all sorts on the way, but I doubt whether he had any definite idea or any settled intention as he drove into the open space in front of his house. But no sooner did he see the resolute and orderly ranks of “the rioters,” the cordon of police, the helpless (and perhaps purposely helpless) chief of police, and the general expectation of which he was the object, than all the blood rushed to his heart. With a pale face he stepped out of his carriage.

“Caps off!” he said breathlessly and hardly audibly. “On your knees!” he squealed, to the surprise of every one, to his own surprise too, and perhaps the very unexpectedness of the position was the explanation of what followed. Can a sledge on a switchback at carnival stop short as it flies down the hill? What made it worse, Andrey Antonovitch had been all his life serene in character, and never shouted or stamped at anyone; and such people are always the most dangerous if it once happens that something sets their sledge sliding downhill. Everything was whirling before his eyes.

“Filibusters!” he yelled still more shrilly and absurdly, and his voice broke. He stood, not knowing what he was going to do, but knowing and feeling in his whole being that he certainly would do something directly.

“Lord!” was heard from the crowd. A lad began crossing himself; three or four men actually did try to kneel down, but the whole mass moved three steps forward, and suddenly all began talking at once: “Your Excellency ... we were hired for a term ... the manager ... you mustn’t say,” and so on and so on. It was impossible to distinguish anything.

Alas! Andrey Antonovitch could distinguish nothing: the flowers were still in his hands. The riot was as real to him as the prison carts were to Stepan Trofimovitch. And flitting to and fro in the crowd of “rioters” who gazed open-eyed at him, he seemed to see Pyotr Stepanovitch, who had egged them on—Pyotr Stepanovitch, whom he hated and whose image had never left him since yesterday.

“Rods!” he cried even more unexpectedly. A dead silence followed.

From the facts I have learnt and those I have conjectured, this must have been what happened at the beginning; but I have no such exact information for what followed, nor can I conjecture it so easily. There are some facts, however.

In the first place, rods were brought on the scene with strange rapidity; they had evidently been got ready beforehand in expectation by the intelligent chief of the police. Not more than two, or at most three, were actually flogged, however; that fact I wish to lay stress on. It’s an absolute fabrication to say that the whole crowd of rioters, or at least half of them, were punished. It is a nonsensical story, too, that a poor but respectable lady was caught as she passed by and promptly thrashed; yet I read myself an account of this incident afterwards among the provincial items of a Petersburg newspaper. Many people in the town talked of an old woman called Avdotya Petrovna Tarapygin who lived in the almshouse by the cemetery. She was said, on her way home from visiting a friend, to have forced her way into the crowd of spectators through natural curiosity. Seeing what was going on, she cried out, “What a shame!” and spat on the ground. For this it was said she had been seized and flogged too. This story not only appeared in print, but in our excitement we positively got up a subscription for her benefit. I subscribed twenty kopecks myself. And would you believe it? It appears now that there was no old woman called Tarapygin living in the almshouse at all! I went to inquire at the almshouse by the cemetery myself; they had never heard of anyone called Tarapygin there, and, what’s more, they were quite offended when I told them the story that was going round. I mention this fabulous Avdotya Petrovna because what happened to her (if she really had existed) very nearly happened to Stepan Trofimovitch. Possibly, indeed, his adventure may have been at the bottom of the ridiculous tale about the old woman, that is, as the gossip went on growing he was transformed into this old dame.

What I find most difficult to understand is how he came to slip away from me as soon as he got into the square. As I had a misgiving of something very unpleasant, I wanted to take him round the square straight to the entrance to the governor’s, but my own curiosity was roused, and I stopped only for one minute to question the first person I came across, and suddenly I looked round and found Stepan Trofimovitch no longer at my side. Instinctively I darted off to look for him in the most dangerous place; something made me feel that his sledge, too, was flying downhill. And I did, as a fact, find him in the very centre of things. I remember I seized him by the arm; but he looked quietly and proudly at me with an air of immense authority.

“*Cher,*” he pronounced in a voice which quivered on a breaking note, “if they are dealing with people so unceremoniously before us, in an open square, what is to be expected from that man, for instance ... if he happens to act on his own authority?”

And shaking with indignation and with an intense desire to defy them, he pointed a menacing, accusing finger at Flibustero, who was gazing at us open-eyed two paces away.

“That man!” cried the latter, blind with rage. “What man? And who are you?” He stepped up to him, clenching his fist. “Who are you?” he roared ferociously, hysterically, and desperately. (I must mention that he knew Stepan Trofimovitch perfectly well by sight.) Another moment and he would have certainly seized him by the collar; but luckily, hearing him shout, Lembke turned his head. He gazed intensely but with perplexity at Stepan Trofimovitch, seeming to consider something, and suddenly he shook his hand impatiently. Flibustero was checked. I drew Stepan Trofimovitch out of the crowd, though perhaps he may have wished to retreat himself.

“Home, home,” I insisted; “it was certainly thanks to Lembke that we were not beaten.”

“Go, my friend; I am to blame for exposing you to this. You have a future and a career of a sort before you, while I—*mon heure est sonnée.*”

He resolutely mounted the governor’s steps. The hall-porter knew me; I said that we both wanted to see Yulia Mihailovna.

We sat down in the waiting-room and waited. I was unwilling to leave my friend, but I thought it unnecessary to say anything more to him. He had the air of a man who had consecrated himself to certain death for the sake of his country. We sat down, not side by side, but in different corners—I nearer to the entrance, he at some distance facing me, with his head bent in thought, leaning lightly on his stick. He held his wide-brimmed hat in his left hand. We sat like that for ten minutes.

II

Lembke suddenly came in with rapid steps, accompanied by the chief of police, looked absent-mindedly at us and, taking no notice of us, was about to pass into his study on the right, but Stepan Trofimovitch stood before him blocking his way. The tall figure of Stepan Trofimovitch, so unlike other people, made an impression. Lembke stopped.

“Who is this?” he muttered, puzzled, as if he were questioning the chief of police, though he did not turn his head towards him, and was all the time gazing at Stepan Trofimovitch.

“Retired college assessor, Stepan Trofimovitch Verhovensky, your Excellency,” answered Stepan Trofimovitch, bowing majestically. His Excellency went on staring at him with a very blank expression, however.

“What is it?” And with the curtness of a great official he turned his ear to Stepan Trofimovitch with disdainful impatience, taking him for an ordinary person with a written petition of some sort.

“I was visited and my house was searched to-day by an official acting in your Excellency’s name; therefore I am desirous ...”

“Name? Name?” Lembke asked impatiently, seeming suddenly to have an inkling of something. Stepan Trofimovitch repeated his name still more majestically.

“A-a-ah! It’s ... that hotbed ... You have shown yourself, sir, in such a light.... Are you a professor? a professor?”

“I once had the honour of giving some lectures to the young men of the X university.”

“The young men!” Lembke seemed to start, though I am ready to bet that he grasped very little of what was going on or even, perhaps, did not know with whom he was talking.

“That, sir, I won’t allow,” he cried, suddenly getting terribly angry. “I won’t allow young men! It’s all these manifestoes? It’s an assault on society, sir, a piratical attack, filibustering.... What is your request?”

“On the contrary, your wife requested me to read something to-morrow at her fête. I’ve not come to make a request but to ask for my rights....”

“At the fête? There’ll be no fête. I won’t allow your fête. A lecture? A lecture?” he screamed furiously.

“I should be very glad if you would speak to me rather more politely, your Excellency, without stamping or shouting at me as though I were a boy.”

“Perhaps you understand whom you are speaking to?” said Lembke, turning crimson.

“Perfectly, your Excellency.”

“I am protecting society while you are destroying it!... You ... I remember about you, though: you used to be a tutor in the house of Madame Stavrogin?”

“Yes, I was in the position ... of tutor ... in the house of Madame Stavrogin.”

“And have been for twenty years the hotbed of all that has now accumulated ... all the fruits.... I believe I saw you just now in the square. You’d better look out, sir, you’d better look out; your way of thinking is well known. You may be sure that I keep my eye on you. I cannot allow your lectures, sir, I cannot. Don’t come with such requests to me.”

He would have passed on again.

“I repeat that your Excellency is mistaken; it was your wife who asked me to give, not a lecture, but a literary reading at the fête to-morrow. But I decline to do so in any case now. I humbly request that you will explain to me if possible how, why, and for what reason I was subjected to an official search to-day? Some of my books and papers, private letters to me, were taken from me and wheeled through the town in a barrow.”

“Who searched you?” said Lembke, starting and returning to full consciousness of the position. He suddenly flushed all over. He turned quickly to the chief of police. At that moment the long, stooping, and awkward figure of Blum appeared in the doorway.

“Why, this official here,” said Stepan Trofimovitch, indicating him. Blum came forward with a face that admitted his responsibility but showed no contrition.

“*Vous ne faites que des bêtises,*” Lembke threw at him in a tone of vexation and anger, and suddenly he was transformed and completely himself again.

“Excuse me,” he muttered, utterly disconcerted and turning absolutely crimson, “all this ... all this was probably a mere blunder, a misunderstanding ... nothing but a misunderstanding.”

“Your Excellency,” observed Stepan Trofimovitch, “once when I was young I saw a characteristic incident. In the corridor of a theatre a man ran up to another and gave him a sounding smack in the face before the whole public. Perceiving at once that his victim was not the person whom he had intended to chastise but someone quite different who only slightly resembled him, he pronounced angrily, with the haste of one whose moments are precious—as your Excellency did just now—‘I’ve made a mistake ... excuse me, it was a misunderstanding, nothing but a misunderstanding.’ And when the offended man remained resentful and cried out, he observed to him, with extreme annoyance: ‘Why, I tell you it was a misunderstanding. What are you crying out about?’”

“That’s ... that’s very amusing, of course”—Lembke gave a wry smile—“but ... but can’t you see how unhappy I am myself?”

He almost screamed, and seemed about to hide his face in his hands.

This unexpected and piteous exclamation, almost a sob, was almost more than one could bear. It was probably the first moment since the previous day that he had full, vivid consciousness of all that had happened—and it was followed by complete, humiliating despair that could not be disguised—who knows, in another minute he might have sobbed aloud. For the first moment Stepan Trofimovitch looked wildly at him; then he suddenly bowed his head and in a voice pregnant with feeling pronounced:

“Your Excellency, don’t trouble yourself with my petulant complaint, and only give orders for my books and letters to be restored to me...”

He was interrupted. At that very instant Yulia Mihailovna returned and entered noisily with all the party which had accompanied her. But at this point I should like to tell my story in as much detail as possible.

III

In the first place, the whole company who had filled three carriages crowded into the waiting-room. There was a special entrance to Yulia Mihailovna’s apartments on the left as one entered the house; but on this occasion they all went through the waiting-room—and I imagine just because Stepan Trofimovitch was there, and because all that had happened to him as well as the Shpigulin affair had reached Yulia Mihailovna’s ears as she drove into the town. Lyamshin, who for some misdemeanour had not been invited to join the party and so knew all that had been happening in the town before anyone else, brought her the news. With spiteful glee he hired a wretched Cossack nag and hastened on the way to Skvoreshniki to meet the returning cavalcade with the diverting intelligence. I fancy that, in spite of her lofty determination, Yulia Mihailovna was a little disconcerted on hearing such surprising news, but probably only for an instant. The political aspect of the affair, for instance, could not cause her uneasiness; Pyotr Stepanovitch had impressed upon her three or four times that the Shpigulin ruffians ought to be flogged, and Pyotr Stepanovitch certainly had for some time past been a great authority in her eyes. “But ... anyway, I shall make him pay for it,” she doubtless reflected, the “he,” of course, referring to her spouse. I must observe in passing that on this occasion, as though purposely, Pyotr Stepanovitch had taken no part in the expedition, and no one had seen him all day. I must mention too, by the way, that Varvara Petrovna had come back to the town with

her guests (in the same carriage with Yulia Mihailovna) in order to be present at the last meeting of the committee which was arranging the fête for the next day. She too must have been interested, and perhaps even agitated, by the news about Stepan Trofimovitch communicated by Lyamshin.

The hour of reckoning for Andrey Antonovitch followed at once. Alas! he felt that from the first glance at his admirable wife. With an open air and an enchanting smile she went quickly up to Stepan Trofimovitch, held out her exquisitely gloved hand, and greeted him with a perfect shower of flattering phrases—as though the only thing she cared about that morning was to make haste to be charming to Stepan Trofimovitch because at last she saw him in her house. There was not one hint of the search that morning; it was as though she knew nothing of it. There was not one word to her husband, not one glance in his direction—as though he had not been in the room. What's more, she promptly confiscated Stepan Trofimovitch and carried him off to the drawing-room—as though he had had no interview with Lembke, or as though it was not worth prolonging if he had. I repeat again, I think that in this, Yulia Mihailovna, in spite of her aristocratic tone, made another great mistake. And Karmazinov particularly did much to aggravate this. (He had taken part in the expedition at Yulia Mihailovna's special request, and in that way had, incidentally, paid his visit to Varvara Petrovna, and she was so poor-spirited as to be perfectly delighted at it.) On seeing Stepan Trofimovitch, he called out from the doorway (he came in behind the rest) and pressed forward to embrace him, even interrupting Yulia Mihailovna.

“What years, what ages! At last ... *excellent ami.*”

He made as though to kiss him, offering his cheek, of course, and Stepan Trofimovitch was so fluttered that he could not avoid saluting it.

“*Cher,*” he said to me that evening, recalling all the events of that day, “I wondered at that moment which of us was the most contemptible: he, embracing me only to humiliate me, or I, despising him and his face and kissing it on the spot, though I might have turned away... Foo!”

“Come, tell me about yourself, tell me everything,” Karmazinov drawled and lisped, as though it were possible for him on the spur of the moment to give an account of twenty-five years of his life. But this foolish trifling was the height of “chic.”

“Remember that the last time we met was at the Granovsky dinner in Moscow, and that twenty-four years have passed since then ...” Stepan Trofimovitch began very reasonably (and consequently not at all in the same “chic” style).

“*Ce cher homme*,” Karmazinov interrupted with shrill familiarity, squeezing his shoulder with exaggerated friendliness. “Make haste and take us to your room, Yulia Mihailovna; there he’ll sit down and tell us everything.”

“And yet I was never at all intimate with that peevish old woman,” Stepan Trofimovitch went on complaining to me that same evening, shaking with anger; “we were almost boys, and I’d begun to detest him even then ... just as he had me, of course.”

Yulia Mihailovna’s drawing-room filled up quickly. Varvara Petrovna was particularly excited, though she tried to appear indifferent, but I caught her once or twice glancing with hatred at Karmazinov and with wrath at Stepan Trofimovitch—the wrath of anticipation, the wrath of jealousy and love: if Stepan Trofimovitch had blundered this time and had let Karmazinov make him look small before every one, I believe she would have leapt up and beaten him. I have forgotten to say that Liza too was there, and I had never seen her more radiant, carelessly light-hearted, and happy. Mavriky Nikolaevitch was there too, of course. In the crowd of young ladies and rather vulgar young men who made up Yulia Mihailovna’s usual retinue, and among whom this vulgarity was taken for sprightliness, and cheap cynicism for wit, I noticed two or three new faces: a very obsequious Pole who was on a visit in the town; a German doctor, a sturdy old fellow who kept loudly laughing with great zest at his own wit; and lastly, a very young princeling from Petersburg like an automaton figure, with the deportment of a state dignitary and a fearfully high collar. But it was evident that Yulia Mihailovna had a very high opinion of this visitor, and was even a little anxious of the impression her salon was making on him.

“*Cher M. Karmazinov*,” said Stepan Trofimovitch, sitting in a picturesque pose on the sofa and suddenly beginning to lisp as daintily as Karmazinov himself, “*cher M. Karmazinov*, the life of a man of our time and of certain convictions, even after an interval of twenty-five years, is bound to seem monotonous ...”

The German went off into a loud abrupt guffaw like a neigh, evidently imagining that Stepan Trofimovitch had said something exceedingly funny. The latter gazed at him with studied amazement but produced no effect on him whatever. The prince, too, looked at the German, turning head, collar and all, towards him and putting up his pince-nez, though without the slightest curiosity.

“... Is bound to seem monotonous,” Stepan Trofimovitch intentionally repeated, drawling each word as deliberately and nonchalantly as possible. “And so my life has been throughout this quarter of a century, *et comme on trouve partout plus de moines que de raison*, and as I am entirely of this opinion, it has come to pass that throughout this quarter of a century I ...”

“*C’est charmant, les moines,*” whispered Yulia Mihailovna, turning to Varvara Petrovna, who was sitting beside her.

Varvara Petrovna responded with a look of pride. But Karmazinov could not stomach the success of the French phrase, and quickly and shrilly interrupted Stepan Trofimovitch.

“As for me, I am quite at rest on that score, and for the past seven years I’ve been settled at Karlsruhe. And last year, when it was proposed by the town council to lay down a new water-pipe, I felt in my heart that this question of water-pipes in Karlsruhe was dearer and closer to my heart than all the questions of my precious Fatherland ... in this period of so-called reform.”

“I can’t help sympathising, though it goes against the grain,” sighed Stepan Trofimovitch, bowing his head significantly.

Yulia Mihailovna was triumphant: the conversation was becoming profound and taking a political turn.

“A drain-pipe?” the doctor inquired in a loud voice.

“A water-pipe, doctor, a water-pipe, and I positively assisted them in drawing up the plan.”

The doctor went off into a deafening guffaw. Many people followed his example, laughing in the face of the doctor, who remained unconscious of it and was highly delighted that every one was laughing.

“You must allow me to differ from you, Karmazinov,” Yulia Mihailovna hastened to interpose. “Karlsruhe is all very well, but you are fond of mystifying people, and this time we don’t believe you. What Russian writer has presented so many modern types, has brought forward so many contemporary problems, has put his finger on the most vital modern points which make up the type of the modern man of action? You, only you, and no one else. It’s no use your assuring us of your coldness towards your own country and your ardent interest in the water-pipes of Karlsruhe. Ha ha!”

“Yes, no doubt,” lisped Karmazinov. “I have portrayed in the character of Pogozhev all the failings of the Slavophiles and in the character of Nikodimov all the failings of the Westerners....”

“I say, hardly *all!*” Lyamshin whispered slyly.

“But I do this by the way, simply to while away the tedious hours and to satisfy the persistent demands of my fellow-countrymen.”

“You are probably aware, Stepan Trofimovitch,” Yulia Mihailovna went on enthusiastically, “that to-morrow we shall have the delight of hearing the charming lines ... one of the last of Semyon Yakovlevitch’s exquisite literary inspirations—it’s called *Merci*. He announces in this piece that he will write no more, that nothing in the world will induce him to, if angels from Heaven or, what’s more, all the best society were to implore him to change his mind. In fact he is laying down the pen for good, and this graceful *Merci* is addressed to the public in grateful acknowledgment of the constant enthusiasm with which it has for so many years greeted his unswerving loyalty to true Russian thought.”

Yulia Mihailovna was at the acme of bliss.

“Yes, I shall make my farewell; I shall say my *Merci* and depart and there ... in Karlsruhe ... I shall close my eyes.” Karmazinov was gradually becoming maudlin.

Like many of our great writers (and there are numbers of them amongst us), he could not resist praise, and began to be limp at once, in spite of his penetrating wit. But I consider this is pardonable. They say that one of our Shakespeares positively blurted out in private conversation that “we *great men* can’t do otherwise,” and so on, and, what’s more, was unaware of it.

“There in Karlsruhe I shall close my eyes. When we have done our duty, all that’s left for us great men is to make haste to close our eyes without seeking a reward. I shall do so too.”

“Give me the address and I shall come to Karlsruhe to visit your tomb,” said the German, laughing immoderately.

“They send corpses by rail nowadays,” one of the less important young men said unexpectedly.

Lyamshin positively shrieked with delight. Yulia Mihailovna frowned. Nikolay Stavrogin walked in.

“Why, I was told that you were locked up?” he said aloud, addressing Stepan Trofimovitch before every one else.

“No, it was a case of unlocking,” jested Stepan Trofimovitch.

“But I hope that what’s happened will have no influence on what I asked you to do,” Yulia Mihailovna put in again. “I trust that you will not let this unfortunate annoyance, of which I had no idea, lead you to disappoint our eager expectations and deprive us of the enjoyment of hearing your reading at our literary *matinée*.”

“I don’t know, I ... now ...”

“Really, I am so unlucky, Varvara Petrovna ... and only fancy, just when I was so longing to make the personal acquaintance of one of the most remarkable and independent intellects of Russia—and here Stepan Trofimovitch suddenly talks of deserting us.”

“Your compliment is uttered so audibly that I ought to pretend not to hear it,” Stepan Trofimovitch said neatly, “but I cannot believe that my insignificant presence is so indispensable at your fête to-morrow. However, I ...”

“Why, you’ll spoil him!” cried Pyotr Stepanovitch, bursting into the room. “I’ve only just got him in hand—and in one morning he has been searched, arrested, taken by the collar by a policeman, and here ladies are cooing to him in the governor’s drawing-room. Every bone in his body is aching with rapture; in his wildest dreams he had never hoped for such good fortune. Now he’ll begin informing against the Socialists after this!”

“Impossible, Pyotr Stepanovitch! Socialism is too grand an idea to be unrecognised by Stepan Trofimovitch.” Yulia Mihailovna took up the gauntlet with energy.

“It’s a great idea but its exponents are not always great men, *et brisons-là, mon cher,*” Stepan Trofimovitch ended, addressing his son and rising gracefully from his seat.

But at this point an utterly unexpected circumstance occurred. Von Lembke had been in the room for some time but seemed unnoticed by anyone, though every one had seen him come in. In accordance with her former plan, Yulia Mihailovna went on ignoring him. He took up his position near the door and with a stern face listened gloomily to the conversation. Hearing an allusion to the events of the morning, he began fidgeting uneasily, stared at the prince, obviously struck by his stiffly starched, prominent collar; then suddenly he seemed to start on hearing the voice of Pyotr Stepanovitch and seeing him burst in; and no sooner had Stepan Trofimovitch uttered his phrase about Socialists than Lembke went up to him, pushing against Lyamshin, who at once skipped out of the way with an affected gesture of surprise, rubbing his shoulder and pretending that he had been terribly bruised.

“Enough!” said Von Lembke to Stepan Trofimovitch, vigorously gripping the hand of the dismayed gentleman and squeezing it with all his might in both of his. “Enough! The filibusters of our day are unmasked. Not another word. Measures have been taken....”

He spoke loudly enough to be heard by all the room, and concluded with energy. The impression he produced was poignant. Everybody felt that something was wrong. I

saw Yulia Mihailovna turn pale. The effect was heightened by a trivial accident. After announcing that measures had been taken, Lembke turned sharply and walked quickly towards the door, but he had hardly taken two steps when he stumbled over a rug, swerved forward, and almost fell. For a moment he stood still, looked at the rug at which he had stumbled, and, uttering aloud "Change it!" went out of the room. Yulia Mihailovna ran after him. Her exit was followed by an uproar, in which it was difficult to distinguish anything. Some said he was "deranged," others that he was "liable to attacks"; others put their fingers to their forehead; Lyamshin, in the corner, put his two fingers above his forehead. People hinted at some domestic difficulties—in a whisper, of course. No one took up his hat; all were waiting. I don't know what Yulia Mihailovna managed to do, but five minutes later she came back, doing her utmost to appear composed. She replied evasively that Andrey Antonovitch was rather excited, but that it meant nothing, that he had been like that from a child, that she knew "much better," and that the fête next day would certainly cheer him up. Then followed a few flattering words to Stepan Trofimovitch simply from civility, and a loud invitation to the members of the committee to open the meeting now, at once. Only then, all who were not members of the committee prepared to go home; but the painful incidents of this fatal day were not yet over.

I noticed at the moment when Nikolay Stavrogin came in that Liza looked quickly and intently at him and was for a long time unable to take her eyes off him—so much so that at last it attracted attention. I saw Mavriky Nikolaevitch bend over her from behind; he seemed to mean to whisper something to her, but evidently changed his intention and drew himself up quickly, looking round at every one with a guilty air. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch too excited curiosity; his face was paler than usual and there was a strangely absent-minded look in his eyes. After flinging his question at Stepan Trofimovitch he seemed to forget about him altogether, and I really believe he even forgot to speak to his hostess. He did not once look at Liza—not because he did not want to, but I am certain because he did not notice her either. And suddenly, after the brief silence that followed Yulia Mihailovna's invitation to open the meeting without loss of time, Liza's musical voice, intentionally loud, was heard. She called to Stavrogin.

"Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, a captain who calls himself a relation of yours, the brother of your wife, and whose name is Lebyadkin, keeps writing impertinent letters to me, complaining of you and offering to tell me some secrets about you. If he really is a connection of yours, please tell him not to annoy me, and save me from this unpleasantness."

There was a note of desperate challenge in these words—every one realised it. The accusation was unmistakable, though perhaps it was a surprise to herself. She was like a man who shuts his eyes and throws himself from the roof.

But Nikolay Stavrogin's answer was even more astounding.

To begin with, it was strange that he was not in the least surprised and listened to Liza with unruffled attention. There was no trace of either confusion or anger in his face. Simply, firmly, even with an air of perfect readiness, he answered the fatal question:

“Yes, I have the misfortune to be connected with that man. I have been the husband of his sister for nearly five years. You may be sure I will give him your message as soon as possible, and I'll answer for it that he shan't annoy you again.”

I shall never forget the horror that was reflected on the face of Varvara Petrovna. With a distracted air she got up from her seat, lifting up her right hand as though to ward off a blow. Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch looked at her, looked at Liza, at the spectators, and suddenly smiled with infinite disdain; he walked deliberately out of the room. Every one saw how Liza leapt up from the sofa as soon as he turned to go and unmistakably made a movement to run after him. But she controlled herself and did not run after him; she went quietly out of the room without saying a word or even looking at anyone, accompanied, of course, by Mavriky Nikolaevitch, who rushed after her.

The uproar and the gossip that night in the town I will not attempt to describe. Varvara Petrovna shut herself up in her town house and Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, it was said, went straight to Skvoreshniki without seeing his mother. Stepan Trofimovitch sent me that evening to *cette chère amie* to implore her to allow him to come to her, but she would not see me. He was terribly overwhelmed; he shed tears. “Such a marriage! Such a marriage! Such an awful thing in the family!” he kept repeating. He remembered Karmazinov, however, and abused him terribly. He set to work vigorously to prepare for the reading too and—the artistic temperament!—rehearsed before the looking-glass and went over all the jokes and witticisms uttered in the course of his life which he had written down in a separate notebook, to insert into his reading next day.

“My dear, I do this for the sake of a great idea,” he said to me, obviously justifying himself. “*Cher ami*, I have been stationary for twenty-five years and suddenly I've begun to move—whither, I know not—but I've begun to move....”

PART III

CHAPTER I. THE FETE—FIRST PART

I

The fête took place in spite of all the perplexities of the preceding “Shpigulin” day. I believe that even if Lembke had died the previous night, the fête would still have taken place next morning—so peculiar was the significance Yulia Mihailovna attached to it. Alas! up to the last moment she was blind and had no inkling of the state of public feeling. No one believed at last that the festive day would pass without some tremendous scandal, some “catastrophe” as some people expressed it, rubbing their hands in anticipation. Many people, it is true, tried to assume a frowning and diplomatic countenance; but, speaking generally, every Russian is inordinately delighted at any public scandal and disorder. It is true that we did feel something much more serious than the mere craving for a scandal: there was a general feeling of irritation, a feeling of implacable resentment; every one seemed thoroughly disgusted with everything. A kind of bewildered cynicism, a forced, as it were, strained cynicism was predominant in every one. The only people who were free from bewilderment were the ladies, and they were clear on only one point: their remorseless detestation of Yulia Mihailovna. Ladies of all shades of opinion were agreed in this. And she, poor dear, had no suspicion; up to the last hour she was persuaded that she was “surrounded by followers,” and that they were still “fanatically devoted to her.”

I have already hinted that some low fellows of different sorts had made their appearance amongst us. In turbulent times of upheaval or transition low characters always come to the front everywhere. I am not speaking now of the so-called “advanced” people who are always in a hurry to be in advance of every one else (their absorbing anxiety) and who always have some more or less definite, though often very stupid, aim. No, I am speaking only of the riff-raff. In every period of transition this riff-raff, which exists in every society, rises to the surface, and is not only without any aim but has not even a symptom of an idea, and merely does its utmost to give expression to uneasiness and impatience. Moreover, this riff-raff almost always falls unconsciously under the control of the little group of “advanced people” who do act with a definite aim, and this little group can direct all this rabble as it pleases, if only it does not itself consist of absolute idiots, which, however, is sometimes the case. It is said among us now that it is all over, that Pyotr Stepanovitch was directed by

the *Internationale*, and Yulia Mihailovna by Pyotr Stepanovitch, while she controlled, under his rule, a rabble of all sorts. The more sober minds amongst us wonder at themselves now, and can't understand how they came to be so foolish at the time.

What constituted the turbulence of our time and what transition it was we were passing through I don't know, nor I think does anyone, unless it were some of those visitors of ours. Yet the most worthless fellows suddenly gained predominant influence, began loudly criticising everything sacred, though till then they had not dared to open their mouths, while the leading people, who had till then so satisfactorily kept the upper hand, began listening to them and holding their peace, some even simpered approval in a most shameless way. People like Lyamshin and Telyatnikov, like Gogol's Tentyotnikov, drivelling home-bred editions of Radishtchev, wretched little Jews with a mournful but haughty smile, guffawing foreigners, poets of advanced tendencies from the capital, poets who made up with peasant coats and tarred boots for the lack of tendencies or talents, majors and colonels who ridiculed the senselessness of the service, and who would have been ready for an extra rouble to unbuckle their swords, and take jobs as railway clerks; generals who had abandoned their duties to become lawyers; advanced mediators, advancing merchants, innumerable divinity students, women who were the embodiment of the woman question—all these suddenly gained complete sway among us and over whom? Over the club, the venerable officials, over generals with wooden legs, over the very strict and inaccessible ladies of our local society. Since even Varvara Petrovna was almost at the beck and call of this rabble, right up to the time of the catastrophe with her son, our other local Minervas may well be pardoned for their temporary aberration. Now all this is attributed, as I have mentioned already, to the *Internationale*. This idea has taken such root that it is given as the explanation to visitors from other parts. Only lately councillor Kubrikov, a man of sixty-two, with the Stanislav Order on his breast, came forward uninvited and confessed in a voice full of feeling that he had beyond a shadow of doubt been for fully three months under the influence of the *Internationale*. When with every deference for his years and services he was invited to be more definite, he stuck firmly to his original statement, though he could produce no evidence except that "he had felt it in all his feelings," so that they cross-examined him no further.

I repeat again, there was still even among us a small group who held themselves aloof from the beginning, and even locked themselves up. But what lock can stand against a law of nature? Daughters will grow up even in the most careful families, and it is essential for grown-up daughters to dance.

And so all these people, too, ended by subscribing to the governesses' fund.

The ball was assumed to be an entertainment so brilliant, so unprecedented; marvels were told about it; there were rumours of princes from a distance with lorgnettes; of ten stewards, all young dandies, with rosettes on their left shoulder; of some Petersburg people who were setting the thing going; there was a rumour that Karmazinov had consented to increase the subscriptions to the fund by reading his *Merci* in the costume of the governesses of the district; that there would be a literary quadrille all in costume, and every costume would symbolise some special line of thought; and finally that “honest Russian thought” would dance in costume—which would certainly be a complete novelty in itself. Who could resist subscribing? Every one subscribed.

II

The programme of the fête was divided into two parts: the literary matinée from midday till four o'clock, and afterwards a ball from ten o'clock onwards through the night. But in this very programme there lay concealed germs of disorder. In the first place, from the very beginning a rumour had gained ground among the public concerning a luncheon immediately after the literary matinée, or even while it was going on, during an interval arranged expressly for it—a free luncheon, of course, which would form part of the programme and be accompanied by champagne. The immense price of the tickets (three roubles) tended to confirm this rumour. “As though one would subscribe for nothing? The fête is arranged for twenty-four hours, so food must be provided. People will get hungry.” This was how people reasoned in the town. I must admit that Yulia Mihailovna did much to confirm this disastrous rumour by her own heedlessness. A month earlier, under the first spell of the great project, she would babble about it to anyone she met; and even sent a paragraph to one of the Petersburg papers about the toasts and speeches arranged for her fête. What fascinated her most at that time was the idea of these toasts; she wanted to propose them herself and was continually composing them in anticipation. They were to make clear what was their banner (what was it? I don't mind betting that the poor dear composed nothing after all), they were to get into the Petersburg and Moscow papers, to touch and fascinate the higher powers and then to spread the idea over all the provinces of Russia, rousing people to wonder and imitation.

But for toasts, champagne was essential, and as champagne can't be drunk on an empty stomach, it followed that a lunch was essential too. Afterwards, when by her efforts a committee had been formed and had attacked the subject more seriously, it was proved clearly to her at once that if they were going to dream of banquets there would be very little left for the governesses, however well people subscribed. There were two ways out of the difficulty: either Belshazzar's feast with toasts and

speeches, and ninety roubles for the governesses, or a considerable sum of money with the fête only as a matter of form to raise it. The committee, however, only wanted to scare her, and had of course worked out a third course of action, which was reasonable and combined the advantages of both, that is, a very decent fête in every respect only without champagne, and so yielding a very respectable sum, much more than ninety roubles. But Yulia Mihailovna would not agree to it: her proud spirit revolted from paltry compromise. She decided at once that if the original idea could not be carried out they should rush to the opposite extreme, that is, raise an enormous subscription that would be the envy of other provinces. “The public must understand,” she said at the end of her flaming speech to the committee, “that the attainment of an object of universal human interest is infinitely loftier than the corporeal enjoyments of the passing moment, that the fête in its essence is only the proclamation of a great idea, and so we ought to be content with the most frugal German ball simply as a symbol, that is, if we can’t dispense with this detestable ball altogether,” so great was the aversion she suddenly conceived for it. But she was pacified at last. It was then that “the literary quadrille” and the other æsthetic items were invented and proposed as substitutes for the corporeal enjoyments. It was then that Karmazinov finally consented to read *Merci* (until then he had only tantalised them by his hesitation) and so eradicate the very idea of victuals from the minds of our incontinent public. So the ball was once more to be a magnificent function, though in a different style. And not to be too ethereal it was decided that tea with lemon and round biscuits should be served at the beginning of the ball, and later on “orchade” and lemonade and at the end even ices—but nothing else. For those who always and everywhere are hungry and, still more, thirsty, they might open a buffet in the farthest of the suite of rooms and put it in charge of Prohorovitch, the head cook of the club, who would, subject to the strict supervision of the committee, serve whatever was wanted, at a fixed charge, and a notice should be put up on the door of the hall that refreshments were extra. But on the morning they decided not to open the buffet at all for fear of disturbing the reading, though the buffet would have been five rooms off the White Hall in which Karmazinov had consented to read *Merci*.

It is remarkable that the committee, and even the most practical people in it, attached enormous consequence to this reading. As for people of poetical tendencies, the marshal’s wife, for instance, informed Karmazinov that after the reading she would immediately order a marble slab to be put up in the wall of the White Hall with an inscription in gold letters, that on such a day and year, here, in this place, the great writer of Russia and of Europe had read *Merci* on laying aside his pen, and so had for the first time taken leave of the Russian public represented by the leading citizens of

our town, and that this inscription would be read by all at the ball, that is, only five hours after *Merci* had been read. I know for a fact that Karmazinov it was who insisted that there should be no buffet in the morning on any account, while he was reading, in spite of some protests from members of the committee that this was rather opposed to our way of doing things.

This was the position of affairs, while in the town people were still reckoning on a Belshazzar feast, that is, on refreshments provided by the committee; they believed in this to the last hour. Even the young ladies were dreaming of masses of sweets and preserves, and something more beyond their imagination. Every one knew that the subscriptions had reached a huge sum, that all the town was struggling to go, that people were driving in from the surrounding districts, and that there were not tickets enough. It was known, too, that there had been some large subscriptions apart from the price paid for tickets: Varvara Petrovna, for instance, had paid three hundred roubles for her ticket and had given almost all the flowers from her conservatory to decorate the room. The marshal's wife, who was a member of the committee, provided the house and the lighting; the club furnished the music, the attendants, and gave up Prohorovitch for the whole day. There were other contributions as well, though lesser ones, so much so indeed that the idea was mooted of cutting down the price of tickets from three roubles to two. Indeed, the committee were afraid at first that three roubles would be too much for young ladies to pay, and suggested that they might have family tickets, so that every family should pay for one daughter only, while the other young ladies of the family, even if there were a dozen specimens, should be admitted free. But all their apprehensions turned out to be groundless: it was just the young ladies who did come. Even the poorest clerks brought their girls, and it was quite evident that if they had had no girls it would never have occurred to them to subscribe for tickets. One insignificant little secretary brought all his seven daughters, to say nothing of his wife and a niece into the bargain, and every one of these persons held in her hand an entrance ticket that cost three roubles.

It may be imagined what an upheaval it made in the town! One has only to remember that as the fête was divided into two parts every lady needed two costumes for the occasion—a morning one for the *matinée* and a ball dress for the evening. Many middle-class people, as it appeared afterwards, had pawned everything they had for that day, even the family linen, even the sheets, and possibly the mattresses, to the Jews, who had been settling in our town in great numbers during the previous two years and who became more and more numerous as time went on. Almost all the officials had asked for their salary in advance, and some of the landowners sold beasts they could ill spare, and all simply to bring their ladies got up as

marchionesses, and to be as good as anybody. The magnificence of dresses on this occasion was something unheard of in our neighbourhood. For a fortnight beforehand the town was overflowing with funny stories which were all brought by our wits to Yulia Mihailovna's court. Caricatures were passed from hand to hand. I have seen some drawings of the sort myself, in Yulia Mihailovna's album. All this reached the ears of the families who were the source of the jokes; I believe this was the cause of the general hatred of Yulia Mihailovna which had grown so strong in the town. People swear and gnash their teeth when they think of it now. But it was evident, even at the time, that if the committee were to displease them in anything, or if anything went wrong at the ball, the outburst of indignation would be something surprising. That's why every one was secretly expecting a scandal; and if it was so confidently expected, how could it fail to come to pass?

The orchestra struck up punctually at midday. Being one of the stewards, that is, one of the twelve "young men with a rosette," I saw with my own eyes how this day of ignominious memory began. It began with an enormous crush at the doors. How was it that everything, including the police, went wrong that day? I don't blame the genuine public: the fathers of families did not crowd, nor did they push against anyone, in spite of their position. On the contrary, I am told that they were disconcerted even in the street, at the sight of the crowd shoving in a way unheard of in our town, besieging the entry and taking it by assault, instead of simply going in. Meanwhile the carriages kept driving up, and at last blocked the street. Now, at the time I write, I have good grounds for affirming that some of the lowest rabble of our town were brought in without tickets by Lyamshin and Liputin, possibly, too, by other people who were stewards like me. Anyway, some complete strangers, who had come from the surrounding districts and elsewhere, were present. As soon as these savages entered the hall they began asking where the buffet was, as though they had been put up to it beforehand, and learning that there was no buffet they began swearing with brutal directness, and an unprecedented insolence; some of them, it is true, were drunk when they came. Some of them were dazed like savages at the splendour of the hall, as they had never seen anything like it, and subsided for a minute gazing at it open-mouthed. This great White Hall really was magnificent, though the building was falling into decay: it was of immense size, with two rows of windows, with an old-fashioned ceiling covered with gilt carving, with a gallery with mirrors on the walls, red and white draperies, marble statues (nondescript but still statues) with heavy old furniture of the Napoleonic period, white and gold, upholstered in red velvet. At the moment I am describing, a high platform had been put up for the literary gentlemen who were to read, and the

whole hall was filled with chairs like the parterre of a theatre with wide aisles for the audience.

But after the first moments of surprise the most senseless questions and protests followed. "Perhaps we don't care for a reading.... We've paid our money.... The audience has been impudently swindled.... This is our entertainment, not the Lembkes!" They seemed, in fact, to have been let in for this purpose. I remember specially an encounter in which the princeling with the stand-up collar and the face of a Dutch doll, whom I had met the morning before at Yulia Mihailovna's, distinguished himself. He had, at her urgent request, consented to pin a rosette on his left shoulder and to become one of our stewards. It turned out that this dumb wax figure could act after a fashion of his own, if he could not talk. When a colossal pockmarked captain, supported by a herd of rabble following at his heels, pestered him by asking "which way to the buffet?" he made a sign to a police sergeant. His hint was promptly acted upon, and in spite of the drunken captain's abuse he was dragged out of the hall. Meantime the genuine public began to make its appearance, and stretched in three long files between the chairs. The disorderly elements began to subside, but the public, even the most "respectable" among them, had a dissatisfied and perplexed air; some of the ladies looked positively scared.

At last all were seated; the music ceased. People began blowing their noses and looking about them. They waited with too solemn an air—which is always a bad sign. But nothing was to be seen yet of the Lembkes. Silks, velvets, diamonds glowed and sparkled on every side; whiffs of fragrance filled the air. The men were wearing all their decorations, and the old men were even in uniform. At last the marshal's wife came in with Liza. Liza had never been so dazzlingly charming or so splendidly dressed as that morning. Her hair was done up in curls, her eyes sparkled, a smile beamed on her face. She made an unmistakable sensation: people scrutinised her and whispered about her. They said that she was looking for Stavrogin, but neither Stavrogin nor Varvara Petrovna were there. At the time I did not understand the expression of her face: why was there so much happiness, such joy, such energy and strength in that face? I remembered what had happened the day before and could not make it out.

But still the Lembkes did not come. This was distinctly a blunder. I learned that Yulia Mihailovna waited till the last minute for Pyotr Stepanovitch, without whom she could not stir a step, though she never admitted it to herself. I must mention, in parenthesis, that on the previous day Pyotr Stepanovitch had at the last meeting of the committee declined to wear the rosette of a steward, which had disappointed her dreadfully, even to the point of tears. To her surprise and, later on, her extreme discomfiture (to anticipate things) he vanished for the whole morning and did not make his

appearance at the literary *matinée* at all, so that no one met him till evening. At last the audience began to manifest unmistakable signs of impatience. No one appeared on the platform either. The back rows began applauding, as in a theatre. The elderly gentlemen and the ladies frowned. "The Lembkes are really giving themselves unbearable airs." Even among the better part of the audience an absurd whisper began to gain ground that perhaps there would not be a *fête* at all, that Lembke perhaps was really unwell, and so on and so on. But, thank God, the Lembkes at last appeared, she was leaning on his arm; I must confess I was in great apprehension myself about their appearance. But the legends were disproved, and the truth was triumphant. The audience seemed relieved. Lembke himself seemed perfectly well. Every one, I remember, was of that opinion, for it can be imagined how many eyes were turned on him. I may mention, as characteristic of our society, that there were very few of the better-class people who saw reason to suppose that there was anything wrong with him; his conduct seemed to them perfectly normal, and so much so that the action he had taken in the square the morning before was accepted and approved.

"That's how it should have been from the first," the higher officials declared. "If a man begins as a philanthropist he has to come to the same thing in the end, though he does not see that it was necessary from the point of view of philanthropy itself"—that, at least, was the opinion at the club. They only blamed him for having lost his temper. "It ought to have been done more coolly, but there, he is a new man," said the authorities.

All eyes turned with equal eagerness to Yulia Mihailovna. Of course no one has the right to expect from me an exact account in regard to one point: that is a mysterious, a feminine question. But I only know one thing: on the evening of the previous day she had gone into Andrey Antonovitch's study and was there with him till long after midnight. Andrey Antonovitch was comforted and forgiven. The husband and wife came to a complete understanding, everything was forgotten, and when at the end of the interview Lembke went down on his knees, recalling with horror the final incident of the previous night, the exquisite hand, and after it the lips of his wife, checked the fervent flow of penitent phrases of the chivalrously delicate gentleman who was limp with emotion. Every one could see the happiness in her face. She walked in with an open-hearted air, wearing a magnificent dress. She seemed to be at the very pinnacle of her heart's desires, the *fête*—the goal and crown of her diplomacy—was an accomplished fact. As they walked to their seats in front of the platform, the Lembkes bowed in all directions and responded to greetings. They were at once surrounded. The marshal's wife got up to meet them.

But at that point a horrid misunderstanding occurred; the orchestra, apropos of nothing, struck up a flourish, not a triumphal march of any kind, but a simple flourish such as was played at the club when some one's health was drunk at an official dinner. I know now that Lyamshin, in his capacity of steward, had arranged this, as though in honour of the Lembkes' entrance. Of course he could always excuse it as a blunder or excessive zeal.... Alas! I did not know at the time that they no longer cared even to find excuses, and that all such considerations were from that day a thing of the past. But the flourish was not the end of it: in the midst of the vexatious astonishment and the smiles of the audience there was a sudden "hurrah" from the end of the hall and from the gallery also, apparently in Lembke's honour. The hurrahs were few, but I must confess they lasted for some time. Yulia Mihailovna flushed, her eyes flashed. Lembke stood still at his chair, and turning towards the voices sternly and majestically scanned the audience.... They hastened to make him sit down. I noticed with dismay the same dangerous smile on his face as he had worn the morning before, in his wife's drawing-room, when he stared at Stepan Trofimovitch before going up to him. It seemed to me that now, too, there was an ominous, and, worst of all, a rather comic expression on his countenance, the expression of a man resigned to sacrifice himself to satisfy his wife's lofty aims.... Yulia Mihailovna beckoned to me hurriedly, and whispered to me to run to Karmazinov and entreat him to begin. And no sooner had I turned away than another disgraceful incident, much more unpleasant than the first, took place.

On the platform, the empty platform, on which till that moment all eyes and all expectations were fastened, and where nothing was to be seen but a small table, a chair in front of it, and on the table a glass of water on a silver salver—on the empty platform there suddenly appeared the colossal figure of Captain Lebyadkin wearing a dress-coat and a white tie. I was so astounded I could not believe my eyes. The captain seemed confused and remained standing at the back of the platform. Suddenly there was a shout in the audience, "Lebyadkin! You?" The captain's stupid red face (he was hopelessly drunk) expanded in a broad vacant grin at this greeting. He raised his hand, rubbed his forehead with it, shook his shaggy head and, as though making up his mind to go through with it, took two steps forward and suddenly went off into a series of prolonged, blissful, gurgling, but not loud guffaws, which made him screw up his eyes and set all his bulky person heaving. This spectacle set almost half the audience laughing, twenty people applauded. The serious part of the audience looked at one another gloomily; it all lasted only half a minute, however. Liputin, wearing his steward's rosette, ran on to the platform with two servants; they carefully took the captain by both arms, while Liputin whispered something to him. The captain

scowled, muttered “Ah, well, if that’s it!” waved his hand, turned his huge back to the public and vanished with his escort. But a minute later Liputin skipped on to the platform again. He was wearing the sweetest of his invariable smiles, which usually suggested vinegar and sugar, and carried in his hands a sheet of note-paper. With tiny but rapid steps he came forward to the edge of the platform.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he said, addressing the public, “through our inadvertency there has arisen a comical misunderstanding which has been removed; but I’ve hopefully undertaken to do something at the earnest and most respectful request of one of our local poets. Deeply touched by the humane and lofty object ... in spite of his appearance ... the object which has brought us all together ... to wipe away the tears of the poor but well-educated girls of our province ... this gentleman, I mean this local poet ... although desirous of preserving his incognito, would gladly have heard his poem read at the beginning of the ball ... that is, I mean, of the *matinée*. Though this poem is not in the programme ... for it has only been received half an hour ago ... yet it has seemed to *us*”—(Us? Whom did he mean by us? I report his confused and incoherent speech word for word)—“that through its remarkable naïveté of feeling, together with its equally remarkable gaiety, the poem might well be read, that is, not as something serious, but as something appropriate to the occasion, that is to the idea ... especially as some lines ... And I wanted to ask the kind permission of the audience.”

“Read it!” boomed a voice at the back of the hall.

“Then I am to read it?”

“Read it, read it!” cried many voices.

“With the permission of the audience I will read it,” Liputin minced again, still with the same sugary smile. He still seemed to hesitate, and I even thought that he was rather excited. These people are sometimes nervous in spite of their impudence. A divinity student would have carried it through without winking, but Liputin did, after all, belong to the last generation.

“I must say, that is, I have the honour to say by way of preface, that it is not precisely an ode such as used to be written for *fêtes*, but is rather, so to say, a jest, but full of undoubted feeling, together with playful humour, and, so to say, the most realistic truthfulness.”

“Read it, read it!”

He unfolded the paper. No one of course was in time to stop him. Besides, he was wearing his steward's badge. In a ringing voice he declaimed:

"To the local governesses of the Fatherland from the poet at the fête:

*"Governesses all, good morrow,
Triumph on this festive day.
Retrograde or vowed George-Sander—
Never mind, just frisk away!"*

"But that's Lebyadkin's! Lebyadkin's!" cried several voices. There was laughter and even applause, though not from very many.

*"Teaching French to wet-nosed children,
You are glad enough to think
You can catch a worn-out sexton—
Even he is worth a wink!"*

"Hurrah! hurrah!"

*"But in these great days of progress,
Ladies, to your sorrow know,
You can't even catch a sexton,
If you have not got a 'dot'."*

"To be sure, to be sure, that's realism. You can't hook a husband without a 'dot'!"

*"But, henceforth, since through our feasting
Capital has flowed from all,
And we send you forth to conquest
Dancing, dowried from this hall—
Retrograde or vowed George-Sander,
Never mind, rejoice you may,
You're a governess with a dowry,
Spit on all and frisk away!"*

I must confess I could not believe my ears. The insolence of it was so unmistakable that there was no possibility of excusing Liputin on the ground of stupidity. Besides, Liputin was by no means stupid. The intention was obvious, to me, anyway; they seemed in a hurry to create disorder. Some lines in these idiotic verses, for instance the last, were such that no stupidity could have let them pass. Liputin himself seemed to feel that he had undertaken too much; when he had achieved his exploit he was so overcome by his own impudence that he did not even leave the platform but remained standing, as though there were something more he wanted to say. He had probably imagined that it would somehow produce a different effect; but even the group of ruffians who had applauded during the reading suddenly sank into silence, as though they, too, were overcome. What was silliest of all, many of them took the whole episode seriously, that is, did not regard the verses as a lampoon but actually thought it realistic and true as regards the governesses—a poem with a tendency, in fact. But the excessive freedom of the verses struck even them at last; as for the general public they were not only scandalised but obviously offended. I am sure I am not mistaken as to the impression. Yulia Mihailovna said afterwards that in another moment she would have fallen into a swoon. One of the most respectable old gentlemen helped his old wife on to her feet, and they walked out of the hall accompanied by the agitated glances of the audience. Who knows, the example might have infected others if Karmazinov himself, wearing a dress-coat and a white tie and carrying a manuscript, in his hand, had not appeared on the platform at that moment. Yulia Mihailovna turned an ecstatic gaze at him as on her deliverer.... But I was by that time behind the scenes. I was in quest of Liputin.

“You did that on purpose!” I said, seizing him indignantly by the arm.

“I assure you I never thought ...” he began, cringing and lying at once, pretending to be unhappy. “The verses had only just been brought and I thought that as an amusing pleasantry....”

“You did not think anything of the sort. You can’t really think that stupid rubbish an amusing pleasantry?”

“Yes, I do.”

“You are simply lying, and it wasn’t brought to you just now. You helped Lebyadkin to compose it yourself, yesterday very likely, to create a scandal. The last verse must have been yours, the part about the sexton too. Why did he come on in a dress-coat? You must have meant him to read it, too, if he had not been drunk?”

Liputin looked at me coldly and ironically.

“What business is it of yours?” he asked suddenly with strange calm.

“What business is it of mine? You are wearing the steward’s badge, too.... Where is Pyotr Stepanovitch?”

“I don’t know, somewhere here; why do you ask?”

“Because now I see through it. It’s simply a plot against Yulia Mihailovna so as to ruin the day by a scandal....”

Liputin looked at me askance again.

“But what is it to you?” he said, grinning. He shrugged his shoulders and walked away.

It came over me with a rush. All my suspicions were confirmed. Till then, I had been hoping I was mistaken! What was I to do? I was on the point of asking the advice of Stepan Trofimovitch, but he was standing before the looking-glass, trying on different smiles, and continually consulting a piece of paper on which he had notes. He had to go on immediately after Karmazinov, and was not in a fit state for conversation. Should I run to Yulia Mihailovna? But it was too soon to go to her: she needed a much sterner lesson to cure her of her conviction that she had “a following,” and that every one was “fanatically devoted” to her. She would not have believed me, and would have thought I was dreaming. Besides, what help could she be? “Eh,” I thought, “after all, what business is it of mine? I’ll take off my badge and go home *when it begins*.” That was my mental phrase, “when it begins”; I remember it.

But I had to go and listen to Karmazinov. Taking a last look round behind the scenes, I noticed that a good number of outsiders, even women among them, were flitting about, going in and out. “Behind the scenes” was rather a narrow space completely screened from the audience by a curtain and communicating with other rooms by means of a passage. Here our readers were awaiting their turns. But I was struck at that moment by the reader who was to follow Stepan Trofimovitch. He, too, was some sort of professor (I don’t know to this day exactly what he was) who had voluntarily left some educational institution after a disturbance among the students, and had arrived in the town only a few days before. He, too, had been recommended to Yulia Mihailovna, and she had received him with reverence. I know now that he had only spent one evening in her company before the reading; he had not spoken all that evening, had listened with an equivocal smile to the jests and the general tone of the company surrounding Yulia Mihailovna, and had made an unpleasant impression on every one by his air of haughtiness, and at the same time almost timorous readiness to take offence. It was Yulia Mihailovna herself who had enlisted his services. Now he was walking from corner to corner, and, like Stepan Trofimovitch, was muttering to

himself, though he looked on the ground instead of in the looking-glass. He was not trying on smiles, though he often smiled rapaciously. It was obvious that it was useless to speak to him either. He looked about forty, was short and bald, had a greyish beard, and was decently dressed. But what was most interesting about him was that at every turn he took he threw up his right fist, brandished it above his head and suddenly brought it down again as though crushing an antagonist to atoms. He went through this by-play every moment. It made me uncomfortable. I hastened away to listen to Karmazinov.

III

There was a feeling in the hall that something was wrong again. Let me state to begin with that I have the deepest reverence for genius, but why do our geniuses in the decline of their illustrious years behave sometimes exactly like little boys? What though he was Karmazinov, and came forward with as much dignity as five *Kammerherr*s rolled into one? How could he expect to keep an audience like ours listening for a whole hour to a single paper? I have observed, in fact, that however big a genius a man may be, he can't monopolise the attention of an audience at a frivolous literary *matinée* for more than twenty minutes with impunity. The entrance of the great writer was received, indeed, with the utmost respect: even the severest elderly men showed signs of approval and interest, and the ladies even displayed some enthusiasm. The applause was brief, however, and somehow uncertain and not unanimous. Yet there was no unseemly behaviour in the back rows, till Karmazinov began to speak, not that anything very bad followed then, but only a sort of misunderstanding. I have mentioned already that he had rather a shrill voice, almost feminine in fact, and at the same time a genuinely aristocratic lisp. He had hardly articulated a few words when someone had the effrontery to laugh aloud—probably some ignorant simpleton who knew nothing of the world, and was congenitally disposed to laughter. But there was nothing like a hostile demonstration; on the contrary people said “sh-h!” and the offender was crushed. But Mr. Karmazinov, with an affected air and intonation, announced that “at first he had declined absolutely to read.” (Much need there was to mention it!) “There are some lines which come so deeply from the heart that it is impossible to utter them aloud, so that these holy things cannot be laid before the public”—(Why lay them then?)—“but as he had been begged to do so, he was doing so, and as he was, moreover, laying down his pen forever, and had sworn to write no more, he had written this last farewell; and as he had sworn never, on any inducement, to read anything in public,” and so on, and so on, all in that style.

But all that would not have mattered; every one knows what authors' prefaces are like, though, I may observe, that considering the lack of culture of our audience and the irritability of the back rows, all this may have had an influence. Surely it would have been better to have read a little story, a short tale such as he had written in the past—over-elaborate, that is, and affected, but sometimes witty. It would have saved the situation. No, this was quite another story! It was a regular oration! Good heavens, what wasn't there in it! I am positive that it would have reduced to rigidity even a Petersburg audience, let alone ours. Imagine an article that would have filled some thirty pages of print of the most affected, aimless prattle; and to make matters worse, the gentleman read it with a sort of melancholy condescension as though it were a favour, so that it was almost insulting to the audience. The subject.... Who could make it out? It was a sort of description of certain impressions and reminiscences. But of what? And about what? Though the leading intellects of the province did their utmost during the first half of the reading, they could make nothing of it, and they listened to the second part simply out of politeness. A great deal was said about love, indeed, of the love of the genius for some person, but I must admit it made rather an awkward impression. For the great writer to tell us about his first kiss seemed to my mind a little incongruous with his short and fat little figure ... Another thing that was offensive; these kisses did not occur as they do with the rest of mankind. There had to be a framework of gorse (it had to be gorse or some such plant that one must look up in a flora) and there had to be a tint of purple in the sky, such as no mortal had ever observed before, or if some people had seen it, they had never noticed it, but he seemed to say, "I have seen it and am describing it to you, fools, as if it were a most ordinary thing." The tree under which the interesting couple sat had of course to be of an orange colour. They were sitting somewhere in Germany. Suddenly they see Pompey or Cassius on the eve of a battle, and both are penetrated by a thrill of ecstasy. Some wood-nymph squeaked in the bushes. Gluck played the violin among the reeds. The title of the piece he was playing was given in full, but no one knew it, so that one would have had to look it up in a musical dictionary. Meanwhile a fog came on, such a fog, such a fog, that it was more like a million pillows than a fog. And suddenly everything disappears and the great genius is crossing the frozen Volga in a thaw. Two and a half pages are filled with the crossing, and yet he falls through the ice. The genius is drowning—you imagine he was drowned? Not a bit of it; this was simply in order that when he was drowning and at his last gasp, he might catch sight of a bit of ice, the size of a pea, but pure and crystal "as a frozen tear," and in that tear was reflected Germany, or more accurately the sky of Germany, and its iridescent sparkle recalled to his mind the very tear which "dost thou remember, fell from thine eyes when we were sitting under that emerald tree, and thou didst cry out joyfully: 'There is

no crime!’ ‘No,’ I said through my tears, ‘but if that is so, there are no righteous either.’ We sobbed and parted forever.” She went off somewhere to the sea coast, while he went to visit some caves, and then he descends and descends and descends for three years under Suharev Tower in Moscow, and suddenly in the very bowels of the earth, he finds in a cave a lamp, and before the lamp a hermit. The hermit is praying. The genius leans against a little barred window, and suddenly hears a sigh. Do you suppose it was the hermit sighing? Much he cares about the hermit! Not a bit of it, this sigh simply reminds him of her first sigh, thirty-seven years before, “in Germany, when, dost thou remember, we sat under an agate tree and thou didst say to me, ‘Why love? See ochra is growing all around and I love thee; but the ochra will cease to grow, and I shall cease to love.’” Then the fog comes on again, Hoffman appears on the scene, the wood-nymph whistles a tune from Chopin, and suddenly out of the fog appears Ancus Marcius over the roofs of Rome, wearing a laurel wreath. “A chill of ecstasy ran down our backs and we parted forever”—and so on and so on.

Perhaps I am not reporting it quite right and don’t know how to report it, but the drift of the babble was something of that sort. And after all, how disgraceful this passion of our great intellects for jesting in a superior way really is! The great European philosopher, the great man of science, the inventor, the martyr—all these who labour and are heavy laden, are to the great Russian genius no more than so many cooks in his kitchen. He is the master and they come to him, cap in hand, awaiting orders. It is true he jeers superciliously at Russia too, and there is nothing he likes better than exhibiting the bankruptcy of Russia in every relation before the great minds of Europe, but as regards himself, no, he is at a higher level than all the great minds of Europe; they are only material for his jests. He takes another man’s idea, tacks on to it its antithesis, and the epigram is made. There is such a thing as crime, there is no such thing as crime; there is no such thing as justice, there are no just men; atheism, Darwinism, the Moscow bells.... But alas, he no longer believes in the Moscow bells; Rome, laurels.... But he has no belief in laurels even.... We have a conventional attack of Byronic spleen, a grimace from Heine, something of Petchorin—and the machine goes on rolling, whistling, at full speed. “But you may praise me, you may praise me, that I like extremely; it’s only in a manner of speaking that I lay down the pen; I shall bore you three hundred times more, you’ll grow weary of reading me....”

Of course it did not end without trouble; but the worst of it was that it was his own doing. People had for some time begun shuffling their feet, blowing their noses, coughing, and doing everything that people do when a lecturer, whoever he may be, keeps an audience for longer than twenty minutes at a literary matinée. But the genius noticed nothing of all this. He went on lisping and mumbling, without giving a thought

to the audience, so that every one began to wonder. Suddenly in a back row a solitary but loud voice was heard:

“Good Lord, what nonsense!”

The exclamation escaped involuntarily, and I am sure was not intended as a demonstration. The man was simply worn out. But Mr. Karmazinov stopped, looked sarcastically at the audience, and suddenly lisped with the deportment of an aggrieved *kammerherr*.

“I’m afraid I’ve been boring you dreadfully, gentlemen?”

That was his blunder, that he was the first to speak; for provoking an answer in this way he gave an opening for the rabble to speak, too, and even legitimately, so to say, while if he had restrained himself, people would have gone on blowing their noses and it would have passed off somehow. Perhaps he expected applause in response to his question, but there was no sound of applause; on the contrary, every one seemed to subside and shrink back in dismay.

“You never did see Ancus Marcius, that’s all brag,” cried a voice that sounded full of irritation and even nervous exhaustion.

“Just so,” another voice agreed at once. “There are no such things as ghosts nowadays, nothing but natural science. Look it up in a scientific book.”

“Gentlemen, there was nothing I expected less than such objections,” said Karmazinov, extremely surprised. The great genius had completely lost touch with his Fatherland in Karlsruhe.

“Nowadays it’s outrageous to say that the world stands on three fishes,” a young lady snapped out suddenly. “You can’t have gone down to the hermit’s cave, Karmazinov. And who talks about hermits nowadays?”

“Gentlemen, what surprises me most of all is that you take it all so seriously. However ... however, you are perfectly right. No one has greater respect for truth and realism than I have....”

Though he smiled ironically he was tremendously overcome. His face seemed to express: “I am not the sort of man you think, I am on your side, only praise me, praise me more, as much as possible, I like it extremely....”

“Gentlemen,” he cried, completely mortified at last, “I see that my poor poem is quite out of place here. And, indeed, I am out of place here myself, I think.”

“You threw at the crow and you hit the cow,” some fool, probably drunk, shouted at the top of his voice, and of course no notice ought to have been taken of him. It is true there was a sound of disrespectful laughter.

“A cow, you say?” Karmazinov caught it up at once, his voice grew shriller and shriller. “As for crows and cows, gentlemen, I will refrain. I’ve too much respect for any audience to permit myself comparisons, however harmless; but I did think ...”

“You’d better be careful, sir,” someone shouted from a back row.

“But I had supposed that laying aside my pen and saying farewell to my readers, I should be heard ...”

“No, no, we want to hear you, we want to,” a few voices from the front row plucked up spirit to exclaim at last.

“Read, read!” several enthusiastic ladies’ voices chimed in, and at last there was an outburst of applause, sparse and feeble, it is true.

“Believe me, Karmazinov, every one looks on it as an honour ...” the marshal’s wife herself could not resist saying.

“Mr. Karmazinov!” cried a fresh young voice in the back of the hall suddenly. It was the voice of a very young teacher from the district school who had only lately come among us, an excellent young man, quiet and gentlemanly. He stood up in his place. “Mr. Karmazinov, if I had the happiness to fall in love as you have described to us, I really shouldn’t refer to my love in an article intended for public reading....” He flushed red all over.

“Ladies and gentlemen,” cried Karmazinov, “I have finished. I will omit the end and withdraw. Only allow me to read the six last lines:

“Yes, dear reader, farewell!” he began at once from the manuscript without sitting down again in his chair. “Farewell, reader; I do not greatly insist on our parting friends; what need to trouble you, indeed. You may abuse me, abuse me as you will if it affords you any satisfaction. But best of all if we forget one another forever. And if you all, readers, were suddenly so kind as to fall on your knees and begin begging me with tears, ‘Write, oh, write for us, Karmazinov—for the sake of Russia, for the sake of posterity, to win laurels,’ even then I would answer you, thanking you, of course, with every courtesy, ‘No, we’ve had enough of one another, dear fellow-countrymen, *merci!* It’s time we took our separate ways!’ *Merci, merci, merci!*”

Karmazinov bowed ceremoniously, and, as red as though he had been cooked, retired behind the scenes.

“Nobody would go down on their knees; a wild idea!”

“What conceit!”

“That’s only humour,” someone more reasonable suggested.

“Spare me your humour.”

“I call it impudence, gentlemen!”

“Well, he’s finished now, anyway!”

“Ech, what a dull show!”

But all these ignorant exclamations in the back rows (though they were confined to the back rows) were drowned in applause from the other half of the audience. They called for Karmazinov. Several ladies with Yulia Mihailovna and the marshal’s wife crowded round the platform. In Yulia Mihailovna’s hands was a gorgeous laurel wreath resting on another wreath of living roses on a white velvet cushion.

“Laurels!” Karmazinov pronounced with a subtle and rather sarcastic smile. “I am touched, of course, and accept with real emotion this wreath prepared beforehand, but still fresh and unwithered, but I assure you, mesdames, that I have suddenly become so realistic that I feel laurels would in this age be far more appropriate in the hands of a skilful cook than in mine....”

“Well, a cook is more useful,” cried the divinity student, who had been at the “meeting” at Virginsky’s.

There was some disorder. In many rows people jumped up to get a better view of the presentation of the laurel wreath.

“I’d give another three roubles for a cook this minute,” another voice assented loudly, too loudly; insistently, in fact.

“So would I.”

“And I.”

“Is it possible there’s no buffet?...”

“Gentlemen, it’s simply a swindle....”

It must be admitted, however, that all these unbridled gentlemen still stood in awe of our higher officials and of the police superintendent, who was present in the hall. Ten minutes later all had somehow got back into their places, but there was not the same good order as before. And it was into this incipient chaos that poor Stepan Trofimovitch was thrust.

IV

I ran out to him behind the scenes once more, and had time to warn him excitedly that in my opinion the game was up, that he had better not appear at all, but had better go home at once on the excuse of his usual ailment, for instance, and I would take off my badge and come with him. At that instant he was on his way to the platform; he stopped suddenly, and haughtily looking me up and down he pronounced solemnly:

“What grounds have you, sir, for thinking me capable of such baseness?”

I drew back. I was as sure as twice two make four that he would not get off without a catastrophe. Meanwhile, as I stood utterly dejected, I saw moving before me again the figure of the professor, whose turn it was to appear after Stepan Trofimovitch, and who kept lifting up his fist and bringing it down again with a swing. He kept walking up and down, absorbed in himself and muttering something to himself with a diabolical but triumphant smile. I somehow almost unintentionally went up to him. I don't know what induced me to meddle again. “Do you know,” I said, “judging from many examples, if a lecturer keeps an audience for more than twenty minutes it won't go on listening. No celebrity is able to hold his own for half an hour.”

He stopped short and seemed almost quivering with resentment. Infinite disdain was expressed in his countenance.

“Don't trouble yourself,” he muttered contemptuously and walked on. At that moment Stepan Trofimovitch's voice rang out in the hall.

“Oh, hang you all,” I thought, and ran to the hall.

Stepan Trofimovitch took his seat in the lecturer's chair in the midst of the still persisting disorder. He was greeted by the first rows with looks which were evidently not over-friendly. (Of late, at the club, people almost seemed not to like him, and treated him with much less respect than formerly.) But it was something to the good that he was not hissed. I had had a strange idea in my head ever since the previous day: I kept fancying that he would be received with hisses as soon as he appeared. They scarcely noticed him, however, in the disorder. What could that man hope for if Karmazinov was treated like this? He was pale; it was ten years since he had appeared

before an audience. From his excitement and from all that I knew so well in him, it was clear to me that he, too, regarded his present appearance on the platform as a turning-point of his fate, or something of the kind. That was just what I was afraid of. The man was dear to me. And what were my feelings when he opened his lips and I heard his first phrase?

“Ladies and gentlemen,” he pronounced suddenly, as though resolved to venture everything, though in an almost breaking voice. “Ladies and gentlemen! Only this morning there lay before me one of the illegal leaflets that have been distributed here lately, and I asked myself for the hundredth time, ‘Wherein lies its secret?’”

The whole hall became instantly still, all looks were turned to him, some with positive alarm. There was no denying, he knew how to secure their interest from the first word. Heads were thrust out from behind the scenes; Liputin and Lyamshin listened greedily. Yulia Mihailovna waved to me again.

“Stop him, whatever happens, stop him,” she whispered in agitation. I could only shrug my shoulders: how could one stop a man resolved to venture everything? Alas, I understood what was in Stepan Trofimovitch’s mind.

“Ha ha, the manifestoes!” was whispered in the audience; the whole hall was stirred.

“Ladies and gentlemen, I’ve solved the whole mystery. The whole secret of their effect lies in their stupidity.” (His eyes flashed.) “Yes, gentlemen, if this stupidity were intentional, pretended and calculated, oh, that would be a stroke of genius! But we must do them justice: they don’t pretend anything. It’s the barest, most simple-hearted, most shallow stupidity. *C’est la bêtise dans son essence la plus pure, quelque chose comme un simple chimique.* If it were expressed ever so little more cleverly, every one would see at once the poverty of this shallow stupidity. But as it is, every one is left wondering: no one can believe that it is such elementary stupidity. ‘It’s impossible that there’s nothing more in it,’ every one says to himself and tries to find the secret of it, sees a mystery in it, tries to read between the lines—the effect is attained! Oh, never has stupidity been so solemnly rewarded, though it has so often deserved it.... For, *en parenthese*, stupidity is of as much service to humanity as the loftiest genius....”

“Epigram of 1840” was commented, in a very modest voice, however, but it was followed by a general outbreak of noise and uproar.

“Ladies and gentlemen, hurrah! I propose a toast to stupidity!” cried Stepan Trofimovitch, defying the audience in a perfect frenzy.

I ran up on the pretext of pouring out some water for him.

“Stepan Trofimovitch, leave off, Yulia Mihailovna entreats you to.”

“No, you leave me alone, idle young man,” he cried out at me at the top of his voice. I ran away. “Messieurs,” he went on, “why this excitement, why the outcries of indignation I hear? I have come forward with an olive branch. I bring you the last word, for in this business I have the last word—and we shall be reconciled.”

“Down with him!” shouted some.

“Hush, let him speak, let him have his say!” yelled another section. The young teacher was particularly excited; having once brought himself to speak he seemed now unable to be silent.

“Messieurs, the last word in this business—is forgiveness. I, an old man at the end of my life, I solemnly declare that the spirit of life breathes in us still, and there is still a living strength in the young generation. The enthusiasm of the youth of today is as pure and bright as in our age. All that has happened is a change of aim, the replacing of one beauty by another! The whole difficulty lies in the question which is more beautiful, Shakespeare or boots, Raphael or petroleum?”

“It’s treachery!” growled some.

“Compromising questions!”

“*Agent provocateur!*”

“But I maintain,” Stepan Trofimovitch shrilled at the utmost pitch of excitement, “I maintain that Shakespeare and Raphael are more precious than the emancipation of the serfs, more precious than Nationalism, more precious than Socialism, more precious than the young generation, more precious than chemistry, more precious than almost all humanity because they are the fruit, the real fruit of all humanity and perhaps the highest fruit that can be. A form of beauty already attained, but for the attaining of which I would not perhaps consent to live.... Oh, heavens!” he cried, clasping his hands, “ten years ago I said the same thing from the platform in Petersburg, exactly the same thing, in the same words, and in just the same way they did not understand it, they laughed and hissed as now; shallow people, what is lacking in you that you cannot understand? But let me tell you, let me tell you, without the English, life is still possible for humanity, without Germany, life is possible, without the Russians it is only too possible, without science, without bread, life is possible—only without beauty it is impossible, for there will be nothing left in the world. That’s the secret at the bottom of everything, that’s what history teaches! Even science

would not exist a moment without beauty—do you know that, you who laugh—it will sink into bondage, you won't invent a nail even!... I won't yield an inch!" he shouted absurdly in confusion, and with all his might banged his fist on the table.

But all the while that he was shrieking senselessly and incoherently, the disorder in the hall increased. Many people jumped up from their seats, some dashed forward, nearer to the platform. It all happened much more quickly than I describe it, and there was no time to take steps, perhaps no wish to, either.

"It's all right for you, with everything found for you, you pampered creatures!" the same divinity student bellowed at the foot of the platform, grinning with relish at Stepan Trofimovitch, who noticed it and darted to the very edge of the platform.

"Haven't I, haven't I just declared that the enthusiasm of the young generation is as pure and bright as it was, and that it is coming to grief through being deceived only in the forms of beauty! Isn't that enough for you? And if you consider that he who proclaims this is a father crushed and insulted, can one—oh, shallow hearts—can one rise to greater heights of impartiality and fairness?... Ungrateful ... unjust.... Why, why can't you be reconciled!"

And he burst into hysterical sobs. He wiped away his dropping tears with his fingers. His shoulders and breast were heaving with sobs. He was lost to everything in the world.

A perfect panic came over the audience, almost all got up from their seats. Yulia Mihailovna, too, jumped up quickly, seizing her husband by the arm and pulling him up too.... The scene was beyond all belief.

"Stepan Trofimovitch!" the divinity student roared gleefully. "There's Fedka the convict wandering about the town and the neighbourhood, escaped from prison. He is a robber and has recently committed another murder. Allow me to ask you: if you had not sold him as a recruit fifteen years ago to pay a gambling debt, that is, more simply, lost him at cards, tell me, would he have got into prison? Would he have cut men's throats now, in his struggle for existence? What do you say, Mr. Æsthete?"

I decline to describe the scene that followed. To begin with there was a furious volley of applause. The applause did not come from all—probably from some fifth part of the audience—but they applauded furiously. The rest of the public made for the exit, but as the applauding part of the audience kept pressing forward towards the platform, there was a regular block. The ladies screamed, some of the girls began to cry and asked to go home. Lembke, standing up by his chair, kept gazing wildly about him. Yulia Mihailovna completely lost her head—for the first time during her career

amongst us. As for Stepan Trofimovitch, for the first moment he seemed literally crushed by the divinity student's words, but he suddenly raised his arms as though holding them out above the public and yelled:

"I shake the dust from off my feet and I curse you.... It's the end, the end...."

And turning, he ran behind the scenes, waving his hands menacingly.

"He has insulted the audience!... Verhovensky!" the angry section roared. They even wanted to rush in pursuit of him. It was impossible to appease them, at the moment, any way, and—a final catastrophe broke like a bomb on the assembly and exploded in its midst: the third reader, the maniac who kept waving his fist behind the scenes, suddenly ran on to the platform. He looked like a perfect madman. With a broad, triumphant smile, full of boundless self-confidence, he looked round at the agitated hall and he seemed to be delighted at the disorder. He was not in the least disconcerted at having to speak in such an uproar, on the contrary, he was obviously delighted. This was so obvious that it attracted attention at once.

"What's this now?" people were heard asking. "Who is this? Sh-h! What does he want to say?"

"Ladies and gentlemen," the maniac shouted with all his might, standing at the very edge of the platform and speaking with almost as shrill, feminine a voice as Karmazinov's, but without the aristocratic lisp. "Ladies and gentlemen! Twenty years ago, on the eve of war with half Europe, Russia was regarded as an ideal country by officials of all ranks! Literature was in the service of the censorship; military drill was all that was taught at the universities; the troops were trained like a ballet, and the peasants paid the taxes and were mute under the lash of serfdom. Patriotism meant the wringing of bribes from the quick and the dead. Those who did not take bribes were looked upon as rebels because they disturbed the general harmony. The birch copes were extirpated in support of discipline. Europe trembled.... But never in the thousand years of its senseless existence had Russia sunk to such ignominy...."

He raised his fist, waved it ecstatically and menacingly over his head and suddenly brought it down furiously, as though pounding an adversary to powder. A frantic yell rose from the whole hall, there was a deafening roar of applause; almost half the audience was applauding: their enthusiasm was excusable. Russia was being put to shame publicly, before every one. Who could fail to roar with delight?

"This is the real thing! Come, this is something like! Hurrah! Yes, this is none of your æsthetics!"

The maniac went on ecstatically:

“Twenty years have passed since then. Universities have been opened and multiplied. Military drill has passed into a legend; officers are too few by thousands, the railways have eaten up all the capital and have covered Russia as with a spider’s web, so that in another fifteen years one will perhaps get somewhere. Bridges are rarely on fire, and fires in towns occur only at regular intervals, in turn, at the proper season. In the law courts judgments are as wise as Solomon’s, and the jury only take bribes through the struggle for existence, to escape starvation. The serfs are free, and flog one another instead of being flogged by the land-owners. Seas and oceans of vodka are consumed to support the budget, and in Novgorod, opposite the ancient and useless St. Sophia, there has been solemnly put up a colossal bronze globe to celebrate a thousand years of disorder and confusion; Europe scowls and begins to be uneasy again.... Fifteen years of reforms! And yet never even in the most grotesque periods of its madness has Russia sunk ...”

The last words could not be heard in the roar of the crowd. One could see him again raise his arm and bring it down triumphantly again. Enthusiasm was beyond all bounds: people yelled, clapped their hands, even some of the ladies shouted: “Enough, you can’t beat that!” Some might have been drunk. The orator scanned them all and seemed revelling in his own triumph. I caught a glimpse of Lembke in indescribable excitement, pointing something out to somebody. Yulia Mihailovna, with a pale face, said something in haste to the prince, who had run up to her. But at that moment a group of six men, officials more or less, burst on to the platform, seized the orator and dragged him behind the scenes. I can’t understand how he managed to tear himself away from them, but he did escape, darted up to the edge of the platform again and succeeded in shouting again, at the top of his voice, waving his fist: “But never has Russia sunk ...”

But he was dragged away again. I saw some fifteen men dash behind the scenes to rescue him, not crossing the platform but breaking down the light screen at the side of it.... I saw afterwards, though I could hardly believe my eyes, the girl student (Virginsky’s sister) leap on to the platform with the same roll under her arm, dressed as before, as plump and rosy as ever, surrounded by two or three women and two or three men, and accompanied by her mortal enemy, the schoolboy. I even caught the phrase:

“Ladies and gentlemen, I’ve come to call attention to the sufferings of poor students and to rouse them to a general protest ...”

But I ran away. Hiding my badge in my pocket I made my way from the house into the street by back passages which I knew of. First of all, of course, I went to Stepan Trofimovitch's.

CHAPTER II. THE END OF THE FETE

I

HE WOULD NOT SEE ME. He had shut himself up and was writing. At my repeated knocks and appeals he answered through the door:

“My friend, I have finished everything. Who can ask anything more of me?”

“You haven't finished anything, you've only helped to make a mess of the whole thing. For God's sake, no epigrams, Stepan Trofimovitch! Open the door. We must take steps; they may still come and insult you....”

I thought myself entitled to be particularly severe and even rigorous. I was afraid he might be going to do something still more mad. But to my surprise I met an extraordinary firmness.

“Don't be the first to insult me then. I thank you for the past, but I repeat I've done with all men, good and bad. I am writing to Darya Pavlovna, whom I've forgotten so unpardonably till now. You may take it to her to-morrow, if you like, now *merci*.”

“Stepan Trofimovitch, I assure you that the matter is more serious than you think. Do you think that you've crushed someone there? You've pulverised no one, but have broken yourself to pieces like an empty bottle.” (Oh, I was coarse and discourteous, I remember it with regret.) “You've absolutely no reason to write to Darya Pavlovna ... and what will you do with yourself without me? What do you understand about practical life? I expect you are plotting something else? You'll simply come to grief again if you go plotting something more....”

He rose and came close up to the door.

“You've not been long with them, but you've caught the infection of their tone and language. *Dieu vous pardonne, mon ami, et Dieu vous garde*. But I've always seen in you the germs of delicate feeling, and you will get over it perhaps—*après le temps*, of course, like all of us Russians. As for what you say about my impracticability, I'll remind you of a recent idea of mine: a whole mass of people in Russia do nothing

whatever but attack other people's impracticability with the utmost fury and with the tiresome persistence of flies in the summer, accusing every one of it except themselves. *Cher*, remember that I am excited, and don't distress me. Once more *merci* for everything, and let us part like Karmazinov and the public; that is, let us forget each other with as much generosity as we can. He was posing in begging his former readers so earnestly to forget him; *quant à moi*, I am not so conceited, and I rest my hopes on the youth of your inexperienced heart. How should you remember a useless old man for long? 'Live more,' my friend, as Nastasya wished me on my last name-day (*ces pauvres gens ont quelquefois des mots charmants et pleins de philosophie*). I do not wish you much happiness—it will bore you. I do not wish you trouble either, but, following the philosophy of the peasant, I will repeat simply 'live more' and try not to be much bored; this useless wish I add from myself. Well, good-bye, and good-bye for good. Don't stand at my door, I will not open it."

He went away and I could get nothing more out of him. In spite of his "excitement," he spoke smoothly, deliberately, with weight, obviously trying to be impressive. Of course he was rather vexed with me and was avenging himself indirectly, possibly even for the yesterday's "prison carts" and "floors that give way." His tears in public that morning, in spite of a triumph of a sort, had put him, he knew, in rather a comic position, and there never was a man more solicitous of dignity and punctilio in his relations with his friends than Stepan Trofimovitch. Oh, I don't blame him. But this fastidiousness and irony which he preserved in spite of all shocks reassured me at the time. A man who was so little different from his ordinary self was, of course, not in the mood at that moment for anything tragic or extraordinary. So I reasoned at the time, and, heavens, what a mistake I made! I left too much out of my reckoning.

In anticipation of events I will quote the few first lines of the letter to Darya Pavlovna, which she actually received the following day:

"*Mon enfant*, my hand trembles, but I've done with everything. You were not present at my last struggle: you did not come to that *matinée*, and you did well to stay away. But you will be told that in our Russia, which has grown so poor in men of character, one man had the courage to stand up and, in spite of deadly menaces showered on him from all sides, to tell the fools the truth, that is, that they are fools. *Oh, ce sont—des pauvres petits vauriens et rien de plus, des petits—fools—voilà le mot!* The die is cast; I am going from this town forever and I know not whither. Every one I loved has turned from me. But you, you are a pure and naïve creature; you, a gentle being whose life has been all but linked with mine at the will of a capricious and imperious heart; you who looked at me perhaps with contempt when I shed weak tears on the eve of our frustrated marriage; you, who cannot in any case look on me except as a comic

figure—for you, for you is the last cry of my heart, for you my last duty, for you alone! I cannot leave you forever thinking of me as an ungrateful fool, a churlish egoist, as probably a cruel and ungrateful heart—whom, alas, I cannot forget—is every day describing me to you....”

And so on and so on, four large pages.

Answering his “I won’t open” with three bangs with my fist on the door, and shouting after him that I was sure he would send Nastasya for me three times that day, but I would not come, I gave him up and ran off to Yulia Mihailovna.

II

There I was the witness of a revolting scene: the poor woman was deceived to her face, and I could do nothing. Indeed, what could I say to her? I had had time to reconsider things a little and reflect that I had nothing to go upon but certain feelings and suspicious presentiments. I found her in tears, almost in hysterics, with compresses of eau-de-Cologne and a glass of water. Before her stood Pyotr Stepanovitch, who talked without stopping, and the prince, who held his tongue as though it had been under a lock. With tears and lamentations she reproached Pyotr Stepanovitch for his “desertion.” I was struck at once by the fact that she ascribed the whole failure, the whole ignominy of the *matinée*, everything in fact, to Pyotr Stepanovitch’s absence.

In him I observed an important change: he seemed a shade too anxious, almost serious. As a rule he never seemed serious; he was always laughing, even when he was angry, and he was often angry. Oh, he was angry now! He was speaking coarsely, carelessly, with vexation and impatience. He said that he had been taken ill at Gaganov’s lodging, where he had happened to go early in the morning. Alas, the poor woman was so anxious to be deceived again! The chief question which I found being discussed was whether the ball, that is, the whole second half of the *fête*, should or should not take place. Yulia Mihailovna could not be induced to appear at the ball “after the insults she had received that morning”; in other words, her heart was set on being compelled to do so, and by him, by Pyotr Stepanovitch. She looked upon him as an oracle, and I believe if he had gone away she would have taken to her bed at once. But he did not want to go away; he was desperately anxious that the ball should take place and that Yulia Mihailovna should be present at it.

“Come, what is there to cry about? Are you set on having a scene? On venting your anger on somebody? Well, vent it on me; only make haste about it, for the time is passing and you must make up your mind. We made a mess of it with the *matinée*;

we'll pick up on the ball. Here, the prince thinks as I do. Yes, if it hadn't been for the prince, how would things have ended there?"

The prince had been at first opposed to the ball (that is, opposed to Yulia Mihailovna's appearing at it; the ball was bound to go on in any case), but after two or three such references to his opinion he began little by little to grunt his acquiescence.

I was surprised too at the extraordinary rudeness of Pyotr Stepanovitch's tone. Oh, I scout with indignation the contemptible slander which was spread later of some supposed liaison between Yulia Mihailovna and Pyotr Stepanovitch. There was no such thing, nor could there be. He gained his ascendancy over her from the first only by encouraging her in her dreams of influence in society and in the ministry, by entering into her plans, by inventing them for her, and working upon her with the grossest flattery. He had got her completely into his toils and had become as necessary to her as the air she breathed. Seeing me, she cried, with flashing eyes:

"Here, ask him. He kept by my side all the while, just like the prince did. Tell me, isn't it plain that it was all a preconcerted plot, a base, designing plot to damage Andrey Antonovitch and me as much as possible? Oh, they had arranged it beforehand. They had a plan! It's a party, a regular party."

"You are exaggerating as usual. You've always some romantic notion in your head. But I am glad to see Mr..." (He pretended to have forgotten my name.) "He'll give us his opinion."

"My opinion," I hastened to put in, "is the same as Yulia Mihailovna's. The plot is only too evident. I have brought you these ribbons, Yulia Mihailovna. Whether the ball is to take place or not is not my business, for it's not in my power to decide; but my part as steward is over. Forgive my warmth, but I can't act against the dictates of common sense and my own convictions."

"You hear! You hear!" She clasped her hands.

"I hear, and I tell you this." He turned to me. "I think you must have eaten something which has made you all delirious. To my thinking, nothing has happened, absolutely nothing but what has happened before and is always liable to happen in this town. A plot, indeed! It was an ugly failure, disgracefully stupid. But where's the plot? A plot against Yulia Mihailovna, who has spoiled them and protected them and fondly forgiven them all their schoolboy pranks! Yulia Mihailovna! What have I been hammering into you for the last month continually? What did I warn you? What did you want with all these people—what did you want with them? What induced you to mix

yourself up with these fellows? What was the motive, what was the object of it? To unite society? But, mercy on us! will they ever be united?"

"When did you warn me? On the contrary, you approved of it, you even insisted on it.... I confess I am so surprised.... You brought all sorts of strange people to see me yourself."

"On the contrary, I opposed you; I did not approve of it. As for bringing them to see you, I certainly did, but only after they'd got in by dozens and only of late to make up 'the literary quadrille'—we couldn't get on without these rogues. Only I don't mind betting that a dozen or two more of the same sort were let in without tickets to-day."

"Not a doubt of it," I agreed.

"There, you see, you are agreeing already. Think what the tone has been lately here—I mean in this wretched town. It's nothing but insolence, impudence; it's been a crying scandal all the time. And who's been encouraging it? Who's screened it by her authority? Who's upset them all? Who has made all the small fry huffy? All their family secrets are caricatured in your album. Didn't you pat them on the back, your poets and caricaturists? Didn't you let Lyamshin kiss your hand? Didn't a divinity student abuse an actual state councillor in your presence and spoil his daughter's dress with his tarred boots? Now, can you wonder that the public is set against you?"

"But that's all your doing, yours! Oh, my goodness!"

"No, I warned you. We quarrelled. Do you hear, we quarrelled?"

"Why, you are lying to my face!"

"Of course it's easy for you to say that. You need a victim to vent your wrath on. Well, vent it on me as I've said already. I'd better appeal to you, Mr...." (He was still unable to recall my name.) "We'll reckon on our fingers. I maintain that, apart from Liputin, there was nothing preconcerted, nothing! I will prove it, but first let us analyse Liputin. He came forward with that fool Lebyadkin's verses. Do you maintain that that was a plot? But do you know it might simply have struck Liputin as a clever thing to do. Seriously, seriously. He simply came forward with the idea of making every one laugh and entertaining them—his protectress Yulia Mihailovna first of all. That was all. Don't you believe it? Isn't that in keeping with all that has been going on here for the last month? Do you want me to tell the whole truth? I declare that under other circumstances it might have gone off all right. It was a coarse joke—well, a bit strong, perhaps; but it was amusing, you know, wasn't it?"

“What! You think what Liputin did was clever?” Yulia Mihailovna cried in intense indignation. “Such stupidity, such tactlessness, so contemptible, so mean! It was intentional! Oh, you are saying it on purpose! I believe after that you are in the plot with them yourself.”

“Of course I was behind the scenes, I was in hiding, I set it all going. But if I were in the plot—understand that, anyway—it wouldn’t have ended with Liputin. So according to you I had arranged with my papa too that he should cause such a scene on purpose? Well, whose fault is it that my papa was allowed to read? Who tried only yesterday to prevent you from allowing it, only yesterday?”

“*Oh, hier il avait tant d’esprit*, I was so reckoning on him; and then he has such manners. I thought with him and Karmazinov ... Only think!”

“Yes, only think. But in spite of *tant d’esprit* papa has made things worse, and if I’d known beforehand that he’d make such a mess of it, I should certainly not have persuaded you yesterday to keep the goat out of the kitchen garden, should I—since I am taking part in this conspiracy against your fête that you are so positive about? And yet I did try to dissuade you yesterday; I tried to because I foresaw it. To foresee everything was, of course, impossible; he probably did not know himself a minute before what he would fire off—these nervous old men can’t be reckoned on like other people. But you can still save the situation: to satisfy the public, send to him to-morrow by administrative order, and with all the ceremonies, two doctors to inquire into his health. Even to-day, in fact, and take him straight to the hospital and apply cold compresses. Every one would laugh, anyway, and see that there was nothing to take offence at. I’ll tell people about it in the evening at the ball, as I am his son. Karmazinov is another story. He was a perfect ass and dragged out his article for a whole hour. He certainly must have been in the plot with me! ‘I’ll make a mess of it too,’ he thought, ‘to damage Yulia Mihailovna.’”

“Oh, Karmazinov! *Quelle honte!* I was burning, burning with shame for his audience!”

“Well, I shouldn’t have burnt, but have cooked him instead. The audience was right, you know. Who was to blame for Karmazinov, again? Did I foist him upon you? Was I one of his worshippers? Well, hang him! But the third maniac, the political—that’s a different matter. That was every one’s blunder, not only my plot.”

“Ah, don’t speak of it! That was awful, awful! That was my fault, entirely my fault!”

“Of course it was, but I don’t blame you for that. No one can control them, these candid souls! You can’t always be safe from them, even in Petersburg. He was recommended to you, and in what terms too! So you will admit that you are bound to

appear at the ball to-night. It's an important business. It was you put him on to the platform. You must make it plain now to the public that you are not in league with him, that the fellow is in the hands of the police, and that you were in some inexplicable way deceived. You ought to declare with indignation that you were the victim of a madman. Because he is a madman and nothing more. That's how you must put it about him. I can't endure these people who bite. I say worse things perhaps, but not from the platform, you know. And they are talking about a senator too."

"What senator? Who's talking?"

"I don't understand it myself, you know. Do you know anything about a senator, Yulia Mihailovna?"

"A senator?"

"You see, they are convinced that a senator has been appointed to be governor here, and that you are being superseded from Petersburg. I've heard it from lots of people."

"I've heard it too," I put in.

"Who said so?" asked Yulia Mihailovna, flushing all over.

"You mean, who said so first? How can I tell? But there it is, people say so. Masses of people are saying so. They were saying so yesterday particularly. They are all very serious about it, though I can't make it out. Of course the more intelligent and competent don't talk, but even some of those listen."

"How mean! And ... how stupid!"

"Well, that's just why you must make your appearance, to show these fools."

"I confess I feel myself that it's my duty, but ... what if there's another disgrace in store for us? What if people don't come? No one will come, you know, no one!"

"How hot you are! They not come! What about the new clothes? What about the girls' dresses? I give you up as a woman after that! Is that your knowledge of human nature?"

"The marshal's wife won't come, she won't."

"But, after all, what has happened? Why won't they come?" he cried at last with angry impatience.

"Ignominy, disgrace—that's what's happened. I don't know what to call it, but after it I can't face people."

“Why? How are you to blame for it, after all? Why do you take the blame of it on yourself? Isn’t it rather the fault of the audience, of your respectable residents, your patresfamilias? They ought to have controlled the roughs and the rowdies—for it was all the work of roughs and rowdies, nothing serious. You can never manage things with the police alone in any society, anywhere. Among us every one asks for a special policeman to protect him wherever he goes. People don’t understand that society must protect itself. And what do our patresfamilias, the officials, the wives and daughters, do in such cases? They sit quiet and sulk. In fact there’s not enough social initiative to keep the disorderly in check.”

“Ah, that’s the simple truth! They sit quiet, sulk and ... gaze about them.”

“And if it’s the truth, you ought to say so aloud, proudly, sternly, just to show that you are not defeated, to those respectable residents and mothers of families. Oh, you can do it; you have the gift when your head is clear. You will gather them round you and say it aloud. And then a paragraph in the *Voice* and the *Financial News*. Wait a bit, I’ll undertake it myself, I’ll arrange it all for you. Of course there must be more superintendence: you must look after the buffet; you must ask the prince, you must ask Mr.... You must not desert us, monsieur, just when we have to begin all over again. And finally, you must appear arm-in-arm with Andrey Antonovitch.... How is Andrey Antonovitch?”

“Oh, how unjustly, how untruly, how cruelly you have always judged that angelic man!” Yulia Mihailovna cried in a sudden, outburst, almost with tears, putting her handkerchief to her eyes.

Pyotr Stepanovitch was positively taken aback for the moment. “Good heavens! I.... What have I said? I’ve always ...”

“You never have, never! You have never done him justice.”

“There’s no understanding a woman,” grumbled Pyotr Stepanovitch, with a wry smile.

“He is the most sincere, the most delicate, the most angelic of men! The most kind-hearted of men!”

“Well, really, as for kind-heartedness ... I’ve always done him justice....”

“Never! But let us drop it. I am too awkward in my defence of him. This morning that little Jesuit, the marshal’s wife, also dropped some sarcastic hints about what happened yesterday.”

“Oh, she has no thoughts to spare for yesterday now, she is full of to-day. And why are you so upset at her not coming to the ball to-night? Of course, she won’t come after getting mixed up in such a scandal. Perhaps it’s not her fault, but still her reputation ... her hands are soiled.”

“What do you mean; I don’t understand? Why are her hands soiled?” Yulia Mihailovna looked at him in perplexity.

“I don’t vouch for the truth of it, but the town is ringing with the story that it was she brought them together.”

“What do you mean? Brought whom together?”

“What, do you mean to say you don’t know?” he exclaimed with well-simulated wonder. “Why Stavrogin and Lizaveta Nikolaevna.”

“What? How?” we all cried out at once.

“Is it possible you don’t know? Phew! Why, it is quite a tragic romance: Lizaveta Nikolaevna was pleased to get out of that lady’s carriage and get straight into Stavrogin’s carriage, and slipped off with ‘the latter’ to Skvoreshniki in full daylight. Only an hour ago, hardly an hour.”

We were flabbergasted. Of course we fell to questioning him, but to our wonder, although he “happened” to be a witness of the scene himself, he could give us no detailed account of it. The thing seemed to have happened like this: when the marshal’s wife was driving Liza and Mavriky Nikolaevitch from the matinée to the house of Praskovya Ivanovna (whose legs were still bad) they saw a carriage waiting a short distance, about twenty-five paces, to one side of the front door. When Liza jumped out, she ran straight to this carriage; the door was flung open and shut again; Liza called to Mavriky Nikolaevitch, “Spare me,” and the carriage drove off at full speed to Skvoreshniki. To our hurried questions whether it was by arrangement? Who was in the carriage? Pyotr Stepanovitch answered that he knew nothing about it; no doubt it had been arranged, but that he did not see Stavrogin himself; possibly the old butler, Alexey Yegorytch, might have been in the carriage. To the question “How did he come to be there, and how did he know for a fact that she had driven to Skvoreshniki?” he answered that he happened to be passing and, at seeing Liza, he had run up to the carriage (and yet he could not make out who was in it, an inquisitive man like him!) and that Mavriky Nikolaevitch, far from setting off in pursuit, had not even tried to stop Liza, and had even laid a restraining hand on the marshal’s wife, who was shouting at the top of her voice: “She is going to Stavrogin, to Stavrogin.” At this point I lost patience, and cried furiously to Pyotr Stepanovitch:

“It’s all your doing, you rascal! This was what you were doing this morning. You helped Stavrogin, you came in the carriage, you helped her into it ... it was you, you, you! Yulia Mihailovna, he is your enemy; he will be your ruin too! Beware of him!”

And I ran headlong out of the house. I wonder myself and cannot make out to this day how I came to say that to him. But I guessed quite right: it had all happened almost exactly as I said, as appeared later. What struck me most was the obviously artificial way in which he broke the news. He had not told it at once on entering the house as an extraordinary piece of news, but pretended that we knew without his telling us which was impossible in so short a time. And if we had known it, we could not possibly have refrained from mentioning it till he introduced the subject. Besides, he could not have heard yet that the town was “ringing with gossip” about the marshal’s wife in so short a time. Besides, he had once or twice given a vulgar, frivolous smile as he told the story, probably considering that we were fools and completely taken in.

But I had no thought to spare for him; the central fact I believed, and ran from Yulia Mihailovna’s, beside myself. The catastrophe cut me to the heart. I was wounded almost to tears; perhaps I did shed some indeed. I was at a complete loss what to do. I rushed to Stepan Trofimovitch’s, but the vexatious man still refused to open the door. Nastasya informed me, in a reverent whisper, that he had gone to bed, but I did not believe it. At Liza’s house I succeeded in questioning the servants. They confirmed the story of the elopement, but knew nothing themselves. There was great commotion in the house; their mistress had been attacked by fainting fits, and Mavriky Nikolaevitch was with her. I did not feel it possible to ask for Mavriky Nikolaevitch. To my inquiries about Pyotr Stepanovitch they told me that he had been in and out continually of late, sometimes twice in the day. The servants were sad, and showed particular respectfulness in speaking of Liza; they were fond of her. That she was ruined, utterly ruined, I did not doubt; but the psychological aspect of the matter I was utterly unable to understand, especially after her scene with Stavrogin the previous day. To run about the town and inquire at the houses of acquaintances, who would, of course, by now have heard the news and be rejoicing at it, seemed to me revolting, besides being humiliating for Liza. But, strange to say, I ran to see Darya Pavlovna, though I was not admitted (no one had been admitted into the house since the previous morning). I don’t know what I could have said to her and what made me run to her. From her I went to her brother’s. Shatov listened sullenly and in silence. I may observe that I found him more gloomy than I had ever seen him before; he was awfully preoccupied and seemed only to listen to me with an effort. He said scarcely anything and began walking up and down his cell from corner to corner, treading more noisily than usual. As I was going down the stairs he shouted after me to go to Liputin’s: “There you’ll hear

everything.” Yet I did not go to Liputin’s, but after I’d gone a good way towards home I turned back to Shatov’s again, and, half opening the door without going in, suggested to him laconically and with no kind of explanation, “Won’t you go to Marya Timofyevna to-day?” At this Shatov swore at me, and I went away. I note here that I may not forget it that he did purposely go that evening to the other end of the town to see Marya Timofyevna, whom he had not seen for some time. He found her in excellent health and spirits and Lebyadkin dead drunk, asleep on the sofa in the first room. This was at nine o’clock. He told me so himself next day when we met for a moment in the street. Before ten o’clock I made up my mind to go to the ball, but not in the capacity of a steward (besides my rosette had been left at Yulia Mihailovna’s). I was tempted by irresistible curiosity to listen, without asking any questions, to what people were saying in the town about all that had happened. I wanted, too, to have a look at Yulia Mihailovna, if only at a distance. I reproached myself greatly that I had left her so abruptly that afternoon.

III

All that night, with its almost grotesque incidents, and the terrible *dénouement* that followed in the early morning, still seems to me like a hideous nightmare, and is, for me at least, the most painful chapter in my chronicle. I was late for the ball, and it was destined to end so quickly that I arrived not long before it was over. It was eleven o’clock when I reached the entrance of the marshal’s house, where the same White Hall in which the matinée had taken place had, in spite of the short interval between, been cleared and made ready to serve as the chief ballroom for the whole town, as we expected, to dance in. But far as I had been that morning from expecting the ball to be a success, I had had no presentiment of the full truth. Not one family of the higher circles appeared; even the subordinate officials of rather more consequence were absent—and this was a very striking fact. As for ladies and girls, Pyotr Stepanovitch’s arguments (the duplicity of which was obvious now) turned out to be utterly incorrect: exceedingly few had come; to four men there was scarcely one lady—and what ladies they were! Regimental ladies of a sort, three doctors’ wives with their daughters, two or three poor ladies from the country, the seven daughters and the niece of the secretary whom I have mentioned already, some wives of tradesmen, of post-office clerks and other small fry—was this what Yulia Mihailovna expected? Half the tradespeople even were absent. As for the men, in spite of the complete absence of all persons of consequence, there was still a crowd of them, but they made a doubtful and suspicious impression. There were, of course, some quiet and respectful officers with their wives, some of the most docile fathers of families, like that secretary, for instance, the father of his seven daughters. All these humble, insignificant people had

come, as one of these gentlemen expressed it, because it was “inevitable.” But, on the other hand, the mass of free-and-easy people and the mass too of those whom Pyotr Stepanovitch and I had suspected of coming in without tickets, seemed even bigger than in the afternoon. So far they were all sitting in the refreshment bar, and had gone straight there on arriving, as though it were the meeting-place they had agreed upon. So at least it seemed to me. The refreshment bar had been placed in a large room, the last of several opening out of one another. Here Prohoritch was installed with all the attractions of the club cuisine and with a tempting display of drinks and dainties. I noticed several persons whose coats were almost in rags and whose get-up was altogether suspicious and utterly unsuitable for a ball. They had evidently been with great pains brought to a state of partial sobriety which would not last long; and goodness knows where they had been brought from, they were not local people. I knew, of course, that it was part of Yulia Mihailovna’s idea that the ball should be of the most democratic character, and that “even working people and shopmen should not be excluded if any one of that class chanced to pay for a ticket.” She could bravely utter such words in her committee with absolute security that none of the working people of our town, who all lived in extreme poverty, would dream of taking a ticket. But in spite of the democratic sentiments of the committee, I could hardly believe that such sinister-looking and shabby people could have been admitted in the regular way. But who could have admitted them, and with what object? Lyamshin and Liputin had already been deprived of their steward’s rosettes, though they were present at the ball, as they were taking part in the “literary quadrille.” But, to my amazement, Liputin’s place was taken by the divinity student, who had caused the greatest scandal at the matinée by his skirmish with Stepan Trofimovitch; and Lyamshin’s was taken by Pyotr Stepanovitch himself. What was to be looked for under the circumstances?

I tried to listen to the conversation. I was struck by the wildness of some ideas I heard expressed. It was maintained in one group, for instance, that Yulia Mihailovna had arranged Liza’s elopement with Stavrogin and had been paid by the latter for doing so. Even the sum paid was mentioned. It was asserted that she had arranged the whole fête with a view to it, and that that was the reason why half the town had not turned up at the ball, and that Lembke himself was so upset about it that “his mind had given way,” and that, crazy as he was, “she had got him in tow.” There was a great deal of laughter too, hoarse, wild and significant. Every one was criticising the ball, too, with great severity, and abusing Yulia Mihailovna without ceremony. In fact it was disorderly, incoherent, drunken and excited babble, so it was difficult to put it together and make anything of it. At the same time there were simple-hearted people enjoying

themselves at the refreshment-bar; there were even some ladies of the sort who are surprised and frightened at nothing, very genial and festive, chiefly military ladies with their husbands. They made parties at the little tables, were drinking tea, and were very merry. The refreshment-bar made a snug refuge for almost half of the guests. Yet in a little time all this mass of people must stream into the ballroom. It was horrible to think of it!

Meanwhile the prince had succeeded in arranging three skimpy quadrilles in the White Hall. The young ladies were dancing, while their parents were enjoying watching them. But many of these respectable persons had already begun to think how they could, after giving their girls a treat, get off in good time before “the trouble began.” Absolutely every one was convinced that it certainly would begin. It would be difficult for me to describe Yulia Mihailovna’s state of mind. I did not talk to her though I went close up to her. She did not respond to the bow I made her on entering; she did not notice me (really did not notice). There was a painful look in her face and a contemptuous and haughty though restless and agitated expression in her eyes. She controlled herself with evident suffering—for whose sake, with what object? She certainly ought to have gone away, still more to have got her husband away, and she remained! From her face one could see that her eyes were “fully opened,” and that it was useless for her to expect any thing more. She did not even summon Pyotr Stepanovitch (he seemed to avoid her; I saw him in the refreshment-room, he was extremely lively). But she remained at the ball and did not let Andrey Antonovitch leave her side for a moment. Oh, up to the very last moment, even that morning she would have repudiated any hint about his health with genuine indignation. But now her eyes were to be opened on this subject too. As for me, I thought from the first glance that Andrey Antonovitch looked worse than he had done in the morning. He seemed to be plunged into a sort of oblivion and hardly to know where he was. Sometimes he looked about him with unexpected severity—at me, for instance, twice. Once he tried to say something; he began loudly and audibly but did not finish the sentence, throwing a modest old clerk who happened to be near him almost into a panic. But even this humble section of the assembly held sullenly and timidly aloof from Yulia Mihailovna and at the same time turned upon her husband exceedingly strange glances, open and staring, quite out of keeping with their habitually submissive demeanour.

“Yes, that struck me, and I suddenly began to guess about Andrey Antonovitch,” Yulia Mihailovna confessed to me afterwards.

Yes, she was to blame again! Probably when after my departure she had settled with Pyotr Stepanovitch that there should be a ball and that she should be present she

must have gone again to the study where Andrey Antonovitch was sitting, utterly “shattered” by the *matinée*; must again have used all her fascinations to persuade him to come with her. But what misery she must have been in now! And yet she did not go away. Whether it was pride or simply she lost her head, I do not know. In spite of her haughtiness, she attempted with smiles and humiliation to enter into conversation with some ladies, but they were confused, confined themselves to distrustful monosyllables, “Yes” and “No,” and evidently avoided her.

The only person of undoubted consequence who was present at the ball was that distinguished general whom I have described already, the one who after Stavrogin’s duel with Gaganov opened the door to public impatience at the marshal’s wife’s. He walked with an air of dignity through the rooms, looked about, and listened, and tried to appear as though he had come rather for the sake of observation than for the sake of enjoying himself.... He ended by establishing himself beside Yulia Mihailovna and not moving a step away from her, evidently trying to keep up her spirits, and reassure her. He certainly was a most kind-hearted man, of very high rank, and so old that even compassion from him was not wounding. But to admit to herself that this old gossip was venturing to pity her and almost to protect her, knowing that he was doing her honour by his presence, was very vexatious. The general stayed by her and never ceased chattering.

“They say a town can’t go on without seven righteous men ... seven, I think it is, I am not sure of the number fixed.... I don’t know how many of these seven, the certified righteous of the town ... have the honour of being present at your ball. Yet in spite of their presence I begin to feel unsafe. *Vous me pardonnez, charmante dame, n’est-ce pas?* I speak allegorically, but I went into the refreshment-room and I am glad I escaped alive.... Our priceless Prohoritch is not in his place there, and I believe his bar will be destroyed before morning. But I am laughing. I am only waiting to see what the ‘literary quadrille’ is going to be like, and then home to bed. You must excuse a gouty old fellow. I go early to bed, and I would advise you too to go ‘by-by,’ as they say *aux enfants*. I’ve come, you know, to have a look at the pretty girls ... whom, of course, I could meet nowhere in such profusion as here. They all live beyond the river and I don’t drive out so far. There’s a wife of an officer ... in the chasseurs I believe he is ... who is distinctly pretty, distinctly, and ... she knows it herself. I’ve talked to the sly puss; she is a sprightly one ... and the girls too are fresh-looking; but that’s all, there’s nothing but freshness. Still, it’s a pleasure to look at them. There are some rosebuds, but their lips are thick. As a rule there’s an irregularity about female beauty in Russia, and ... they are a little like buns.... *vous me pardonnez, n’est-ce pas?* ... with good eyes, however, laughing eyes.... These rose buds are charming for two years when they

are young ... even for three ... then they broaden out and are spoilt forever ... producing in their husbands that deplorable indifference which does so much to promote the woman movement ... that is, if I understand it correctly.... H'm! It's a fine hall; the rooms are not badly decorated. It might be worse. The music might be much worse.... I don't say it ought to have been. What makes a bad impression is that there are so few ladies. I say nothing about the dresses. It's bad that that chap in the grey trousers should dare to dance the cancan so openly. I can forgive him if he does it in the gaiety of his heart, and since he is the local chemist.... Still, eleven o'clock is a bit early even for chemists. There were two fellows fighting in the refreshment-bar and they weren't turned out. At eleven o'clock people ought to be turned out for fighting, whatever the standard of manners.... Three o'clock is a different matter; then one has to make concessions to public opinion—if only this ball survives till three o'clock. Varvara Petrovna has not kept her word, though, and hasn't sent flowers. H'm! She has no thoughts for flowers, *pauvre mère!* And poor Liza! Have you heard? They say it's a mysterious story ... and Stavrogin is to the front again.... H'm! I would have gone home to bed ... I can hardly keep my eyes open. But when is this 'literary quadrille' coming on?"

At last the "literary quadrille" began. Whenever of late there had been conversation in the town on the ball it had invariably turned on this literary quadrille, and as no one could imagine what it would be like, it aroused extraordinary curiosity. Nothing could be more unfavourable to its chance of success, and great was the disappointment.

The side doors of the White Hall were thrown open and several masked figures appeared. The public surrounded them eagerly. All the occupants of the refreshment-bar trooped to the last man into the hall. The masked figures took their places for the dance. I succeeded in making my way to the front and installed myself just behind Yulia Mihailovna, Von Lembke, and the general. At this point Pyotr Stepanovitch, who had kept away till that time, skipped up to Yulia Mihailovna.

"I've been in the refreshment-room all this time, watching," he whispered, with the air of a guilty schoolboy, which he, however, assumed on purpose to irritate her even more. She turned crimson with anger.

"You might give up trying to deceive me now at least, insolent man!" broke from her almost aloud, so that it was heard by other people. Pyotr Stepanovitch skipped away extremely well satisfied with himself.

It would be difficult to imagine a more pitiful, vulgar, dull and insipid allegory than this "literary quadrille." Nothing could be imagined less appropriate to our local society. Yet they say it was Karmazinov's idea. It was Liputin indeed who arranged it with the

help of the lame teacher who had been at the meeting at Virginsky's. But Karmazinov had given the idea and had, it was said, meant to dress up and to take a special and prominent part in it. The quadrille was made up of six couples of masked figures, who were not in fancy dress exactly, for their clothes were like every one else's. Thus, for instance, one short and elderly gentleman wearing a dress-coat—in fact, dressed like every one else—wore a venerable grey beard, tied on (and this constituted his disguise). As he danced he pounded up and down, taking tiny and rapid steps on the same spot with a stolid expression of countenance. He gave vent to sounds in a subdued but husky bass, and this huskiness was meant to suggest one of the well-known papers. Opposite this figure danced two giants, X and Z, and these letters were pinned on their coats, but what the letters meant remained unexplained. "Honest Russian thought" was represented by a middle-aged gentleman in spectacles, dress-coat and gloves, and wearing fetters (real fetters). Under his arm he had a portfolio containing papers relating to some "case." To convince the sceptical, a letter from abroad testifying to the honesty of "honest Russian thought" peeped out of his pocket. All this was explained by the stewards, as the letter which peeped out of his pocket could not be read. "Honest Russian thought" had his right hand raised and in it held a glass as though he wanted to propose a toast. In a line with him on each side tripped a crop-headed Nihilist girl; while *vis-à-vis* danced another elderly gentleman in a dress-coat with a heavy cudgel in his hand. He was meant to represent a formidable periodical (not a Petersburg one), and seemed to be saying, "I'll pound you to a jelly." But in spite of his cudgel he could not bear the spectacles of "honest Russian thought" fixed upon him and tried to look away, and when he did the *pas de deux*, he twisted, turned, and did not know what to do with himself—so terrible, probably, were the stings of his conscience! I don't remember all the absurd tricks they played, however; it was all in the same style, so that I felt at last painfully ashamed. And this same expression, as it were, of shame was reflected in the whole public, even on the most sullen figures that had come out of the refreshment-room. For some time all were silent and gazed with angry perplexity. When a man is ashamed he generally begins to get angry and is disposed to be cynical. By degrees a murmur arose in the audience.

"What's the meaning of it?" a man who had come in from the refreshment-room muttered in one of the groups.

"It's silly."

"It's something literary. It's a criticism of the *Voice*."

"What's that to me?"

From another group:

“Asses!”

“No, they are not asses; it’s we who are the asses.”

“Why are you an ass?”

“I am not an ass.”

“Well, if you are not, I am certainly not.”

From a third group:

“We ought to give them a good smacking and send them flying.”

“Pull down the hall!”

From a fourth group:

“I wonder the Lembkes are not ashamed to look on!”

“Why should they be ashamed? You are not.”

“Yes, I am ashamed, and he is the governor.”

“And you are a pig.”

“I’ve never seen such a commonplace ball in my life,” a lady observed viciously, quite close to Yulia Mihailovna, obviously with the intention of being overheard. She was a stout lady of forty with rouge on her cheeks, wearing a bright-coloured silk dress. Almost every one in the town knew her, but no one received her. She was the widow of a civil councillor, who had left her a wooden house and a small pension; but she lived well and kept horses. Two months previously she had called on Yulia Mihailovna, but the latter had not received her.

“That might have been foreseen,” she added, looking insolently into Yulia Mihailovna’s face.

“If you could foresee it, why did you come?” Yulia Mihailovna could not resist saying.

“Because I was too simple,” the sprightly lady answered instantly, up in arms and eager for the fray; but the general intervened.

“*Chère dame*”—he bent over to Yulia Mihailovna—“you’d really better be going. We are only in their way and they’ll enjoy themselves thoroughly without us. You’ve done

your part, you've opened the ball, now leave them in peace. And Andrey Antonovitch doesn't seem to be feeling quite satisfactorily.... To avoid trouble."

But it was too late.

All through the quadrille Andrey Antonovitch gazed at the dancers with a sort of angry perplexity, and when he heard the comments of the audience he began looking about him uneasily. Then for the first time he caught sight of some of the persons who had come from the refreshment-room; there was an expression of extreme wonder in his face. Suddenly there was a loud roar of laughter at a caper that was cut in the quadrille. The editor of the "menacing periodical, not a Petersburg one," who was dancing with the cudgel in his hands, felt utterly unable to endure the spectaclled gaze of "honest Russian thought," and not knowing how to escape it, suddenly in the last figure advanced to meet him standing on his head, which was meant, by the way, to typify the continual turning upside down of common sense by the menacing non-Petersburg gazette. As Lyamshin was the only one who could walk standing on his head, he had undertaken to represent the editor with the cudgel. Yulia Mihailovna had had no idea that anyone was going to walk on his head. "They concealed that from me, they concealed it," she repeated to me afterwards in despair and indignation. The laughter from the crowd was, of course, provoked not by the allegory, which interested no one, but simply by a man's walking on his head in a swallow-tail coat. Lembke flew into a rage and shook with fury.

"Rascal!" he cried, pointing to Lyamshin, "take hold of the scoundrel, turn him over ... turn his legs ... his head ... so that his head's up ... up!"

Lyamshin jumped on to his feet. The laughter grew louder.

"Turn out all the scoundrels who are laughing!" Lembke prescribed suddenly.

There was an angry roar and laughter in the crowd.

"You can't do like that, your Excellency."

"You mustn't abuse the public."

"You are a fool yourself!" a voice cried suddenly from a corner.

"Filibusters!" shouted someone from the other end of the room.

Lembke looked round quickly at the shout and turned pale. A vacant smile came on to his lips, as though he suddenly understood and remembered something.

“Gentlemen,” said Yulia Mihailovna, addressing the crowd which was pressing round them, as she drew her husband away—“gentlemen, excuse Andrey Antonovitch. Andrey Antonovitch is unwell ... excuse ... forgive him, gentlemen.”

I positively heard her say “forgive him.” It all happened very quickly. But I remember for a fact that a section of the public rushed out of the hall immediately after those words of Yulia Mihailovna’s as though panic-stricken. I remember one hysterical, tearful feminine shriek:

“Ach, the same thing again!”

And in the retreat of the guests, which was almost becoming a crush, another bomb exploded exactly as in the afternoon.

“Fire! All the riverside quarter is on fire!”

I don’t remember where this terrible cry rose first, whether it was first raised in the hall, or whether someone ran upstairs from the entry, but it was followed by such alarm that I can’t attempt to describe it. More than half the guests at the ball came from the quarter beyond the river, and were owners or occupiers of wooden houses in that district. They rushed to the windows, pulled back the curtains in a flash, and tore down the blinds. The riverside was in flames. The fire, it is true, was only beginning, but it was in flames in three separate places—and that was what was alarming.

“Arson! The Shpigulin men!” roared the crowd.

I remember some very characteristic exclamations:

“I’ve had a presentiment in my heart that there’d be arson, I’ve had a presentiment of it these last few days!”

“The Shpigulin men, the Shpigulin men, no one else!”

“We were all lured here on purpose to set fire to it!”

This last most amazing exclamation came from a woman; it was an unintentional involuntary shriek of a housewife whose goods were burning. Every one rushed for the door. I won’t describe the crush in the vestibule over sorting out cloaks, shawls, and pelisses, the shrieks of the frightened women, the weeping of the young ladies. I doubt whether there was any theft, but it was no wonder that in such disorder some went away without their wraps because they were unable to find them, and this grew into a legend with many additions, long preserved in the town. Lembke and Yulia Mihailovna were almost crushed by the crowd at the doors.

“Stop, every one! Don’t let anyone out!” yelled Lembke, stretching out his arms menacingly towards the crowding people.

“Every one without exception to be strictly searched at once!”

A storm of violent oaths rose from the crowd.

“Andrey Antonovitch! Andrey Antonovitch!” cried Yulia Mihailovna in complete despair.

“Arrest her first!” shouted her husband, pointing his finger at her threateningly.

“Search her first! The ball was arranged with a view to the fire...”

She screamed and fell into a swoon. (Oh, there was no doubt of its being a real one.) The general, the prince, and I rushed to her assistance; there were others, even among the ladies, who helped us at that difficult moment. We carried the unhappy woman out of this hell to her carriage, but she only regained consciousness as she reached the house, and her first utterance was about Andrey Antonovitch again. With the destruction of all her fancies, the only thing left in her mind was Andrey Antonovitch. They sent for a doctor. I remained with her for a whole hour; the prince did so too. The general, in an access of generous feeling (though he had been terribly scared), meant to remain all night “by the bedside of the unhappy lady,” but within ten minutes he fell asleep in an arm-chair in the drawing-room while waiting for the doctor, and there we left him.

The chief of the police, who had hurried from the ball to the fire, had succeeded in getting Andrey Antonovitch out of the hall after us, and attempted to put him into Yulia Mihailovna’s carriage, trying all he could to persuade his Excellency “to seek repose.” But I don’t know why he did not insist. Andrey Antonovitch, of course, would not hear of repose, and was set on going to the fire; but that was not a sufficient reason. It ended in his taking him to the fire in his droshky. He told us afterwards that Lembke was gesticulating all the way and “shouting orders that it was impossible to obey owing to their unusualness.” It was officially reported later on that his Excellency had at that time been in a delirious condition “owing to a sudden fright.”

There is no need to describe how the ball ended. A few dozen rowdy fellows, and with them some ladies, remained in the hall. There were no police present. They would not let the orchestra go, and beat the musicians who attempted to leave. By morning they had pulled all Prohoritch’s stall to pieces, had drunk themselves senseless, danced the Kamarinsky in its unexpurgated form, made the rooms in a shocking mess, and only towards daybreak part of this hopelessly drunken rabble reached the scene of the fire to make fresh disturbances there. The other part spent the night in the rooms

dead drunk, with disastrous consequences to the velvet sofas and the floor. Next morning, at the earliest possibility, they were dragged out by their legs into the street. So ended the fête for the benefit of the governesses of our province.

IV

The fire frightened the inhabitants of the riverside just because it was evidently a case of arson. It was curious that at the first cry of "fire" another cry was raised that the Shpigulin men had done it. It is now well known that three Shpigulin men really did have a share in setting fire to the town, but that was all; all the other factory hands were completely acquitted, not only officially but also by public opinion. Besides those three rascals (of whom one has been caught and confessed and the other two have so far escaped), Fedka the convict undoubtedly had a hand in the arson. That is all that is known for certain about the fire till now; but when it comes to conjectures it's a very different matter. What had led these three rascals to do it? Had they been instigated by anyone? It is very difficult to answer all these questions even now.

Owing to the strong wind, the fact that the houses at the riverside were almost all wooden, and that they had been set fire to in three places, the fire spread quickly and enveloped the whole quarter with extraordinary rapidity. (The fire burnt, however, only at two ends; at the third spot it was extinguished almost as soon as it began to burn—of which later.) But the Petersburg and Moscow papers exaggerated our calamity. Not more than a quarter, roughly speaking, of the riverside district was burnt down; possibly less indeed. Our fire brigade, though it was hardly adequate to the size and population of the town, worked with great promptitude and devotion. But it would not have been of much avail, even with the zealous co-operation of the inhabitants, if the wind had not suddenly dropped towards morning. When an hour after our flight from the ball I made my way to the riverside, the fire was at its height. A whole street parallel with the river was in flames. It was as light as day. I won't describe the fire; every one in Russia knows what it looks like. The bustle and crush was immense in the lanes adjoining the burning street. The inhabitants, fully expecting the fire to reach their houses, were hauling out their belongings, but had not yet left their dwellings, and were waiting meanwhile sitting on their boxes and feather beds under their windows. Part of the male population were hard at work ruthlessly chopping down fences and even whole huts which were near the fire and on the windward side. None were crying except the children, who had been waked out of their sleep, though the women who had dragged out their chattels were lamenting in sing-song voices. Those who had not finished their task were still silent, busily carrying out their goods. Sparks and embers were carried a long way in all directions. People put them out as best they could. Some helped to put the fire out while others stood about, admiring it. A great

fire at night always has a thrilling and exhilarating effect. This is what explains the attraction of fireworks. But in that case the artistic regularity with which the fire is presented and the complete lack of danger give an impression of lightness and playfulness like the effect of a glass of champagne. A real conflagration is a very different matter. Then the horror and a certain sense of personal danger, together with the exhilarating effect of a fire at night, produce on the spectator (though of course not in the householder whose goods are being burnt) a certain concussion of the brain and, as it were, a challenge to those destructive instincts which, alas, lie hidden in every heart, even that of the mildest and most domestic little clerk.... This sinister sensation is almost always fascinating. "I really don't know whether one can look at a fire without a certain pleasure." This is word for word what Stepan Trofimovitch said to me one night on returning home after he had happened to witness a fire and was still under the influence of the spectacle. Of course, the very man who enjoys the spectacle will rush into the fire himself to save a child or an old woman; but that is altogether a different matter.

Following in the wake of the crowd of sightseers, I succeeded, without asking questions, in reaching the chief centre of danger, where at last I saw Lembke, whom I was seeking at Yulia Mihailovna's request. His position was strange and extraordinary. He was standing on the ruins of a fence. Thirty paces to the left of him rose the black skeleton of a two-storied house which had almost burnt out. It had holes instead of windows at each story, its roof had fallen in, and the flames were still here and there creeping among the charred beams. At the farther end of the courtyard, twenty paces away, the lodge, also a two-storied building, was beginning to burn, and the firemen were doing their utmost to save it. On the right the firemen and the people were trying to save a rather large wooden building which was not actually burning, though it had caught fire several times and was inevitably bound to be burnt in the end. Lembke stood facing the lodge, shouting and gesticulating. He was giving orders which no one attempted to carry out. It seemed to me that every one had given him up as hopeless and left him. Anyway, though every one in the vast crowd of all classes, among whom there were gentlemen, and even the cathedral priest, was listening to him with curiosity and wonder, no one spoke to him or tried to get him away. Lembke, with a pale face and glittering eyes, was uttering the most amazing things. To complete the picture, he had lost his hat and was bareheaded.

"It's all incendiarism! It's nihilism! If anything is burning, it's nihilism!" I heard almost with horror; and though there was nothing to be surprised at, yet actual madness, when one sees it, always gives one a shock.

“Your Excellency,” said a policeman, coming up to him, “what if you were to try the repose of home?... It’s dangerous for your Excellency even to stand here.”

This policeman, as I heard afterwards, had been told off by the chief of police to watch over Andrey Antonovitch, to do his utmost to get him home, and in case of danger even to use force—a task evidently beyond the man’s power.

“They will wipe away the tears of the people whose houses have been burnt, but they will burn down the town. It’s all the work of four scoundrels, four and a half! Arrest the scoundrel! He worms himself into the honour of families. They made use of the governesses to burn down the houses. It’s vile, vile! Aie, what’s he about?” he shouted, suddenly noticing a fireman at the top of the burning lodge, under whom the roof had almost burnt away and round whom the flames were beginning to flare up. “Pull him down! Pull him down! He will fall, he will catch fire, put him out!... What is he doing there?”

“He is putting the fire out, your Excellency.”

“Not likely. The fire is in the minds of men and not in the roofs of houses. Pull him down and give it up! Better give it up, much better! Let it put itself out. Aie, who is crying now? An old woman! It’s an old woman shouting. Why have they forgotten the old woman?”

There actually was an old woman crying on the ground floor of the burning lodge. She was an old creature of eighty, a relation of the shopkeeper who owned the house. But she had not been forgotten; she had gone back to the burning house while it was still possible, with the insane idea of rescuing her feather bed from a corner room which was still untouched. Choking with the smoke and screaming with the heat, for the room was on fire by the time she reached it, she was still trying with her decrepit hands to squeeze her feather bed through a broken window pane. Lembke rushed to her assistance. Every one saw him run up to the window, catch hold of one corner of the feather bed and try with all his might to pull it out. As ill luck would have it, a board fell at that moment from the roof and hit the unhappy governor. It did not kill him, it merely grazed him on the neck as it fell, but Andrey Antonovitch’s career was over, among us at least; the blow knocked him off his feet and he sank on the ground unconscious.

The day dawned at last, gloomy and sullen. The fire was abating; the wind was followed by a sudden calm, and then a fine drizzling rain fell. I was by that time in another part, some distance from where Lembke had fallen, and here I overheard very strange conversations in the crowd. A strange fact had come to light. On the very

outskirts of the quarter, on a piece of waste land beyond the kitchen gardens, not less than fifty paces from any other buildings, there stood a little wooden house which had only lately been built, and this solitary house had been on fire at the very beginning, almost before any other. Even had it burnt down, it was so far from other houses that no other building in the town could have caught fire from it, and, vice versa, if the whole riverside had been burnt to the ground, that house might have remained intact, whatever the wind had been. It followed that it had caught fire separately and independently and therefore not accidentally. But the chief point was that it was not burnt to the ground, and at daybreak strange things were discovered within it. The owner of this new house, who lived in the neighbourhood, rushed up as soon as he saw it in flames and with the help of his neighbours pulled apart a pile of faggots which had been heaped up by the side wall and set fire to. In this way he saved the house. But there were lodgers in the house—the captain, who was well known in the town, his sister, and their elderly servant, and these three persons—the captain, his sister, and their servant—had been murdered and apparently robbed in the night. (It was here that the chief of police had gone while Lembke was rescuing the feather bed.)

By morning the news had spread and an immense crowd of all classes, even the riverside people who had been burnt out had flocked to the waste land where the new house stood. It was difficult to get there, so dense was the crowd. I was told at once that the captain had been found lying dressed on the bench with his throat cut, and that he must have been dead drunk when he was killed, so that he had felt nothing, and he had “bled like a bull”; that his sister Marya Timofeyevna had been “stabbed all over” with a knife and she was lying on the floor in the doorway, so that probably she had been awake and had fought and struggled with the murderer. The servant, who had also probably been awake, had her skull broken. The owner of the house said that the captain had come to see him the morning before, and that in his drunken bragging he had shown him a lot of money, as much as two hundred roubles. The captain’s shabby old green pocket-book was found empty on the floor, but Marya Timofeyevna’s box had not been touched, and the silver setting of the ikon had not been removed either; the captain’s clothes, too, had not been disturbed. It was evident that the thief had been in a hurry and was a man familiar with the captain’s circumstances, who had come only for money and knew where it was kept. If the owner of the house had not run up at that moment the burning faggot stack would certainly have set fire to the house and “it would have been difficult to find out from the charred corpses how they had died.”

So the story was told. One other fact was added: that the person who had taken this house for the Lebyadkins was no other than Mr. Stavrogin, Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch, the son of Varvara Petrovna. He had come himself to take it and had had much ado to persuade the owner to let it, as the latter had intended to use it as a tavern; but Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch was ready to give any rent he asked and had paid for six months in advance.

“The fire wasn’t an accident,” I heard said in the crowd.

But the majority said nothing. People’s faces were sullen, but I did not see signs of much indignation. People persisted, however, in gossiping about Stavrogin, saying that the murdered woman was his wife; that on the previous day he had “dishonourably” abducted a young lady belonging to the best family in the place, the daughter of Madame Drozdov, and that a complaint was to be lodged against him in Petersburg; and that his wife had been murdered evidently that he might marry the young lady. Skvoreshniki was not more than a mile and a half away, and I remember I wondered whether I should not let them know the position of affairs. I did not notice, however, that there was anyone egging the crowd on and I don’t want to accuse people falsely, though I did see and recognised at once in the crowd at the fire two or three of the rowdy lot I had seen in the refreshment-room. I particularly remember one thin, tall fellow, a cabinet-maker, as I found out later, with an emaciated face and a curly head, black as though grimed with soot. He was not drunk, but in contrast to the gloomy passivity of the crowd seemed beside himself with excitement. He kept addressing the people, though I don’t remember his words; nothing coherent that he said was longer than “I say, lads, what do you say to this? Are things to go on like this?” and so saying he waved his arms.