

CHILDHOOD

A Novel

1852

by Leo Tolstoy

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I.

KARL IVÀNOVICH, OUR TEACHER

On the 12th of August, 18—, exactly two days after my birthday, when I was ten years old and received such wonderful presents, Karl Ivanovich woke me at seven o'clock in the morning by striking right over my head at a fly with a flap which was made of wrapping-paper attached to a stick. He did that so awkwardly that he set in motion the small picture of my guardian angel which was hanging on the oak headpiece of my bed, and made the dead fly fall straight upon my head. I stuck my nose out of my coverlet, stopped the swinging picture with my hand, threw the killed fly upon the ground, and with angry, though sleepy, eyes measured Karl Ivanovich. But he, dressed in a many-coloured wadded dressing-gown, which was girded by a belt of the same material, in a red hand-knit skull-cap with a tassel, and in soft goatskin boots, continued to make the round of the walls, and to aim and flap at flies.

" I'll admit I am a little fellow," thought I, " but why does he worry me ? Why does he not kill flies over Volodya's bed ? There are lots of them there ! No, Volodya is older than I, and I am the youngest of all;

that's why he is tormenting me. All he is thinking about," whispered I, "is how to cause me annoyance. He knows quite well that he has waked and frightened me, but he acts as though he did not notice it. He is a contemptible fellow! And his dressing-gown, and cap, and tassel, — they are all contemptible ! "

While I thus expressed in thought my disgust with Karl Ivanovich, he walked up to his bed, took a look at the watch which was hanging above it in a hand-made shoe of glass beads, hung the flap on a nail, and, evidently in the pleasantest mood, turned to us.

"Auf, Kinder, auf ! 's ist Zeit. Die Mutter ist schon im Saal," he cried out in his good German voice, then came up to me, seated himself at my feet, and took his snuff-box out of his pocket. I pretended I was asleep. Karl Ivànovich at first took a snuff, wiped his nose, snapped his fingers, and then turned his attention to me.

He smiled and began to tickle the soles of my feet. " Nun, nun, Faulenzer ! " said he.

Though I was very much afraid of tickling, I did not jump up from bed and did not answer him, but only hid my head farther under the pillows, kicked my feet with all my might, and made all possible efforts to keep from laughing.

" What a good man he is, and how he loves us, and how could I have thought so ill of him ? "

I was angry at myself and at Karl Ivanovich, and I wanted to laugh and cry at the same time ; my nerves were shattered.

" Ach, lassen Sie, Karl Ivanovich ! " cried I, with tears in my eyes, and stuck my head out of my pillows.

Karl Ivanovich was surprised, left my soles in peace, and with a disturbed mien began to ask what the matter was with me, and whether I had not had a bad dream. His good German face and the interest which he evinced in trying to ascertain the cause of my tears made them flow more copiously; I felt ashamed, and I could not understand how a minute ago I could have disliked Karl Ivanovich, and how I could have found his gown, his cap, and his tassel contemptible. Now, on the contrary, all those things appeared particularly charming to me, and even the tassel seemed to be an evident proof of his goodness.

I told him that I was crying because I had had a bad dream, that I dreamt mamma had died and was being buried. I had made up all that myself, because I really did not remember what it was I had dreamt about that night ; but when Karl Ivanovich, touched by my story, began to console me, it seemed to me that I had actually had such a terrible dream, and my tears began to flow, this time from an entirely different cause.

When Karl Ivanovich left me, and I raised myself in bed and began to pull my stockings on my tiny legs, my tears flowed less abundantly, but the gloomy thoughts of my fictitious dream did not leave me. The children's valet, Nikolay, entered the room. He was a small, neat man, always serious, accurate, respectful, and a great friend of Karl Ivanovich. He was carrying our garments and shoes : for Volodya a pair of boots, and for me still the unbearable shoes with ribbons. I felt ashamed to cry in his presence. Besides, the morning sun shone merrily through the windows, and Volodya, who was mocking Marya Ivanovna, my sister's governess, was laughing so merrily and loudly, as he stood at the wash-basin, that even solemn Nikolay, with a towel over his shoulder, and with soap in one of his hands and the water-tank in the other, smiled and said :

" That will do, Vladimir Petrovich ! Be pleased to wash yourself ! "

I cheered up completely.

" Sind Sie bald fertig ? " was heard the voice of Karl Ivénovich from the study-room.

His voice was stern, and no longer had that expression of kindness which had touched me to tears. In the classroom Karl Ivanovich was a different man : he was an instructor. I dressed in a hurry, washed myself, and, with the hair-brush in my hand, trying to smooth down my wet hair, made my appearance in response to his call.

Karl Ivanovich had his spectacles on his nose and a book in his hands, and was seated in his usual place, between the door and the window. At the left of the door were two small shelves : one was ours, the children's, the other was his, Karl Ivanovich's. On our shelf were all kinds of books, school-books and others: some of these were placed upright, others lay flat. Only two large volumes of the " Histoire des Voyages," in red bindings, were properly placed against the wall. Then followed long, fat, large, and small books, - bindings without books, and books without bindings. We used to stick and jam into it all kinds of things, when, just before recess, we were ordered to fix up the " library," as Karl Ivanovich loudly called that shelf.

The collection of books on his shelf was not so large as ours, but it was much more varied. I remember three of them: a German pamphlet about the manuring of gardens for cabbage, - without a binding : one volume of a history of the Seven Years' War, - in parchment which was burned at one end ; and a complete course of hydrostatics. Karl Ivanovich used to pass the greater part of his time reading, and he had even impaired his eyesight in that way ; but he never read anything else but these books and the Northern Bee]

Among the objects which lay on Karl Ivanovich's shelf, there was one which more than any other reminds me of him. It was a circle of cardboard, stuck in a wooden support, in which it moved, by means of pegs. Upon 1A periodical.

that circle was pasted a picture which represented a caricature of a lady and a hair-dresser. Karl Ivanovich was a good hand at pasting, and he had himself invented and made that circle in order to shield his weak eyes against the bright light.

Vividly I see before me the lank figure in the cotton dressing-gown and red cap, underneath which peep out scanty gray hairs. He is seated at the little table, upon which is placed the circle with the hair-dresser, that throws a shadow upon his face. In one hand he holds a book ; his other is resting on the arm of the chair. Near him lies the watch with a chasseur painted on its face, a checkered handkerchief, a round black snuff-box, a green case for his glasses, and snuffers on a holder. All these things are lying so regularly and properly in their places, that by the order itself it is possible to conclude that Karl Ivanovich's conscience is pure and his soul at rest.

When we had run ourselves tired in the hall down-stairs, we used to

steal up-stairs on tiptoes, into the study, and there we would see Karl Ivanovich sitting all alone in his armchair and with a calmly sublime expression reading one of his favourite books. There were moments when I caught him not reading : his spectacles were dropped lower on his large aquiline nose, his blue, half-closed eyes looked with a certain peculiar expression, and his lips smiled sadly. It was quiet in the room ; one could hear only the even breathing and the ticking of the watch with the chasseur.

At times he did not notice me, while I stood at the door and thought : " Poor, poor old man ! There are many of us : we are playing, we are happy ; but he is all alone, and nobody comforts him. He is telling the truth when he says that he is an orphan. The history of his life is terrible, indeed! I remember his telling it to Nikolay. It is terrible to be in his place ! " And I would feel so

sorry for him, that I would go up to him, take his hand, and say : " Lieber Karl Ivanovich ! " He liked my speaking thus to him : he would pat me, and it was evident that he was touched.

Upon the other wall hung maps, nearly all of them torn, but skilfully pasted up by the hand of Karl Ivanovich. On the third wall, in the middle of which was a door that led down-stairs, were hanging, on one side, two rulers : one, all cut up, belonged to us, the other, which was new, was his, and was used more for encouragement than for ruling; on the other side was a blackboard, on which our great transgressions were marked with circles, and our small ones with crosses. At the left of the board was the corner where we were made to kneel.

How well I remember that corner ! I remember the valve in the stove, the ventilator in that valve, and the noise which it made whenever it was turned. When I had stood in the corner quite awhile, until my knees and back were aching, I thought: "Karl Ivanovich has forgotten about me. He, no doubt, feels rested, sitting in a soft chair, and reading his Hydrostatics, but how about me ? " And to make him think of me, I would softly open and close the valve, or scratch off some stucco from the wall ; but if suddenly an unusually large piece fell upon the ground, - then, indeed, the fright it gave me was worse than any punishment. I looked at Karl Ivanovich, - but he sat there with his book in his hand, as if he had not heard anything.

In the middle of the room stood a table which was covered with a torn black oilcloth, underneath which peeped out the edges that had been all cut up with penknives. Around the table were a few unpainted tabourets, which had assumed a gloss from long usage. The last wall was occupied by three windows. From these the following view was had: right below the windows was the road, every puddle, every pebble, and every rut of which had long been familiar and dear to me ; beyond the road lay an avenue of lopped linden-trees, and beyond that a wicker-fence could be seen in places ; on the other side of the avenue appeared a meadow, on one side of which was a threshing-barn, and opposite it a forest ; the hut of the watchman

was visible far in the distance.

Through the window on the right was seen a part of the terrace where the grown people used to sit before dinner. At times, while Karl Ivanovich was correcting the dictation sheet, I looked in that direction, and I saw my mother's black head and somebody's back, and I dimly heard some conversation and laughter. I felt angry because I could not be there, and I thought : " When I shall be grown, shall I stop studying and eternally reading the Dialogues ? And shall I not be sitting with those I love ? " Anger passed into sadness, and I fell to musing, God knows why or over what, so that I did not hear Karl Ivanovich's angry words over my mistakes.

Karl Ivanovich took off his dressing-gown, put on his blue uniform with elevations and gatherings at the shoulders, fixed his cravat before the mirror, and took us down-stairs, to bid mother good morning.

II.

MAMMA

Mother was sitting in the drawing-room and pouring out tea. With one hand she held the teapot, with the other the faucet of the samovar, from which the water ran over the teapot to the tray. Though she was looking fixedly at it, she did not notice it, nor that we had entered.

So many memories of the past rise before one, trying to resurrect in imagination the features of a beloved being, that one sees them dimly through these recollections as through tears. When I try to recall my mother as she was at that time, I can think only of her brown eyes, which always expressed the same kindness and love, of a birthmark upon her neck, a little below the place where the small hairs curled, of her white linen collar, of her tender dry hand which had so often fondled me, and which I had so often kissed; her general expression escapes me.

To the left of the sofa stood an old English grand piano. At the piano was seated my swarthy sister Lyubochka, who with her rosy fingers that had just been washed in cold water was playing with evident expression Clementi's Etudes. She was eleven years old. She wore a short gingham dress and white, lace-bordered pantalets, and she could encompass octaves only by arpeggio. Near her, and half turned around, sat Marya Ivanovna, in a cap with rose-coloured ribbons, and wearing a blue jersey. Her angry red face assumed a sterner expression the moment Karl Ivanovich entered. She looked angrily at him and, without answering his greeting, continued to stamp her foot and to count: un, deux, trois, un, deux, trois,

louder and more commandingly than before.

Karl Ivanovich paid no attention whatsoever to it, and, as was his custom, with German politeness went straight up to take my mother's hand. She awoke from her reverie, shook her head, as if wishing to dispel her gloomy thoughts with that motion, gave her hand to Karl Ivanovich, and kissed his furrowed temple, while he was kissing her hand.

« Ich danke, lieber Karl Ivanovich .' " and continuing to speak German, she asked him whether the children had slept well.

Karl Ivanovich was deaf in one ear, and just then he could hear nothing because of the noise at the piano. He bent lower down to the sofa, leaned with one arm against the table, while standing on one foot, and with a smile, which then appeared to me the acme of refinement, lifted his cap on his head and said :

" Excuse me, Natalya Nikolaevna ! "

Not to catch a cold, Karl Ivanovich never took off his red cap, but every time he entered the sitting-room, he asked permission to keep it on.

" Put it on, Karl Ivanovich. I am asking you whether the children have slept well," said mamma, quite aloud, as she moved up to him.

But he again had not heard anything. He covered his bald head with his red cap, and smiled even more sweetly.

" Stop a minute, Mimi," said mamma to Marya Ivanovna, smiling. " One can't hear a thing."

Whenever mother smiled, her face, which was very pretty, became even more beautiful, and everything around her seemed to grow happier. If, in the heavy moments of my life, I had been able to see that smile, even in passing, I should not have known what grief is. It seems to me that in the smile alone is contained that which is called the beauty of the face : if the smile adds charm to the face, the face is beautiful; if it does not change it, it is common ; if it spoils it, it is homely.

Having greeted me, mamma took my head with both her hands, and threw it back, then looked fixedly at me, and said :

" You have been crying to-day ? "

I did not answer. She kissed my eyes, and asked in German :

" What were you crying about ? "

Whenever she spoke to us in a friendly manner, she spoke in that language, which she had mastered perfectly.

" I had been crying in my dream, mamma," said I, as I recalled the fictitious dream with all its details and involuntarily shuddered at the thought.

Karl Ivanovich confirmed my words, but kept silent about the dream. Having said something about the weather, in which conversation Mimi, too, took part, mamma placed six pieces of sugar on the tray for some especially honoured servants, then arose and walked up to the embroidery-frame which stood near the window.

" Well, go now to papa, children, and tell him to be sure and come to see me before he goes to the threshing-floor."

The music, the counting, and the stern glances began anew, and we went to papa. After passing the room which from grandfather's time had preserved the name of officiating-room, we entered his study.

III.

PAPA

He was standing near the writing-table and, pointing to some envelopes, papers, and heaps of money, was speaking excitedly about something to steward Yakov Mikhaylovich, who was standing in his customary place, between the door and the barometer, with his hands behind his back, rapidly moving his fingers in all directions.

The more excitedly father spoke, the more rapidly his fingers twitched, and, again, when father stopped speaking, his fingers ceased moving ; but when Yakov himself began to speak his fingers came into the greatest commotion and desperately jumped on all sides. It seems to me one could have guessed Yakov's secret thoughts by their motion. But his face was quiet, and expressed the consciousness of his dignity and at the same time of his subserviency, as much as to say : "I am right ; however, as you may wish it ! "

When papa saw us, he only said :

"Wait a moment."

With a motion of his head he pointed to the door, which he wanted some one of us to close.

" Oh, merciful Lord ! What is the matter with you to-day, Yakov?" continued he to the steward, twitching his shoulders, which was a habit of his. " This envelope with the enclosed eight hundred roubles - "

Ylkov moved up the abacus, cast 800 upon it, and fixed his eyes upon an indefinite point, waiting for things to follow.

" – are for farm expenses during my absence. You understand ? For the mill you are to get one thousand roubles – is it not so? You will get back deposits from the treasury, eight thousand roubles ; for the hay, of which, according to your own calculation, we ought to sell seven thousand puds, – let me say at forty-five kopeks, – you will receive three thousand roubles ; consequently, how much money will you have in all ? Twelve thousand, – am I not right ? "

"Just so, sir," said Yakov.

But I noticed by the rapidity with which his fingers moved that he was about to retort something. Papa interrupted him.

" Well, from these moneys you will send ten thousand to the Council for the Petrovskoe estate. Now, the money which is in the office," continued papa (Yakov had disturbed the former 12,000, and now cast 21,000 on his abacus), " you will bring to me, and you will write it down among the expenses of this date." (Yakov mixed up the accounts and turned over the abacus, no doubt wishing to say by this that the 21,000 would be equally lost.) " But this envelope with the enclosed money you will deliver in my name according to the address."

I was standing near the table and looked at the inscription. It ran : " To Karl Ivanych Mauer."

Evidently noticing that I had read what I ought not to know, papa placed his hand upon my shoulder, and with a slight motion indicated a direction away from the table. I did not understand whether that was a favour or a reprimand, but in any case kissed his large venous hand which lay upon my shoulder.

" At your service, sir," said Yakov. " And what is your order in regard to the Khabarovka money?"

Khabàrovka was mother's estate.

" Leave it in the office, and never use it without my order."

Yakov was silent for a few moments; then suddenly his fingers began to move with increased rapidity, and, changing the expression of submissive stupidity with which he listened to his master's commands, into one of shrewd cunning, which was peculiar to him, he moved the abacus up to him, and began to speak.

" Permit me to report to you, Peter Aleksandrovich, that your will shall be done, but it is impossible to pay into the Council at the proper time. You have deigned to say," continued he, speaking more slowly, " that money is due from the deposits, the mill, and the hay." (As he mentioned these items, he cast them on the abacus.) " But I am afraid we may have made a mistake in our calculations," he added, after a short silence, and looking thoughtfully at papa.

« Why ? »

" Permit me to show you : as to the mill, the miller has come to see me twice to ask for a delay ; he swore by Christ that he had no money, and he is here even now ; perhaps you would be pleased to speak to him yourself ? "

" What does he say ? " asked papa, making a sign with his head that he did not wish to speak with the miller.

" The same old thing ! He says that there has been no grinding at all, that all the money he had he put into a dam. What advantage would there be for us, sir, to push him for it ? As to the deposits, which you mentioned, it seems to me I already have reported that our money is stuck fast there, and that it will not be so easy to get it soon. I only lately sent to town a wagon of flour to Ivan Afan[^]sich, and with it a note in regard to this matter : he answered that it would give him pleasure to do something for Peter Aleksàndrych, but that the affair was not in his hands, and that, according to appearances, the receipt would not be delivered for two months yet. In regard to the hay you have deigned to remark, suppose even we shall get three thousand roubles - "

He cast 3,000 on the abacus and kept silent for about a minute, looking now at the abacus, now into father's eyes, as much as to say :

" You see yourself how little that is ! And the hay, again, will have to be sold first; if we were to sell it now, you can see for yourself - "

He evidently had still a great supply of proofs ; it was, no doubt, for this reason that papa interrupted him.

"I sha'n't change my order," said he; "but if there will really be a delay in the receipt of the money, then we can't help ourselves, and you will take as much money of the Khabàrovka estate as will be necessary."

" Your servant, sir ! "

By Yakov's expression of face and by his fingers one could tell that this latter order afforded him a great pleasure.

Yakov was a serf, but a very zealous and devoted man. Like all good stewards, he was extremely close-fisted for his master, and had the strangest conceptions about his master's advantages. He eternally schemed for the increase of his master's property at the expense of that of his mistress, and tried to prove that it was necessary to use all the income from her estates for the Petrovskoe village, where we were living. He was triumphant at this moment, because he had been completely successful.

Having bid us good morning, papa told us that we had been long enough frittering our time away in the village, that we were no longer babies, and that it was time for us to begin studying in earnest.

« I think you know already that I am this very evening going to Moscow, and that I shall take you with me, » said he. " You will be living with grandmother, and mamma will stay here with the girls. And remember this : her only consolation will be to hear that you are studying well and that people are satisfied with you. "

Although from the preparations which had been going on for several days we expected something unusual, yet this news gave us a terrible shock. Volodya blushed and with a trembling voice gave him mother's message.

" So this is what my dream foreboded ! " thought I.

" God grant only that nothing worse may happen. "

I was very sorry for mother; at the same time the thought that we were now grown gave me pleasure.

" If we are to travel to-day, there will be no classes : that is glorious ! " thought I. " However, I am sorry for Karl Ivanovich. He will, no doubt, be dismissed, or else they would not have fixed an envelope for him. It would be better, after all, to study all our lives and not to go away, not to leave mother, and not to offend poor Karl Ivanovich. He is unfortunate enough without it ! "

These thoughts flashed through my head : I did not budge from the spot, and fixed my eyes on the black ribbons of my shoes.

My father said a few words to Karl Ivanovich about the falling of the barometer, and ordered Yakov not to feed the dogs, so that before his leave-taking he might go out in the afternoon and listen to the baying of the young hounds. Contrary to my expectation he sent us back to study, consoling us, however, with a promise to take us out on the hunt.

On my way up-stairs I ran out on the terrace. At the door lay father's favourite greyhound, Milka, blinking her eyes in the sun.

" Dear Milka, " said I, patting her and kissing her mouth, " we are going away to-day. Good-bye ! We shall never see each other again. "

I was agitated, and I began to weep.

IV.

THE LESSONS

Karl Ivanovich was not at all in humour. That was evident from his knit brow, from the manner with which he threw his coat into the drawer, from his girding himself angrily, and from his making a deep mark with his thumb in the book of Dialogues, in order to indicate the place to which we were to memorize.

Volodya studied pretty well, but I was so disconcerted that I could do absolutely nothing. I looked for a long time senselessly into the book of Dialogues, but I could not read through the tears which had gathered in my eyes at the thought of the impending departure. But when the time came to recite the Dialogues to Karl Ivanovich, who listened to me with half-closed eyes (that was a bad sign), – particularly when I reached the place where one says, " Wo kommen Sie her ? " and the other answers : " Ich komme vom Kaffeehause," I could no longer restrain my tears, and through my sobs could not pronounce : " Haben Sie die Zeitung nicht gelesen ? " When we reached penmanship, my tears that fell on the paper made blotches as if I were writing on wrapping-paper.

Karl Ivanovich grew angry, put me on my knees, insisted that it was nothing but stubbornness and a puppet-show (that was his favourite expression), threatened me with the ruler, and demanded that I should ask forgiveness, though I could not pronounce a word through my tears. In the end, he evidently felt that he was unjust and went away into Nikolay's room, slamming the door after him.

In the class-room we could hear the conversation in the valet's room.

" Have you heard, Nikolay, that the children are going to Moscow ? " said Karl Ivanovich, as he entered the room.

" Indeed, I have."

Nikolay, it seems, was on the point of rising, because Karl Ivanovich said: "Keep your seat, Nikolay!" and immediately after closed the door. I left my corner and went to the door to listen.

"No matter how much good you may do to people, no matter how attached you may be, you evidently cannot expect any gratitude, Nikolay?" said Karl Ivanovich, with feeling.

Nikolay, who was sitting at the window, cobbling away at a boot, nodded his head in affirmation.

" I have been living in this house these fifteen years, and I can say before God, Nikolay," continued Karl Ivanovich, raising his eyes and his snuff-box toward the ceiling, " that I have loved them and have worked with them more than if they were my own children. You remember, Nikolay, when Volodenka had the fever, how I sat for nine days by his bed, without closing my eyes. Yes ! when I was good,

dear Karl Ivanovich, I was needed, but now," added he, smiling ironically, " now the children have grown, and they must study in earnest. As if they were not studying here, Nikolay!"

" I should say they were, it seems ! " said Nikolay, putting down the awl, and pulling through the waxed thread with both his hands.

" Yes, I am superfluous now, so I am sent away ; but where are the promises ? where is the gratitude ? I respect and love Natalya Nikolaevna, Nikolay," said he, putting his hand on his breast, " but what is she ? Her will has as much power in this house as this ! " saying which, he with an expressive mien threw upon the floor a chip of leather. " I know whose tricks they are, and why I am superfluous now ; it is because I do not flatter and approve everything, as other people do. I am in the habit of speaking the truth at all times and to everybody," said he, proudly. " God be with them ! They will not grow rich by not having me here, and I, God is merciful, will find a piece of bread somewhere. Am I right, Nikolay ? "

Nikolay raised his head and looked at Karl Ivanovich, as if he wanted to assure himself that he would really be able to find a piece of bread, but he did not say anything.

Karl Ivanovich spoke much and long in that strain ; he told of how his services had been much better appreciated at some general's, where he used to live (that pained me very much), he told of Saxony, of his parents, of his friend, tailor Schönheit, and so forth.

I sympathized with his sorrow, and I felt pained because my father and Karl Ivanovich, whom I respected about equally, did not understand each other ; I again betook myself to my corner, sat down on my heels, and began to consider how to restore the right understanding between them.

When Karl Ivanovich returned to the class-room, he ordered me to get up, and to prepare the copy-book for dictation. When everything was ready, he majestically fell back into his chair, and in a voice which seemed to issue from some depth began to dictate as follows : " * Von al-len Lei-den-schaf-ten die grau-sam-ste ist ' - haben Sie geschrieben ? " Here he stopped, slowly snuffed some tobacco, and continued with renewed strength : " ' Die grausamste ist, die Un-dank-bar-keit ' - ein grosses U." Having finished the last word, and in expectation of something to follow, I looked at him.

" Punctum, " said he, with a barely perceptible smile, and made a sign that we should hand him our copybooks.

He read that motto several times, with various intonations and with an expression of the greatest satisfaction. The motto expressed his innermost thought. Then he gave us a lesson from history, and seated himself at the window. His face was not as stern as before ; it expressed the satisfaction of a man who had in a fitting manner avenged the insult which had been offered him.

It was fifteen minutes to one, but Karl Ivanovich did not even think of dismissing us ; he continued giving us new lessons. Ennui and appetite grew in the same proportion. With the greatest impatience I followed all the tokens which indicated the nearness of the dinner. There was the peasant woman going with a mop to wash the dishes; there the rattle of the plates was heard in the butler's room; the table was drawn out and chairs were placed ; and there Mimi was coming from the garden with Lyubochka and Katenka (Katenka was the twelve-year-old daughter of Mimi), but Foka was not yet to be seen, servant Foka, who always came and announced that dinner was served. Only then would we be allowed to throw aside our books and run down, without paying any heed to Karl Ivanovich.

Steps were heard on the staircase, but that was not Foka. I had studied his walk, and always could recognize the creak of his boots. The door opened, and an entirely unfamiliar figure made its appearance.

V.

THE SAINTLY FOOL

Into the room entered a man of about fifty years of age, with a pale, pock-marked, oval face, long gray hair, and a scanty reddish beard. He was so tall that, in order to enter, he had to bend not only his head, but his whole body. He was dressed in something torn that resembled a caftan and a cassock ; in his hand he held a huge staff. As he entered the room, he with all his might struck the floor with it, and, furrowing his brow and opening his mouth beyond measure, laughed out in a most terrible and unnatural manner. One of his eyes was maimed, and the white pupil of that eye kept on leaping about and giving to his otherwise ugly face a more disgusting expression.

"Aha, caught!" he cried out, running up to Volodya with mincing steps, getting hold of his head, and beginning carefully to examine his crown. Then he walked away from him with an entirely solemn expression on his face, stepped to the table, and began to blow under the oilcloth and to make the sign of the cross over it.

" Oh, a pity ! Oh, painful ! Dear ones – will fly away," said he then, in a voice quivering with tears, feelingly looking at Volodya, and beginning with his sleeves to wipe off the tears which had really started to fall.

His voice was rough and hoarse, his motions hasty and uneven, his speech senseless and incoherent (he never used any pronouns), but the accents were so touching, and his yellow, maimed face at times

assumed such an expression of sincere sorrow, that, hearing him, it was not possible to abstain from a certain mingled feeling of pity, fear, and sadness.

That was the saintly fool and pilgrim, Grisha.

Whence did he come ? Who were his parents ? What had incited him to choose the pilgrim's life which he was leading? Nobody knew that. I only know that he had been known as a saintly fool ever since his fifteenth year, that he walked barefoot in summer and winter, that he visited monasteries, presented images to those he took a fancy to, and spoke mysterious words which some regarded as prophecies, that no one had ever known him otherwise, that he at times called on grandmother, and that some said that he was the unfortunate son of rich parents, but a pure soul, while others maintained that he was simply a peasant and a lazy man.

At last long-wished-for and punctual Foka appeared, and we went down-stairs. Grisha, sobbing and continuing to utter incoherent words, went down after us, and struck the steps with his staff. Papa and mamma were walking hand in hand in the living-room, and discussing something. Marya Ivanovna sat stiffly in an armchair, which symmetrically adjoined the sofa at right angles, and in a stern, though reserved voice, gave instructions to the girls, who were sitting near her.

The moment Karl Ivanovich entered the room, she glanced at him, immediately turned away, and her face assumed an expression which may be rendered by, " I do not notice you, Karl Ivanovich." We could read in the eyes of the girls that they were anxious to transmit to us some very important information, but it would have been a transgression of Mimi's rules to jump up from their seats and come to us. We had first to walk up to her, to say " Bonjour, Mimi ! " to scuff, and then only we were permitted to enter into a conversation.

What an intolerable person that Mimi was ! In her presence it was not possible to speak about anything ; she found everything improper. Besides, she continually nagged us, " Parlez donc français," every time we, as if to spite her, wanted to chat in Russian ; or, at dinner, we would just get the taste of some dish and would not want to be interrupted by any one, when she would burst in with " Mangez donc avec du pain," or " Comment-ce que vous tenez votre fourchette ? " " What business has she with us ? " we would think. " Let her teach the girls ; we have Karl Ivanovich for that." I absolutely shared his hatred of other people.

" Ask mamma to take us out to the hunt," said Katenka, in a whisper, stopping me by my blouse, when the grown people had entered the dining-room.

" All right, we shall try."

Grisha dined in the dining-room, but at a separate table. He did not raise his eyes from his plate, but now and then sobbed, made

terrible grimaces, and kept on saying, as if to himself, " A pity ! flown away – the dove has flown to heaven – Oh, there is a stone on the grave ! " and so on.

Mamma had been out of humour since morning: the presence, words and acts of Grisha perceptibly intensified that feeling in her.

« Oh, yes, I almost forgot to ask you for one thing," said she, as she passed a plate of soup to father.

" What is it ? "

" Please have your awful dogs locked up ; they almost bit poor Grisha to death as he crossed the yard. They might attack the children some day."

When Grisha heard them speaking about him, he turned toward the table, began to show the torn corners of his garment, and munching, said :

" Wanted to kill. God did not let. A sin to hunt with dogs, a great sin ! Strike no big ones, why strike ? God will forgive, different days."

"What is he talking about?" asked papa, sharply and severely surveying him. " I do not understand a word."

" But I understand," answered mamma. " He is telling me that a certain hunter had on purpose urged the dogs against him, and so he says, ' Wanted to kill but God did not let,' and he is asking you not to punish the hunter."

" Oh, that's it ? " said papa. " But how does he know that I had intended to punish the hunter ? You know, I am not at all fond of these gentlemen," he continued in French, " but this one is especially objectionable to me, and, no doubt – "

" Oh, do not say that, my dear," mamma interrupted him, as if frightened at something, " how do you know ? "

" It seems to me I have had occasion to become acquainted with his tribe, – there are a lot of them coming to see you, they are all of the same pattern. Always one and the same story."

It was evident mamma was of an entirely different opinion in regard to that matter, and did not wish to discuss it.

" Hand me that pasty, if you please," said she. " Are they good to-day ? "

"No, I am angry," continued papa, taking the pasty in his hand, but holding it at such a distance that mamma could not reach it, " no, I am angry whenever I see intelfl gent and cultivated people given to such deception."

And he struck the table with his fork.

" I have asked you to hand me the pasty," repeated she, extending her hand.

" They are doing just right," continued papa, moving his hand away, " when they put them in jail. The only good they do is to destroy the otherwise weak nerves of certain persons," added he, with a smile, as he noticed that this conversation did not please mamma. Then he handed her the pasty.

" I shall reply only this much to you : it is hard to believe that a man who, in spite of his sixty years, in summer and winter walks barefoot, and uninterruptedly wears under his garments chains of two puds in weight, and who more than once has declined the proposition to live in peace and contentment, – it is hard to believe that such a man should be doing it all out of laziness. As to the prophecies," she added, with a sigh and after a short silence, "je suis payée pour y croire, it seems to me, I have told you how Kiryusha foretold papa's death to him to the very hour and day."

" Oh, what have you done with me ? " said papa, smiling and placing his hand to his mouth on the side where Mimi was sitting. (Whenever he did so, I listened with redoubled attention, expecting something funny.) " Why did you remind me of his feet ? I have looked at them, and now I sha'n't eat anything."

The dinner was coming to an end. Lyubochka and Katenka kept on winking to us, moving restlessly in their chairs, and, in general, showing great anxiety. This winking meant, " Why do you not ask to take us to the hunt ?" I nudged Volodya with my elbow. Volodya nudged me, and finally took courage ; at first speaking in a timid voice, then more firmly and loudly, he declared that, as we were to depart to-day, we should like to have the girls go with us to the hunt, in the carriage. After a short consultation between the grown people, the question was decided in our favour, and, what was even more agreeable, mamma said she would herself go with us.

VI.

PREPARATION FOR THE HUNT

Yakov was called during the dessert and orders were given in regard to the carriage, the dogs, and the saddlehorses, – all this with the minutest details, calling each horse by its name.

As Volodya's horse was lame, papa ordered a hunter's horse to be

saddled for him. This word, " hunter's horse," somehow sounded strange in mamma's ears ; it seemed to her that a hunter's horse must be some kind of a ferocious animal, which must by all means run away with and kill Volodya. In spite of the assurance of papa and of Volodya, who said with remarkable pluck that it was all nothing and that he was very fond of being carried rapidly by a horse, poor mamma continued saying that she should be worrying during the whole picnic.

The dinner came to an end. The grown people went into the cabinet to drink coffee, and we ran into the garden, to scuff along the paths, which were covered with fallen yellow leaves, and to have a chat. We began to talk about Volodya's riding on a hunter's horse, about its being a shame that Lyubochka did not run so fast as Katenka, about its being interesting to get a look at Grisha's chains, and so on, but not a word was said of our departure. Our conversation was interrupted by the rattle of the approaching carriage, on each spring of which a village boy was seated. Behind the carriage followed the hunters with their dogs, and behind the hunters, coachman Ignat, riding on the horse which was intended for Volodya, and leading my old nag by the hand. At first we all rushed to the fence, from which all these interesting things could be seen, and then we all ran up-stairs shouting and rattling, to get dressed, and to get dressed in such a manner as to resemble hunters most. One of the chief means for obtaining that end was to tuck our pantaloons into our boots. We betook ourselves to that work without any loss of time, hastening to get done as soon as possible and to run out on the veranda, to enjoy the sight of the dogs and of the horses, and to have a chat with the hunters.

It was a hot day. White, fantastic clouds had appeared in the horizon early in the morning ; then a soft breeze began to drive them nearer and nearer, so that at times they shrouded the sun. Though the clouds moved about and grew dark, it was, evidently, not fated that they should gather into a storm-cloud and break up our last enjoyment. Toward evening they again began to scatter : they grew paler, lengthened out, and ran down to the horizon ; others, above our very heads, changed into white, transparent scales; only one large, black cloud hovered somewhere in the east. Karl Ivanovich always knew whither each cloud went. He announced that that cloud would go to Mäslovka, that there would be no rain, and that the weather would be fine.

Foka, in spite of his declining years, very nimbly and rapidly ran down-stairs, called out, " Drive up ! " and, spreading his feet, planted himself in the middle of the driveway, between the place where the coachman was to drive up the carriage and the threshold, in the attitude of a man who need not be reminded of his duties. The ladies came down, and after a short discussion where each one was to sit, and to whom each one was to hold on (though, it seemed to me, there was no need at all to hold on), they seated themselves, opened their parasols, and started. As the carriage moved off, mamma pointed to the « hunter's horse " and asked the coachman with a quivering voice :

" Is this horse for Vladimir Petrovich ? "

When the coachman answered in the affirmative, she waved her hand and turned away. I was in great impatience. I mounted my pony, looked between its ears, and made all kinds of evolutions in the yard.

" Please not to crush the dogs," said a hunter to me.

" Have no fear, this is not my first time," answered I, proudly.

Volddya seated himself on the "hunter's horse" not without a certain trembling, in spite of the firmness of his character, and, patting it, asked several times :

" Is it a gentle horse ? "

He looked very well on a horse, just like a grown person. His tightly stretched thighs lay so well on the saddle that I was envious, because, as far as I could judge by the shadow, I did not make such a fine appearance.

Then papa's steps were heard on the staircase. The dog-keeper collected the hounds that had run ahead. The hunters with their greyhounds called up their dogs, and all mounted their horses. The groom led a horse up to the veranda. The dogs of father's leash, that had been lying before in various artistic positions near the horse, now rushed up to him. Milka ran out after him, in a beaded collar, tinkling her iron «clapper. Whenever she came out, she greeted the dogs of the kennel ; with some of them she played, others she scented or growled at, and on others, again, she looked for fleas.

Papa mounted his horse, and we started.

VII

THE HUNT

Tôrka, the Chief Hunter, rode ahead of us, on a gray, hook-nosed horse. He wore a shaggy cap, and had a huge horn on his shoulders and a hunting-knife in his belt. From the gloomy and ferocious exterior of that man one would have concluded that he was going to a mortal conflict rather than to a hunt. At the hind feet of his horse ran, in a motley, wavering mass, the hounds, in close pack. It was a pity to see what fate befell the unfortunate hound that took it into his head to drop behind. In order to do so, he had to pull his companion with all his might, and whenever he accomplished it, one

of the dog-keepers who rode behind struck him with his hunting-whip, calling out, " Back to the pack ! " When he rode out of the gate, papa ordered the hunters and us to ride on the road, but he himself turned into the ryefield.

The harvesting was in full blast. The immeasurable, bright yellow field was closed in only on one side by a tall, bluish forest which then appeared to me as a most distant and mysterious place, beyond which either the world came to an end, or uninhabitable countries began. The whole field was filled with sheaves and men. Here and there, in the high, thick rye, could be seen, in a reaped swath, the bent form of a reaping woman, the swinging of the ears as she drew them through her fingers ; a woman in the shade, bending over a cradle ; and scattered stacks in the stubble-field that was overgrown with bluebottles. Elsewhere peasants in nothing but shirts, standing on carts, were loading the sheaves, and raising the dust on the dry, heated field. The village elder, in boots and with a camel-hair coat over his shoulders, and notched sticks in his hand, having noticed us in the distance, doffed his lambskin cap, wiped off his red-haired head and beard with a towel, and called out loud to the women. The sorrel horse on which papa was riding went at a light, playful canter, now and then dropping his head to his breast, drawing out his reins, and switching off with his heavy tail the horseflies and gnats that eagerly clung to him.

Two greyhounds, bending their tails tensely in the shape of a sickle and lifting their legs high, gracefully leaped over the high stubble, behind the feet of the horse ; Milka ran in front and, bending her head, waited to be fed. The conversation of the people, the tramp of the horses, the rattle of the carts, the merry piping of the quails, the buzzing of the insects that hovered in the air in immovable clouds, the odour of wormwood, of straw, and of horses' sweat, thousands of various flowers and of shadows which the burning sun spread over the fightyellow stubble-field, over the blue distance of the forest, and over the light, lilac clouds, the white cobwebs that were borne in the air or that lodged upon the stubbles, - all that I saw, heard, and felt.

When we reached the Viburnum Forest, we found the carriage there and, above all expectation, another one-horse vehicle, in the midst of which sat the butler. Through the hay peeped a samovar, a pail with an icecream freezer, and a few attractive bundles and boxes. There was no mistaking ; we were to have tea, ice-cream, and fruit in the open. At the sight of the vehicle we expressed a noisy delight, because it was regarded as a great pleasure to drink tea in the woods, on the grass, and, in general, in a spot where no one ever drank tea.

Tiirka rode up to the grove, stopped, attentively listened to papa's minute instructions as to where to line up and where to come out (however, he never complied with these instructions, but did as he thought best), unloosed the dogs, fixed the braces, mounted his horse, and, whistling, disappeared behind the young birch-trees. The loosed hounds first expressed their pleasure by wagging their tails,

then shook themselves, straightened themselves, and, scenting their way and shaking their tails, ran in different directions.

" Have you a handkerchief ? " asked papa.

I took it out of my pocket and showed it to him.

" Well, so, take this gray dog on your handkerchief."

" Zhiran ? " said I, with the look of a connoisseur.

" Yes ! and run along the road. When you come to a clearing, stop. And look out; do not come back to me without a hare! "

I tied my handkerchief around Zhiran's shaggy neck, and ran headlong to the place indicated. Papa laughed and cried after me :

" Hurry up, hurry up, or you will be late ! "

Zhiran kept stopping all the time, pricking his ears, and listening to the calls of the hunters. I did not have enough strength to pull him off, and I began to cry, " Atu ! atu ! " Then Zhiran tugged so hard that I barely could hold him back and fell down several times before I could reach the place. Having found a shady, level spot at the foot of a tall oak-tree, I lay down in the grass, placed Zhiran near me, and began to wait. My imagination, as generally happens under such circumstances, far outran the actual facts ; I imagined that I was baiting the third hare, whereas it was only the first hound that was heard in the woods. Turka's voice was heard through the forest ever louder and more animated ; the hound whimpered, and his voice was heard more frequently ; a second, bass voice joined it, then a third, a fourth. These voices now grew silent, now interrupted each other. The sounds grew in volume and became less irregular, and finally ran together into one hollow, long-drawn tone. The grove was rich in echoes, and the hounds bayed incessantly.

When I heard that, I remained as if petrified in my place. Fixing my eyes on the clearing, I smiled meaning-lessly ; the perspiration coursed down my face in a stream, and, though its drops, running over my cheek, tickled me, I did not wipe them off. It seemed to me that there could be nothing more decisive than this moment. The strain of this intent feeling was too great to last long. The hounds now bayed at the very clearing, now kept on receding from me. There was no hare. I began to look around me. The same mood seemed to possess Zhiran ; at first he tugged to get away and whimpered ; then he lay down near me, placed his snout on my knees, and grew quiet.

Near the bared roots of that oak-tree, under which I was sitting, ants were swarming over the gray, dry earth, between the dry oak leaves, acorns, dried up, lichen-covered sticks, yellowish green moss and the thin blades of grass that peeped through here and there. They were hastening, one after the other, along the foot-paths which they had laid out : some of them went with burdens,

others without burdens. I took a stick in my hand and barred their way. It was a sight to see how some of them, despising the danger, crawled under the obstacle, while others crept over it ; and some, especially those that were with burdens, were completely lost, and did not know what to do : they stopped, looked for a way round, or turned back, or climbing over the stick reached my hand and, it seemed, were trying to get in the sleeve of my blouse. I was distracted from these interesting observations by a butterfly with yellow wings that enticingly circled about me. The moment I directed my attention to it, it flew away some two steps from me, hovered above an almost withered white flower of wild clover, and alighted upon it. I do not know whether the sun warmed the butterfly, or whether it was drinking the juice of that flower, – in any case, it was evidently happy there. It now and then flapped its wings and pressed'close to the flower; finally it remained perfectly quiet. I put my head on both my hands, and looked with delight at the butterfly.

Suddenly Zhirân began to whine, and he tugged with such strength that I almost fell down. I looked around. At the edge of the forest leaped a hare, one of his ears lying flat and the other standing erect. The blood rushed to my head and I, forgetting myself for the moment, cried something in an unnatural voice, let the dog go, and started to run myself. No sooner had I done that, than I began to feel remorse ; the hare squatted, took a leap, and I never saw him again.

But what was my shame when Turka appeared from behind a bush, in the wake of the hounds that with one voice made for the open ! He had seen my mistake (which was that I did not hold out), and, looking contemptuously at me, he said only : " Ah, master ! " But you should have heard how he said it ! I should have felt better if he had hung me from his saddle like a hare.

I stood long in the same spot in great despair, did not call the dog back, and only kept on repeating, striking my thighs :

" 0 Lord, what have I done ! "

I heard the hounds coursing away ; I heard them beating at the other end of the grove, and driving the hare, and Turka blowing his huge horn and calling the dogs, – but I did not budge.

VIII.

GAMES

The hunt was ended. A rug was spread in the shade of young birch-trees, and the whole company seated themselves on it. Butler Gavriilo

had stamped down the juicy green grass around him, and was wiping the plates and taking out of a box plums and peaches that were wrapped in leaves. The sun shone through the green branches of the birches, and cast round, quivering bits of light on the patterns of the rug, on my feet, and even on the bald, perspiring head of Gavriilo. A light breeze that blew through the leafage of the trees, and over my hair and perspiring face, greatly refreshed me.

When we had received our shares of ice-cream and fruit, there was nothing else to do on the rug, and we arose, in spite of the burning, oblique rays of the sun, and went away to play.

" Well, what shall it be ?" said Lyubochka, blinking from the sun and hopping about on the grass. " Let us play Robinson."

" No, that is tiresome," said Volodya, lazily throwing himself on the grass and chewing at some leaves, "that everlasting Robinson ! If you want to play something, let us rather build an harbour."

Volodya evidently was playing the great gentleman : he, no doubt, was proud of having come on a hunter's horse, and he pretended he was very tired. But, on the other hand, he may have had too much common sense and too little imagination to take complete enjoyment in the game of Robinson. The game consisted in performing scenes from the " Swiss Family Robinson," which we had lately read

" Well, why, pray, do you not want to give us that pleasure?" insisted the girls. "You may be Charles, or Ernest, or the father, - whichever you wish," said Katenka, trying to raise him from the ground by the sleeve of his blouse.

" Really, I don't feel like it, it is tiresome ! " said Volodya, stretching himself and at the same time smiling with self-satisfaction.

" I should have preferred to stay at home, if nobody wants to play," said Lyubochka, through tears.

She was a great blubberer.

" Well, let us have it ; only, please, stop weeping, - I can't bear it ! "

Volodya's condescension gave us very little pleasure; on the contrary, his lazy and weary look destroyed all the charm of the game. When we seated ourselves on the ground and, imagining that we were rowing out to catch fish, began to row with all our might, Volodya sat down with crossed arms and in a pose which had nothing in common with the attitude of a fisherman. I told him so ; but he answered that we should gain nothing from swinging our arms more or less, and that we should not get far away anyhow. I involuntarily agreed with him. When I imagined that, holding a stick over my shoulder, I was going into the woods to hunt, Volodya lay flat on his back, with his hands behind his head, and told me that he was

going there too. Such actions and words cooled our zest for the game, and were extremely unpleasant, the more so since, in reality, we could not help admitting that Volodya acted wisely.

I know myself that with a stick it is not possible to kill a bird, or even to shoot at all. That is only a game. But if one were to judge that way, it would not even be possible to ride on chairs; and yet, Volodya himself remembers, I think, how in the long winter evenings we used to cover an armchair with a cloth, and make a carriage of it; one took the coachman's seat, another the lackey's, the girls were in the middle, three stools were the three horses, — and we started off on the road. And what different kinds of accidents used to happen on that road, and how merrily and swiftly those winter evenings passed away ! To judge by what was going on now, there would be no game. And if there were to be no game, what, then, would be left ?

IX.

SOMETHING LIKE FIRST LOVE

As Lyubochka represented that she was plucking some American fruit from a tree, she pulled down, together with a leaf, an immense worm ; she threw it away in terror, lifted up her hands, and jumped aside, as if afraid that something might burst from it. The game stopped, we all fell to the ground, touching our heads, to get a glimpse of that peculiar thing.

I was looking over Katenka's shoulder, who was trying to lift the worm on a leaf which she placed in its way.

I had noticed that many girls were in the habit of shrugging their shoulders, whenever they tried to restore the low-necked dress to its proper place. I remember how Mimi used to get angry at that motion, saying: "C'est un geste de femme de chambre." As Katenka was bending over the worm, she made that very motion, and at the same time the wind raised her little braid from her white neck. Her shoulder was, during that motion of hers, about two feet from my lips. I was no longer looking at the worm, but right straight at her shoulder, which I gave a smacking kiss. She did not turn round, but I noticed that her neck and ears were blushing. Volodya did not raise his head, but said, contemptuously :

" What tenderness ! "

There were tears in my eyes.

I did not take my eyes away from Katenka. I had long been used to her fresh, fair face, and I always loved it; but now I began to look

more closely at it, and loved it even more. When we walked up to the grown people, papa announced to our great delight that, at mother's request, our departure was postponed till the next morning.

We rode back together with the carriage. Volodya and I, desirous to surpass each other in the art of horseback riding and in daring, made all kinds of evolutions near it. My shadow was now longer than before, and, judging by it, I supposed that I had the appearance of a fine-looking rider ; but the feeling of self-satisfaction which I was experiencing was soon shattered by the following incident. Wishing to gain the final applause of all those who were seated in the carriage, I lagged a little behind, then, with the aid of whip and legs, put the horse to a gallop, assumed a carelessly graceful attitude, and attempted to pass in a whirl on the side of the carriage, where Katenka was sitting. The only thing I did not know was whether to pass by in silence, or with a shout. But the miserable horse stopped so suddenly the moment it came in a line with the carriage horses, in spite of all my efforts to the contrary, that I flew over the saddle upon its neck, and came very near rolling off.

X.

THE KIND OF A MAN MY FATHER WAS

He was a man of the past age, and had the indefinable character, common to the youths of that time, a compound of chivalry, daring, self-confidence, amiability and merriment. He looked contemptuously at the people of the present generation, which view originated as much in his inborn haughtiness, as in the secret annoyance because in our age he could have neither that influence, nor those successes, which he had enjoyed in his. His two chief passions in life were cards and women ; he had won several millions in the course of his life, and he had liaisons with an endless number of women of all classes of society.

A tall, stately stature, a strange, mincing gait, a habit of shrugging his shoulder, small, eternally smiling eyes, a large, aquiline nose, irregular lips that were folded rather awkwardly, but pleasantly, a defective enunciation, – he lisped, – and a head entirely bald : such was the exterior of my father ever since I can remember him, – an exterior with which he managed not only to pass for a man à bonnes fortunes, – and he really was such, – but even to be in favour with people of all conditions of life, especially with those whom he wished to please.

He knew how to get the best out of his relations with everybody. Although he had never been a man of very fashionable society, he always cultivated the acquaintance of people of that circle, and he

did this in such a manner as to be respected. He was possessed of that extreme measure of pride and self-confidence which, without offending others, raised him in the opinion of the world. He was original, though not always so, and he used this originality as a means of social advancement which in some cases took the place of worldliness and wealth. Nothing in the world could rouse in him a feeling of surprise: in whatever brilliant position he happened to be, he always seemed to have been born for it. He knew so well how to hide from others and remove from himself the dark side of life which is filled with petty annoyances and grief, that it was impossible not to envy him. He was a connoisseur in all things that furnish comfort and enjoyment, and he knew how to use them.

His hobby was his brilliant connections, which he possessed partly through my mother's family relations, partly through the companions of his youth. But at them he was angered in his heart, because they had far advanced in rank, while he for ever remained a Lieutenant of the Guard, out of service. Like all former military men, he did not know how to dress fashionably ; but he dressed originally and with taste. He always wore ample light raiment, beautiful linen, large turned-back cuffs and collars. And everything was well adapted to his tall stature, strong frame, bald head, and quiet, self-confident motions.

He was sensitive and even given to weeping. Frequently, when in reading aloud he reached a pathetic passage, his voice would falter, and tears appear, and he would angrily put down the book. He loved music and sang, accompanying himself at the piano, the ditties of his friend A----, gipsy songs and some arias from operas;

but he did not like "scientific" music and, disregarding the commonly accepted opinion, openly said that Beethoven's sonatas made him sleepy and tired, and that he knew nothing better than " Wake me not, while I am young," as Madam Seménov used to sing it, and "Not

alone," as the gipsy maiden Tanyusha sang it. His nature was one of those which for a good deed need a public. God knows whether he had any moral convictions. His life was so full of distractions of all kinds that he had had no time to form them, and he was so fortunate in his life that he saw no need for them.

In his old age he formed settled opinions and invariable rules for everything, but they were all based exclusively on a practical basis. Those acts and that conduct of life which caused him happiness and pleasure he regarded as good, and he considered that all people ought at all times to act likewise. He spoke with great enthusiasm, and that ability, it seemed to me, increased the flexibility of his rules: he was à able to speak of the same deed as a very pleasant jest and as an act of low rascality.

OCCUPATIONS IN THE CABINET AND IN THE SITTING ROOM

It was getting dark when we reached home. Mamma seated herself at the piano, and we children brought paper, pencils, and paint, and took up positions at the round table. I had only some blue paint ; yet I began to picture the hunt with that alone. Having very vividly represented a blue boy astride on a blue horse, and blue dogs, I was not quite sure whether it was proper to paint a blue hare, and so I ran into papa's cabinet to take counsel with him. Papa was reading something, and to my question, " Are there any blue hares ? " he answered, without raising his head, " There are, my dear, there are." I returned to the round table and painted a blue hare ; but I found it necessary later to change the blue hare into a bush. The bush did not please me either ; I made a tree of it, and of the tree I made a hay rick, and of the rick a cloud, and finally I so smeared the whole paper over with the blue paint, that I tore it up in anger, and dozed off in an armchair.

Mamma was playing the second concert of Field, her teacher. I was dozing, and in my imagination rose some light, bright and transparent recollections. She began to play a pathetic sonata of Beethoven, and something sad, heavy and gloomy overcast my mind. Mamma often played these two pieces. I very well remember, therefore, the feeling which they evoked in me. That feeling

resembled recollections, but recollections of what ? It seemed to me that I was recalling something that had never been.

Opposite me was the door to the cabinet, and I saw Yakov and some other people in caftans and beards entering through it. The door was at once closed after them. "Well, now the occupation has begun!" thought I. It seemed to me there was nothing more important in the whole world than the affairs which were transacted in the cabinet. I was strengthened in this belief because people generally walked up to the door of the cabinet whispering and on tiptoe, while from it was heard papa's loud voice, and was borne the odour of a cigar which, for some reason, always attracted me. In my waking moments I was suddenly struck by a familiar creaking of boots in the officiating room. Karl Ivanovich walked up on tiptoe, but with a gloomy and firm face, holding some kind of notes in his hand, and lightly knocked at the door. He was admitted, and the door was again closed.

" I wonder whether some misfortune has happened," thought I. " Karl Ivanovich is angry, and he is capable of doing almost anything."

I again fell asleep.

There was, however, no misfortune. An hour later the same creaking boots awoke me. Karl Ivanovich, with his handkerchief wiping off the tears which I had noticed on his cheeks, issued from the door, and

mumbling something to himself, went up-stairs. Papa came out after him, and entered the sitting-room.

" Do you know what I have just decided ? " said he in a happy voice, placing his hand on mamma's shoulder.

" What, my dear ? "

" I shall take Karl Ivanovich along with the children. They are used to him, and he, it seems, is really attached to them. 8even hundred roubles a year does not amount to much, et puis au fond c'est un très bon diable."

I could not at all grasp why papa was scolding Karl Ivanovich.

" I am very glad," said mamma, " both for the children and for him ; he is an excellent old man."

" You ought to have seen how touched he was when I told him that he should leave the five hundred roubles as a present for the children ! But what is most amusing is the bill which he brought me. It is worth looking at," added he, with a smile, as he gave her the note which had been written by Karl Ivanovich's hand. " It is fine ! "

Here are the contents of the note.

" For the children two fishing-rod - 70 kopek.

" Coloured paper, gold border, glew and form for boxes, as presents - 6 roubles 55 kopek.

" A book and bow, presents to children -8 roubles 16 kopek.

" Pantaloon to Nikolay - 4 rouble.

" Promised by Peter Aleksàntrofich from Moscow in the year 18- gold watch at 140 roubles.

" Sum total due to Karl Mauer outside of salary - 159 roubles 79 kopek."

Reading this note, in which Karl Ivanovich demanded payment for all his expenditures for presents, and even for a present which he had been promised, everybody will conclude that Karl Ivanovich was nothing more than an unfeeling and avaricious egoist, but that is a mistake.

When he entered the cabinet with the notes in his hand and with a ready speech in his head, he had intended to expatiate to papa on all the injustice which he had suffered in our house, but when he began to speak in the same touching voice and the same touching intonations in which he generally dictated to us, his eloquence acted most powerfully upon himself, so that when he reached the

place where he said, " However sad it will be for me to part from the children," he completely lost himself, his voice began to tremble, and he was compelled to get his checkered handkerchief out of his pocket.

" Yes, Peter Aleksandrych," said he through tears (that passage was not at all in his prepared speech), " I am so accustomed to the children that I do not know what I am going to do without them. I should prefer to serve you without pay," he added, with one hand wiping his tears, and with the other handing in his bill.

I am absolutely sure that Karl Ivanovich was that moment speaking sincerely, because I know his good heart ; but it remains a mystery to me how his bill harmonized with his words.

" If the parting is sad for you, it is still sadder for me," said papa, tapping his shoulder. " I have now changed my mind."

Shortly before supper, Grisha entered the room. He had not ceased sobbing and weeping from the time he had come to our home, which, in the opinion of those who believed in his ability to predict, foreboded some misfortune for our house. He began to take leave, and said that the next morning he would wander on. I beckoned to Volodya, and went out-of-doors.

« What ? "

" If you want to see Grisha's chains, let us go up-stairs, to the apartments of the male servants. Grisha sleeps there in the second room, and we can see everything from the lumber-room, and we shall see everything - "

"Superb! Wait here awhile; I will call the girls."

The girls came out, and we proceeded up-stairs. After some dispute as to who should be the first to go into the dark lumber-room, we seated ourselves, and began to wait.

XII.

GRISHA

We felt ill at ease in the darkness. We pressed close to each other, and did not say a word. Almost right after us Grisha entered with slow steps. In one hand he held his staff, in the other a tallow dip in a brass candlestick. We did not dare to breathe.

" Lord Jesus Christ ! Holy Mother of God ! To the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost," repeated he, breathing heavily, with all kinds

of intonations and abbreviations which are peculiar only to those who often repeat these words.

Having, with a prayer, placed his staff in the corner, and surveying his bed, he began to undress. Ungirding his old black belt, he slowly took off his torn nankeen frock, carefully folded it, and hung it over the back of the chair. His face did not now express, as usually, dulness and haste; on the contrary, he was quiet, pensive, and even majestic. His motions were slow and thoughtful.

When he was left in the linen, he softly let himself down on his bed, made the sign of the cross over it on all sides, and, as could easily be seen, with an effort (he was frowning) rearranged the chains under his shirt. Having remained for a minute in a sitting posture, and carefully examining the linen which had been torn in places, he arose, with a prayer raised the candle on a level with the holy shrine, in which were a few images, made the sign of the cross toward them, and turned the candle upside down. It went out with a crackling sound.

The almost full moon burst through the windows that looked out upon the forest. The long, white figure of the fool was, on the one side, illuminated by the pale, silvery beams of the moon, and, on the other, it fell as a black shadow, together with the shadows from the frames, upon the floor and the walls, and reached up to the ceiling. In the yard the watchman was beating his brass plate.

Crossing his enormous hands on his breast, dropping his head, and continually drawing deep breaths, Grisha stood silently before the images, then with difficulty let himself down on his knees and began to pray.

At first he softly said familiar prayers, accentuating certain words, then he repeated them, but louder and with more animation. He began to use his own words, with perceptible effort trying to express himself in Church-Slavic. His words were incorrect, but touching. He prayed for all his benefactors (thus he called all who received him), among them for my mother, and for us ; he prayed for himself, and asked the Lord to forgive him his heavy sins, and repeated, " O Lord, forgive mine enemies ! " He arose with groans, still repeating the same words, prostrated himself upon the ground, and again arose, in spite of the weight of the chains that emitted a grating, penetrating sound as they struck the ground.

Volodya pinched my leg very painfully, but I did not even turn round. I only rubbed the place with my hand and continued, with a feeling of childish wonder, pity, and awe, to follow all the movements and words of Grisha.

Instead of merriment and laughter, which I had expected upon entering the lumber-room, I now experienced a chill and anguish of soul.

Grisha was for a long time in that attitude of religious ecstasy,

and he improvised prayers. Now he repeated several times in succession, " The Lord have mercy upon me," but every time with new strength and expression ; now, again, he said, " Forgive me, O Lord, instruct me what to do, instruct me what to do, O Lord! " with an expression, as if he expected an immediate answer to his prayer; now, again, were heard only pitiful sobs. He rose on his knees, crossed his arms on his breast, and grew silent.

I softly put my head out of the door, and did not breathe. Grisha did not move ; deep sighs escaped from his breast; in the dim pupil of his blind eye, which was illuminated by the moon, stopped a tear.

" Thy will be done ! " he suddenly exclaimed with an inimitable expression, knocked his brow against the floor, and began to sob like an infant.

Much water has flowed since then, many memories of the past have lost all meaning for me and have become dim recollections, and pilgrim Grisha has long ago ended his last pilgrimage ; but the impression which he produced on me, and the feeling which he evoked, will never die in my memory.

O great Christian Grisha! Your faith was so strong that you felt the nearness of God ; your love was so great that words flowed of their own will from your lips, and you did not verify them by reason. And what high praise you gave to His majesty, when, not finding any words, you prostrated yourself on the ground !

The feeling of contrition with which I listened to Grisha could not last long ; in the first place, because my curiosity was satisfied, and, in the second, because my feet had fallen asleep from sitting so long in one posture, and I wanted to join in the general whispering and consultation which was taking place behind me in the dark lumber-room. Somebody touched my hand, and said in a whisper, " Whose hand is it ? " It was very dark in

the lumber-room, but, by the mere touch and by the voice that was whispering right over my ear, I immediately recognized Katenka.

Quite unconsciously I seized her short-gloved arm at the elbow, and pressed my lips against it. Katenka, it seems, was surprised at this action, and drew her hand back ; in doing so, she knocked down a broken chair which was standing in the lumber-room. Grisha raised his head, quietly looked around and, saying his prayer, began to make the sign of the cross in all the corners. We ran out of the lumber-room noisily.

XIII.

NATALYA SÀVISHNA

In the middle of the last century there used to run about the yards of the village Khabarovka, in a dress of ticking, the barefoot, but merry, fat, and red-cheeked girl, Natashka. On account of the deserts, and at the request of her father, the clarinet-player Savva, my grandfather took her "up-stairs," to be among the female servants of grandmother. Chambermaid Natashka distinguished herself in that capacity, both by her meekness of manner and by her zeal. When mother was born, and a nurse was needed, this duty fell on Natashka. In that new field she earned praises and rewards for her activity, faithfulness, and attachment to the young miss. But the powdered head and the buckled stockings of young, dapper, officious Foka, who had frequent relations with her during his duties, charmed her coarse, but loving heart. She had even made up her own mind to go to grandfather to ask his permission to marry Foka. Grandfather received her wish as a sign of her ingratitude, grew angry, and sent poor Natalya, as a punishment, into the cattle-yard in a village of the steppes. Six months later, however, since there was no one who could take her place, she was brought back to the estate, and restored to her old position. As she returned from banishment in her ticking garments, she appeared before grandfather, fell down before his feet, and asked him to restore her to his former favour and kindness, and to for-

get her old infatuation which, she swore, would never again return. And, indeed, she kept her word.

Since then Natashka became Natalya Sâvishna, and donned a cap ; all the abundance of love which she treasured she transferred to her young lady.

When a governess took her place with my mother, she received the keys of the larder, and all the linen and the provisions were placed in her hands. She executed her new duties with the same zeal and love. She lived only for the good of her masters, and seeing in everything loss, ruin, and misappropriation, tried in all ways to counteract them.

When mamma married, she wished to show her appreciation of Natalya Sâvishna's twenty years' labour and faithfulness; so she sent for her, and expressing in the most flattering words all her gratefulness and love for her, handed her a sheet of paper with a revenue stamp upon it, on which was written Natalya Savishna's emancipation, adding that, no matter whether she continued to serve in our house or not, she would receive a yearly pension of three hundred roubles. Natalya listened to all that in silence, then, taking the document in her hands, angrily looked upon it, mumbled something between her teeth, and ran out of the room, slamming the door behind her. Mamma did not understand the cause of her strange act, so, waiting a few minutes, she went into Natalya Sâvishna's room. She was sitting with tearful eyes upon her coffer, fingering her handkerchief, and was looking fixedly at the bits of the torn emancipation document that were lying near her feet.

" What is the matter with you, my dear Natalya? " asked mamma, as she took her hand.

" Nothing, motherkin," answered she. " Evidently I have in some way displeased you, that you are chasing me from the estate. Well, I shall go."

She tore her hand away and, scarcely restraining her tears, wanted to rush out of the room. Mamma kept her back, embraced her, and they both melted into tears.

As far back as I can remember myself, I remember Natalya Sâvishna, her love and her favours ; but it is only now that I am able to estimate them, – for then it never occurred to me what a rare and remarkable being that old woman was. She not only never spoke, but, it seems, she never even thought of herself; all her life consisted of love and self-sacrifice. I was so accustomed to her unselfish, tender love for us that I did not imagine it could have been otherwise, in no way was grateful to her, and never asked myself whether she was happy or satisfied.

At times I would run into her chamber, under the pretext of some absolute necessity, and would sit down and begin to think aloud, not being in the least troubled by her presence. She was always busy with something : she either knitted some stockings or rummaged through the coffers with which her chamber was crowded, or took a list of the linen, and, listening to all the nonsense which I was talking, how, " when I shall be a general, I will marry a famous beauty, will buy me a red horse, will build me a glass house, and will send for Karl Ivanovich's relatives in Saxony," and so forth, she would say, " Yes, my dear, yes." Generally, when I got up to go, she opened a blue coffer, on the lid of which were pasted, on the inside, – I remember it as if it happened to-day, – a coloured reproduction of a hussar, a picture with a pomatum can, and a drawing by Volodya, – took out of that box some incense, lighted it, and, fanning, said :

w This, my dear one, is incense from Ochakov. When your deceased grandfather – the kingdom of heaven be his ! – went against the Turks, he brought it back from there. There is only this last piece left," she added with a sigh.

In the coffers that filled the room there was absolutely everything. No matter what was needed, they used to say, "We ought to ask Natalya Sâvishna," and, indeed, after rummaging awhile, she would find the necessary article and declare, " Luckily I have put it away." In these coffers there were thousands of such articles of which nobody in the house knew anything, and for which no one cared, except she.

Once I was angry with her. It happened like this. At dinner, as I was pouring out a glass of kvas, I dropped the bottle and spoiled the table-cloth.

" Call Natalya Sâvishna to see what her darling child has done," said mamma.

Natalya Sâvishna entered, and, seeing the puddle which I had made, shook her head; then mamma said something in her ear, and she went out threatening me with her finger.

After dinner I went into the parlour, leaping about in the happiest frame of mind, when suddenly Natâlya Sâvishna jumped from behind the door, with the tablecloth in her hands, caught me, and began to wipe my face with the wet part of it, all the time saying : " Don't soil table-cloths, don't soil table-cloths ! " That so incensed me, that I bawled from anger.

" What ! " said I to myself, as I walked about the parlour and choked with tears, " Natâlya Sâvishna, simple Natâlya, says ' thou ' to me, and strikes my face with a wet table-cloth, as if I were a common village boy. No, that is terrible ! "

When Natâlya Sâvishna saw that I was blubbering, she ran away, but I continued to strut about and to consider how to repay insolent Natâlya for the insult which she had offered me.

A few minutes later Natâlya Sâvishna returned, timidly accosted me, and began to console me.

" Do stop, my dear one, stop weeping – forgive me, foolish woman – I have done wrong – you will forgive me, my darling – here is something for you."

She took from her handkerchief a cornet, in which were two pieces of caramels and one fig, and with a trembling hand gave them to me. I did not have enough strength to look into the face of the good old woman ; I turned away, as I accepted the present, and my tears began to flow more copiously, this time not from anger, but from love and shame.

XIV.

THE SEPARATION

On the day following the incidents described by me, at the twelfth hour, a carriage and a calash stood at the entrance. Nikolay was dressed in travelling fashion ; that is, his trousers were tucked into his boots and his coat was tightly girded by a belt. He was standing in the calash and arranging the ulsters and pillows on the seats ; if they seemed too much puffed, he seated himself on the pillows, and, leaping up and down, pressed them into shape.

« For the Lord's sake, do us the favour, Nikolay Dmitrich, to see whether you can't put in the master's strong box," said papa's valet, breathlessly, as he stuck his head out of the carriage; "it is a small affair."

" You ought to have said so before, Mikhéy Ivanych," answered Nikolay hastily and in anger, throwing with all his might a bundle into the bottom of the calash. " Upon my word, my head is in a whirl as it is, and there you are bothering me with your strong boxes," he added, raising his cap, and wiping off large drops of perspiration from his sun-browned face.

The manorial peasants, in coats, caftans, and shirts, and without hats, the women in ticking skirts and striped kerchiefs, with babes in their arms, and the boys barefoot, stood around the veranda, examined the vehicles, and conversed with each other. One of the drivers, a stooping old man in a winter cap and a camel-hair coat, held in his hand the shaft of the carriage, moved it to and fro, and thoughtfully looked at the wheels; another, a fine-looking young lad, clad only in a white shirt with red Bukhara cotton gussets, and wearing a black lambskin cap shaped like a cylindrical buckwheat cake, which he, scratching his blond locks, poised now on one ear, now on the other, put his camel-hair coat on the coachman's box, threw the reins there also and, snapping his plaited whip, looked now at his boots, now at the coachmen who were greasing the calash. One of them, straining himself, was holding a jack ; another, bending over the wheel, was carefully greasing the axle and the axle-box, and, not to lose the last bit of grease left on the brush, smeared it on the lower part of the rim.

Variously coloured, weak-kneed post-horses stood at the picket fence and switched the flies off with their tails. Some of them, spreading their shaggy, swollen legs, blinked their eyes and were dozing ; others rubbed each other, from ennui, or nibbled at leaves or stalks of rough, dark-green ferns that grew near the veranda. A few greyhounds either breathed heavily, lying in the sun, or walked about in the shade under the carriage and calash, and licked the grease which oozed out of the axles. There was a dusty mist in the air, and the horizon was of grayish olive hue ; but there was not a cloud to be seen in the whole sky. A strong westerly wind raised columns of dust from the roads and fields, bent the tops of the tall lindentrees and birches of the garden, and carried far away the falling yellow leaves. I was sitting near the window, and impatiently was waiting for the end of all the preparations.

When all had gathered in the sitting-room near the round table, in order to pass a few minutes together, for the last time, it did not occur to me what a sad moment awaited us. The most trifling thoughts were crossing my brain. I asked myself : which coachman will ride in the calash, and which one in the carriage ? Who will travel with papa, and who with Karl Ivanovich ? and why do they insist in wrapping me in a shawl and a wadded jacket ?

" I am not as tender as that. Don't be afraid, I shall not freeze. If only there will soon be an end to it all ! If we just could get seated, and be off ! "

" To whom will you order me to give a note about the children's linen ? " said Natalya Sâvishna, who had entered with tearful eyes and carrying a note in her hand, as she turned to mamma.

" Give it to Nikolay, and then come to tell the children good-bye ! "

The old woman wanted to say something, but suddenly stopped, covered her face with her handkerchief, and, motioning with her hand, left the room. My heart was pinched when I saw her motion; but my impatience to travel was greater than my sympathy, and I continued to listen with complete indifference to the conversation between father and mother. They were evidently speaking about things that interested neither the one nor the other : what it was necessary to buy for the house ; what to say to Princess Sophie and Madame Julie ; and whether the road would be good.

Foka entered, and in the same voice in which he announced " Dinner is served," he said, as he stopped on the threshold, " The horses are ready." I noticed how mamma shuddered and grew pale at this bit of news, as if it had been something unforeseen by her.

Foka was ordered to close all the doors in the house. That amused me very much, " as if everybody were hiding from somebody."

When all seated themselves, – Foka, too, sat down on the edge of a chair, – but the moment he did that, the door creaked, and everybody looked round. Natalya rapidly entered the room, and, without raising her eyes, seated herself at the door on the same chair with Foka. I see clearly the bald, wrinkled face of Foka and the bent, kindly figure in the cap, underneath which gray hair peeped out. They are both pressing together on one chair, and they both feel uncomfortable.

I continued to be careless and impatient. The ten seconds during which we sat with closed doors appeared to me a whole hour. Finally all arose, made the sign of the cross, and began to take leave. Papa embraced mamma, and kissed her several times.

" That will do, my dear ! " said papa ; " we are not departing for an age."

" It is sad, nevertheless ! " said mamma, in a voice trembling with tears.

When I heard that voice and saw her quivering lips and eyes full of tears, I forgot everything, and I felt so sad, so pained, and so utterly wretched, that I wanted rather to run away than to bid her farewell. I understood at that moment that when she embraced father, she really was bidding us farewell.

She began so many times to kiss Volodya and to make the sign of the cross over him that, supposing she was going to turn to me, I pushed myself forward, but she again and again blessed him and pressed him to her breast. At last, I embraced her and, clinging to her, wept and wept, thinking of nothing but my sorrow.

When we went out to seat ourselves in the vehicles, the annoying manorial servants followed to bid us goodbye. Their " Please, your hand, sir," their smacking kisses on the shoulder, and the odour of lard from their heads provoked in me a feeling very much akin to disgust. Under the influence of that feeling I very coldly kissed Natalya Savishna's cap, while she, all in tears, bade me farewell.

It is strange, but I see all the faces of the servants as if it had happened to-day, and I could paint them with their minutest details, but mamma's face and location have absolutely escaped from my imagination, – perhaps, because at that time I could not gather courage to take one good look at her. It then seemed to me that if I were to do so, my grief and hers would reach impossible limits.

I rushed before the others to the carriage and seated myself in the back seat. As the top was raised, I could not see anything, but a certain instinct told me that mamma was still there.

" Shall I take one more glance at her, or not ? Well, for the last time ! " said I to myself, and put my head out of the carriage toward the veranda. Just at that time, mamma, with the same thought, had come up from the opposite side to the carriage, and was calling me by name. When I heard her voice behind me, I turned toward her, but did it so rapidly that we knocked our heads together : she smiled sadly, and for the last time gave me a tight embrace and a kiss.

When we had moved away a few fathoms, I decided to look at her. The wind had raised the blue kerchief with which her head was tied ; dropping her head and covering her face with her hands, she slowly walked up the veranda. Fdka was sustaining her.

Papa was seated by my side, but he did not say anything. I choked with tears, and something so compressed my throat that I was afraid I would strangle. When we drove out on the highway, we saw a white handkerchief which some one on the balcony was waving. I began to wave mine, and this motion calmed me a little. I continued to sob, and the thought that my tears were a proof of my sensitiveness gave me pleasure and joy.

When we had travelled about a verst, I sat down more calmly, and I began to look with stubborn attention at the nearest object before my eyes, – the hind part of the side horse that ran on my side. I watched that dappled horse flapping his tail, and striking one leg against another, which made the driver crack his plaited whip at him, and then his legs began to move more evenly. I saw the harness leaping about, and the rings upon it, and I kept on looking at the

harness until it became lathered at the tail. I began to look around me : at the waving fields of ripe rye ; at the dark fallow field on which here and there a plow, a peasant, and a mare with her colt could be seen ; at the verst posts, and even at the coachman's box, in order to see who the driver was. My face was not yet dry from its tears, when my thoughts were far away from my mother, whom I had left, perhaps, for ever. But every reminiscence led my thoughts to her. I recalled the mushroom which I had found the day before in the avenue of birches ; I recalled how Lyubochka and Katenka disputed who was to pluck it, and I recalled how they wept when they had us farewell.

" I am sorry to leave them, and I am sorry for Natalya Sâvishna, and for the birch avenue, and for Foka ! I am sorry to leave even growling Mimi. I am sorry for everything, for everything ! And poor mamma ! " And tears again stood in my eyes, but not for long.

XV.

CHILDHOOD

Happy, happy, irretrievable period of childhood ! How can one help loving and cherishing its memories ? These memories refresh and elevate my soul and serve me as a source of my best enjoyments.

I remember how, having frisked about until tired, I sat at the tea table in my high chair. It was late. I had long ago drunk my cup of milk and sugar; sleep closed my eyes, but I did not budge from the place, and remained there and listened. How could I help listening ? Mamma was speaking to somebody, and the sounds of her voice were so sweet and so charming. Those sounds alone spoke so eloquently to my heart ! With eyes dimmed by sleepiness I looked fixedly at her face, and suddenly she grew so small, so very small, – her face was not larger than a button, but I saw it just as plainly. I saw her looking at me and smiling. I liked to see her so tiny. I blinked my eyes even more, and she became not larger than those little men one sees in the pupil of the eye. I moved, and the whole charm was broken. I squinted, turned around, and in every manner possible tried to renew it, – it was all in vain.

I rose, scampered away, and comfortably lodged myself in an armchair.

" You will fall asleep again, Nikolenka ! " said mamma : " you had better go up–stairs."

" I do not want to sleep, mamma," I answered her, and indistinct, though sweet, dreams filled my imagination. A healthy childish sleep closed my eyelids, and a few minutes later I lost consciousness and

slept until I was awakened. In my waking moments I felt somebody's hand touching me : by the touch alone I could tell her, even in my sleep, and I involuntarily caught that hand and pressed it hard, very hard to my lips.

Everybody had left; one candle was burning in the sitting-room ; mamma had said that she would wake me herself. It was she who seated herself on the chair upon which I was asleep, and with her lovely, tender hand patted my hair. Over my ear was heard the familiar voice :

" Get up, my darling, it is time to go to bed."

No indifferent looks embarrassed her : she was not afraid to pour out all her tenderness and love on me. I did not stir, but kissed her hand even harder.

" Do get up, my angel ! "

She touched my neck with her other hand, and her soft fingers moved about and tickled me. It was quiet and half-dark in the room ; my nerves were aroused by the tickling and by the waking. Mamma was sitting close to me ; she touched me ; I scented her odour, and heard her voice. All that caused me to leap up, to embrace her neck with both my hands, to press my head to her breast, and, breathing heavily, to say :

" Oh, my dear, dear mother, how I love you ! "

She smiled a sad, bewitching smile, took my head into both her hands, kissed my brow, and placed me upon her knees.

" So you love me very much ? " She was silent for a moment, then she said : " Remember, you must always love me; you must never forget me! You will not forget your mamma when she is no more ? You will not, Nikolenka ? "

She kissed me more tenderly yet.

" Stop, don't say that, my darling, my sweetheart ! " I called out, kissing her knees, and tears ran in streams from my eyes, – tears of love and ecstasy.

When, after such a scene, I came up-stairs and stood in my wadded cloak before the holy images, what a wonderful feeling I experienced at the words, "Preserve, O Lord, father and mother ! " When, in such moments, I repeated the prayers which my childish lips for the first time lisped after my beloved mother, my love for her and my love for God were strangely mingled in one feeling.

After the prayer I rolled myself into my coverlet, and my heart felt light and cheerful. One dream chased another, – but what were they about ? They were intangible, but filled with pure love and hope for bright happiness. I thought of Karl Ivanovich and his bitter fate, –

of the only man whom I knew to be unhappy, and I felt so sorry for him, and so loved him, that the tears gushed from my eyes, and I thought : God grant him happiness, and me an opportunity of helping him, and alleviating his sorrow ; I was ready to sacrifice everything for him. Then I stuck my favourite china toy, – a hare or a dog, – into the corner of the down pillow, and I was happy seeing how comfortable and snug the toy was there. I also prayed the Lord that He would give happiness to everybody, and that all should be satisfied, and that to-morrow should be good weather for the outing, and then I turned on my other side, my thoughts and dreams became mixed and disturbed, and I fell softly, quietly asleep, my face wet with tears.

Will that freshness, carelessness, need of love, and strength of faith, which one possesses in childhood, ever return ? What time can be better than that when all the best virtues, – innocent merriment and limitless need of love, – are the only incitements in life ?

Where are all those ardent prayers, where is the best gift – those tears of contrition ? The consoling angel came on his pinions, with a smile wiped off those tears and fanned sweet dreams to the uncorrupted imagination of the child.

Is it possible life has left such heavy traces in my heart that these tears and that ecstasy have for ever gone from me ? Is it possible, nothing but memories are left ?

XVI.

POETRY

Almost a month after we had settled in Moscow, I was sitting at a large table up-stairs, in grandmother's house, and writing. Our teacher of drawing sat opposite me, and gave a final touch to the head of a turbaned Turk, drawn with a black crayon. Volddya, standing behind the teacher, craned his neck and looked over his shoulder. This head was Volodya's first production in black crayon, and it was that very day to be presented to grandmother, it being her name day.

" And won't you throw some shadows here ? " said Volddya to the teacher, rising on tiptoes, and pointing to the Turk's neck.

" No, it is not necessary," said the teacher, putting away the crayons and the drawing-pen in a box with a sliding lid. " It is all right this way, and don't touch it again. Well, and you, Nikolenka," he added, rising, and still looking sidewise at the Turk, " tell us, at last, your secret ; what are you going to offer to grandmother ? Really, it would be well if you, too, gave her a head. Good-bye,

young gentlemen ! ” He took his hat and a ticket, and went out.

That moment I thought myself that a head would be better than what I was working on. When we were told that grandmother’s name day would come soon, and that we ought to prepare some presents for that day, it occurred to me to write verses for the occasion, and I immediately picked

64 out two lines with a rhyme, and hoped shortly to find the rest. I absolutely cannot remember how such a strange idea, for a child, could have got into my head, but I recall that it gave me pleasure, and that to all questions about the matter, I answered that I should not fail to offer grandmother a present, but that I should not tell anybody what it was.

Contrary to my expectation, it soon appeared that, in spite of all my efforts, I was not able to find any other verses except the two lines which I had made up on the spur of the moment. I began to read the poems that were in our readers, but neither Dmitriev, nor Derzhavin helped me at all ! On the contrary, they only convinced me of my incapacity. As I knew that Karl Ivanovich was fond of copying poems, I began quietly to rummage through his papers, and among his German poems found one Russian lyric, which, no doubt, belonged to his own pen.

To Madam L. . . Petrovski, 1828, 3 juni.

Remember me near,

Remember me far,

Remember my

Even from now up to ever, Remember me to my grave, How faithful I can love.

– Karl Mauer.

This poem, written in a beautiful, round hand, on thin letter-paper, took my fancy on account of the stirring feeling which pervaded it. I immediately learned it by rote, and decided to take it for my model. Things now went much easier. On the name day my greeting, consisting of twelve lines, was ready, and, seating myself at the table in the class-room, I copied it on vellum paper.

Two sheets of paper were already spoiled, – not that I wished to change something, the verses seemed perfect to

me, but beginning with the third line, the ends of the verses began to turn upwards more and more, so that one could see, even from a distance, that they were written crooked, and that they were not good for anything.

The third sheet was just as crooked as the other two, but I decided

not to copy it again. In my poem I congratulated grandmother, and wished her to live long, and finished as follows :

We will try never to bother,

And will love you like our own mother.

It did not look so bad, after all, only the last verse strangely offended my ear.

" And will love you like our own mother," mumbled I. " What other rhyme could I get for mother ? other ? smother ? Oh, well, it will pass anyway ; it is not worse than the verses of Karl Ivanovich."

I wrote down the last verse. Then I read aloud my production, with feeling and expression, in the sleeping-room. There were lines without any measure, and that did not disconcert me ; but the last verse struck me more unpleasantly still. I sat down on my bed, and fell to musing.

"Why did I write like our own mother? She was not here, so I ought not even to have mentioned her. It is true, I love grandmother, and I respect her, but still, it is not the same – why did I write that, why did I lie ? To be sure this was a poem, still I ought not to have done so."

Just then the tailor entered, and brought the new half-frock coats.

" Well, it will have to remain that way ! " said I, in great impatience, as I angrily shoved the poem under the pillow, and ran away to try on the Moscow clothes.

The Moscow clothes turned out to be a fine affair : the cinnamon-coloured half-frocks, with their brass buttons, were closely fitting, – not as they used to make them in the country for us, by sizes; the black trousers, tightly fitting, too, wonderfully showed the muscles, and hung over the boots.

"At last I myself have pantaloons with foot straps, and real ones ! " I thought and, beside myself with pleasure, examined my legs on all sides. Although the trousers were dreadfully tight, and I felt uncomfortable in my new suit, I did not mention it to anybody, but, on the contrary, said that I felt quite at ease, and, if there was any fault in the suit, it was, that it was too loose. After that I stood for a long time before the looking-glass, combing my copiously waxed hair. No matter how much I tried, I could not smooth down the tufts on my crown : the moment I wanted to experiment on their docility, and stopped pressing them down with the brush, they rose and towered in all directions, giving my face an exceedingly funny expression.

Karl Ivanovich was dressing in the next room, and they carried through the class-room a blue dress coat to him, and with it some white appurtenances. At the door that led down-stairs was heard the

voice of one of grandmother's chambermaids : I went out to discover what she wanted. She was holding in her hand a stiffly ironed shirt-front, and told me that she had brought it for Karl Ivanovich, and that she had not slept that night, in order to get it washed in time. I undertook to hand him the shirt-front, and asked whether grandmother had risen.

" Indeed, sir ! She has already had her coffee, and the protopope has come. How fine you look ! " she added, smiling, and surveying my new garments.

This remark made me blush. I turned around on one foot, clicked my fingers, and leaped up, to let her feel that she did not know yet what a fine fellow I really was.

When I brought the shirt-front to Karl Ivanovich, he did not need it any longer : he had put on another, and, bending over a small looking-glass, which stood on a table, was holding the superb tie of his cravat in his hands, and trying whether his smoothly shaven chin would freely go into it and come out again. Having pulled our garments into shape, and having asked Nikolay to do the same for him, he took us to grandmother. I have to laugh when I think how strongly all three of us smelled of pomatum, as we descended the staircase.

Karl Ivanovich had in his hands a small box of his own make; Volodya had the drawing, and I the poem. We all had on our tongue a greeting with which we were to offer our presents. Just as Karl Ivanovich opened the door of the parlour, the clergyman was putting on his vestments, and the first sounds of the mass were heard.

Grandmother was in the parlour already : bending and leaning over the arm of a chair, she was standing at the wall and praying fervently. Papa stood near her. She turned around to us and smiled, when she noticed that we were hiding behind our backs the presents which we were to offer, and that we had stopped at the door, in our desire not to be observed. All the effect of surprise, on which we had been counting, was lost.

When the blessing with the cross began, I suddenly felt that I was under the oppressive influence of an unconquerable, stupefying timidity, and, feeling that I should never have enough courage to make my offering to her, I hid behind Karl Ivanovich's back. I congratulated grandmother in the choicest of expressions, and, transferring the box from his right hand to his left, handed it to her, and walked off a few steps, in order to give Volodya a chance. Grandmother, so it seemed, was delighted with the box, which was bordered with gold paper, and expressed her thanks to him with a most gracious smile. It was, however, evident that she did not know where to place the box, and, probably for that reason, asked papa to see with what remarkable skill it was made.

Having satisfied his curiosity, papa handed it to the protopope who, it seemed, took a liking to the thing : he shook his head, and now

looked at the box, and now at the master who had managed to produce such a beautiful object. Volodya offered his Turk, and he also was the recipient of the most flattering praise on all sides. Then came my turn : grandmother turned to me with a smile of encouragement.

Those who have experienced bashfulness, know that the feeling increases in direct proportion with time, and that decision diminishes in the same proportion ; that is, the longer that condition lasts, the harder it is to overcome the bashfulness, and the less there is left of decision.

My last courage and decision left me when Karl Ivanovich and Volodya made their offerings, and my bashfulness reached its extreme limits : I felt my heart-blood continually coursing to my head, my face alternately changing colour, and large drops of perspiration oozing on my forehead and nose. My ears were burning ; I felt a chill and a perspiration over my whole body ; I stood now on one foot, now on another, and I did not budge from the spot.

« Well, do show us, Nikolenka ! What is it you have, a box or a drawing ? " said papa to me. There was nothing to be done; with a trembling hand I gave her the crushed, fatal roll; but my voice refused to serve me, and I stopped silent before grandmother. I was beside myself, thinking that, instead of the expected drawing, they would read aloud my worthless poem and the words like my own mother which would be a clear proof that I had never loved her, and that I had forgotten her. How am I to tell the agony through which I passed, when grandmother began to read aloud my poem ; when, unable to make it out, she stopped in the middle of the verse, in order to look at papa with a smile, which then seemed to me to be one of mockery ; when she pronounced it differently from what I had intended it ; and when, her eyes being weak, she did not finish reading it, but handed it to papa and asked him to read it from the beginning ? It seemed to me that she did so because she was tired of reading such horrible and badly scrawled verses, and because she wanted papa to read the last line, which was such an evident proof of my heartlessness. I was waiting for him to snap my nose with the poem, and to say : "Naughty boy! Do not forget your mother! Take this for it ! " But nothing of the kind happened ; on the contrary, after it had been read, grandmother said : " Charmant ! " and kissed my brow.

The box, the drawing, and the poem were put, by the side of two batiste handkerchiefs and a snuff-box with mamma's portrait, on a sort of extension table connected with the armchair in which grandmother always sat.

" Princess Varvara Ilinichna," announced one of the two huge lackeys who stood in the back of grandmother's carriage.

Grandmother was deep in thought over the portrait, which was fastened to the shell snuff-box, and did not answer.

" Does your Grace command to ask her in ? " repeated the lackey.

XVII.

PRINCESS KORNAKOV

" Ask her in," said grandmother, seating herself deeper in the chair.

The princess was a woman about forty-five years of age, small of stature, sickly, lean, and bilious, with grayish green, disagreeable little eyes, the expression of which clearly contradicted the unnaturally sweet curves of her mouth. Underneath a velvet hat with an ostrich feather could be seen her bright red hair ; her eyebrows and eyelashes appeared even brighter and redder on the sickly colour of her face. In spite of all this, she gave a general impression of generosity and energy, thanks to her unaffected movements, her tiny hands, and the peculiar leanness of all her features.

The princess talked a great deal, and by reason of her talkativeness belonged to that class of people who are always speaking as though some one were contradicting them, although not a word is said. She now raised her voice, now gradually lowered it in order to burst forth with new vivacity, and glanced at her silent listeners, as if trying to strengthen herself by that glance.

Though the princess had kissed grandmother's hand, and continually called her *ma bonne tante*, I noticed that grandmother was not satisfied with her; she raised her brows in a peculiar manner, as she listened to the reason why Prince Mikhâylo was absolutely unable to come to congratulate grandmother, though he wished very much to do so, and, answering in Russian to the French speech of the princess, she said, dwelling with emphasis on her words :

" I thank you very much, my dear, for your attention, but as to Prince Mikhaylo not being able to come, what is the use mentioning it ? He has always a great deal to do. And what pleasure could it be for him to sit down with an old woman ? "

And, not giving the princess a chance to contradict her words, she continued :

" Tell me, how are your children, my dear ? "

" The Lord be praised, *ma tante*, they are growing, studying, and having a good time – especially Etienne, the eldest, is getting to be so mischievous that there is no getting on with him ; but he is bright, *un garçon qui promet*. Just imagine, *mon cousin*" she continued, turning exclusively to papa, because grandmother, who was not in the least interested in the children of the princess, but

wanted to praise her own grandchildren, carefully took my poem from under the box, and began to unfold the paper : " Just imagine, mon cousin, what he did a few days ago - "

The princess leaned over to papa, and began to tell him something with great animation. Having finished her story, which I did not hear, she burst out laughing and, looking interrogatively at papa, said :

" What do you think of that boy, mon cousin ? He deserved a whipping ; but that trick of his was so bright and amusing, that I forgave him, mon cousin."

And the princess fixed her eyes upon grandmother, and continued to smile, without saying anything.

" Do you "beat your children, my dear ? " asked grandmother, significantly raising her eyebrows, and emphasizing the word beat.

" Oh, ma bonne tante" answered the princess in a kind voice, casting a rapid glance upon papa, " I know your opinion in regard to this matter, but permit me to disagree with you in this only : however much I have thought, or read, or consulted about the question, my experience has brought me to the conviction that it is necessary to act upon children through fear. To make anything of a child, you need fear - am I not right, mon cousin ? And what is it, je vous demande un peu, children fear more than the rod ? "

Saying this, she looked interrogatively at us, and, I must confess, I felt very ill at ease during that moment.

" Say what you may, a boy up to twelve and even fourteen years of age is a child. With girls it is a different matter."

" Yes, that is very nice, my dear," said grandmother, folding my poem and replacing it under the box, as if she did not regard the princess, after these words, worthy of hearing such a production. " That is very nice, only, please, tell me, what refined feelings can you after that expect of your children ? "

And, regarding till's argument as incontrovertible, grandmother added, in order to break off the conversation :

" However, everybody has his own opinion upon that matter."

The princess did not answer, and only smiled condescendingly, wishing thus to say that she forgave this queer prejudice in a person whom she respected so much.

" Ah, introduce me to your young people," said she, looking at us and smiling politely.

We rose, and, fixing our eyes upon the face of the princess, did not know in the least what to do in order to prove that we had become

acquainted.

" Kiss the hand of the princess," said papa.

" I ask you to love your old aunt," said she, kissing Volodya's hair. "Though I am but distantly related to you, I count not by degrees of relationship, but by ties of friendship," she added, speaking more especially to grandmother, but grandmother was still dissatisfied with her, and said :

" Ah, my dear, do we nowadays count such relationship ? "

" This one will be a worldly young man," said papa, pointing to Volodya, "and this one a poet," he added, while I was kissing the small dry hand of the princess, and with extraordinary distinctness imagined a switch in that hand, and under the switch a bench, and so forth.

" Which one ? " asked the princess, keeping hold of my hand.

" This one, the little fellow with the locks," answered papa, smiling merrily.

" What have my locks done to him ? Has he nothing else to talk about ? " thought I, and went into the corner.

I had the oddest conceptions of beauty, – I even regarded Karl Ivanovich as the first beau in the world ; but I knew full well that I was not good-looking, and in this opinion was not mistaken. Therefore, every reference to my looks was offensive to me.

I remember very well how once at dinner, – I was then six years old, – they were speaking of my exterior, and mamma was trying to find something comely in my face. She said that I had bright eyes and a pleasant smile, and, finally, yielding to father's proofs and to evidence, was compelled to admit that I was homely. Later, when I thanked her for the dinner, she patted my cheek, and said :

" Know this much, Nikolenka, no one will love you for your face, so you must try and be a good and clever boy."

These words not only convinced me that I was not handsome, but also that I must try by all means to be a good and clever boy.

In spite of this, moments of despair frequently came over me. I imagined that there was no happiness in the world for a man with such a broad nose, fat lips, and small gray eyes, as mine were. I asked God to do a miracle, and to change me into a handsome boy, and everything I then had, and everything I should ever have in the future, I would gladly have given for a pretty face.

XVIII.

PRINCE IVAN IVANOVICH

When the princess had listened to the poem and had showered praises on the author, grandmother softened, began to speak in French with her, stopped calling her "you, my dear," and invited her to visit us in the evening with all her children. The princess promised she would, and, after staying awhile, departed.

There came so many guests that day to congratulate grandmother that in the courtyard, near the entrance, there were always several carriages standing, the whole morning.

"Bonjour, chère cousine," said one of the guests as he entered the room and kissed grandmother's hand.

He was a man of some seventy years of age, of tall stature, in a military uniform, with large epaulets, below the collar of which could be seen a large white cross, and with a calm, open countenance. I was struck by the freedom and simplicity of his movements. Although there was left but a small circle of scanty hair on the back of his head, and although the position of the upper lip gave clear evidence of the absence of teeth, his face was still one of remarkable beauty.

Prince Ivan Ivanovich had, while still very young, made a brilliant career at the end of the last century, thanks to his noble character, fine looks, remarkable bravery, distinguished and powerful connections, and, especially, luck. He remained in the service, and his ambition was soon so well satisfied, that there was nothing more for him to wish in that respect. He had carried himself from his very youth as if he had been preparing himself to occupy that illustrious place in the world where fate had later put him. Therefore, although in his brilliant and somewhat vain life, as in all other lives, there were annoyances, disappointments and failures, he not even once was false to his ever calm character, nor to his high ideals, nor to the fundamental tenets of religion and morality, and he earned universal respect not only on the basis of his high position, but on the basis also of his consistency and fortitude.

He was a man of mediocre mind, but, thanks to his position, which permitted him to look with disdain at all the vain tribulations of life, his ideals were of an elevated character. He was good and sympathetic, but somewhat cold and haughty in manner. That came from his being placed in a position where he could be useful to many, so that by his coldness he endeavoured to guard himself against the unrelenting prayers and requests of people who wished to make use of his influence. His coldness, however, was softened by the condescending civility of a man of the great world. He was well educated and well read; but his education stopped at what he had

acquired in youth, that is, at the end of the last century. He had read everything worth while that had been written in France during the eighteenth century in the field of philosophy and eloquence, knew thoroughly all the best productions of French literature, so that he could and did with pleasure quote passages from Racine, Corneille, Boileau, Molière, Montaigne, Fénelon ; he was brilliantly versed in mythology, and with benefit had studied, in French translations, the ancient monuments of epic poetry ; he had a fair knowledge of history, which he drew from Ségur; but he did not have the least conception of mathematics, beyond arithmetic, nor of physics, nor of contemporaneous literature ; he could in a conversation politely suppress, or even express, a few commonplaces about Goethe, Schiller, and Byron, but he never had read them.

In spite of this French classical education, of which there are but few examples left now, his conversation was simple, and this simplicity at the same time hid his ignorance of certain things, and also gave evidence of his agreeable manner and indulgence. He was a great enemy of all originality, maintaining that originality was a trick of people in bad society. Society was a matter of necessity to him, wherever he happened to be; whether in Moscow, or abroad, he always lived in the same open fashion, and upon certain days received the whole city at his house. The prince was on such a footing in the city, that an invitation from him could serve as a passport into all the parlours, that many young and beautiful women gladly offered him their rosy cheeks, which he kissed, as it were, with the feeling of a father, and that apparently distinguished and decent people expressed indescribable joy when they were admitted to his receptions.

There were but few people left to the prince, like grandmother, who were of the same circle, the same bringing up, the same point of view, and the same age with him, so he particularly valued his old friendship with her, and always showed her great respect.

I did not get tired looking at the prince ; the respect which everybody showed him, the large epaulets, the particular joy which grandmother expressed upon seeing him, and the fact that he alone, evidently, was not afraid of her, conversed with her entirely at his ease, and even had the courage to call her " ma cousine " inspired in me a respect for him, equal to, if not greater than, that which I felt for my father. When they showed him my poem, he called me to him and said :

"Who knows, ma cousine, maybe he will be another Derzhavin."

Saying this, he gave me a painful pinch in my cheek. If I did not cry out loud, it was only because I decided to take it as a favour.

The guests departed, papa and Volodya went out; in the drawing-room were left the prince, grandmother, and I.

" Why did not our dear Natalya Nikolaevna come ? " suddenly asked Prince Ivan Ivanovich, after a moment's silence.

" Ah, mon cher ! " answered grandmother, lowering her * voice, and putting her hand on the sleeve of his uniform : " She, no doubt, would have come, if she were at liberty to do what she pleases. She writes me that Pierre had proposed her going, but that she had herself declined because, says she, they had had no income this year. She writes, ' Besides, I have no reason to settle in Moscow this year with my whole house. Lyubochka is too young yet ; and as to the boys, who will be living with you, lam more at ease than if they stayed with me.' That is all very nice ! " continued grandmother, in a tone that clearly showed she did not find it at all very nice. " The boys ought to have been sent here long ago, to learn something, and to get used to the world, for what kind of an education could they get in the country ? The eldest will soon be thirteen years, and the other eleven. You have noticed, mon cousin, they are here like savages, – they do not know how to enter a room."

"I can't, however, understand," answered the prince, " what is the cause of their eternal complaint about ruinous conditions ? He has some very good property, and Natasha's Khabàrovka, where you and I, in times long gone, used to play theatre, I know like the five fingers of my hand ; it is a magnificent estate, and ought to bring a nice income."

" I will tell you as a true friend," grandmother interrupted liim, ■with a sad countenance, " it seems to me that these are only excuses, so as to give him a chance to live here alone, to frequent clubs and dinners, and to do God knows what; but she does not suspect anything. You know what an angelic soul she is ; she has complete confidence in him. He had assured her that the children ought to be taken to Moscow, and that she ought to stay all alone, with the stupid governess, in the country, – and she believed him. If he were to tell her that the children ought to be whipped, as Princess Varvara IKnichna whips them, she, I think, would at once consent," said grandmother, moving about in her chair, with an expression of deep disgust. " Yes, my friend," continued grandmother, after a moment's silence, and raising one of her two handkerchiefs, to wipe off a tear which had made its appearance, " I often think that he can neither value nor understand her, and that in spite of all her goodness, her love for him, and her desire to hide her grief, – I know that well, – she cannot be happy with him. Remember what I say, he will – "

Grandmother covered her face with her handkerchief.

" Eh, ma bonne amie" said the prince, chidingly, " I see you have not become wiser in the least, – you eternally worry and weep for an imaginary sorrow. Really, are you not ashamed ? I have known him for a long time, and I have known him as an attentive, good, and excellent husband, and, above all, as a very noble man, un parfait bonnet homme."

Having involuntarily heard the conversation, which I ought not to have heard, I slipped out of the room on tiptoe, and in great

agitation.

XIX.

THE IVINS

«Volodya! Volddya! The Ivins!» I cried out when I saw through the window three boys, in blue frogged coats with beaver collars, who, following their young, dandyish tutor, were crossing from the other side of the street toward our house.

The Ivins were some relatives of ours, and almost of the same age with us. Soon after our arrival in Moscow we became acquainted and friendly.

The second Ivin, Serézha, was a swarthy, curly-headed boy, with an upturned, firm nose, very fresh, red lips, which rarely were entirely closed, a somewhat prominent upper row of white teeth, beautiful, dark blue eyes, and an unusually lively countenance. He never smiled, but either looked quite serious, or laughed heartily with a melodious, clear-cut, and exceedingly attractive laughter. His original beauty struck me from the very start. I felt unconquerably attracted by him. It was enough for my happiness to see him, and all the powers of my soul were concentrated upon this desire. When I passed three or four days without seeing him, I grew lonely, and felt sad enough to weep. All my dreams, waking and sleeping, were of him. When I lay down to sleep, I wished that I might dream of him ; when I closed my eyes, I saw him before me, and I treasured this vision as my greatest pleasure. I did not dare entrust this feeling to any one in the world, I valued it so.

Perhaps he was tired of feeling my restless eyes continually directed toward him, or he did not feel any sympathy for me, but he visibly preferred to play and to talk with Volodya, rather than with me. I was, nevertheless, satisfied, wished for nothing, demanded nothing, and was ready to sacrifice everything for him.

In addition to the passionate attraction with which he inspired me, his presence provoked in me, in no less degree, another feeling, – a fear of offending him, or in any way grieving him, and not pleasing him ; perhaps, because his face bore a haughty expression, or because, disdainful of my own looks, I too much valued the advantages of beauty in others, or, what is more likely, since it is a decided sign of love, I was as much in fear of him as I loved him. When Serézha spoke to me for the first time, I so completely lost myself from such unexpected happiness, that I grew pale, and blushed, and did not know what to answer him. He had a bad habit, when he was thinking of something, of resting his eyes on one object, blinking all the time, and twitching his nose and eyebrows. Everybody found

that this habit spoiled his face, but I thought it so charming that I came to do the same, and a few days after my acquaintance with him, grandmother asked me whether my eyes were not hurting me, for I was jerking them like an owl. Not a word was ever said between us in regard to our love, but he felt his power over me, and tyrannically, though unconsciously, made use of it in our childish relations. However much I wished to tell him what there was upon my soul, I was too much afraid of him to attempt confidences, and tried to appear indifferent, and without murmuring submitted to him. At times his influence seemed hard and intolerable to me, but it was not in my power to escape it.

It is sad to recall that refreshing, beautiful feeling of unselfish and limitless love, which died without ebullition and without finding any response.

It is strange that, when I was a child, I always wanted to be big, and now, since I have ceased being small, I frequently wish I were. How often this desire, not to be like a child, had, in my relations to Serézha, arrested the feeling which was ready to pour forth, and caused me to simulate. I not only did not dare to kiss him, which I frequently wanted to do, to take his hand, to say how glad I was to see him, but did not even dare to call him Serézha, but only Sergyéy : such was the relation established between us. Every expression of sentiment was a proof of childishness, and he who permitted himself such a thing was still a boy. Although we had not yet passed those bitter experiences which lead grown people to be cautious and cold in their relations with each other, we deprived ourselves of the pure enjoyment of a tender, childlike attachment, through the one strange desire to imitate grown people.

I met the Ivins in the antechamber, greeted them, and flew headlong to grandmother ; I announced to her that the Ivins had come, with an expression as if this news ought to make her completely happy. Then, without taking my eyes off Serézha, I followed him into the drawing-room and watched all his movements. While grandmother said that he had grown much, and directed her penetrating eyes upon him, I experienced that feeling of terror and hope which the artist must experience when he is waiting for the respected judge to pass a sentence upon his production.

The young tutor of the Ivins, Herr Frost, went, with grandmother's permission, down into the garden with us, seated himself on a green bench, picturesquely crossed his legs, placing between them his cane with a brass knob, and, with the expression of a man who is satisfied with his actions, lighted a cigar.

Herr Frost was a German, but of an entirely different type from our good Karl Ivanovich. In the first place he spoke Russian correctly, and French with a bad pronunciation, and enjoyed, particularly among ladies, the reputation of being a very learned gentleman ; in the second, he wore red moustaches, a large ruby pin in a black satin cravat, the ends of which were tucked under his suspenders, and light blue pantaloons with changing hues and with foot-straps ; in

the third, he was young, had a beautiful, self-satisfied expression, and unusually well-developed, muscular legs. It was evident he very much treasured this advantage ; he regarded the effect as irresistible on persons of the feminine sex and, no doubt for this reason, tried to place his legs in a most noticeable position, and, whether he was standing or sitting, continually moved his thighs. It was the type of a young Russian German, who wished to be a beau and a Lovelace.

We had a merry time in the garden. The game of robbers went on as nicely as possible ; but an incident came very near putting a stop to it. Serézha was the robber. In running after the travellers, he tripped, and in full career struck his knee against a tree with such force that I thought he would break to splinters. Although I was the rural police, and my duty consisted in catching him, I went up to him sympathetically, and asked him whether he had hurt himself very painfully. Serézha was furious, he clenched his fists, stamped his feet, and, in a voice which showed conclusively that he had hurt himself very much, cried out to me :

" What is that ? After this, there is no game ! Well, why do you not catch me, why do you not catch me ? " he repeated several times, looking away at Volodya and the elder Ivin, who represented the travellers and leaped up and down the path ; then he suddenly shouted and with loud laughter rushed forward to catch them.

I can't tell how that heroic act struck and captivated me. In spite of his terrible pain, he not only did not weep, but he did not even show that he had been hurt, and did not for a minute forget the game.

Soon after that, when Ilinka Grap joined our company and we went up-stairs before dinner, Serézha had occasion to captivate me even more and to impress me with his remarkable manliness and fortitude of character.

Ilinka Grap was the son of a poor foreigner, who had once lived at my grandfather's. He was in some way under obligations to him, and for some reason regarded it as his duty to send his son to us as often as possible. If he thought that our acquaintance would afford his son any honour or pleasure, he was in this respect completely mistaken, because we not only were not friendly with Ilinka, but turned our attention to him only when we wanted to make fun of him. Ilinka was a boy of about thirteen years of age, thin, tall, pale, with a birdlike face, and a good-natured, submissive expression. He was dressed very poorly, but was always so copiously covered with pomatum that we used to assert that on a warm day the pomatum melted on Grap's head and ran under his blouse. When I think of him now, I find that he was a very obliging, quiet, and good boy ; but then he appeared to me such a contemptible being that it was not worth while to pity him or even to think of him.

When the game of robbers stopped, we went up-stairs, and began to show off and to brag before each other with all kinds of gymnastic

tricks. Ilinka looked at us with a timid smile of wonderment, and when it was proposed that he should do likewise, he declined, saying that he did not have any strength. Serézha was wonderful ; he took off his blouse ; his face and eyes were red, for he continually laughed and tried new tricks : he jumped over three chairs placed in a row, turned somersaults through the whole length of the room, stood on his head on Tatischev's dictionaries, which he had placed in the middle of the room in the shape of a pedestal, and did such funny tricks with his feet that it was impossible to keep from laughing. After this last performance, he thought for a moment, winked, and suddenly went up to Ilinka with a very serious expression in his face : " Try that ; really it is not hard." Noticing that the eyes of all were directed upon him, Grap blushed and with a scarcely audible voice assured us that he was in no way capable of doing it.

" Now, really, why does he not want to do it ? Is he a girl ? What ? He must, by all means, stand on his head ! "

And Serézha took his hand.

"By all means, by all means on his head!" we all cried, and surrounded Ilinka, who was perceptibly frightened and pale. We took his hands and pulled him to the dictionaries.

« Let me, I'll do it alone ! You will tear my blouse ! " cried the unfortunate victim. But these cries of despair only encouraged us more. We were dying with laughter, and the green blouse cracked in all its seams.

Volodya and the elder Ivin bent down his head and placed it on the dictionaries. Serézha and I got hold of the poor boy's thin legs, which he waved in all directions, rolled up his pantaloons to his knees, and with loud laughter stretched his legs in the air. The younger Ivin sustained the equilibrium of his body.

It so happened that after the noisy laughter we all suddenly grew silent, and it was so quiet in the room that we could hear the heavy breathing of poor Grap. That moment I was not entirely convinced that all this was funny and jolly.

" Now he is a fine fellow ! " said Serézha, slapping him with his hand.

Ilinka was silent, and in trying to free himself, threw his legs in all directions. During one of these desperate movements, his heel struck Serézha's eye so painfully that Serézha at once dropped his legs, put his hand to his eye, from which tears began to flow against his will, and gave Ilinka a blow with all his might. Ilinka was no longer supported by us, and fell to the floor like a lifeless mass. He could only say through tears :

" Why do you torment me so ? "

The pitiful figure of poor Ilinka, with his tearful face, dishevelled hair, and tucked-up pantaloons, underneath which could be seen the unblackened boot-legs, struck us forcibly ; we were all silent and endeavoured to smile.

Serézha was the first to come to his senses.

" He is an old woman, and a cry baby," he said, lightly touching him with his foot. " It is impossible to play with him. Now, that will do, get up."

" I told you you were a naughty boy," angrily cried Ilinka, and, turning away, sobbed out loud.

" Oh, he strikes with his heels, and then he calls names ! " cried Serézha, taking a dictionary in his hands and swinging it over the head of the unfortunate boy, who did not even think of defending himself, but covered his head with his hands.

" Take this, and this ! Let us leave him, if he does not know what jokes are. Let us go down-stairs," said Serézha, laughing in an unnatural manner.

I looked sympathetically at the poor fellow, who lay upon the floor, and, hiding his face in a dictionary, wept so much that I thought he would certainly die of the convulsions with which his body was shaking.

" O Sergyéy ! " said I to him, " why did you do that ? "

" I declare! I did not cry, I hope, when I almost crushed my leg to the bone! "

" Yes, that is so," thought I, " Ilinka is nothing but a cry baby, and Serézha is a brave fellow. Oh, what a brave fellow ! "

It did not occur to me that the poor boy was really not crying so much from physical pain as from the thought

that five boys, whom he, no doubt, liked, had without any reason conspired to hate and persecute him.

I positively am not able to explain the cruelty of my act. How is it I did not go up to him, did not defend, or console him ? What had become of the sentiment of compassion which used to make me sob at the sight of a young jackdaw thrown out of its nest, or of a pup that was to be thrown over the fence, or a chicken that the cook-boy took out to kill for the soup ?

Is it possible this beautiful sentiment was choked in me through my love for Serézha, and my desire to appear before him just such a brave fellow as he was ? This love and desire to appear brave were no enviable qualities, for they produced the only dark spots on the pages of my childhood memories.

XX.

GUESTS ARE COMING

To judge from the unusual activity which was noticeable in the buffet, from the bright illumination which gave a new, festive appearance to the old, familiar objects in the drawing-room and parlour, and, more especially, to judge from the fact that Prince Ivan Ivanovich had sent his music, there was to be a large gathering of people in the evening.

At the noise of each carriage that passed by, I ran to the window, put my hands to my temples and to the pane, and with impatient curiosity looked into the street. From the darkness, which at first hid all the objects outside the window, slowly emerged : right opposite, the familiar bench with the lamp-post ; diagonally across, a large house, with two windows below lighted up ; in the middle of the street, some Jehu, with two occupants in his vehicle, or an empty coach, returning home leisurely. Suddenly a carriage drove up to the entrance, and I, quite sure that it must be the Ivins, who had promised to arrive early, ran down to meet them in the antechamber. Instead of the Ivins, appeared, after the liveried arm which had opened the door, two ladies, one, tall, in a blue cloak with a sable collar, the other, small, all wrapped in a green shawl, underneath which could be seen only tiny feet in fur boots. Without paying any attention to my presence in the antechamber, though I had regarded it as my duty to bow to

them at their arrival, the smaller lady walked up to the taller, and stopped in front of her. The tall lady unwound the kerchief that completely hid the head of the small lady and unbuttoned her cloak. When the liveried lackey received these things in his keeping, and had taken off her fur boots, there issued from that bundled-up being a beautiful girl twelve years of age, in a short, open muslin dress, white pantalets, and tiny black shoes. Over her white neck was a black velvet ribbon, her head was all in dark blond curls which so beautifully encased her pretty face in front, and her bare neck behind, that I should not have believed anybody, not even Karl Ivanovich, that they curled in this way because, ever since morning, they had been tied in bits of the Moscow Gazette, and because they had been curled with hot curling-irons. It seemed to me she was born that way, with her curly head.

The striking feature of her face was the unusual size of her bulging, half-closed eyes, which formed a strange, but pleasant contrast with the tiny mouth. Her little lips were closed, and her eyes looked so serious that the general expression of her face was such that one did not expect a smile from it, and, consequently, her smile was the more enchanting.

Trying not to be noticed, I slunk through the door of the parlour, and thought it necessary to walk up and down, pretending that I was deep in thought, and that I did not know that guests had come. When the guests reached the middle of the parlour, I, as it were, came to, scuffed, and announced to them that grandmother was in the sitting-room. Madame Valakhin, whose face I liked very much, especially since I discovered in it a resemblance to the face of her daughter Sonichka, graciously nodded her head to me.

Grandmother was apparently very glad to see Sonichka, called her to her, fixed a lock upon her head, which had fallen on her forehead, and, looking fixedly at her, said : " Quelle charmante enfant ! " Sonichka smiled, blushed, and looked so sweet, that I, too, blushed, looking at her.

" I hope you will not be lonely at my house, dear girl," said grandmother, raising her face by the chin. " I ask you to have a good time and dance as much as possible. Here are already one lady and two gentlemen " she added, speaking to Madame Valakhin, and touching my hand.

This way of connecting me with herself was so pleasing that it made me blush once more.

As I felt that my bashfulness was increasing, and hearing the rumble of an approaching carriage, I thought it necessary to withdraw. In the antechamber I found Princess Kornakov with a son and an incredible number of daughters. Her daughters had all the same looks, they all resembled the princess, and they were all homely, so that not one of them arrested the attention. After doffing their cloaks and boas, they suddenly began to speak in thin voices, fluttered about, and laughed at something, no doubt because there were so many of them. Etienne was a boy of about fifteen years of age, tall, flabby, with a washed-out face, sunken, blue-ringed eyes, and enormous arms and legs for his age. He was awkward, and his voice was uneven and harsh, but he seemed to be satisfied with himself, and was just the kind of boy I had expected of one who was whipped with switches.

We stood quite a while facing and examining each other, without saying a word. Then we moved up to each other and, it seems, were about to kiss, but having taken another look at one another, somehow changed our minds. When the dresses of all his sisters had rustled by us, I asked him, in order to start a conversation, whether they had not been crowded in the carriage.

" I do not know," he answered, carelessly. " You know, I never travel in the carriage, because, the moment I seat myself in it, I get a sick headache, and mamma knows that. When we go out for the evening, I always take my place on the coachman's box, - it's jollier, - I can see everything, and Filipp lets me guide the horses, and sometimes I take the whip, too. And those that drive by sometimes get it," he added, with an expressive gesture. " It's

nice ! "

" Your Grace," said a lackey, who had just entered the antechamber,
* Filipp wants to know what you have deigned to do with the whip ? "

" How ? What ? I gave it back to him."

" He says you didn't."

" Well, then I hung it on the lamp-post."

" Filipp says that it is not on the lamp-post either, and you had better admit that you have lost it, and so Filipp will with his own money answer for your jokes," continued the angry lackey, becoming more and more animated.

The lackey, whose appearance was that of a respectable and stern man, evidently took Filipp's side with zeal, and was determined by all means to clear up the matter. By a natural feeling of delicacy, I stepped aside, as if I had not noticed anything ; but the lackeys present acted differently, they came nearer, and approvingly looked at the old servant.

" Well, if I lost it, I lost it," said Etienne, avoiding any further explanations. " I'll pay him whatever the whip is worth. How funny!" he added, walking up to me, and drawing me after him into the drawing-room.

" No, excuse me, master, what are you going to pay with ? I know how you pay. You have not paid Mârya Vlâsevna her two dimes these eight months; it is now two years you have not payed me, and Petr usha - "

" Will you shut up ? " cried out the young prince, turning pale from anger. " I will tell it all - "

" I will tell it all, I will tell it all ! " said the lackey. " It is not good, your Grace ! " he added with great emphasis, just as we entered the parlour, and as he was going with the cloaks to the clothes-press.

" That's it ! That's it ! " was heard somebody's approving voice in the antechamber behind us.

Grandmother had the special gift, by applying, with a certain tone, and at certain occasions, the plural and singular number of the pronoun of the second person, to express her opinion of people. Although she used " thou " and " you " in a reversed sense from the commonly accepted form, these shades received an entirely different meaning in her mouth. When the young prince walked up to her, she said a few words to him, calling him " you," and glanced at him with an expression of such contempt that if I had been in his place, I should have gone to pieces. But Etienne was, apparently, a boy of a different composition : he not only did not pay any attention to grandmother's reception, but not even to her person, and bowed to

the whole company, with the greatest ease, if not very gracefully.

Sonichka occupied all my attention. I remember how I spoke with the greatest pleasure, whenever Volodya, Etienne, and I were conversing in a place in the parlour where Sonichka could be seen, and she could see and hear us— Whenever I had occasion to say something that, in my opinion, was either funny or clever, I spoke louder, and looked at the door that led into the drawingroom ; but when we went over to another place, where we could not be seen or heard, I was silent, and no longer found any pleasure in the conversation.

The drawing-room and the parlour were slowly filling up with guests. Among them, as is always the case at evening parties for children, were some older ones, who would not let slip an opportunity of making merry and dancing, as if only to please the lady of the house.

When the Ivins arrived, the pleasure which I generally experienced at meeting Serézha gave way to a strange annoyance, because he would see Sonichka, and would be seen by her.

XXI.

BEFORE THE MAZURKA

" Oh, there will be some dancing here, I see," said Serézha, as he left the sitting-room, and took out of his pocket a new pair of kid gloves. " I must put on my gloves."

" What shall I do ? We have no gloves," thought I, " and I must go up-stairs and look for some."

Although I rummaged through all the drawers, I found in one of them only our travelling mittens, and in another one kid glove, which could be of no use whatsoever to me : in the first place, because it was exceedingly old and dirty, in the second place, because it was entirely too large; and chiefly, because it lacked the middle finger, which had, no doubt, been cut off by Karl Ivanovich for some ailing hand. I put the remnant of a glove, however, on my hand, and attentively examined that spot on the middle finger which is always black with ink.

"Now, if Natalya Savishna were here she certainly would find some gloves. I can't go down-stairs in this shape, because when they will ask me why I am not dancing, what am I to say ? Neither can I remain here, because they will just as surely discover my absence. What am I to do?" said I, and waved my hands in despair.

"What are you doing here?" said Volodya, who had just run in. " Go,

engage a lady, it will begin soon."

" Volodya," said I to him, showing him my hand with two fingers sticking out of the soiled glove, and speaking in a voice which expressed a condition bordering on despair, " Volodya, you did not think of this ! "

" Of what ? " he said, impatiently. " Ah ! Of the gloves," he added, quite indifferently, as he noticed my hand ; " that is so, we have none, and we shall have to ask grandmother what she has to say about it." And, without reflecting a moment, he ran down-stairs.

The indifference with which he had referred to a subject that had seemed so important to me, calmed me, and I hastened into the drawing-room, entirely forgetful of the monstrous glove which was drawn over my left hand.

Cautiously approaching grandmother's chair, and lightly touching her mantilla, I said in a whisper to her :

" Grandmother, what are we to do ? We have no gloves ! "

" What is it, my dear ? "

" We have no gloves," I repeated, coming nearer and nearer, and placing both my hands on the arm of the chair.

"What is this?" she said, seizing my left hand. " Voyez, ma chère" she continued, turning to Madame Valâkhin, " voyez comme ce jeune homme s'est fait élégant polir danser avec votre fille ! "

Grandmother held my hand tightly, and with an inviting, though serious, glance looked at the persons present, until the curiosity of all the guests was satisfied, and the laughter had become universal.

I should have been very much aggrieved if Serézha had seen me, as I, shrinking from shame, was trying to pull away my hand ; but I did not feel in the least ashamed before Sonichka, who was laughing so heartily that tears stood in her eyes and all her locks kept bobbing about her heated face. I understood that her laughter was too

loud and unnatural to be derisive ; on the contrary, the fact that we were laughing both together, and looking at each other, brought me, in a certain way, nearer to her. The episode with the glove might have had a bad end, but it gave me this advantage, it put me on a free footing with a circle which always appeared to me as the most terrible, – the circle in the drawing-room. I no longer felt the least bashfulness in the parlour.

The suffering of bashful people arises from their uncertainty as to the opinion which is held in regard to them. The moment this opinion is clearly defined, – whatever it may be, – the suffering ceases.

How sweet Sonichka Valàkhin was, when she danced a French quadrille opposite me, with the awkward young prince ! How sweetly she smiled, when she gave me her hand in the chaîne ! How sweetly her blond curls leaped about in even measure on her head ! How naively she made jeté-assemblé with her tiny feet ! In the fifth figure, when my lady ran from me to the opposite side, and I, waiting for the beat, was getting ready to do my solo, Sonichka solemnly compressed her lips and began to look to one side. But she was unnecessarily afraid for me. I boldly made chassé en avant, chassé en arrière, glissade, and, when I came near her, I playfully showed her the glove with the two towering fingers.

She burst into a loud laugh, and even more charmingly scraped her tiny feet on the parquetry. I remember how, when we formed a circle and joined hands, she bent her head, and, without letting my hand go, scratched her little nose against her glove. All that is standing vividly before my eyes, and I still hear the quadrille from the " Maid of the Danube," to the sounds of which it all took place.

Then came a second quadrille, which I danced with Sonichka. When I seated myself by her side, I felt quite uncomfortable, and did not have the slightest idea what to talk to her about. When my silence was prolonged too much, I became frightened lest she should take me for a fool, and I decided to free her from such a delusion, at whatever cost. " Vous êtes une habitante de Moscou ? " said I to her and, after an affirmative answer, continued : " Et moi, je n'ai encore jamais fréquenté la capitale," calculating particularly on the effect of the word frequenter. I felt, however, that, though the beginning was very brilliant, and gave complete proof of my superior knowledge of French, I was not able to continue the conversation in that strain. It was still some time before our turn to dance would come, and the silence was renewed. I looked in anguish at her, wishing to know what impression I had made, and expecting her to help me.

" Where did you find such a killing glove ? " she suddenly asked me. This question afforded me great pleasure and relief. I explained that the glove belonged to Karl Ivanovich, and somewhat ironically expatiated on his person, telling her how funny he was when he took off his red cap, and how he once, dressed in a green wadded-coat, fell from his horse straight into a puddle, and so on. The quadrille passed unnoticed. All that was very well. But why did I refer to Karl Ivanovich in derision ? Should I have lost Sdnichka's good opinion if I had described him to her with all the love and respect which I felt for him ?

When the quadrille was over, Sonichka said " Merci " to me with as sweet an expression as if I really had earned her gratitude. I was in ecstasy, all beside myself with joy, and could not recognize myself: whence came my courage, confidence, and even boldness ? " There is not a thing that could confuse me," thought I, carelessly walking up and down the parlour ; " I am ready for everything."

Serézha proposed to me to be his vis-à-vis. " All right," said I,

" although I have no lady, I will find one." Casting a searching glance over the whole parlour, I noticed that

all were engaged, except one young lady, who was standing at the door of the drawing-room. A tall young man was just approaching her, as I concluded, in order to invite her. He was within two steps of her, and I at the opposite end of the parlour. In the twinkling of an eye I flew, gracefully sliding over the parquetry, across the whole distance which separated us, and, shuffling my feet before her, with a firm voice, I invited her to the contradance. The tall young lady smiled condescendingly, gave me her hand, and the young man was left without a lady.

I had such a consciousness of my power that I did not even pay any attention to the annoyance of the young man ; but I found out later that he had asked who that shaggy boy was that had leaped in front of him and had taken his lady away right before his face.

XXII.

THE MAZURKA

The young man whose lady I had taken away was dancing a mazurka, and leading it as the first pair. He leaped from his seat, holding his lady's hand, and instead of making "pas de Basques," as Mimi had taught us, simply ran ahead. When he reached the corner, he stopped, spread his legs, struck the floor with his heel, turned about, and hopping, ran ahead.

As I had no lady for the mazurka, I sat behind grandmother's high chair and observed.

" What is he doing there ?" I reflected. "That is not at all the way Mimi taught us ; she assured us that everybody danced a mazurka on tiptoe, moving the feet evenly and in a circle ; and now it seems that they dance it quite differently. There the Ivins, and Etienne, and all are dancing, but none of them make ' pas de Basques ; ' and even Volodya has learned the new fashion. It is not at all bad ! And what a sweet girl Sonichka is ! There, she has started again - " I felt exceedingly happy.

The mazurka came to an end. A few elderly men and women walked up to grandmother, in order to bid her good-bye, and departed. Avoiding the dancers, the lackeys were carefully carrying things for the tables into the back rooms. Grandmother was visibly tired, spoke as if against her will, and prolonged her words beyond measure. The musicians for the thirtieth time lazily began the same motive. The tall young lady, with whom I had

danced, noticed me, while making a figure, and, smiling treacherously, – probably, because she wished to please grandmother by it, – brought Sonichka and one of the numberless princesses to me. "Rose ou hortie" she said to me.

" Oh, you are here ! " said grandmother, turning around in her chair. " Go, my dear, go ! "

Although I then felt more like hiding my head behind grandmother's chair than issuing from it, there was no refusing. I got up, said "Rose," and timidly looked at Sonichka. I had no time to come to my senses, when somebody's hand in a white glove passed through my arm, and the princess with the pleasantest smile rushed ahead, not suspecting in the least that I was completely ignorant of what I was to do with my feet.

I knew that "pas de Basques" was out of place and indecent, and might bring shame upon me; but the familiar sounds of the mazurka, acting upon my hearing, gave a certain direction to my acoustic nerves, which, in their turn, transmitted the motion to my legs ; and these, quite involuntarily and to the surprise of the spectators, began to evolve the fatal round and even figures on the tiptoes. As long as we proceeded in a straight direction, things went fairly well, but at turning I noticed that if I did not use proper precaution I should fly ahead. To avoid such an unpleasantness, I stopped with the intention of producing the same figures which the young man had so beautifully produced in the leading pair. But the very moment I spread my legs and was about to leap up, the princess hurriedly ran about me, and looked at my legs with an expression of blank surprise and curiosity. That look undid me. I so completely lost myself, that instead of dancing, I began, in the strangest manner and entirely out of keeping with the measure of the dance or anything else, to wriggle my feet in one spot, and finally stopped entirely. Everybody was looking at me, some in wonderment, some with curiosity, some in derision, and some with compassion. Grandmother alone remained indifferent.

" Il ne fallait pas danser, si vous ne savez pas ! " was heard the angry voice of papa over my very ear, and, giving me a light push, he took the hand of my lady, made the round with her in the ancient fashion, with the loud approval of the spectators, and brought her back to her seat. The mazurka was over soon after that.

" O Lord ! Why dost Thou punish me so severely ! "

" Everybody hates me, and will always hate me. My road is barred to everything: to friendship, to love, to honours, – everything is lost! Why did Volodya make signs to me, which everybody could see, but which did not help me ? Why did that abominable princess look at my legs ? Why did Sonichka – she is a dear, but why did she smile at me then ? Why did papa blush and seize my hand ? Is it possible he, too, was ashamed of me ? Oh, that is terrible ! I am sure, if mamma had been here, she would not have blushed for her Nikolenka." And my imagination was transported far, after that sweet image. I recalled

the meadow in front of the house, the tall lindentrees of the garden, the clear pond, over which the swallows circled, the azure sky, on which white, transparent clouds hovered, the fragrant ricks of newly mown hay ; and many other peaceful, glowing recollections arose in my distracted imagination.

XXIII.

AFTER THE MAZURKA

At supper, the young man, who had danced with the leading pair, seated himself at our children's table, and directed his especial attention to me, which would have flattered my egotism greatly, if I had been able to have any sensations after the misfortune which had befallen me. But the young man, it seemed, was anxious to make me feel happy : he joked with me, called me a brave fellow, and, when none of the grown people were looking on, poured into my wineglass wine from all kinds of bottles, and insisted that I should drink it. Toward the end of the supper, the servant filled about one-fourth of my glass with champagne from a bottle that was covered with a napkin, but the young man demanded that he should fill it to its brim. He compelled me to gulp it down at one draught, and I felt a gentle warmth permeating my body, and took a special liking to my merry protector, and for some unknown reason laughed out loud.

Suddenly the sounds of "grandfather's" dance were heard in the parlour, and people rose from the table. My friendship for the young man came to an end then and there. He went over to the grown people, and I did not dare to follow him, but went up to listen, with curiosity, to what Madame Valàkhin was saying to her daughter.

" Only half an hour longer," Sonichka said, convincingly.

" Really, my angel, it is impossible."

"Just do it for my sake, please," she said, fondling her. " Well, will you be happy, if I shall be ill to-morrow ?

said Madame Valàkhin, smiling carelessly.

" Ah, you have consented ! Shall we stay ? " called out Sonichka, jumping up with delight.

" What am I to do with you ? Go, dance ! Here is a cavalier for you," she said, pointing at me.

Sonichka gave me her hand, and we ran into the parlour.

The wine which I had drunk and the presence and merriment of

Sonichka caused me completely to forget the unfortunate incident of the mazurka. I did the funniest tricks with my feet: now I imitated a horse, and ran at a quick trot, proudly raising my feet ; now I rattled them on one spot, like a wether that is angered at a dog, and all the time laughed from the depth of my soul, not being in the least concerned what impression I produced upon the spectators. Sonichka, too, did not cease laughing: she laughed because we were circling around and holding each other's hands; she laughed at some elderly gentleman, who slowly raised his feet in order to step across a handkerchief, making it appear that it was very hard for him to do ; and she nearly died with laughter, when I jumped almost to the ceiling, to show her my agility.

As I passed through grandmother's cabinet, I looked at myself in the glass : my face was perspiring, my hair dishevelled ; my tufts stuck in every direction ; but the general expression of my face was so happy, good-natured, and healthy, that I was pleased with myself.

" If I were always as I am now," thought I, " I should not fail to please others."

But when I again glanced at the pretty face of my lady, I found in it, in addition to the expression of merriment, health, and carelessness, which had pleased me in my own, so much of refined and gentle beauty, that I grew angry at myself : I understood how foolish it was for me to hope that I should be able to direct toward myself the attention of so charming a creature.

I could not hope that my feelings would be reciprocated, and I did not even think of it: my soul was full of happiness as it was. I did not imagine that one could demand any greater happiness than the sentiment of love, which filled all my soul with delight, and that one could desire anything other than that this sentiment should never come to an end. I was satisfied as it was. My heart fluttered like a dove, the blood continually rushed to it, and I felt like weeping.

When we passed through the corridor, near the dark lumber-room under the staircase, I cast a glance at it, and thought : What happiness that would be if it were possible to pass an eternity with her in that dark lumber-room, and if no one knew that we were living there.

" Don't you think we have had a jolly time to-night ? " I said in a quiet, quivering voice, and increased my steps, being frightened not so much at what I had said, as at what I was about to say.

"Yes, very!" she answered, turning her head to me with such an open and kind expression that I ceased being afraid.

" Especially after supper. But if you knew how sorry I am (I had intended to say "unhappy") that you are going to leave soon, and that we shall not see each other again ! "

" Why should we not see each other ? " she said, looking sharply at

the tips of her little shoes, and passing her fingers over the trellis by which we were walking. " Every Tuesday and Friday mamma and I drive out to the Tver Boulevard. Don't you ever drive out ? "

" I will certainly ask next Tuesday, and if they will not let me, I will run there all alone, without a cap. I know the road well."

" Do you know what? " suddenly said Sdnichka. " I always say ' thou ' to the boys that come to see me. Let us speak ' thou ' to each other ! Dost thou want it ? " she added, shaking her little head, and looking straight into my eyes.

We were just entering the parlour, and another lively part of the " grandfather's " dance was at that moment beginning. " I will, with - you," I said, when the music and noise could drown my words.

" With thee, not with you," Sdnichka corrected me, and burst out laughing.

The " grandfather " came to an end, and I had not yet succeeded in using a single phrase with " thou," although I kept on composing such as would contain that pronoun several times. I did not have the courage for it. " Dost thou want ? " and " Come thou " resounded in my ears, and produced a kind of intoxication : I saw nothing and nobody but Sdnichka. I saw how they lifted her locks, pushed them behind her ears, and laid bare parts of her brow and temples which I had not yet seen. I saw her being wrapped in her green shawl so tightly that only the tip of her nose was visible. I noticed that if she had not made a small opening near her mouth with her rosy little fingers, she would certainly have strangled, and I saw how, while descending the staircase with her mother, she rapidly turned around to us, nodded her head, and disappeared behind the door.

Volodya, the Ivins, the young prince, and I, we all were in love with Sdnichka and, standing on the staircase, saw her out with our eyes. I do not know whom in particular she greeted with the nod of her head, but at that moment I was firmly convinced that she meant it for me.

When I bade the Ivins good-bye, I very freely, even coldly, spoke with Serézha, and pressed his hand. If he understood that with that day he had lost my love and

his power over me, he doubtless was sorry for it, though he endeavoured to be as indifferent as possible.

It was the first time in my life that I was false to my love, and for the first time I experienced the pleasure of that sensation. It was a joy for me to exchange my worn-out sentiment of habitual loyalty for the fresh sentiment of love, full of mystery and uncertainty. Besides, to fall in love and cease loving at the same time means to love twice as much as before.

XXIV.

IN BED

"How could I have loved Serézha so long and so passionately?" I reflected, lying in bed. "No, he never understood, never could appreciate my love, and was not worthy of it. But Sonichka ? What a charming girl ! 'Dost thou want !' 'It is for thee to begin !'"

In my vivid representation of her face, I jumped up on all fours, then covered my head with my coverlet, tucked it all around me, and, when there were no openings left, lay down and, experiencing a gentle warmth, was lost in sweet dreams and memories. I fixed my immovable eyes upon the under side of the quilt, and saw her face as distinctly as an hour before. I mentally conversed with her, and that conversation gave me indescribable pleasure, though it had absolutely no sense, because it was composed of so many repetitions of " thou," " to thee," " thy," and " thine."

These dreams were so distinct that I could not fall asleep from pleasurable agitation, and was desirous of sharing the superabundance of my happiness with somebody.

" Darling ! " I said almost aloud, abruptly turning around on my other side. " Volodya, are you asleep ? "

" No," he answered me with a sleepy voice, " what is it?"

"I am in love, Volodya, desperately in love with Sonichka ! "

" Well, what of it?" he answered me, stretching himself.

« O Volddya ! You can't imagine what is going on in me. I had just rolled in my coverlet when I saw her and heard her so distinctly, so distinctly, that it is really wonderful ! And do you know ? when I lie and think of her, I feel sad, God knows why, and I want to cry awfully."

Volodya moved restlessly.

" I wish only for one thing," continued I, " and that is, always to be with her, always to see her, and nothing else. Are you in love ? Confess really, do, Volodya ! "

It is strange, but I wanted everybody to be in love with Sonichka, and I wanted everybody to talk about it.

"That is not your business," said Volodya, turning his face toward me. " Maybe."

"You do not want to sleep, you only pretended!" I called out, when I noticed by his burning eyes that he did not even think of sleeping, and had thrown off his coverlet. " Let us talk about her. Don't you think she is fine ? She is so charming that if she were to command me: 'Nikdlenka, jump out of the window!' or, 'throw yourself into the tire ! ' I swear to you," said I, " I should with pleasure do so. Oh, what a charming girl ! " I added, vividly imagining her before me ; and, completely to enjoy that image, I abruptly turned on my other side and stuck my head under the pillows. " Volodya, I want to cry awfully."

"You are a fool!" he said, smiting, and then kept silent for a moment. " I am entirely different from you ; I think that if it were possible, I should want at first to sit by her side and talk with her - "

" Oh, so you are in love, too ?" I interrupted him.

" Then," continued Volodya, smiling gently, " then I should kiss her little fingers, her eyes, lips, nose, feet, - I should kiss her all over - "

" Nonsense ! " I cried out from under my pillows.

" You do not understand anything," contemptuously said Volodya.

" No, I understand, but you do not, and you are talking nonsense," said I, through tears.

" But there is no reason for weeping. A regular girl ! "

XXV.

THE LETTER

On the 16th of April, almost six months after the day which I have just described, father came up-stairs, during classes, and announced to us that we were going home with him that very night. Something pinched me at my heart, when I heard the news, and my thoughts at once reverted to my mother.

Our sudden departure was the result of the following letter :

Petrovskoe, April 12th.

" I received your kind letter of April 3d just a little while ago, at ten o'clock in the evening, and, as is my custom, I am replying to it immediately. Fédor brought it from town yesterday, but as it was late, he handed it to Mimi this morning. Mimi did not give it to me all day, under the pretext that I was nervous and ill. I had, in

reality, a little fever and, to confess, this is the fourth day that I have not been feeling well and have not left the bed.

" Please, do not get frightened, my dear one. I feel quite well, and, if Ivan Vasilich will permit, shall get up to-morrow.

" On Friday of last week I went out driving with the children ; but at the very entrance upon the highway, near the bridge which always frightens me so, the horses stuck in the mud. It was a fine day, and I thought I should walk as far as the highway, while they extricated the carriage. When I reached the chapel I grew very tired, and sat down to rest ; but before the people came to pull out the carriage, almost half an hour passed, and I began to feel cold, particularly in my feet, because I had on thin-soled shoes, and they were wet. After dinner I felt a chill and a fever, but kept on my feet, as is my habit, and after tea sat down to play duets with Lyubochka. (You will not recognize her, - she has made such progress !) But imagine my surprise when I discovered that I could not count the beats. I started several times to count, but everything got mixed up in my head, and I heard strange sounds in my ears. I counted : one, two, three, and then suddenly: eight, fifteen ; and (which is the main thing), I knew I was not doing right, but could not correct myself. Finally Mimi came to my aid, and almost using force, put me to bed. Here you have, my dear one, a detailed account of how I grew ill, and how it is all my fault. The next day I had a pretty high fever, and our good old Ivan Vasilich came. He has been staying at our house ever since, and he promised me he would soon let me out in the air again. A splendid old man is this Ivan Vasilich ! When I was feverish and delirious he stayed at my bed all night long, without closing his eyes ; but now, seeing that I am writing, he is staying with the girls in the sofaroom, and I can hear from my chamber how he is telling them German stories and how they, listening to them, are dying with laughter.

"La "belle, Flamande, as you call her, has been my guest for two weeks, because her mother has gone to make visits, and she proves her sincere attachment by her care of me. She confides all the secrets of her heart to me. With her pretty face, good heart, and youth, she could become a beautiful girl in every respect if she were in good hands; but in the society in which she lives, to judge by her own story, she will be completely ruined. It has occurred to me that if I did not have so many children of my own, I should be doing a good act if I took her into my house.

" Lyubochka wanted to write to you herself, but she has torn her third sheet, and she says : ' I know what a scoffer papa is ; if I make one mistake, he will show it to everybody.' Katenka is as dear as ever, and Mimi is as good and tiresome.

"Now let us speak of something serious : you are writing me that your affairs are not going well this winter, and that you will be compelled to take some Khabârovka money. It is strange to me that you even ask my consent. Does not that which belongs to me equally belong to you ?

" You are so good, my dear one, that for fear of grieving me you are hiding the actual condition of your affairs, but I guess you have lost much at cards, and I am not in the least, I swear it, aggrieved at the fact, so that, if this affair can be straightened out, please don't spend much thought over it, or vainly worry about the matter. I have become accustomed not to count on your winnings for our children, not even, you will forgive me for saying so, on your property. Your winnings give me as little pleasure as your losses grieve me ; I am only grieved at your unfortunate passion for gaming, which robs me of a part of your tender attachment for me, and compels you to tell such bitter truths as those you are telling me now, – and God knows how that pains me ! I never cease praying to Him that He may deliver us, not from poverty (what is poverty ?), but from that terrible condition when the interests of our children, which I shall have to protect, will come in conflict with our own. Thus far God has fulfilled my prayer ; you have not crossed the one line, after which we shall have either to sacrifice our property, which no longer belongs to us, but to our children, or – it is terrible to think of it, and yet we are threatened by a terrible misfortune. Yes, it is a heavy cross the Lord has sent us both.

" You are writing me about the children, and return to our old quarrel : you ask my permission to send them to some educational establishment. You know my prejudice against such an education.

" I do not know, my dear one, whether you will agree with me ; in any case, I implore you, for the sake of our love, to promise me that as long as I am alive, and after my death, if it shall please God to separate us, this shall not happen.

" You tell me that it will be necessary for you to go to St. Petersburg about our affairs. Christ be with you, my friend ! go and come back as soon as possible ! We all feel very lonely without you. The spring is remarkably fine ; the balcony door has already been put out ; the path in the greenhouse was completely dry four days ago ; the peaches are in full bloom ; only here and there patches of snow are left ; the swallows have returned ; and to-day Lyubochka has brought me the first spring flowers. The doctor says that in three or four days I shall be quite well again, and able to breathe the fresh air, and warm myself in the April sun. Good-bye, my dear one ! Please, do not worry, neither about my illness nor about your losses ; settle your affairs as soon as possible, and come back to us with the children for the whole summer. I am making wonderful plans as to how we are going to pass it, and you only are wanting to materialize them."

The following part of the letter was in French, in a closely written and uneven hand, and upon a different piece of paper. I translate it word for word :

" Don't believe what I am writing you about my illness ; nobody suspects to what degree it is serious. I alone know that I shall never rise from bed again. Do not lose a single minute, and come at

once, and bring the children with you. Maybe, I shall live long enough to embrace and bless them; that is my one last wish. I know what a blow I am striking you, but you would all the same, sooner or later, receive it from me, or from others. Let us try with fortitude and with hope in the mercy of God to bear this misfortune ! Let us submit to His will !

" Do not imagine that what I write is the delirium of a diseased imagination ; on the contrary, my thoughts are unusually clear at this moment, and I am perfectly calm. Do not console yourself in vain with the hope that these are false and dim presentiments of a fearsome soul. No, I feel, I know, – and I know because it has pleased God to reveal it to me, – that I am to live only a short time.

" Will my love for you and my children end together with my life ? I have come to understand that this is impossible. I feel too strongly this minute, to think that the feeling without which I cannot understand existence should ever be annihilated. My soul cannot exist without love for you ; and I know that it will exist for ever, for this reason alone, if for no other, that such a feeling as my love could not have originated, if it were ever to come to an end.

" I shall not be with you ; but I am firmly convinced that my love will never leave you, and this thought is so comforting to my soul that I await my approaching death in peace and without fear.

" I am calm, and God knows that I have always looked at death as a transition to a better life ; but why do tears choke me ? Wherefore are the children to lose their beloved mother ? Why should such a blow be struck you ? Why must I die, when your' love has made me boundlessly happy ?

" His holy will be done !

" I cannot write any more for tears. Maybe I shall not see you again. So I thank you, my truest friend, for all the happiness with which you have surrounded me in this life ; and there, I will ask God that He may reward you. Good-bye, my dear one ! Remember that I shall be no more, but my love will never and in no place leave you. Good-bye, Volodya, good-bye, my angel ! Good-bye, my Benjamin, my Nikolenka !

" Will they ever forget me ? "

In this letter was enclosed a French note from Mimi, of the following contents :

" The sad presentiments, of which she tells you, have been only too well confirmed by the doctor. Last night she ordered this letter to be taken to the post. Thinking that she said that in her delirium, I waited until this morning, and decided to break the seal. No sooner had I opened it, than Natalya Nikolaevna asked me what I had done with the letter, and ordered me to burn it, if it had not yet been

sent. She speaks of it continually, and assures us that it will kill you. Do not delay your journey, if you wish to see this angel before she has left you. Pardon this scrawl. I have not slept these three nights. You know how I love her ! "

Natalya Savishna, who had passed the whole night of the 11th of April in mother's chamber, told me that having written the first part of her letter, mamma put it near her on the table, and fell asleep.

" I myself," said Natalya Savishna, " I must confess, dozed off in the chair, and the stocking fell out of my hands. Then in my sleep, about one o'clock, I heard her talk. I opened my eyes : there she, my little dove, was sitting in her bed, folding her arms just like this, and her tears were pouring down in three streams. ' So all is ended ? ' was all she said, and covered her face with her hands.

" I jumped up, and began to ask her what the matter was with her.

" ' Ah, Natalya Savishna, if you only knew whom I saw just now!'

" No matter how much I asked her, she would not answer me. She only ordered me to put the small table near her, then wrote something more in the letter, told me to seal it in her presence, and to send it away at once. After that everything went worse and worse."

XXVI.

WHAT AWAITED US IN THE COUNTRY

On the 25th of April we dismounted from the road carriage, at the veranda of the Petrdvskoe house. When we left Moscow, papa was lost in thought, and upon Volddya's asking whether mamma was not ill, he looked at him with sadness, and silently nodded his head. During the journey, he became perceptibly calmer ; but as we approached our home, his face assumed an even more sad expression, and when, upon leaving the carriage, he asked of Foka, who came running out of breath : " Where is Natalya Nikolaevna ? " his voice was not firm, and there were tears in his eyes. Good old Foka stealthily looked at us, dropped his eyes, and, opening the door to the antechamber, answered, with his face turned away :

« This is the sixth day she has not left the chamber."

Milka, who, as I later learned, had not stopped whining since the first day when mamma became ill, joyfully rushed up to father, jumped on him, whined, and licked his hands; but he pushed her aside and went into the sitting-room, thence into the sofa-room, from which a door led straight into mamma's chamber. The nearer he

approached this room, the more his unrest was to be noticed in all his movements. As he entered the sofa-room, he walked on tiptoe, barely drew breath, and made the sign of the cross before he had the courage to turn the latch of the closed door. Just then, unkempt,

weeping Mimi came running in from the corridor. " Ah, Peter Aleksandrych ! " she said in a whisper, with an expression of real despair, and then, noticing that papa was turning the latch of the door, added scarcely audibly : " You can't pass through here ; you have to go in through the outer door."

Oh, how heavily all that acted upon my childish imagination, which was prepared for sorrow by some terrible presentiment !

We went into the maids' room. In the corridor we ran against fool Akim, who used to amuse us with his grimaces; at this moment he not only did not seem funny to me, but nothing struck me so painfully as the appearance of his meaningless, indifferent face. In the maids' room two servant girls, who were sitting at some work, rose to greet us, but the expression of their faces was so sad that I felt terribly. Passing through Mimi's room, papa opened the door of the chamber, and we entered. To the right of the door were two windows, which were darkened by shawls ; at one of these, Natalya Sâvishna was seated, with spectacles on her nose, and was knitting a stocking. She did not rise to kiss us, as she was in the habit of doing, but only raised herself a little, glanced at us through her spectacles, and her tears began to flow in streams. I did not like it at all that at the first sight of us they all started weeping, while just before they were calm.

To the left of the door stood a screen, behind the screen a bed, a small table, a medicine box, and a large armchair, in which the doctor was dozing. Near the bed stood a very blond young lady of remarkable beauty, in a white morning gown, and, rolling up her sleeves a little, she put ice to the head of mamma, whom I was able to see. This young lady was la Mie Flamande, of whom mamma had written, and who later on was to play such an important part in the life of our whole family. The moment we entered, she took one hand away from mamma's head, and arranged over her breast the folds of her gown, then said in a whisper : " She is unconscious."

I was in great anguish then, but I noticed all the details. It was almost dark in the room, and warm, and there was a mingled odour of mint, eau de cologne, camomile, and Hoffmann's drops. That odour struck me so powerfully that not only when I smell it, but even when I think of it, my imagination immediately transfers me into that gloomy, close room, and reproduces all the minutest details of that terrible moment.

Mamma's eyes were open, but she did not see anything. Oh, I shall never forget that terrible look ! There was so much suffering expressed in it.

We were taken away.

When I later asked Natalya Sévishna about the last moments of my mother, she told me this :

" When you were taken away, my little dove kept on tossing for a long time, as though something were choking her here ; then she dropped her head from the pillows, and fell asleep, as softly and calmly as if she were an angel of heaven. I had just gone out to see why they were not bringing the drink, – and when I came back, she, the treasure of my heart, had thrown off everything about her, and was beckoning to father. He bent down to her, but she evidently had no strength to say what she wanted ; she only opened her lips, and began to sigh : ' My Lord ! God ! The children ! The children ! ' I wanted to run for you, but Ivan Vasilich stopped me, saying that it would excite her too much, and that it would be better not to call you. Then she only lifted her hand, and let it fall again. God knows what she meant to say by it! I think she was blessing you, though you were out of sight ; and thus God has decreed that she should not see her children before her last moments. Then she raised herself, my little dove, folded

her little hands just like this, and then spoke in a voice that I can't repeat : ' Mother of God, do not desert them ! ' By this time the agony had reached her heart, and one might see by her eyes that the poor woman was suffering terribly : she fell back on her pillows, bit the sheet, and her tears began to flow in streams."

« Well, and then ? "

Natàlya could not speak any more: she turned her face away, and burst into tears.

Mamma had passed away amidst terrible sufferings.

XXVII.

GRIEF

The next day, late in the evening, I wanted to take another look at her: overcoming an involuntary feeling of terror, I softly opened the door, and walked into the parlour on tiptoe.

In the middle of the room stood the coffin on a table ; around it were burning candles in tall silver candlesticks ; in the distant corner sat the sexton, and in a monotonous voice read the psalter.

I stopped at the door and began to look, but my eyes were so red with tears, and my nerves were so unstrung, that I could not make out anything. Everything was strangely running together : the light,

the brocade, the velvet, the tall candlesticks, the rose-coloured lace-bordered pillow, the crown, the cap with its ribbons, and something translucent, of a wax-colour. I stood on a chair, in order to see her face ; but I imagined I saw in the place where it ought to have been the same pale yellow, translucent object. I could not believe that it was her face. I began to look more closely at it, and by degrees recognized the familiar features which were so dear to me. I shuddered from terror, when I convinced myself that it was she. But why were her closed eyes so sunken ? Why this terrible pallor, and the black spot under the transparent skin on one of her cheeks ? Why was the expression of her whole face so severe and cold ? Why were her lips so pale, and their position so beautiful,

so majestic, and expressing such an unearthly calm that a cold chill passed over my back and hair, as I looked at her ?

I looked, and felt that a certain incomprehensible, irresistible power was attracting my eyes to that lifeless face. I riveted my gaze upon it, and my imagination painted for me pictures abloom with life and happiness. I forgot that the dead body, which was lying before me and at which I was looking meaninglessly, as at an object which had nothing in common with my memories, was she. I imagined her now in one, now in another situation : alive, merry, smiling; then I was suddenly struck by some feature in her pale face, upon which my eyes were resting ; I recalled the terrible reality, and shuddered, but did not cease looking at it. And again dreams took the place of reality, and again the consciousness of reality destroyed my dreams. Finally my imagination grew tired, it no longer deceived me. The consciousness of reality also disappeared, and I completely forgot myself. I do not know how long I remained in that condition, and I do not know what it really was ; I know only that I lost, for some time, the consciousness of my whole existence, and experienced some elevated, inexpressibly pleasant and sad sensation.

Maybe, as she was flying away to a better world, her beautiful soul looked back in sorrow at the one in which she left us. She noticed my sadness, took pity on me, and upon pinions of love, with a heavenly smile of sympathy, winged her way to earth, in order to console and bless me.

The door creaked, and another sexton entered the room to take the place of the first. That noise woke me, and the first thought that came to me was that inasmuch as I was not weeping, and was standing upon the chair in an attitude which had in it nothing of a touching nature, the sexton might take me for an unfeeling boy, who had climbed upon the chair out of discomfort or curiosity ; I made the sign of the cross, bowed, and fell to weeping.

As I now recall my impressions, I find that only that minute of self-forgetfulness was a real grief. Before and after the funeral, I did not stop weeping, and was sad, but I am ashamed to think of that sadness, because it was always mingled with some selfish feeling. Now it was the desire to show that I was grieved more than the rest, now the anxiety about the effect I was producing on the others, now

an aimless curiosity, which caused me to make observations on Mimi's bonnet, and the faces of the people present. I hated myself because I did not experience exclusively a sentiment of sorrow, and endeavoured to conceal all the other feelings ; for this reason my grief was not sincere nor natural. Besides, I experienced a certain pleasure from the knowledge that I was unhappy, and tried to awaken the consciousness of misfortune, and this egoistical feeling more than any other drowned my real sorrow in me.

Having slept soundly and calmly through the night, as is always the case after great bereavement, I awoke with dried eyes and soothed nerves. At ten o'clock we were called to the mass which was celebrated before the funeral. The room was filled with servants and peasants, who, all of them in tears, had come to bid their mistress farewell. During the service I wept decently, made the signs of the cross, and bowed to the ground, but I did not pray with sincerity, and was sufficiently indifferent ; I was concerned about the new half-dress coat which they had put on me, and which was tight under my arms ; I was thinking how to keep from soiling my pantaloons at the knees, and stealthily made observations upon all the people present. Father stood at the head of the coffin, was as pale as a sheet, and with evident difficulty restrained his tears. His tall stature in the black dress coat, his pale, expressive countenance, and his usual graceful and confident movements, whenever he made the sign of the cross, bowed, reaching the floor with his hand, took the candle out of the priest's hands, or walked up to the coffin, were exceedingly effective ; but I do not know why, I did not like his being able to produce such an effect at that particular moment.

Mimi was leaning against the wall and, it seemed, barely could stand on her feet ; her dress was crushed and full of feathers, and her cap was on one side; her swollen eyes were red, her head was shaking ; she sobbed without interruption in a heartrending voice, and continually covered her face with a handkerchief and with her hands. It seemed to me that she did so, in order to hide her face from the spectators, when resting a moment from her simulated sobs. I recalled how the day before she told father that mamma's death was a terrible blow to her, from which she never expected to recover, that she had lost everything in mother, that this angel (so she called mamma) had not forgotten her before her death, and had expressed her desire of safeguarding her future and that of Katenka. She shed bitter tears, while telling this, and it may be that the feeling of sorrow was genuine, but it was not pure and exclusive. Lyubochka, in a black dress, with mourning ruffles all wet with tears, drooped her head, and looked now and then at the coffin. Her face expressed childish terror. Katenka stood near her mother and, in spite of her drawn face, was as rosy as usual. Volodya's open nature was also open in its grief ; he either stood lost in thought, his immovable look directed to some object, or his mouth suddenly began to twitch, and he hurriedly made the signs of the cross and bowed. All the outsiders who attended the funeral were unbearable to me. The consoling words which they spoke to father – that she would be better there, that she was not for this world – provoked a

certain anger in me.

What right did they have to speak of and weep for her? Some of them, speaking of us, called us orphans. As if we did not know ourselves that children who had no mother were called by that name! They seemed to take delight in being the first to name us so, just as people are in a hurry to call a newly married girl Madame.

In the farther corner of the parlour, almost hidden behind the open door of the buffet, knelt the bent, grayhaired old woman. Folding her hands and raising them to heaven, she did not weep, but prayed. Her soul went out to God, and she asked Him to unite her with the mistress whom she had loved more than any one in the world, and she was firmly convinced that this would soon happen.

" Here is one who has loved her sincerely ! " thought I, and I was ashamed of myself.

The mass was over ; the face of the deceased one was uncovered, and all persons present, except us, went up to the coffin, one after another, and made their obeisance.

One of the last to walk up to take leave of mother was a peasant woman, with a pretty five-year-old girl in her arms, whom, God knows why, she had brought with her. Just then I accidentally dropped my wet handkerchief, and I was on the point of lifting it up. The moment I bent down, I was struck by a terrible, penetrating cry, which was filled with such terror that if I were to live a hundred years I shall not forget it, and whenever I think of it, a cold chill passes over my body. I raised my head : on a tabouret, near the coffin, stood the same peasant woman, with difficulty restraining the girl in her arms, who fought with her little hands, and, throwing back her terrified face and fixing her bulging eyes upon the countenance of the dead woman, shrieked in a terrible, preternatural voice. I cried out in a voice which, I think, was even more terrible than the one that had struck me, and ran out of the room.

Only then I understood what the strong and heavy odour came from, which filled the room, mingling with the odour of incense ; and the thought that the face which only a few days before was beaming with beauty and gentleness, the face of her I loved more than anything else in the world, could evoke terror, for the first time, it seemed, opened the bitter truth to me, and filled my soul with despair.

XXVIII.

THE LAST SAD MEMORIES

Mamma was no more, but our life ran in the usual routine ; we went to bed and rose at the same hours, and in the same rooms. Morning and evening, tea, dinner, supper, – everything was at the customary hours. The tables and chairs stood in the same places. Nothing in the house nor in our manner of life had changed, – only she was no more –

It seemed to me that after such a misfortune everything ought to change. Our usual manner of life appeared to me as an insult to her memory, and too vividly reminded me of her absence.

On the day before the funeral, after dinner, I was sleepy, and I went to the room of Natalya Lavishna, intending to lie down on her soft feather bed, under her warm quilt. When I entered, Natalya Lavishna was lying on her bed, and no doubt was sleeping. When she heard the sound of my footsteps, she raised herself, threw back the woollen kerchief with which her head was covered to protect it against flies, and, fixing her cap, seated herself on the edge of her bed.

As it used to happen frequently that after dinner I came to rest in her room, she guessed the cause of my coming, and said to me, rising from her bed :

" You have come to rest yourself, my little dove ? Lie down ! "

"Don't say that, Natalya Savishna!" I said, holding her back by her hand. " I did not come for that – I just came so – and you are tired : you had better lie down yourself."

" No, my dear one, I have slept enough," she said to me (I knew she had not slept for three days). " And this is no time for sleeping," she added, with a deep sigh.

I wanted to have a talk with Natalya Savishna about our misfortune. I knew her loyalty and love, and so it would have been a consolation for me to weep with her.

"Natalya Savishna," I said, after a moment's silence, and seating myself on the bed, " did you expect this ? "

The old woman looked at me in perplexity and with curiosity, as if she did not quite understand why I asked her that.

" Who could have expected this ?" I repeated.

" Oh, my dear one," she said, casting a look of the ten-derest compassion upon me, " I not only did not expect it, but I can't even think of it. It has long been time for me, an old woman, to put my old bones to rest ; for see what I have lived to go through : I have buried the old master, your grandfather, – may his memory be eternal, – Prince Nikolay Mikhaylovich, two brothers, sister Annushka, and they were all younger than I, my dear one, and now I

have to outlive her, no doubt for my sins. His holy will be done ! He has taken her because she was worthy, and He needs good people even there."

This simple thought gave me consolation, and I moved up to Natalya Savishna. She crossed her arms over her breast, and looked up to the ceiling; her moist, sunken eyes expressed a great, but calm, sorrow. She was firmly convinced that God would not separate her long from her upon whom all the power of her love had been centred for so many years.

" Yes, my dear one, it does not seem long since I was swathing and watching her, and she called me Nasha. She used to run up to me, and embrace me with her tiny arms, and kiss me, and say :

" 'Nàshik mine, beauty mine, darling mine.' And I, joking her, would say :

" < It is not so, motherkin, you do not love me ! Just let you grow up, and you will marry, and will forget your Nasha.' And she would fall to musing: 'No,' she'd say, ' I had better not marry, if I can't take Nasha with me. I will never abandon Nasha.' And there! she has abandoned me, she did not wait my time. And she did love me ; but, to tell the truth, whom did she not love ? Yes, my dear one, you must not forget your mother ; she was not human, but an angel of heaven. When her soul will be in the heavenly kingdom, she will love you there, too, and she will rejoice in you there."

" Why do you say, Natalya Savishna, when she will be in the heavenly kingdom ? " asked I. " I think she must be there now."

"No, my dear one," said Natalya Savishna, dropping her head, and seating herself nearer to me on the bed, "now her soul is here."

And she pointed upwards. She spoke almost in a whisper, and with such feeling and conviction that I involuntarily raised my eyes, and, looking at the moulding, tried to find something there.

" Before the soul of a righteous person goes to heaven, it has to pass through forty ordeals, my dear one, for forty days, and may still be in her house - "

She long spoke in the same strain, and she spoke with simplicity and conviction, as if she were telling the commonest things which she had seen herself, and in regard to which no one could have the slightest doubts. I listened to her, with bated breath, and though I did not understand well what she was telling me, I believed her fully.

" Yes, my dear one, now she is here, is looking at you, and, maybe, hearing what we are saying," concluded Natalya Savishna.

And, lowering her head, she grew silent. She needed a handkerchief to wipe off her falling tears. She rose, looked straight into my

face, and said in a voice quivering with emotion :

" The Lord has moved me up several steps by this experience. What is left for me here? For whom am I to live, whom am I to love ? "

" Do you not love us ? " I said, with reproach, and with difficulty restraining my tears.

" God knows how I love you, my little doves, but I have never loved, nor can love, any one as I have loved her."

She could not speak any longer, turned away from me, and sobbed out loud.

I did not think of sleeping after that. We sat silent, facing each other, and wept.

Foka entered the room. Noticing our condition, and evidently not wishing to disturb us, he looked about silently and timidly, and stopped at the door.

" What is it, Fdkasha ? " asked Natalya Savishna, wiping her tears with her handkerchief.

« A pound and a half of raisins, four pounds of sugar, and three pounds of rice for the kutyà." 1

" Right away, right away, my friend," said Natalya Savishna. She hurriedly took a pinch of snuff, and with rapid steps went to one of the coffers. The last traces of the sorrow which had been produced by our conversation disappeared the moment she had a duty to perform which she regarded as very important.

" Why four pounds ?" she grumbled, as she fetched the sugar and weighed it out on the steelyard. "Three pounds and a half will be enough."

1 Rice-cake used in the church during the reading of the mass for the dead.

And she took a few pieces off the scale.

"And what kind of a business is this? Yesterday I let you have eight pounds of rice, and now you are asking again for some. You may do as you please, Foka, but I will not give you any rice. That Vánka is glad there is a disturbance in the house, and so he thinks that, perhaps, I shall not notice it. No, I will not be indulgent when it comes to the master's property. Who has ever heard such a thing ? Eight pounds ! "

" What is to be done ? He says it has all been used up."

" Well, here it is, take it ! Let him have it ! "

I was struck by that transition from the touching emotion with which she had been speaking to me, to grumbling and petty considerations. When I reflected over it at a later time, I understood that, in spite of what was going on in her soul, she had sufficient presence of mind to do her work, and the power of habit drew her to her ordinary occupations. The sorrow had affected her so powerfully, that she did not find it necessary to conceal the fact that she was able to attend to other matters ; she would have found it difficult to understand how such a thought could come to one.

Vanity is a sentiment that is incompatible with true sorrow, and yet that sentiment is so firmly inoculated in the nature of man that the deepest sorrow rarely expels it. Vanity in sorrow is expressed by the desire to appear bereaved, or unhappy, or firm. And these low desires, to which we do not own up, but which do not abandon us, not even in the deepest grief, deprive it of power, dignity, and sincerity. But Natalya Savishna was so deeply struck by her misfortune that in her soul not a wish was left, and she lived only from habit.

After having supplied Foka with the desired provisions, and reminded him of the cake which was to be made for the entertainment of the clergy, she dismissed him, took up a stocking, and again sat down by my side.

Our conversation reverted to the same subject, and we once more began to weep, and to wipe off our tears.

The conversations with Natalya Savishna were repeated every day. Her quiet tears and gentle, pious speeches afforded me consolation and relief.

But soon we were separated; three days after the funeral we moved with our whole household to Moscow, and it was my fate never to see her again.

Grandmother received the terrible news only upon our arrival, and her grief was very great. We were not admitted to her, because she was unconscious for a whole week ; the doctors were afraid for her life, the more so since she not only would not take any medicine, but did not even speak to any one, nor sleep, nor take any food. At times, while she was sitting all alone in her room, she suddenly burst out laughing, then sobbed without tears, went into convulsions, and shouted meaningless and terrible words in a preternatural voice. This was the first great sorrow which had struck her down, and it brought her to despair. She felt she must accuse somebody of her misfortune, and she uttered fearful threats, exhibiting meanwhile unusual bodily strength, jumped up from her chair, walked across the room with long, rapid steps, and then fell down unconscious.

I once walked into her room : she sat, as usual, in her chair, and was, apparently, calm ; but her glance appalled me. Her eyes were wide open, but her vision was indefinite and dull : she looked

straight at me, and in all probability did not see me. Her lips slowly began to smile, and she spoke in a touching and tender voice : " Come to me, my dear, come to me, my angel ! " I thought she was speaking to me, so I walked up to her, but she was not looking at me. " Ah, if you knew, my treasure, how I have suffered, and how happy I am now that you have arrived." I understood that she imagined she saw mamma, and I stopped. " And they told me that you were no more," she continued, frowning. " What nonsense ! You can't die before me!" and she laughed out with a terrible, hysterical laughter.

Only people who are capable of strong affection can experience deep sorrow ; but this very necessity of loving serves for them as a counteraction of their sorrow, and cures it. For this reason the moral nature of man is even more tenacious than his physical nature. Sorrow never kills.

A week later grandmother was able to weep, and she grew better. Her first thought, after she regained consciousness, was of us, and her love for us was increased. We did not leave her chair; she wept softly, spoke of mamma, and tenderly petted us.

It would never have occurred to a person who saw grandmother's bereavement, that she exaggerated it, though the expression of that sorrow was vehement and touching; but somehow I sympathized more with Natalya Savishna, and I am convinced, even now, that nobody loved mamma so sincerely and purely, or grieved for her so much as did that simple-hearted and loving creature.

With my mother's death the happy period of my life was over, and a new epoch, that of my boyhood, began ; but since the memories of Natalya Savishna, whom I never saw again, and who had had such a strong and helpful influence upon the direction and development of my sentiments, belong to the first epoch, I shall say a few words about her and her death.

After our departure, as our people who remained in the village later told me, she felt very lonely for want of work. Although all the coffers were still in her keeping, and she did not cease rummaging through them, transposing, hanging things up, and spreading them out, she missed the noise and bustle of the country residence when it is inhabited by its masters, to which she had been accustomed from her childhood. The bereavement, the changed manner of life, and the absence of petty cares soon developed in her an ailment of old age for which she had a natural predisposition. Precisely a year after mother's death, she developed dropsy, and took to her bed.

I think it was hard for Natalya Lavishna to live alone, and harder still to die alone, in the large Petrovskoe house, without relatives, without friends. Everybody in the house loved and respected her, but she had no friendship for anybody, and she prided herself on the fact. She surmised that in her capacity of stewardess, where she enjoyed the confidence of her masters and had so many coffers with all kinds of property in her charge, her

friendship for anybody would necessarily lead to hypocrisy and criminal condescension. For this reason, or, perhaps, because she had nothing in common with the other servants, she kept aloof from all and maintained that in the house she had no kith nor kin, and that she would show no indulgence in matters pertaining to her master's property.

She sought and found consolation in confiding her feelings to God in fervent prayers ; but at times, during moments of weakness, to which we all are subject, when the best consolation is afforded man by the tears and sympathies of living beings, she lifted upon her bed her lapdog, who, fixing her yellow eyes upon her, licked her hands ; Natalya Savishna spoke to her and, weeping softly, stroked her. When her lapdog began pitifully to whimper, she tried to quiet her, and said : "Now stop, I know without you that I shall die soon."

A month before her death she took some white calico, white muslin, and rose-coloured ribbons out of her coffer : with the aid of her servant-girl she sewed a white dress and a cap for herself, and made the minutest arrangements for everything that would be needed for her funeral. She also went through the coffers of her master, and transferred everything, with the greatest precision, according to an invoice, to the wife of the business steward ; then she took out two silk dresses and an ancient shawl, which had been given her at one time by grandmother, and grandfather's military uniform, with golden trappings, which had also been given into her full possession. Thanks to her care, the seams and the lace of the uniform were still fresh, and the cloth had not been touched by moths. Before her death she expressed her wish that one of the dresses – the rose-coloured one – should be given to Volodya for a dressing-gown or smoking-jacket, the other, – puce in checks, – to me, for similar use, and the shawl to Lyubochka. The uniform she bequeathed to whichever of us became an officer first. The rest of her property and money, except forty roubles which she laid aside for her burial and mass, she left to her brother. Her brother, who had long ago been emancipated, was living in some distant Government, and leading a most riotous life, so she had no relations with him during her lifetime.

When Natalya Savishna's brother appeared to get his inheritance, and the whole property of the deceased woman amounted only to twenty-five roubles, he was unwilling to believe it, and declared it was impossible that an old woman, who had lived for sixty years in a rich house, who had had everything in her hands, and all her life lived parsimoniously and quarrelled about every rag, should have left nothing. But it was really so.

Natalya Savishna suffered two months from her disease, and bore her sufferings with truly Christian patience; she did not grumble, did not complain, but only, as was her custom, continually invoked God. An hour before death, she confessed with quiet joy, and received the holy sacrament and extreme unction.

She begged forgiveness of the inmates of the house for offences

which she might have caused them, and asked her confessor, Father Vasili, to transmit to us that she did not know how to thank us for our kindnesses, and that she asked us to forgive her, if through her stupidity she had offended any one, but that " I have never been a thief, and have never so much as filched a thread from my masters." This was the one quality for which she valued herself.

Having donned the gown which she had prepared, and a cap, and resting on her pillows, she continued talking to the priest to the very last. She happened to think that she had left nothing for the poor, so she took out ten roubles, and asked him to distribute them among the poor of his parish ; then she made the sign of the cross, lay down, and drew her last sigh, pronouncing the name of God with a joyful smile.

She left life without regret, was not afraid of death, and accepted it as a boon. This is often said, but how rarely does it happen in reality ! Natalya Savishna could well afford to be without fear of death, for she died with her faith unshaken, and fulfilling the law of the gospel. All her life was a pure, unselfish love and selfsacrifice.

What if her belief might have been more elevated, and her life directed to higher purposes, – was her pure soul on that account less worthy of love and admiration ?

She executed the best and highest act of this life,– she died without regrets or fear.

She was buried, according to her own wish, not far from the chapel which was built over mother's grave. The mound under which she lies, and which is overgrown with nettles and agrimony, is surrounded by a black picket-fence, and I never fail to go from the chapel to this fence and to make a low obeisance.

At times I stop in silence between the chapel and the black fence. In my soul again arise gloomy recollections, and I think : Has Providence connected me with these two beings only that I may eternally regret them ?