

## MASTER AND WORKMAN

by Leo Tolstoy

Translated from the Original Russian and edited by Leo Wiener  
Assistant Professor of Slavic Languages at Harvard University

1895

### I.

This happened in the seventies, on the seventh of December. There was a holiday in the parish, and the village innkeeper, the merchant of the second guild, Vasili Andriich Brekhunov, could not get off, – he had to be in the church, for he was a church elder, and at home he had to receive and entertain his relatives and friends. And now the last guests had departed, and Vasili Andriich was getting ready immediately to go to a neighbouring landed proprietor, in order to buy from him a grove for which he had been haggling for quite a while.

Vasili Andriich was in a hurry to go there, so that the merchants from the city might not cut him out of this advantageous bargain. The young proprietor asked ten thousand for the grove, for no other reason than that Vasili Andriich offered seven for it. In reality, seven thousand formed only one-third of the real value of the grove. Vasili Andriich would probably have got it down to his own price, since the woods were in his district and between him and the village buyers of the county there had long been an agreement that one merchant would not raise another merchant's price; but Vasili Andriich had learned that some lumber dealers from the capital of the Government intended to come down to bid for the Goryachkino grove, and so he decided to go at once and

settle the business with the proprietor. And so, the moment the holiday was over, he took out of his trunk his own seven hundred roubles, added to it 2,300 roubles belonging to the church, so as to get together the sum of three thousand roubles, and, after having cautiously counted the money over and put it away in his pocketbook, got ready to go.

Workman Nikita, the only one of Vasili Andriich's workmen who was not drunk this day, ran to hitch up. Nikita was not drunk on that day, because he was a drunkard, and now, since Shrovetide, during which he had spent in drink his sleeveless coat and leather boots, he had made a vow not to drink, and had not drunk for two months; he had not drunk even at that time in spite of the temptation of the liquor which had been consumed during the first two days of the holiday.

Nikita was a fifty-year-old peasant, from a neighbouring village, not a master, as they said of him, but one who had passed the

greater part of his life, not at home, but working out. He was everywhere highly regarded for his industry, agility, and strength in his work, but mainly for his good and agreeable character; but he did not settle anywhere, because twice a year, and sometimes often er, he went on a spree, when he not only spent everything he had on drink, but also became riotous and quarrelsome. Vasili Andrei ch, too, had several times sent him away, but had later taken him back, as he appreciated his honesty, his love of animals, and especially his cheapness. Vasili Andr&ch did not pay Nikita eighty roubles, which such a workman was worth, but only forty roubles, which he paid him out without any order, in driblets, and then for the most part not in money, but in high-priced articles from the shop.

Nikita's wife, Marfa, who had once been a handsome, sturdy woman, was now keeping house with her halfgrown boy and two girls, and did not invite Nikita to come and stay with her, in the first place, because she had for something like twenty years been living with a cooper, a peasant from a neighbouring village, who was living in her house; and in the second, because, although she could manage her husband when he was sober, she was as afraid of him as of fire when he was drunk. One time Nikita got himself drunk at home, probably in order to have revenge on his wife for his sober meekness, and broke open her trunk, got out her most expensive garments, and, taking an axe, chopped on a block all her jackets and dresses into bits. All the wages which Nikita earned were given up to his wife, and Nikita did not have any objection to this. Even so now, two days before the holiday, Marfa came to Vasili Andr&ch and got from him white flour, tea, and an eighth of a measure of liquor, – all for the value of about three roubles, – and took, besides, five roubles in money, for which she thanked him as for a special favour, whereas at the cheapest price Vasili Andr&ch owed Nikita twenty roubles.

" Have we made any agreement ?" Vasili Andr&ch used to say to Nikita. " If you need anything, take it,– you will work it off. I do not do like other people: < Wait,' and accounts, and fines. We do things honestly. You serve me, and I do not leave you in a lurch."

Saying this, Vasili Andr&ch was sincerely convinced that he was doing Nikita a great favour; he spoke convincingly, and all people who were dependent on his money, beginning with Nikita, supported him in this conviction that he was not cheating, but conferring benefactions upon them.

" Yes, I understand, Vasili Andr&ch. It seems to me, I am serving you as though you were my own father. I understand very well," Nikita would answer, though he understood very well that Vasili Andr&dich was cheating him, and yet he felt that there was no use in trying to clear up his accounts with him, but that it was necessary to stay there, so long as he had no other place, and take what they gave him.

Now, when he received his master's command to hitch up, Nikita, as always, merrily and cheerfully, with a brisk and light step of his waddling feet went to the shed, took the tasselled leather bridle

down from a peg and, letting the bit rings clatter, went to the locked stable, where stood by himself the horse which Vasili Andr&ch had ordered to have harnessed.

" Well, do you feel lonely, you little silly ?" said Nikita, answering the weak whinnying of greeting with which he was met by the middle-sized, fine-looking stallion, with somewhat sloping back and yellow muzzle, which was standing all alone in the stable. " Come now, come now! You will have time enough for it, – let me give you first some water, " he said to the horse, as though he were speaking to a being that could understand his words, and, wiping with the skirt of his coat the fat, grooved, worn off, dust-covered back, he put the bridle on the beautiful young head of the stallion, straightened out his ears and forelock, and, throwing down the halter, took the horse to water.

Making his way carefully out of the manure-littered stable, Yellow-muzzle frisked and kicked, pretending that he meant with his hind leg to kick Nikita, who was racing down with him to the well.

" Have your fun, have your fun, rogue!" Nikita kept saying. He knew with what care Yellow-muzzle kicked up his hind foot, only hard enough to touch his soiled short fur coat, but not to strike him, and he was fond of this trick.

When the horse had had his fill of cold water, he drew a deep sigh, mumbling with his wet, strong lips, from which transparent drops fell down from his whiskers, and he stood still, as though lost in thought; then he suddenly snorted out loud.

" If you do not want to, you don't have to, and I'll know better; don't ask me again," said Nikita, quite seriously and circumstantially explaining his conduct to Yellow-muzzle. He again ran up to the shed, pulling by the rein the merry young horse who kept kicking and whinnying loud.

There were no workmen present; there was there but one stranger, the cook's husband, who had come for the holidays.

" Go, dear man, and ask him," Nikita said to him, " what sleigh he wants me to hitch up, the broad one, or the little sleigh."

The cook's husband entered the tin-roof covered house, which stood on a high foundation, and soon returned with the information that he was to hitch up the little sleigh. By that time Nikita had already put on the collar, and strapped the belly-band with the brass nails, and, carrying the painted arch in one hand and leading the horse with the other, was walking up to two sleighs which were standing under the shed.

" Let it be the little one, I do not care," he said. He led the horse, which kept pretending that he wanted to bite him, in between the shafts, and with the aid of the cook's husband began to hitch the horse to the sleigh.

When everything was almost done, and he had only to fix the reins, he sent the cook's husband to the shed for straw and to the barn for the matting.

" Now it is all done. Come now, don't be so restless !" said Nikita, as he pressed into the sleigh the freshly threshed oat-straw which the cook's husband had brought. " Now let me put down the blanket, and the matting on top. That's it, that's it, - it will be nice to sit in it," he said, doing what he was saying, that is, tucking the matting under the straw on all sides of the seat. " Thank you, dear man," Nikita said to the cook's husband, " two people get done quickly," and, straightening out the leather reins with the ring where they meet, Nikita seated himself on the driver's seat and touched the horse, which was begging for the reins, and started over the frozen manure of the yard toward the gate.

" Uncle Nikita, uncle, oh, uncle !" a seven-year-old boy, in a short black fur coat, new white felt boots, and warm - cap, who came running fast from the vestibule into the yard, called out behind him in a shrill voice. " Take me along," he begged, buttoning his coat as he ran.

"All right, all right, darling," said Nikita, and, stopping, he helped the pale, thin little lad, his master's child, who beamed with joy, into the sleigh, and drove out into the street.

It was past two. It was frosty, - about ten degrees Reaumur, gloomy, and windy. Half the sky was covered with a low, dark cloud. But everything was quiet in the yard. In the street the wind was more noticeable: the snow swept down from a neighbouring shed, and it whirled in the corner near the bath-house. Nikita had barely driven out of the yard and turned his horse toward the entrance of the house, when Vasili Andr&ch, with a cigarette in his mouth, in a cloth-covered sheepskin-fur coat, tightly girded low in his waist with a belt, came out of the vestibule on the high porch, which was covered with snow that squeaked under his leather-covered felt boots, and stopped. Taking a last puff from the cigarette, he threw it down at his feet and stepped upon it, and, letting the smoke escape through his moustache and looking sidewise at the horse that was coming out of the gate, began on both sides of his ruddy, shaven face to fix the corners of his sheepskin collar, with the fur turned in, so that it might not sweat from his breath.

" Look at the rogue, he is there already!" he said, when he saw his son in the sleigh. Vasili Andr&ch was in a state of excitation from the wine which he had drunk with the guests, and so more than ever satisfied with everything which belonged to him and with everything he did. The sight of his son, whom he in his thoughts always called his heir, now afforded him especial pleasure ; he looked at him, blinking and displaying his long teeth.

Vasili Andr^ich's pale, lean, pregnant wife, whose head and shoulders were wrapped in a woollen kerchief, so that only her eyes

could be seen, saw him off: she stood behind him, in the vestibule.

" Really, you had better take Nikita along," she said, timidly stepping through the door.

Vasili Andr&ch made no reply to her words, which evidently displeased him, frowned angrily, and spit out.

" You are travelling with money," his wife continued, in the same pitiable voice. "And I am afraid the weather may get bad, truly I am."

"Well, do I not know the road, that I must by all means have a guide with me ? " muttered Vasili Andr&ch with that unnatural tension of the lips with which he usually spoke to buyers and sellers, pronouncing every syllable with especial precision.

" Really, I wish you would take him. I implore you, for God's sake! " repeated his wife, wrapping her kerchief over her other side.

" You are as persistent as a bathbroom leaf. What is the use of my taking him ? "

" Why not, Vasili Andr&ch, I should be glad," Nikita said, cheerfully. " If only they will feed the horses while I am away," he added, turning to his master's wife.

" I will see to it, Nikita. I will tell 8em6n to feed them," said the mistress.

" Well, do you want me to go with you, Vasili Andr&ch ? " said Nikita, waiting for an answer.

" I see I shall have to obey the old woman. But if you are to go, you had better go and put on some warmer togs," said Vasili Andr&ch, smiling again and blinking at Nikita's short fur coat, which was torn under the arms and in the hack, tattered at the lower edge, soiled, and out of shape, and had been used for every imaginable purpose.

" Come, dear man, hold the horse!" Nikita shouted into the yard, to the cook's husband.

" I will myself, I will myself!" squeaked the boy, taking his stiffened red little hands out of his pocket and seizing the cold leather reins.

" Only, don't clean up your togs too much ! Be lively !" cried Vasili Andr&ch, displaying his teeth at Nikita.

" In one breath, father, Vasili Andr&ch," said Nikita, and, swiftly mincing with his in-toeing, old, felt-patched felt boots, he ran into the yard and into the workmen's hut.

" Here, Annushka! Hand me the cloak down from the oven, – I am going with the master!" said Nikita, as he ran into the hut and took a belt down from a peg.

The woman, who had had a nap after dinner and now was getting a samovar ready for her husband, met Nikita cheerfully, and, infected by his haste, began to move as rapidly as he, and fetched down from the oven, where it was getting dry, a miserable, threadbare cloth caftan, and began hurriedly to shake it out and open it up.

" You will have a fine time with your master," Nikita said to the cook. Out of good-natured politeness, Nikita always said something to a person, when he was left alone with one.

Girding himself with the narrow, worn-out belt, he drew in his belly, which was drawn in as it was, and laced himself as tightly as he could over his short fur coat.

" That's it," he said to himself after that, no longer addressing the cook, but his belt, and sticking the ends through the belt, " now you won't jump out," and, raising and lowering his shoulders, so as to have his arms free, he put on the cloak, again arched his back, so as to have his arms unhampered, adjusted the cloak under the pit of his arms, and fetched his mittens down from a shelf. " Now it is all right."

" Nikita, you had better change your boots," said the cook, " for those you have on are no good."

Nikita stopped, as though to recall something.

"Yes, I ought to. Well, these will do, – it is not far! "

And he ran out into the yard.

"Won't you be cold, Nikita?" asked the mistress, as he came up to the sleigh.

"Not at all cold, – I shall be warm," replied Nikita, beating up the straw in front of the sleigh, so as to cover his feet with it, and sticking the whip, which was useless for the good horse, into the straw.

Vasili Andr&ch was already seated in the sleigh, occupying almost the whole bent back of it with the two fur coats which he wore, and, taking the reins, immediately let the horse go. Nikita on the run jumped in on the left side and stuck out one leg.

II.

The good stallion moved the sleigh with a slight squeak of the runners, and at a brisk pace started down the well-travelled, frozen village street.

" Where are you hanging on ? Let me have the whip, Nikita!" exclaimed Vasili Andr<sup>^</sup>ich, evidently enjoying the sight of his heir, who was hanging on behind, standing on the runners. " I will show you ! Run to mamma, you son of a gun."

The boy jumped down. Yellow-muzzle increased his pace and, correcting himself, passed over to a trot.

Kresty, in which Vasili Andr<sup>&</sup>ch's house stood, consisted of six houses. As soon as they rode out beyond the last hut, the blacksmith's shop, they noticed that the wind was much stronger than they had expected. They could hardly see the road now. The track from the runners was immediately drifted over, and the road could be told only because it was higher than any other place. The snow whirled over the whole held, and one could not see the line where earth and heaven meet. Telydtino forest, which was always visible, only now and then appeared black through the snow dust. The wind blew from the left, stubbornly turning the mane on Yellow-muzzle's sloping fat neck in one direction, and carrying his bushy tail, which was tied in a simple knot, to one side. Nikita's long collar, as he was sitting on the side of the wind, pressed close to his face and nose.

" He does not run as he can, – there is too much snow," said Vasili Andr<sup>&</sup>ch, priding himself on his good horse. " I once drove him to Pashutino, where he took me in half an hour."

"What?" asked Nikita, who had not heard well behind his collar.

" To Pashutino, I say; he took me there in half an hour," shouted Vasili Andr<sup>&</sup>ch.

" No use talking, a good horse ! " said Nikita.

They were silent awhile. But Vasili Andr<sup>&</sup>ch felt like talking.

"Well, what do you suppose? Did I tell your wife not to give the cooper anything to drink ? " Vasili An-dr<sup>&</sup>ch began in the same loud voice; he was so convinced that it must be flattering to Nikita to talk with such an important and clever man as he was, and so satisfied with his jest, that it did not even occur to him that this conversation might be disagreeable for Nikita.

Nikita again did not catch the sound of his master's words, as it was carried away by the wind.

Vasili Andr<sup>&</sup>ch repeated his jest about the cooper in his loud, distinct voice.

" God be with him, Vasili Andr<sup>&</sup>ch. I do not meddle with these matters. All I care for is that she should not treat the lad badly, and as for the rest, God be with her."

" That is so," said Vasili Andr&ch. " Well, are you going to buy a horse toward spring ? " he began a new subject of conversation.

"There is no way out," replied Nikita, opening the collar of the caftan and bending over in the direction of his master.

This time the conversation interested Nikita, and he wanted to hear it all.

" The lad has grown up, – he has to plough himself; they have been hiring all the time," he said.

" Well, take the one with the lean crupper, – I will not ask much," continued Vasili Andr&ch, feeling himself in good spirits and so attacking his favourite occupation, which absorbed all his mental powers, – horse trading.

" If you will let me have some fifteen roubles, I will buy one in the horse market," said Nikita, who knew that a fair price for the horse with the lean crupper, which Vasili Andr&ch was trying to sell him, was about seven roubles, and that Vasili Andr&ch, in giving him this horse, would figure it at twenty-five, and then he would not see any money from him for half a year.

" It's a good horse. I mean it for your good, as though for myself. I don't care, let me have a loss: I am not like others. Honestly," he shouted in that voice with which he pulled the wool over the eyes of the buyers and the sellers, " it's a fine horse."

" That's so," said Nikita, with a sigh, and having convinced himself that there was nothing else to listen to, took his hand away from the collar, which immediately covered his ear and face.

For about half an hour they travelled in silence. The wind blew through Nikita's side and arm, where the fur was torn.

He crouched and breathed into the collar, which covered his mouth, but he still felt cold.

" Well, what do you think ? Shall we go by Kara-myshevo, or straight ahead ? " asked Vasili Andr&ch.

By the way of Karamyshevo the road was more cheerful, with good signals on both sides, but it was farther. Straight ahead it was nearer, but the road was little travelled and there were no signals, or there were poor ones and they were covered with snow.

Nikita stopped to think a little.

"By the way of Karamyshevo it is farther, but the road is better," he said.

« But if we go straight, we have just to cross a little ravine, – we cannot lose the way, – and then through the woods, – it is nice,"

said Vasili Andr&ch, who wanted to travel straight ahead.

"As you please," said Nikita, again dropping his collar.

Vasili Andr&dich did so and, after travelling about half a verst, turned to the left, near a tall oak branch with here and there a dry leaf, which dangled in the wind.

After the turn the wind blew almost straight into their faces, and a light snow began to fall from above. Vasili Andr&ch drove; he filled his cheeks and breathed downward, into his moustache. Nikita was dozing off.

Thus they travelled in silence for about ten minutes. Suddenly Vasili AndnSich said something.

"What?" asked Nikita, opening his eyes.

Vasili Andr&ch made no reply, but bent forward and backward, looking in front of the horse. The horse's hair between his legs and on his neck was curled from the sweat; he was walking.

"What is it, I say?" repeated Nikita.

"What? What?" Vasili Andr&ch mocked him angrily. "I cannot see any signals, - we must have lost our way."

"Stand still, then, and I will go and look for the road," said Nikita. Jumping lightly from the sleigh and taking the whip out of the straw, he went to the left, on the side he was sitting on.

The snow was not deep that year, so that one could walk anywhere, but here and there it was knee-deep and dropped into Nikita's boots. Nikita walked around, feeling with his feet and the whip, but could not find the road anywhere.

"Well?" said Vasili Andr&ch, as Nikita again came up to the sleigh.

"The road is not on this side. I must go and try on the other."

"There is a black spot in front, - go there and look," said Vasili Andr&ch.

Nikita went there, and approached that which looked black, - it was dirt which from the bared winter fields had drifted over the snow and had dyed the snow black. After having tried on the right side, Nikita came back to the sleigh, shook the snow off himself and out of one boot, and seated himself in the sleigh.

"We must travel to the right," he said, with determination. "The wind blew against my left side, and now blows straight into my face. Go to the right," he said, with determination.

Vasili Andr&dich obeyed him, and turned to the right. But still there

was no road. Thus they travelled for a little while. The wind did not subside, and there fell a light snow.

" Vasili Andr&ch, it seems that we have lost the road," Nikita suddenly exclaimed, as though with pleasure. " What is this ? " he said, pointing to black potato tops, which were sticking out through the snow.

Vasili Andrdich stopped the sweating horse, which was breathing heavily, drawing in its sloping sides.

" What is it ? " he asked.

"We are in the Zakharovka field. That's where we have driven to."

"Sure?" called out Vasili Andr&ch.

" I am not lying, Vasili Andrdich, but telling the truth," said Nikita. " I know it by the way the sleigh is going: we are travelling over a potato field; and here is a pile, where they heaped the tops. It is the field of the Zakharovka plant."

" I declare we have gone astray !" said Vasili Andr&ch. " What shall we do ? "

"We must keep straight ahead, that is all, – we shall come out somewhere," said Nikita. " If not to Zakharovka, we may come to a proprietor's out-farm."

Vasili AndnSicb obeyed him and let the horse go as Nikita had ordered him. Thus they travelled for quite awhile. At times they passed over bare sowed fields, and the sleigh thundered over clods of frozen earth. At times they travelled over stubble-fields, now over winter fields, and now over summer fields, where beneath the snow could be seen the wormwood and straw stalks tossing in the wind; at times they drove into deep and everywhere equally white and even snow, above which nothing could be seen.

The snow fell from above and sometimes rose from below. The horse was apparently fagged out; his hair was all curled and hoarfrosted from his sweat, and he went at a slow pace. Suddenly he broke through and settled in a puddle or ditch. Vasili Andr&ch wanted to stop, but Nikita cried out to him:

" Don't stop! We have got into it, and so have to get out again. Come now, dear one! Come, friend! " he cried out in a loud voice to the horse, jumping out of the sleigh and himself sticking fast in the ditch.

The horse jerked forward and at once came out on a frozen heap of earth. It was evident this was a dug trench.

" Where are we now ? " asked Vasili Andr&ch.

"We shall find out," replied Nikita. "Move on, we shall certainly come to some place."

"This must be Goryachkino forest," said Vasili Andrd-ich, pointing to something black, which appeared beyond the snow, in front of them.

" We shall go on, and then we shall find out what kind of a forest it is," said Nikita.

Nikita saw that long, dry willow leaves were borne toward him from the direction of the darkening spot, and so he knew that it was not a forest, but some settlement, but he did not want to say so. And, indeed, they had not travelled ten sdzhens from the trench when trees stood out black in front of them, and a new, moaning sound was heard. Nikita had guessed correctly. This was not a forest, but a row of tall willow-trees, with here and there leaves trembling upon them. The willow-trees were evidently planted along the trench of a threshing-floor. When the horse reached the willows, which were monotonously whining in the wind, he suddenly rose with his fore legs higher than the sleigh, pulled his hind legs, too, out on an elevation, turned to the left, and no longer sank up to his knees into the snow. This was a road.

" Here we are," Nikita said, " but we don't know where."

The horse no longer strayed from the road, though it was snow-drifted, and before they had travelled forty sfzhens on it, they saw in black outlines the straight strip of a wicker kiln under a snow-drifted roof, from which the snow kept drifting all the time. After passing the kiln, the road turned to the wind, and they drove into a drift. But in front of them could be seen a lane between two houses, so that apparently the drift was on the road, and they had to pass over it. And as soon as they crossed the drift, they drove into a street. At the first yard stiffly frozen linen, which was hanging on a rope, was desperately fluttering in the wind: there were shirts, one red, one white, drawers, foot-rags, and a skirt. The white shirt was whirling about most furiously, waving its sleeves.

" I declare, she is a lazy woman, or she is dying, for she has not taken in the linen for the holiday," said Nikita, as he looked at the dangling shirts.

III.

At the entrance of the street the wind blew strongly, and the road was drifted, but in the middle of the village it was quiet, warm, and cheerful. Near one yard a dog was barking at another ; a woman, covering her head with a sleeveless coat, came running from somewhere and entered through the door of the hut, stopping on the threshold, in order to look at the travellers. From the middle of the village could be heard the songs of girls.

In the village there seemed to be less wind, and snow, and frost.

" Why, this is Grishkino," said Vasili Andr&ch.

" So it is," replied Nikita.

It was, indeed, Grishkino. It turned out that they had kept too much to the left and had travelled something like eight versts off the road, but still in the direction of their place of destination. To Goryachkino they had to travel another five versts.

In the middle of the village they almost stumbled upon a tall man who was walking in the street.

" Who is there ? " shouted this man, stopping the horse ; on learning that it was Vasili Andr&ch, he took hold of the shaft and, groping along it with his hands, walked up to the sleigh and seated himself on the driver's seat.

He was an acquaintance of Vasili Andr&ch, Isay by name, and was in all the surrounding country known as the biggest horse-thief.

" Oh, Vasili Andr&ch ! Whither does God carry you ? " said Isdy, wafting against Nikita a breath of vodka.

" We were going to Goryachkino."

" And this is where you came to ! You ought to have kept toward Malakhovo."

"Of course, we ought to, but we did not," said Vasili Andr&ch, stopping his horse.

"The horse is a good one," said Isay, examining the horse and with a habitual motion tightening the slipping knot of the bushy tail.

" Well, are you going to stay here overnight ? "

" No, friend, we are obliged to go on."

" On business, no doubt. And who is he ? Oh, Nikita Stepanych!"

"I should say I am!" replied Nikita. "Now, dear man, how can we keep from losing the road again ?"

"No need of losing! Turn back, straight along the road, and when you come out, keep straight ahead. Don't take the left road. You will come out on the highway, and then to the right."

" Where is the turn from the highway ? A summer sign or a winter sign ?" asked Nikita.

" A winter sign. As soon as you come out on the highway, there are some bushes, and opposite the bushes a large, curly signal oak, - there it is."

Vasili Andrei ch turned his horse back, and went through the outskirts of the village.

"You had better stay overnight!" Isdy shouted after them.

But Vasili Andr&ch did not answer him, and touched his horse; it did not seem hard to travel the five versts of the level road, especially since the wind had died down and the snow stopped falling.

After going back over the street, which was well-travelled, and here and there showed black spots of fresh manure, and having passed the yard with the linen, where the white shirt had got off the rope and was dangling down by one frozen sleeve, they again reached the frightfully moaning willows and once more found themselves in the open field. The snow-storm had not only not subsided, but even seemed to have become stronger. The road was all covered with drifts, and the only way one could tell that one was on the road was by the signals. But it was difficult to make the signals out in front, because the wind blew in the face.

Vasili Andr&ch half-closed his eyes, bent down his head, and watched for signals, but mainly depended on the horse, to which he gave the reins. The horse actually did not lose the road, and went, turning to the right and to the left, to follow the bends of the road, which he felt under foot, so that, although the snow kept growing stronger overhead, and the wind began to blow more strongly, the signals could be seen, now on the right, and now on the left.

Thus they travelled about ten minutes, when suddenly in front of the horse there appeared something black, which moved in the slanting screen of the wind-driven snow. Those were fellow travellers. Yellow-muzzle caught up with them, and hit his feet against the hamper of the sleigh in front of him.

" Dri-i-ive around !" somebody shouted from the sleigh.

Vasili Andr&ch began to drive around. In the sleigh sat three peasants and a woman. They were apparently guests, going home from the holiday. One peasant kept whacking with a stick at the snow-covered back of the nag. Two, who were sitting in front, waved their hands and shouted something. The woman was all wrapped up and covered "with snow; she sat without moving, bumping herself, in the back of the sleigh.

" Who are you ?" cried out Vasili Andrei ch.

" From A-a-a-!" was all that could be heard.

" From where, I say ?"

" From A-a-a-!" one of the peasants shouted with all his might, but it was still impossible to make him out

" Go on! Don't give up! " shouted another, who never stopped whacking the nag with the stick.

" Evidently they have been celebrating."

" Go on, go on I Let her go, S^mka ! Move on ! Keep it up > "

The sleighs struck against one another with their wings, almost caught in one another, and separated, and the peasant sleigh began to fall behind.

The shaggy, snow-covered, pot-bellied nag, breathing heavily under her low arch, was evidently using her last strength to run away from the stick that was coming down on her back, and minced with her short legs in the deep snow, which she threw up as she ran. The muzzle, apparently of a young horse, with tightly drawn nether lip, as in a fish, with spreading nostrils and ears lying down from fear, for a few seconds was in a line with Nikita's shoulder and then began to fall behind.

"This is what liquor does," said Nikita. "They have completely worn out the horse. They are Asiatics! "

For a few minutes could be heard the nag's heavy breathing through the nostrils and the drunken shouts of the peasants, and then the heavy breathing stopped and the sounds of the peasants were not heard. And again nothing could be heard all around them, but the wind whistling about their ears, and now and then the squeak of the runners over the wind-swept places of the road.

This meeting cheered and braced up Vasili Andr&ch, and he drove the horse more boldly, without making out the signals, depending entirely on the horse.

Nikita had nothing to do, and, as always, when he was in such a situation, dozed off, to make up for much sleep he had lost. Suddenly the horse stopped, and Nikita almost fell down, lurching forward on his nose.

"We are again going wrong," said Vasili Andr&ch.

" What is it ?"

" I cannot see the signals. We must have lost the road again."

" If we have lost the road, we must find it," Nikita said, curtly; he got up and, stepping lightly with his in-toeing feet, started once more to walk over the snow.

He walked for a long time, disappearing from view, again appearing, and again disappearing, and finally came back.

" There is no road here, – maybe it is somewhere ahead," he said, as

he seated himself in the sleigh.

It was beginning to get quite dark. The snow-storm did not grow any stronger, nor did it subside.

" If we only could hear those peasants," said Vasili Andr&ch.

" They have not caught up with us, so we must have gone far astray. And maybe they have lost the road themselves," said Nikita.

" Whither shall we go ? " asked Vasili Andr&ch.

" We must let the horse go," said Nikita. " He will take us right. Let me have the reins."

Vasili Andr&ch gave up the reins, more willingly so because his fingers in the warm gloves were beginning to freeze.

Nikita took the reins and only held them, trying not to move them and rejoicing at the good sense of his favourite animal. Indeed, the clever horse, turning now one, now another ear, now to one side, and now to another, began to turn around.

" All he needs is speaking," Nikita kept saying. " See what he is doing ! Go on, go on, you know better ! That's it!"

The wind began to blow from behind, and it grew warmer.

" He is clever," Nikita kept rejoicing at the horse.

" Kirgiz is strong, but stupid. But he, – just see what he is doing with his ears. He does not need any telegraph, – he can scent a verst off."

Less than half an hour passed, when ahead there was, indeed, something black, – either a village or a forest, – and on the right side there again appeared the signals. They had evidently come out on the road.

" Why, this is again Grfshkino," Nikita suddenly exclaimed.

Indeed, on their left now was the same kiln, from which the snow drifted, and farther on was the same rope with the frozen linen, the shirts and drawers, which kept Lapping as desperately in the wind as before.

They again drove into the street, and again it was quiet, warm, and cheerful, and again could be seen the manure-covered road; again voices and songs were heard, and again the dog barked. It was already so dark that in several windows fires could be seen.

In the middle of the street Vasili Andr&ch turned his horse to a large house consisting of two brick parts, and stopped at the porch.

Nikita went up to the snow-drifted, lighted window, in the light of which sparkled the flitting snowflakes, and knocked at it with his whip butt.

" Who is there ? " a voice replied to Nikita's knock.

" From Kresty, the Brekhunovs, dear man," replied Nikita. " Just come out for a minute!"

The person went away from the window, and about two minutes later one could hear the door in the vestibule come open, then the latch clicked in the outer door, and, holding the door against the wind, there appeared an old peasant with a white beard, in a short fur coat thrown over his white holiday shirt, and after him a lad in red shirt and leather boots.

" Is it you, Andr&ch ?" asked the old man.

" We have lost our way, friend," said Vasili Andr&ch.

" We wanted to go to Goryachkino, but found our way here. We went a second time, but again lost our way."

" I declare, you have gone astray," said the old man. " Petrushka, go and open the gate! " he turned to the lad in the red shirt.

" I will do it," replied the lad, in a cheerful voice, and ran into the vestibule.

" We do not mean to stay overnight, friend," said Vasili Andr&ch.

" You can't travel, – it is night-time. Stay here ! "

" I should like to, but I have to go. Business, friend, – I can't."

" Well, warm yourself at least, – you have come in time for the samovar," said the old man.

" It will not do any harm to get warm," said Vasili Andr&ch. " It will not be any darker, and the moon will come out and light up things. Had we not better go in and warm ourselves, Nikita ? "

" Well, it will not do any harm to get warm," said Nikita, who was stiff with cold and anxious to warm his cold limbs in a warm room.

Vasili Andr&ch went into the room with the old man, and Nikita drove through the gate which the lad had opened, and moved the horse under the penthouse of the shed, which place the lad had pointed out to him. The shed was filled with manure, and the high arch caught in a beam. The hens, with the cock, who had settled to roost there, started cackling in dissatisfaction, and pattered with their feet over the beam. The disturbed sheep, stepping with their hoofs on the frozen manure, fled to one side. A dog, whining desperately, in fright and anger, in puppy fashion, began to bark at the stranger.

Nikita talked to all of them : he excused himself to the hens and assured them that he would not disturb them again ; he rebuked the sheep for being frightened without knowing why, and kept admonishing the dog all the time that he was tying his horse.

" Now it will be all right," he said, shaking the snow off himself. "How he barks!" he added, to the dog. " That will do ! Come, now, stop, foolish dog! You are only agitating yourself," he said. "We are no thieves, we are friends."

" These are, as it says, the three domestic counsellors," said the lad, with his powerful hand thrusting the sleigh, which was out in the open, into the penthouse.

" What counsellors ? " asked Nikita.

" So it is written in Pulson: a thief steals to the house, – the dog barks, – that means, don't dally, look out. The cock crows, – that means, get up. The cat washes herself, – that means, a dear guest: get ready to receive him," said the lad, smiling.

Petrushka could read and write, and knew almost by heart the only book he had, Paulson's text-book, and he was fond, especially when he had had something to drink, as to-day, of quoting from it utterances which, he thought, fitted the occasion.

" That's so," said Nikita.

" I suppose you are cold, uncle," added Petrushka.

" I am," said Nikita.

And they went across the yard and the vestibule into the house.

IV.

The farm where Vasili Andr&ch stopped was one of the wealthiest in the village. The family had five allotments, and, besides, rented other land. There were on this farm six horses, three cows, two heifers, about twenty sheep. There were in all twenty persons in this family : four married sons, six grandchildren, of which only Petrushka was married, two great-grandchildren, three orphans, and four daughters-in-law with their children. This was one of the extremely few farms which remained still undivided; but even in them there was going on the silent, internal work of dissension, which, as always, began among the women, and which would inevitably soon lead to division. Two sons were living as water-carriers in Moscow, and one was a soldier. At home were now the old man, his wife, his second son, the master, and his eldest son, who had come from Moscow for the holiday, and all the women and children ; besides the family there was also one of the neighbours, – a guest, – and a friend.

Over the table, in the room, hung a lamp, with an upper shade, which brightly lighted up the tea-dishes, a bottle of vodka, a luncheon, and the brick walls, which were in the far corner adorned with images on either side of which were pictures. On the first seat, behind the table, sat Vasili Andreich, in his short black fur coat only, licking his frozen moustache and observing the people and the room about him with his bulging, hawk eyes. Beside Vasili Andreich, there sat at the table the bald-headed, white-bearded old man, in a white home-spun shirt; beside him, in a fine chintz shirt, with mighty back and shoulders, was the son who had come from Moscow for the holiday, and another son, the broad-shouldered elder brother, who was the master of the house, and a lean, red-haired peasant, a neighbour.

The peasants had had something to drink and eat, and were now getting ready to drink tea, and the samovar was already crooning, as it stood on the floor near the oven. On the hanging beds and on the oven, children could be seen. On the bed bench a woman sat over a cradle. The old man's wife, with tiny wrinkles all over her face, which ran in every direction, and which wrinkled even her lips, waited on Vasili Andreich.

Just as Nikita entered the room, she was carrying up to the guest some vodka, which she had poured into a tumbler of thick glass.

" Do not misjudge us, Vasili Andreich; we must greet you," she said. " Take it, my dear."

The sight and odour of the vodka, especially now that he was cold and tired, very much confused Nikita. He frowned, and, shaking the snow off his cap and caftan, stood up opposite the images and, as though not seeing any one, made three times the sign of the cross and bowed to the images, then, turning back to the old man, the master, bowed, first to him, then to all those who were at the table, then to the women, who were standing near the oven, and, saying, " With the holiday," began to take off his wraps, without looking at the table.

" But you are covered with hoarfrost, uncle," said the elder brother, as he looked at Nikita's snow-covered face, eyes, and beard.

Nikita took off his caftan, shook it out, hung it up near the oven, and walked over to the table. He, too, was offered some vodka. There was a minute of agonizing struggle; he came very near taking the glass and pouring the fragrant, light-coloured moisture down his throat; but he glanced at Vasili Andreich, recalled his vow, recalled the boots which he had sold for drink, recalled the cooper, recalled the boy, for whom he had promised to buy a horse by spring, and so sighed and declined the vodka.

" I do not drink, thank you very much," he said, frowning, and sat down on a bench near the second window.

" Why not ? " asked the elder brother.

" I don't, and that's all," said Nikita, without raising his eyes, looking awry at his scanty moustache and beard, and thawing out the icicles from them.

"It is not good for him," said Vasili Andr&ch, biting off a cracknel after the glass which he had drunk.

" Well, then you will have some tea," said the kindly old woman. " I am afraid you are cold. Why are you women so slow with the samovdr ? "

" It is ready," replied a young woman, and, dusting off with her apron the boiling covered samovar, she with difficulty brought it up to the table, raised it, and set it down with a thud.

In the meantime Vasili Andr&dich told them how they had lost their way, how they had twice come back to the same village, how they had wandered around, and how they had met the peasants. The peasants wondered, explained where and why they had lost their way, and who the drunken peasants were whom they had met, and taught them how to travel.

" A little child would find the way from here to Mol-chanovka, – all you have to do is to find the turn from the highway,– you will see a bush there. But you did not go far enough," said the neighbour.

" You had better stay overnight. The women will make beds for you," the old woman admonished them.

"You had better travel in the morning, – it is nice then," affirmed the old man.

"Impossible, friend, – business!" said Vasili Andr&f-ich. " If you miss your hour, you won't make up for it in a year," he added, as he thought of the grove and of the merchants who might get ahead of him in this bargain. " We shall get there, shall we not ?" he said, turning to Nikita.

Nikita for a long time made no reply, as though all the time busy thawing out his moustache and beard.

" We may lose the road again," he said, gloomily.

Nikita was gloomy, because he was very anxious to get some vddka, and the one thing which could drown this desire was tea, and he had not yet been offered any tea.

"If we only get as far as the turn, we won't lose the way, – the road then lies straight through the forest," said Vasili Andr&ch.

" It is your business, Vasili Andr&dich. If you want to go, I don't care," said Nikita, taking the glass of tea which was handed to him.

" We shall drink our tea, and then, march."

Nikita said nothing, but only shook his head and, carefully pouring his tea into the saucer, began over the steam to warm his fingers, which were always swollen from work. Then, biting off a tiny piece of sugar, he bowed to the master and the mistress of the house, and said:

" May you be well," and he sucked in the warming liquid.

" If some one would take us as far as the turn!" said Vasili Andr&ch.

" Well, that can be done," said the eldest son. " Petrushka null hitch up and take you to the turn."

" Hitch up, then, friend, and I will be thankful to you for it."

" Why are you in such a hurry, dear one! " said the kindly old woman. " We are glad to have you."

" Petrushka, go and hitch up the marc," said the elder brother.

"I will," said Petrushka, smiling; and, immediately pulling his cap off a peg, he ran out to hitch up.

While the horse was being harnessed, the conversation passed over to what it had stopped at, when Vasili Andr&ch reached the window. The old man was complaining to his neighbour, the elder, about his third son, who had sent him nothing for the holiday, but had sent his wife a French kerchief.

" The young people are getting unmanageable," said the old man.

" Unmanageable ? " said the friend, " there is no getting along with them! They have become awfully clever. There is Demochkin, - he broke his father's arm. It is all from too much sense, I suppose."

Nikita listened and watched their faces and evidently wanted to take part in their conversation, but he was wholly occupied with the tea and only approvingly shook his head. He drank one glass after another, and he grew warmer and warmer, and happier and happier. The conversation lasted for a long time, all the while about one and the same thing, about the harm of division, and the conversation was apparently not in the abstract, but had reference to the division in this house, - a division which the second son, who was sitting there and keeping silent, was demanding. This was obviously a sore spot, and the question interested all the people of the house, but out of propriety they did not discuss their private affair. But finally the old man did not hold out, and with tears in his eyes declared that he would permit no division so long as he was alive, that, thanks to God, he had the house, and that if he divided up, they would all go a-begging.

« That's the way it was with the Matvydevs," said the neighbour. " They had a house that was a house ; they divided up, and now nobody has anything."

" That's the way you want it to be," the old man said, turning to his son.

His son made no reply, and there ensued an awkward silence. This silence was interrupted by Petrushka, who had hitched up and had several minutes ago returned to the room and had kept smiling all the time.

" There is a fable in Pulsou," he said: " a father gave his sons a broom to break; they could not break it together, but broke it easily by single rods. It is just like this," he said, smiling with his whole mouth. " Beady !" he said.

" If it is ready, we shall go," said Vasili Andr&ch. " And you, grandfather, don't give in as to the division. You have earned it, and you are the master. Complain to the justice of the peace. He will tell you what the law is."

" He is carrying on so, and carrying on so," the old man said, still sticking to the same subject, " that there is no getting along with him. Just as though the devil were in him."

In the meantime Nikita, having finished his fifth glass of tea, still did not turn it over, but laid it down sidewise, hoping that they would fill it again. But there was no more water in the samovar, and the hostess did not fill him another glass, and besides, Vasili Andr&ch was putting on his wraps. There was nothing to be done. Nikita himself got up, put back into the sugar-bowl the piece of sugar which he had nibbled at from all sides, with the skirt of his coat wiped his face, which was wet with perspiration, and went to put on his cloak.

After he had put it on, he drew a deep sigh and, thanking the host and the hostess and bidding them farewell, went out of the warm, light room into the dark, cold vestibule, in which the wind moaned and the snow was carried through the chinks of the trembling door, and from there into the dark yard.

Petrushka, in a fur coat, was standing with his horse in the middle of the yard, repeating, with a smile, verses from Pdulson. He said:

" Storm and mist beshroud the heaven, Drifts of snow fly up and whirl; Like a wolf the storm is howling, And now moaning like a girl."

Nikita approvingly shook his head and straightened out the reins.

The old man, in seeing Vasili Andr&ch out, carried a lantern into the vestibule, to show him the way, but the wind put it out at once.

It could be noticed in the yard that the snow-storm was now worse than before.

"But this is bad weather," thought Vasili Andreich; " we may not get there, – but I can't, business ! And I am ready to go, and the host's horse is hitched up. We shall get there, God willing! "

The host, too, thought that he ought not to travel, but he had advised him to stay, and no attention had been paid to him. There was no sense in asking again. " Maybe I am so timid on account of my old age, and they will get there," he thought. " At least we shall go to bed in time. There will be no trouble."

Petrushka did not even think of the danger: he knew the road and all the places about so well, and, besides, the verses about " drifts of snow fly up and whirl" braced him so much because they expressed precisely what was taking place in the yard. Nikita, however, did not want to travel at all; but he had long ago become accustomed to not having his own will and to serving others, and so no one kept the travellers back.

V.

Vasili Andreich walked over to the sleigh, with difficulty making out in the darkness where he was, climbed into it, and took the reins.

" Lead us !" he shouted.

Petrushka was kneeling in his sledge, and he started his horse. Yellow-muzzle, who had been neighing for quite awhile, since he knew that a mare was ahead of him, rushed forward, and they drove out into the street. They drove again through the outskirts of the village, and along the same road, past the yard with the frozen linen hanging out, but the linen was no longer visible; past the same shed, against which the snow had now drifted almost up to the roof, and from which endless snow was pouring; past the same gloomily moaning, whistling, and bending willow-trees, and again entered into the sea of snow, which was agitated above and below. The wind was so strong that when it blew from the side and the travellers settled themselves against it, it made the sleigh careen and turned the horse to one side. Petrushka drove his good mare in front at an easy trot, and kept shouting merrily. Yellow-muzzle ran after the mare.

Having travelled thus for about ten minutes, Petrushka turned around and shouted something. Neither Vasili Andreich nor Nikita heard through the wind what he said, but they guessed that they had arrived at the turn. Indeed, Petrushka turned to the right, and the wind, which had blown from the side, again began to blow in their face, and on the right, through the snow, something black could be seen. This was the bush at the turn.

" Well, God aid you ! "

" Thank you, Petrushka."

" ' Storm and mist beshroud the heaven,' " shouted Petrushka, as he disappeared.

" What a poet!" said Vasili Andrdich, pulling the reins.

" Yes, he is a fine lad, a real peasant," said Nikita.

They drove on.

Nikita wrapped himself and ducked his head down between his shoulders, so that his small beard hugged his neck; he sat quietly, trying not to lose any of the heat which he had obtained in the house with his tea. He saw in front of him the straight lines of the shafts, which kept constantly deceiving him, as they seemed to him to be the well-travelled road, and he saw the wavering crupper of the horse with his tail tied in a knot and hanging to one side, and farther ahead, the high arch and the shaking head and neck of the horse with the waving mane. Now and then he noticed the signals, so that he knew that so far they had been travelling on the road, and he had nothing to do.

Vasili Andreich drove, letting the horse choose his own road. But Yellow-muzzle, in spite of his having sighed in the village, ran unwillingly, and seemed to turn away from the road, so that Vasili Andrdich corrected him several times.

" Here, on the right, is one signal, and here another, and a third," Vasili Andreich counted, " and in front of us is the forest," he thought, as he looked at the black spot in front of him; but what had appeared to him to be a forest was only a bush. They passed the bush, they went another twenty sazhen, but there was no fourth signal, and there was no forest. " No doubt we shall soon have the forest," thought Vasili Andreich, and, excited by the wine and the tea, he did not stop, but touched the reins, and the obedient, good animal obeyed, and now at a pace

and now at a slow trot ran whither he was sent, though he knew that he was not going where it was necessary to go. Ten minutes passed, and there was still no forest.

«We have again lost our way," said Vasili Andr&ch, stopping his horse.

Nikita silently climbed out of the sleigh and, holding up his cloak, which now stuck to him in the wind, and now blew away from him and came near falling off, started to walk over the snow; he went to one side, and then to the other. Three or four times he was completely lost from sight. Finally he returned and took the reins out of Vasili Andr&ch's hands.

" We must go to the right," he said, sternly and with determination,

as he tinned the horse.

" Very well, let it be to the right," said Vasili Andr&ch, giving him the reins and sticking his frozen hands into his sleeves.

Nikita made no reply.

" Come, now, friend, do your best! " he shouted to the horse, but the horse, in spite of the shaking of the reins, went only at a walk.

The snow was here and there knee-deep, and the sleigh went by jerks, with every motion of the horse.

Nikita got the whip, which was hanging over the front, and struck the horse. The good horse, which was unaccustomed to the whip, yanked the sleigh, went at a trot, but immediately passed over to an amble and walk. Thus they travelled for about five minutes. It was dark and the snow fell from above and rose from below, so that it was at times impossible to see the arch. The sleigh seemed now and then to stand still, and the field to run backwards. Suddenly the horse came to an abrupt standstill, apparently noticing something wrong in front of him. Nikita again jumped out, throwing down the reins, and went ahead of the horse, to see what it was that had brought him to a standstill, but he had barely made a step

in front of the horse, when his feet slipped and he rolled down an incline.

" Whoa, whoa, whoa," he said to himself as he fell, and tried to stop himself, but he could not, and he stopped only when his feet cut their way into a thick layer of snow which had been blown up from the bottom of the ravine. The overhanging snow-drift, disturbed by Nikita's fall, caved in over him and fell behind his collar.

" What is the matter with you ? " Nikita said, reproachfully addressing the drift and the ravine, and shaking the snow out from behind his collar.

" Nikita, oh, Nikita! " Vasili Andr&ch called from above.

But Nikita made no reply.

He had no time: he was shaking off the snow; then he looked for the whip, which he had dropped as he rolled down the incline. When he found his whip, he tried to climb straight back, where he had rolled down, but there was no possibility of getting up; he kept rolling back, so that he had to go down-hill, to find a way up. About three sazhen from the place where he had rolled down, he with difficulty crawled up-hill, and followed the edge of the ravine back to the place where the horse should have been. He did not see either the horse or the sleigh; but as he was walking against the wind, he heard, before seeing anything, Vasili Andr&ch's shouts and Yellow-muzzle's neighing, for they had both made him out.

" I am coming, I am coming; what makes you yell so ? " he said.

Only when he had come up to the sleigh did he see the horse and Vasili Andrich, who was standing near it and looking enormous.

"Where in the devil have you been ? We have to go back. Let us get back to Gnsnkino," the master began angrily to reproach Nikita.

" I should be glad to go back, Vasili Andrich, but where shall we go ? Here is such a terrible ravine that, if we get into it, we shall never get out. I had such a fall that I barely got out alive."

" Well, are we going to stay here ? We have to go somewhere," said Vasili Andrich.

Nikita did not say anything. He seated himself in the sleigh, with his back to the wind, took off his boots and shook out the snow which had fallen into them, and, getting a handful of straw, carefully stopped a hole inside his left boot.

Vasili Andrich was silent, as though leaving everything now to Nikita. After putting on his boots, Nikita stuck his feet into the sleigh, again put on his mittens, took the reins, and turned the horse alongside the ravine. But they had not travelled one hundred steps, when the horse again stood still. In front of him was another ravine.

Nikita again climbed out and again trudged over the snow. He walked for quite awhile. Finally he appeared from the opposite side to the one from which he had started. ,

" Andrich, are you alive ?" he shouted.

"Here!" answered Vasili Andrich. " Well, what is it?"

" I can't make out. It is dark, – nothing but ravines. We must again travel against the wind."

They started again; again Nikita went trudging over the snow. He seated himself again, and again trudged, and finally stopped, out of breath, near the sleigh.

" Well, what is it ?" asked Vasili Andrich.

" I am all worn out, and the horse is stopping, – that's what it is."

" What is to be done ? "

" Well, wait."

Nikita went away again, and soon came back.

" Follow me," he said, walking in front of the horse.

Vasili Andreich no longer gave any orders, but submissively did Nikita's bidding.

" Here, after me," shouted Nikita, walking swiftly to the right and seizing Yellow-muzzle by the reins and directing him somewhere down into a snow-drift.

The horse at first refused to go, but then jerked forward, hoping to jump across the drift, but failed and settled in it up to the collar.

" Get out! " Nikita shouted to Vasili Andreich, who continued to sit in the sleigh, and, taking hold of one shaft, began to push the sleigh down toward the horse. " It is hard, friend," he addressed Yellow-muzzle, " but what is to be done ? Just a little pull! Come now, come now, just a little bit! " he shouted.

The horse jerked once, then another time, but still did not get out, and again stopped, as though considering something.

" Friend, this won't do," Nikita admonished Yellowmuzzle. " Just a little more 1 "

Again Nikita tugged at the shaft on his side. Vasili Andreich did the same on his. The horse moved his head, then gave a sudden jerk.

" Come now, you will not drown, don't be afraid ! " cried Nikita.

A jump, a second, a third, and finally the horse got out of the drift, and stopped, breathing heavily and shaking off the snow. Nikita wanted to lead on, but Vasili Andreich was so much out of breath in his two fur coats that he could not walk, and threw himself into the sleigh.

" Let me rest awhile," he said, loosening the kerchief with which he had in the village tied up the collar of his fur coat.

" It's all right here; lie there," said Nikita, " and I will lead ahead," and with Vasili Andreich in the sleigh he led the horse by the bridle about ten steps down, and then up again, and he stopped.

The spot where Nikita stopped was not in the ravine, where the snow which was swept from the hillocks had lodged so as to cover them completely ; but it was none the less partly protected against the wind by the edge of the ravine. There were moments when the wind seemed to die down a little; but this did not last long, and, as though to make up for this rest, the storm swept down later with tenfold force, and bore down and whirled worse than ever. There was such a gust of wind at the moment when Vasili Andreich, getting his breath back, climbed out of the sleigh and walked over to Nikita, in order to speak about what they should do. Both involuntarily bent their heads and waited before speaking, until the fury of the gust

should have passed. Yellow-muzzle, too, angrily let his ears drop and shook his head. As soon as the gust subsided a little, Nikita took off his mittens, which he stuck into his belt, breathed into his hands and began to unstrap the bridle from the arch.

"What are you doing there?" asked Vasili Andr&ch.

"I am unhitching, what else? I have no more strength," Nikita answered, as though to excuse himself.

"Sha'n't we get out anywhere?"

"No, we sha'n't, and we shall only wear out the horse. The dear one is not himself now," said Nikita, pointing to the horse, which was standing submissively, ready for anything, and breathing heavily with his sloping, wet sides. "We have to stay here overnight," he repeated, as though getting ready to stay overnight in an inn, and began to loosen the collar-strap.

The clamp sprang open.

"Sha'n't we freeze to death?" said Vasili Andr&ch.

"Well, if I do, I sha'n't refuse," said Nikita.

VI.

Vasili Andr&ch was quite warm in his two fur coats, especially after he had tried to get through the drift; but the frost ran up and down his back when he understood that he would really have to stay there overnight. To calm himself, he sat down in the sleigh, and began to take out his cigarettes and matches.

In the meantime Nikita unharnessed the horse. He unstrapped the belly-band and the saddle-straps, took out the reins, loosened the collar-straps, took out the arch, and kept all the time talking to the horse, to encourage him.

"Come out now, come," he said, taking him out from between the shafts. "We will tie you up here. I'll put some straw under you, and I'll take off the bridle," he said, while doing what he said. "You'll have a bite, and you'll feel better."

But Yellow-muzzle was apparently not quieted by Nikita's talk, and was agitated: he kept stepping now on one foot, and now on another, pressed close to the sleigh, standing with his back against the wind, and rubbed his head against Nikita's sleeve.

As though not to refuse Nikita's treatment of straw, which Nikita had shoved under his nose, Yellow-muzzle once jerked out a handful of straw from the sleigh, but immediately decided that this was no time for straw, and so dropped it, and the wind scattered it in a twinkling and covered it with snow.

" Now we will make a sign," said Nikita. Turning the sleigh toward the wind, and tying up the shafts with the saddle-strap, he raised them up and drew them close to the foot-board. " If we are buried in the snow, good people will see the shafts, and will dig us out," said Nikita, clapping his mittens, together and putting them on. " That's the way the old people taught me."

Vasili Andr&ch in the meantime opened his fur coat and covered himself with its skirts, and began to rub one sulphur match after another against the steel box; but his hands trembled, and the lighted matches one after another, even before burning up brightly, or at the very moment that he carried them to the cigarette, were blown out by the wind. Finally one match caught fire and for a moment lighted up the fur of his coat, his hand with the gold ring on the inwardly bent forefinger, and the snow-covered straw which peeped out underneath the matting, and the cigarette caught fire. He puffed at it two or three times, swallowed the smoke, breathed it out through his moustache, and wanted to take another puff, but the tobacco with the fire was caught in a gust and carried away in the same direction as the straw.

But even these few swallows of the tobacco smoke cheered up Vasili Andr&ch.

"If we have to stay here overnight, - let it be so!" he said, with determination. " Wait, I'll make a flag," he said, taking up the kerchief, which he had loosened from his collar and had thrown down in the sleigh; he took off his gloves, stood up on the foot-board of the sleigh, and, stretching forward, in order to reach up to the saddlestrap, tightly tied the kerchief to it near the shaft.

The kerchief immediately began to flutter desperately, now sticking to the shaft, now blowing away, stretching out, and flapping.

" See how well it is done ! " said Vasili Andr&ch, admiring his work, as he let himself down into the sleigh. " It would be warmer together, but there is no room for both of us," he said.

" I will find a place," replied Nikita, " only I have to cover the horse first, for the dear one is all in a sweat. Let me have it! " he added, and, walking over to the sleigh, he pulled the matting away from underneath Vasili Andr&ch.

When he had pulled it out, he doubled it, and, throwing off the crupper and taking off the saddle-bolster, covered Yellow-muzzle with it.

" You will be warmer now, silly one," he said, putting the saddle-bolster and the crupper back over the matting. " You won't need the blanket, will you ? And let me have a little straw," said Nikita, after finishing this work and again walking up to the sleigh.

And taking both away from underneath Vasili AndnS-ich, he went to the back of the sleigh, burrowed a hole for himself in the snow, put

the straw into it, and pulling his cap over his face, and wrapping himself in the caftan, and covering himself with the blanket, sat down on the straw bed, leaning against the bast back of the sleigh, which protected him against the wind and the snow.

Vasili Andr&ch disapprovingly shook his head at what Nikita was doing, as he in general did not approve of the ignorance and stupidity of any peasant, and began to arrange himself for the night.

He straightened out what straw there was left in the sleigh, put a lot of it under him, and, sticking his hands into his sleeves, rested his head at the front of the sleigh, where he was protected against the wind.

He did not feel like sleeping. He lay there thinking: he kept thinking of one thing, which formed the only aim, meaning, joy, and pride of his life, – of how much money he had made and how much more he could make; how much other people, whom he knew, had earned and now possessed, and how these others had made their money, and how he could, like them, make as much. The purchase of the Goryachkino forest was to him an affair of great moment. He expected to get rich at once from this forest, to make, probably, ten thousand. And he began mentally to estimate the value of the forest, which he had seen in the fall, and in which he had counted all the trees on an area of two desyatinas.

" The oak will be good for runners; and then the beams; and there will still be left some thirty sazhen to the desyatina," he said to himself. " There will be left at the least two hundred and a quarter to each desyatina. Fifty-six desyatinas, – fifty-six hundreds, and fifty-six hundreds, and fifty-six tens, and again fifty-six tens, and fifty-six fives." He saw that it amounted to at least twelve thousand, but he was unable without the abacus to make it out exactly. " Still, I won't give ten thousand ; I will give eight, with the deduction of the clearings. I will bribe the surveyor, – I will give him one hundred, or even one hundred and fifty; he will make out some five desyatinas of clearing. He will let me have it for eight. I'll throw three thousand at once into his face. That will soften him surely," he thought, feeling the pocketbook in his pocket with the upper part of his arm. " God knows, how we have lost our way! The forest ought to be here and the guard-house. We should be hearing the dogs. They don't bark, the accursed ones, when you want them to."

He removed the collar from his ear, and began to listen; there could be heard the same whistling of the wind and the flapping of the kerchief, and the pattering of the falling snow against the bast of the sleigh. He covered himself again. "If I knew for sure, we could stay here overnight. Well, we shall get there to-morrow. It will be only one day lost. They will not travel in such weather, either." And he recalled that on the ninth he was to receive money from the butcher for the steers. " He intended to come himself ; he will not find me at home, – my wife will not know how to receive the money.

She is very ignorant. She does not know the right way to act," he continued to think, as he recalled that on the day before she had not known how to act in the presence of the rural judge, who had called on him for the holiday. " Of course, she is a woman! She has not seen anything! What kind of a house did we have, when my parents were alive ? Just a wealthy peasant's house; a groats-sheller and an inn, – and that was all the property. And what have I done in fifteen years ? A shop, two taverns, a mill, a grain-store, two rented estates, a house, and a granary under tin roofs," he thought, with pride. " It is different from what it was in the time of my father. Whose name is everywhere known in the district ? Brekhunov's!

"And why is this so? Because I attend to business, I work harder than others, who are lazy or busy themselves with foolish things. I do not sleep at nights. Storm or not, I go out. Well, that's the way to do business. They think that it is just play to make money. No, you have to work and trouble your head. And you have to stay overnight in the open, and not sleep nights. How your pillow is tossed under your head from much thinking," he reflected, proudly. " And people imagine that it is luck that makes men. There, the Mironovs have millions now. Why ? Work, and God will give you. If God only grants us health! "

And the thought that he, too, might be such a mil-lionaire as Mironov, who began with nothing, so agitated Vasili Andr&ch that he felt the need of talking with somebody. But there was no one to talk to. If he could reach Gorydchkiuo, he would talk with the landed proprietor,– he would show him a thing or two.

« How it blows! There will be such a drift that we shall not be able to get out in the morning," he thought, listening to the gust of the wind, which blew against the front of the sleigh, and bent it, and whisked the snow against the bast. He rose a little and looked around: in the white, agitated darkness could be seen only Yellowmuzzle's black-looking head and his back, which was covered with the flapping matting, and his thick knotted tail, while all around, in front, behind, there was everywhere a monotonous, agitated darkness, which at times seemed barely lifted, and at times again more dense.

" I had no business listening to Nikita," he thought. " We ought to be travelling, – we should somehow get somewhere. We could get back to Grishkino, and could stay overnight at Taras's. We shall have to stay here all night. What good could come from tins? Well, God rewards for labours, and gives nothing to vagabonds, lazybones, or fools. I must have a smoke ! " He sat up, took out his cigarette-holder, lay with his belly downward, covering the fire from the wind with the skirt of his coat, but the wind none the less found its way in and put out one match after another. Finally, he managed to light one, and he began to smoke. He was very much pleased to have at last succeeded. Though it was the wind that smoked the most of the cigarette, he none the less took three or four puffs, and he again felt more cheerful. He again lay back against the sleigh, wrapped

himself up, and began once more to bring back memories and reveries, and suddenly lost his consciousness and fell asleep.

But suddenly it was as though something gave him a push and woke him up. Whether it was Yellow-muzzle who had jerked out some straw under him, or something within him agitated him, he awoke, and his heart began to knock so rapidly and so strongly that it seemed to him that the sleigh was shaking under him. He opened his eyes. Around him all was as before, but it seemed to him to be lighter.

"It is growing lighter," he thought, "no doubt it is not far from daylight." But he immediately recalled that it was lighter because the moon was up. He raised himself a little and looked first at the horse. Yellow-muzzle was still standing with his back against the wind, and was all a-tremble. The snow-covered matting was turned to one side, the crupper had slipped down, and the snow-covered head with the fluttering forelock and mane could now be made out. Vasili Andreich leaned against the back of the sleigh and glanced at the horse. Nikita was still sitting in the same posture in which he had been sitting before. The blanket, with which he had covered himself, and his feet were thickly covered with snow.

"I am afraid the peasant will freeze to death; he has miserable clothes on. They will make me responsible for him. What shiftless people they are! Truly ignorant," thought Vasili Andreich. He felt like taking the matting off the horse and covering Nikita with it, but it was cold to get up or move around, and he was afraid the horse might freeze to death. "What did I take him for? It is all her silliness!" thought Vasili Andreich, as he recalled his wife, whom he did not love, and he again rolled over to his former place in the front part of the sleigh. "Uncle once sat the whole night in the snow, just like me," he thought, "and he was all right. Well, when they dug out the vasty an," another example occurred to him, "he was dead, as stiff as a frozen carcass."

"If I had remained overnight in Grishkino, nothing would have happened." And, wrapping himself carefully so that the warmth of the fur might not be wasted, but might warm him in the neck, at the knees, and in the soles of his feet, he closed his eyes, trying once more to fall asleep. But, no matter how much he tried now, he was unable to forget himself, but, on the contrary, felt himself entirely cheerful and animated. He began once more to count up his profit, the debts people owed him, and again boasted to himself and rejoiced at himself and at his position; but everything was now constantly interrupted by furtive fear and the annoying thought that he had not done right in not staying in Grfshkino. "I should be lying on a bench and be warm now." He turned around several times and adjusted himself, trying to find a more comfortable position, which would be protected from the wind, but he felt all the time uncomfortable; he raised himself again, changed his position, wrapped his legs, closed his eyes, and grew silent. But either his cramped feet in their strong felt boots began to pain him, or the wind blew through, and he, lying awhile, again, with anger at himself, recalled how he might have been sleeping now peacefully in

the warm hut at Grfshkino, and he got up again, tossed about, wrapped himself, and again lay down.

At one time Vasili Andr&ch was sure he heard the distant crowing of a cock. He was happy, opened his fur coat, and began to listen intently, but, no matter how much he strained his hearing, he could not hear anything but the sound of the wind, which whistled in the shafts and flapped the kerchief, and the sound of the snow swishing against the bast of the sleigh.

Nikita remained sitting in the same posture that he had taken in the evening, and did not even make any reply to the words of Vasili Andr&ch, who called to him two or three times. " He does not worry much, - no doubt he is asleep," Vasili Andr&ch thought in anger as he looked over the back of his sleigh at Nikita, who was covered with a thick layer of snow.

Vasili Andr&ch got up and lay down again about twenty times. It seemed to him that there would be no end to this night. " Now it must be near to morning," he once thought, as he got up and looked around. " I will look at my watch. It will make me cold to unwrap myself. Well, when I know that it is near morning, I shall feel more at ease. We shall hitch up again."

In the depth of his heart Vasili Andr&ch knew that it could not yet be morning, but he began to become more and more timid, and wanted at one and the same time to verify and to deceive himself. He carefully slipped the hooks off the eyes of his fur coat, and, putting his hand in the bosom of his coat, rummaged for a long time before he found his waistcoat. He with difficulty drew his silver watch with the enamelled flower design from his pocket, and tried to make out the time. He could not see anything without light. He again lay face downward on his elbows and knees, and just as when he had lighted his cigarette took out the matches and began to strike them. Now he went to work in a more methodical manner, and, feeling with his fingers for a match with the greatest amount of phosphorus, lighted it at once. He pushed the face of the watch toward the light, and when he looked at it he did not believe his eyes. It was only ten minutes past twelve. There was yet a whole night ahead of him.

" Oh, what a long night!" thought Vasili Andr&ch, feeling the cold run up his spine; and, wrapping himself and covering himself again, he pressed into the corner of the sleigh, preparing himself to wait in patience. Suddenly he clearly heard a new, live sound through the monotonous noise of the wind. The sound increased evenly, and, upon reaching complete clearness, began just as evenly to die down. There was no doubt but that this was a wolf. And this wolf was so near that with the wind it was possible to hear how he, moving his jaws, changed the sound of his voice. Vasili Andr&ch threw back his collar and listened attentively. Yellow-muzzle, too, listened intently, pricking his ears, and, when the wolf ended his tune, changed the position of his feet and gave a cautioning snort. After this Vasili Andr&ch was absolutely unable to fall asleep, or even to calm

himself. No matter how much he tried to think of his calculations, his business, and his fame, and of his worth and wealth, terror took even more possession of him, and above all his thoughts hovered, and to all his thoughts was added the thought as to why he had not stayed for the night at Grishkina

" The devil take the forest! I have, thank God, enough business without it. Oh, if I could but pass the night!" he said to himself. " They say that drunken people freeze to death," he thought, " and I have had something to drink." And, watching his sense of feeling, he noticed that he was beginning to tremble, not knowing himself why he was trembling, whether from cold or from fear. He tried to cover himself and to be as before, but he was unable to do so. He could not remain in one spot, – he felt like getting up, undertaking something, in order to drown the rising terror, against which he felt himself to be powerless. He again drew out his cigarettes and matches, but there were but three matches left, and they were all bad. All three sizzled, without catching fire.

" The devil take you, accursed one, – go to! " he cursed, himself not knowing whom, and flung away the crushed cigarette. He wanted to fling away the matchbox, too, but he arrested the motion of his hand, and stuck it into his pocket. He was assailed by such unrest that he could no longer stay in one spot. He climbed out of the sleigh and, standing with his back against the wind, began to gird himself tightly low down in the waist.

" What sense is there in lying and waiting for death ? I'll get on the horse and – march ! " it suddenly occurred to him. " When I am on the horse's back, he will not stop. As for him," he thought, in reference to Nikita, " it does not make much difference if he dies. What kind of a life is his, anyway ? He does not even care much for life, while I, thank God, have something to live on."

And untying the horse, he threw the reins over his neck and tried to jump on him, but the fur coats and the boots were so heavy that he fell down. Then he stood up on the sleigh, and tried to mount from the sleigh. But the sleigh tottered under his weight, and he fell down again. Finally he moved the horse for the third time up to the sleigh, and, standing carefully on its edge, finally succeeded in getting on his belly across the horse. Lying thus awhile, he moved forward once, and twice, and finally threw his leg across the horse's back, and seated himself, pressing with the soles of his boots against the lower crupper strap. The motion of the tottering sleigh woke up Nikita, and he got up, and Vasili Andr&ch thought that he was saying something.

" To listen to you, fools! Why should I perish, for nothing ? " shouted Vasili Andr&ch, and, adjusting the flapping skirts of his fur coat under his knees, he turned the horse and drove him away from the sleigh, in the direction where, he supposed, was the forest and the guardhouse.

VII.

From the time that Nikita had seated himself, after being covered with the blanket, against the back of the sleigh, he had remained motionless in the same posture. Like all men who live with Nature and know want, he was patient and could patiently wait for hours, even days, without experiencing either restlessness or irritation. He heard his master call him, but made no reply, because he did not want to move or talk. Though he was still warm from the tea he had drunk and from having moved about a great deal, when climbing over the snow-drifts, he knew that this heat would not last long and that he would not be able to warm himself by moving, because he felt himself as tired as a horse, when it stops and is unable, in spite of all the whipping, to move on, and the master sees that it has to be fed, to be able to work again. One foot in the torn boot was cold, and he no longer felt the big toe on it. Besides, he was getting colder and colder over his whole body. The thought that he might, and in all probability would, die that night, occurred to him, but this thought did not seem particularly disagreeable or terrible to him. This thought was not particularly disagreeable, because his whole life had not been a continuous holiday, but, on the contrary, an unceasing sendee, from which he was beginning to be tired. Nor was this thought particularly terrible to him, because, besides those masters, like Vasili Andr&ch, whom he had been serving here, he felt himself always, in this life, dependent on the chief Master, who had sent him into this life, and he knew that even dying he would remain in the power of the same Master, and that this Master would not do him any harm. " It is a pity to give up what I am used to and accustomed to. Well, what is to be done ? I shall have to get used to the new things."

" Sins ?" he thought, and he recalled his drunkenness, the money wasted in drink, the insult to his wife, his cursing, non-attendance at church, non-observance of fasts, and all that for which the pope had rebuked him at the confession. " Of course, they are sins; but have I brought them down on myself ? God has evidently made me such. Well, and the sins ! Where can one go to?"

Thus he thought at first as to what might happen with him that night, and later he no longer returned to these thoughts, but abandoned himself to those recollections which naturally occurred to him. Now he recalled Marfa's arrival, and the drunkenness of the workmen, and his refusal to drink liquor; now again the present journey, and Taras's hut, and the talk about dividing up; now again he thought of his boy, of Yellow-muzzle, who would now get warmed up under the blanket, and of his master, who made the sleigh creak, as he kept tossing about in it. " I suppose, dear man, you are not a bit glad you have gone out," he thought. "A man who leads such a life does not want to die. It is not like one of ns fellows." And all these recollections began to become mixed in his head, and he fell asleep.

But when Vasili AndrAch, seating himself on his horse, shook the sleigh, and the back of it, against which Nikita was leaning, rose, and a runner struck Nikita in his back, he awoke and was

involuntarily compelled to change his position. With difficulty straightening out his legs and shaking off the snow from them, he got up, and immediately a painful cold penetrated his body. When he saw what the matter was, he wanted Vasili Andreich to leave him the matting, which the horse did not need any longer, so that he might cover himself with it, and he so called out to Vasili Andreich.

But Vasili Andreich did not stop, and disappeared in the powdery snow.

When Nikita was left alone, he mused for awhile what to do. He did not feel himself strong enough to go and look for a house. He could no longer sit down in the old place, – it was all covered with snow. He felt that in the sleigh, too, he would not get warm, because he had nothing to cover himself with, and his caftan and fur coat no longer kept him warm. He was as cold as though he had nothing but his shirt on. He felt ill at ease. "Father, heavenly Father!" he muttered, and the consciousness that he was not alone, but that some one heard him and would not leave him, quieted him. He drew a deep breath and, without taking the blanket off his head, climbed into the sleigh and lay down where his master had been lying before.

But he could not warm himself in the sleigh, either. At first he trembled with his whole body, then the chill passed, and he began slowly to lose consciousness. He did not know whether he was dying or falling asleep, but he felt himself equally prepared for either.

#### VIII.

In the meantime Vasili Andreich drove the horse with his feet and with the reins in the direction where, for some reason, he assumed that the forest and the guardhouse were. The snow blinded him, and the wind, it seemed, wanted to stop him, but he, bending forward and constantly wrapping himself in his fur coat and sticking it between himself and the cold saddle-bolster, which made it hard for him to sit up, continued to drive the horse. Though with difficulty, the horse went submissively at a pace whither he was directed to go.

For about five minutes he rode, as he thought, straight ahead, without seeing anything but the head of the horse and the white wilderness, and without hearing anything but the whistle of the wind about the ears of the horse and the collar of his fur coat.

Suddenly something black stood out in front of him. His heart fluttered with joy, and he rode toward the black spot, thinking that he could make out the walls of village houses. But the blackness was not motionless; it kept moving, and was not a village, but tall mugwort, which had grown out on a balk and was sticking out through the snow and desperately tossing about under the pressure of the wind, which carried it to one side and whistled through it. For some reason the sight of this mugwort, agitated by the merciless wind, made Vasili Andreich tremble, and he began hurriedly to drive the horse, without noticing that, in riding up to the mugwort, he had changed the direction wholly and now was driving the horse in an

entirely different direction, still thinking that he was riding to the place where the guard-house ought to be. But the horse kept turning to the right, and so he kept turning it to the left.

Again something black appeared in front. He rejoiced, being sure that this time it certainly was a village. But it was again a balk, which was overgrown with mugwort. The dry mugwort was fluttering in the wind as before, for some reason filling Vasili Andreich with terror. But this was not only the same kind of mugwort: near by there was a horse track, which was just being drifted over. Vasili Andreich stopped, bent over, looked close: it was a horse track that was just being covered up, and it could be nobody else's but his own. He was evidently going around in a circle, and within a small area. " I shall perish in this way !" he thought, but, not to submit to his terror, he began to drive his horse with more force, staring at the white snow mist, in which he thought he could discern points of light, which disappeared as soon as he looked close at them. At one time he thought he heard the barking of dogs or the howling of wolves, but these sounds were so feeble and so indefinite that he did not know whether he heard anything or whether it only seemed so to him, and he stopped and began to listen intently.

Suddenly a terrible, deafening noise was heard near his ears, and everything trembled and shook under him. Vasili Andreich seized the horse's neck, but the horse's neck was also shaking, and the terrible sound became more terrible still. For a few seconds Vasili Andr&ch could not regain his senses or make out what had happened. What had happened was, that Yellow-muzzle, either encouraging himself, or calling for somebody's aid, had neighed in his loud, melodious voice. " Pshaw, accursed one, how you have frightened me!" Vasili Andr&ch said to himself. But even when he comprehended the true cause of his fright, he was not able to dispel it.

" I must come to my senses and regain my composure," he said to himself, and yet he could not control himself, and kept driving his horse, without noticing that he was no longer travelling with the wind, but against it. His body, especially where it was uncovered and touched the saddle-bolster, was freezing and aching, his hands and feet trembled, and his breath came in gusts. He saw that he was perishing amidst this terrible snow wilderness, and he did not see any means of salvation.

Suddenly the horse lurched forward and, sticking fast in a snow-drift, began to struggle and fall sidewise. Vasili Andr&ch jumped down from his horse, and in his leap pulled the crupper on which his foot was resting to one side, and jerked down the saddle-bolster, to which he was holding as he jumped down. The moment Vasili Andr&ch jumped down, the horse straightened himself up, rushed forward, took a second leap, and, neighing and dragging along the loosened matting and harness, disappeared from view, leaving Vasili Andreich by himself in the snow-drift. Vasili Andreich started after him, but the snow was so deep, and the fur coats were so heavy on him, that, sinking with every leg above his knee into the snow, he, after taking not more than twenty steps, got out of breath and stopped. "

The grove, the steers, the estate, the shop, the taverns, the tin-roofed house and granary, the heir," he thought, "how will all this be left? What is this? Impossible!" it flashed through his head. And for some reason he recalled the mugwort fluttering in the wind, past which he had ridden twice, and he was assailed by such terror that he did not believe the reality of what happened with him. He thought: "Is not all this in a dream?" and he wanted to wake up, but there was no need of waking. It was real snow, which lashed his face and covered him up and chilled his right hand, from which he had lost the glove, and this was a real wilderness, in which he was now left alone, like that mugwort, awaiting inevitable, imminent, senseless death.

"Queen of heaven, saintly Father Nicholas, teacher of abstinence," he recalled the mass of the previous day and the image with the black face in the gold-leaf, and the tapers which he had sold for this image and which were immediately brought back to him, and which he put away in the box almost untouched. And he began to beg this same Nicholas, the miracle-worker, to save him, promising him masses and tapers. But he at once understood clearly and indubitably that this image, gold-leaf, tapers, priest, masses, — all these were very important and necessary there, in the church, but that here they could do nothing for him, that between these tapers and masses and his present distressed condition there was, and could be, no connection. "I must not lose my courage," he thought. "I must follow the horse's tracks, or they will soon be covered with snow," it suddenly occurred to him. "This will take me out, and I may catch him yet. Only I must not be in haste, or I shall stick fast and be lost worse than ever." But, in spite of his intention to go slowly, he rushed forward and started on a run, falling all the time, getting up again, and falling again. The horse track became barely visible in those places where the snow was not deep. "I am lost," thought Vasili Andrich, "I shall lose the track, and I shall not catch the horse." But just at that moment he looked forward and saw something black. This was Yellow-muzzle, and not only Yellow-muzzle himself, but also the sleigh and the shafts with the kerchief. Yellow-muzzle, with the harness and matting knocked sidewise, now stood, not in the old place, but near the shafts, and was tossing his head, which was pulled down by the rein he was stepping upon. It turned out that Vasili Andrich had stuck fast

in the same ravine in which he had stuck fast with i ikita, that the horse was —taking him back to the sleigh, naees frtn6 i jTped E from him not more than fifty paces from where the sleigh was. 3

IX.

Making his way with difficulty to the sleigh, Vasili Andrich grasped it, and for a long time stood motionless, trying to calm himself and get his breath. Nikita was not in his old place, but in the sleigh lay something which was covered with snow, and Vasili Andrich guessed that this was Nikita. Vasili Andrich's terror was now completely gone, and if he was afraid of anything, it was of that terrible condition of terror, which he had experienced on the

horse, and especially when he was left alone in the drift. It was necessary by no means to permit this terror, and in order not to permit it, it was necessary for him to do something, to busy himself with something. And so the first thing he did was to stand with his back against the wind and to open up his fur coat. Then, as soon as he got his wind back a little, he shook the snow out of his boots and the left glove,— the right glove was hopelessly lost and no doubt somewhere deep in the snow; then he again girded himself tightly low in the waist, as he was in the habit of girding himself when he went out of the shop to buy the grain which the peasants brought in their carts, and began to prepare himself for work. The first thing he thought he had to do was to get the horse's foot out of the rein. So he did, and, having freed the rein, he again tied Yellow-muzzle to the iron clamp in the front of the sleigh, where he had stood before, and began to get behind the horse, in order to straighten on him the crupper, the saddle-bolster, and the matting; but at that moment he noticed that something moved in the sleigh, and from under the snow, with which the mass was covered, rose Nikita's head. It was evidently with great effort that Nikita, who was freezing stiff, raised himself and sat up, in a strange manner, as though driving off the flies, swinging his hands in front of his face. He moved his hand and said something, — Vasili Andr&ch thought he was calling him. Vasili Andr&ch left the matting, without straightening it out, and walked over to the sleigh.

" What do you want ?" he asked. " What did you say ?"

" I am dy-dy-dying, that's what," Nikita said, with difficulty, in a halting voice. " Give my earnings to my lad or to my woman, — it is all the same."

" Are you frozen?" asked Vasili Andr&ch.

" I feel my death, — forgive, for Christ's sake," — Nikita said, in a tearful voice, continuing to move his hands in front of his face, precisely as though he were warding off flies.

Vasili Andr&ch for about half a minute stood silent and motionless, then suddenly, with the same determination with which he struck his hands at a profitable bargain, took a step backward, rolled up the sleeves of his fur coat, and began with both his hands to scrape the snow down from Nikita and out of the sleigh. When he had finished the work, he hurriedly loosened his belt, spread the fur coat, and giving Nikita a push, lay down on him, covering him not only with his fur coat, but also with his whole warm, heated-up body. Having with his hands fixed the skirts of the fur coat between the bast of the sleigh and Nikita, and having caught the lower edge between his knees, Vasili Andr&ch lay thus, face downward, pressing his head against the bast of the front of the sleigh, and now no longer heard the movement of the horse, nor the whistling of the storm, but only listened to Nikita's breathing. Nikita at first lay for a long time motionless, then heaved a loud sigh, and began to move.

" That's it, — you said you were dying. Lie still, warm yourself, —

we shall – " began Vasili Andr&ch.

But, to his great surprise, he was not able to speak more, because tears had appeared in his eyes, and his lower jaw was moving rapidly. He stopped talking, and only swallowed what came to his throat. " I am frightened, it seems; I am very weak," he thought to himself. But this weakness was not only not disagreeable to him, it even afforded him a certain special joy, such as he had never experienced before.

" We shall – " he said to himself, experiencing a certain solemn meekness of spirit. He lay for quite awhile in silence, wiping his eyes against the fur of his fur coat, and catching between his knees the right skirt of the fur coat, which was being carried away by the wind.

But he felt so much like telling somebody about his joyous condition.

" Nikita ! " he said.

" All right, I am warm," the answer came from below.

" Yes, my friend, I was lost. You would have frozen to death, and so should I."

But just then his jaws began to tremble, and his eyes were again filled with tears, and he was unable to continue speaking.

" That's nothing," he thought. " I know about myself what I know."

And he grew silent. Thus he lay for a long time.

He felt warm underneath, from Nikita, and warm above, from the fur coat; only his hands, with which he held down the skirts of the fur coat on each side of Nikita, and his legs, from which the wind kept blowing his fur coat away all the time, began to freeze. Particularly his right hand, without the glove, began to freeze. But he was not thinking of his feet or of his hands, but only of how he might warm up the peasant who was lying under him.

He looked several times at the horse, and saw that his back was uncovered and the matting and the harness were lying in the snow, and that it was necessary to get up and cover the horse, but he could not make up his mind to leave Nikita for a minute and impair that joyous condition in which he was. He did not now experience any fear.

" Never mind, he can't get away," he said to himself about his warming up the peasant, with the same boasting with which he spoke of his purchases and sales.

Thus Vasili Andr&ch lay an hour, and two and three hours, but he did not know how the time passed. At first there hovered in his

imagination impressions of the snow-storm, a shaft, and horses under an arch, which were shaking before his eyes, and he thought of Nikita, who was lying under him; then there were mingled in recollections of the holiday, his wife, the rural judge, the taperbox, and again Nikita, who was lying under this box ; then he saw peasants, who were buying and selling, and white walls, and houses roofed with tin, under which Nikita was lying; then all this got mixed, – one thing entered into another, and, like the colours of the rainbow, which unite into one white colour, all the various impressions blended into one nothing, and he fell asleep. He slept for a long time, without dreams, but before daybreak the visions returned. He imagined he stood near the taper-box, and Tikhon's wife was asking him for a five-kopek taper for the holiday, and he wanted to take the taper and give it to her, but his hands did not go up, but stuck fast in his pockets. He wanted to go around the box, but his legs did not move, and the new, clean galoshes stuck fast to the stone floor, and he could not lift them up or take his feet out of them. And suddenly the taperbox was not a box, but a bed, and Vasili Andrdich saw himself lying with his belly on the box, that is, in his bed, in his house. And he is lying on his bed and can-

not get up, but he must get up, because Ivan Matvydich, the rural judge, will soon come in, and he must go with Ivan Matvy&ch to buy the forest, or fix the crupper on Yellow-muzzle. And he asks his wife, " Well, Nikolaevna, has he been here?" "No," she says, " he has not." And he hears some one driving up to the porch. It must be he. No, past. " Nikolaevna, oh, Nikolaevna, is he not yet here ?" " No." And he lies on his bed, and cannot get up, and waits, and this waiting gives him pain and joy. And suddenly the joy is accomplished: the one he has been waiting for has come, but it is not Ivan Matvydich, the rural judge, but some one else; but still it is the one he is waiting for. He has come, and he calls him, and the one who calls him is the one who has called him and who has told him to lie down on Nikita. And Vasili Andrdich is glad that this somebody has come for him. " I am coming !" he cries joyfully, and this cry awakens him. And he wakes up, but he wakes up a different man from what he was when he fell asleep. He wants to get up, and he cannot; he wants to move his hand, – he cannot; his foot, – and again he cannot. He wants to turn his head, and he cannot do that either. And he wonders, but is not in the least worried about it. He understands that it is death, and is not in the least worried about it. And he recalls that Nikita is lying under him, that Nikita is warmed up and alive, and it seems to him that he is Nikita, and Nikita he, and that his life is not in him, but in Nikita. He strains his hearing, and he hears Nikita's breathing and even a feeble snoring. " Nikita is alive, consequently I am alive," he says to himself, triumphantly.

And he tlinks of the money, the shop, the house, the purchases, the sales, Mirdnov's millions: he finds it hard to understand why this man, whom they used to call Vasili Brekhundv, busied himself with all these things that he did busy himself with. " Well, he did not know what the matter was," he thinks of Vasili Brekhunov. " I did not know, but now I know. Now there is no mistake. Now I know." And

again he hears the call of him who has called him before. " I am coming, I am coming!" his whole being says joyfully, meekly. And he feels that he is free and that nothing now holds him back.

And Vasili Andr&ch saw and heard and felt nothing more in this world.

All about him there was the same snow mist as before. The same gusts of snow whirled about and covered the fur coat of dead Vasili Andr&ch, and all of trembling Yellow-muzzle, and the barely visible sleigh, and warmed up Nikita, who was lying deep down in it, under his dead master.

X.

Nikita awoke before morning. What wakened him was the cold which was beginning to go down his spine. He dreamt that he was coming from the mill with a wagon-load of his master's Hour, and that, in passing a brook, he had missed the bridge and stuck fast in the mud. And he sees that he crawled under the wagon and is lifting it with his arched back. But, strange to say, the wagon does not move and is glued to his back, and he cannot raise the wagon, nor get away from under it. It is crushing his whole spine. And it is so cold! He certainly must get out from under it. " This will do," he says to him who is pressing the wagon down on him. " Take off the bags !" But the wagon presses him colder and colder, and suddenly something knocks with peculiar force, and he awakens completely and recalls everything. The cold wagon is the frozen dead master, who is lying on him. And the knock was produced by Yellow-muzzle, who twice struck his hoof against the sleigh.

" Andr&ch, oh, Andr&ch !" Nikita calls his master, cautiously, with a presentiment of the truth, and arching his back.

But Andr(\*ich makes no reply, and his belly and his legs are stiff and cold and heavy, like weights.

" Dead, no doubt. The kingdom of heaven be his!" thinks Nikita.

He turns his head, digs with his hand through the snow, and opens his eyes. It is light; the wind whistles as before through the shafts, and the snow falls as before, with this difference only, that it no longer lashes the bast of the sleigh, but noiselessly buries the sleigh and the horse, deeper and deeper, and neither the horse's motion nor his breathing can be heard. " He, too, must be frozen dead," Nikita thought of Yellow-muzzle. And, indeed, those knocks with the hoofs against the sleigh, which awakened Nikita, were the death-efforts of stiffly frozen Yellow-muzzle to keep on his feet.

" Lord, Father, apparently Thou art calling me too," Nikita said to himself. " Thy holy will be done. I feel bad. Well, there is but one

death, and that cannot be escaped. If it would only come soon – ”  
And he again hid his hand, closing his eyes, and forgot himself,  
fully convinced that now he was certainly dying, the whole of him.

Not until noon of the following day did peasants dig Vasili Andr<sup>ich</sup> and Nikita out with shovels, within thirty sazhen from the road, and half a verst from the village.

The snow was blown higher than the sleigh, but the shafts and the handkerchief could still be seen on it. Yellow-muzzle, up to his belly in the snow, with the crupper and matting pulled down from his back, stood all white, pressing his dead head against his stiff throat; his nostrils were frozen into icicles; the eyes were covered with hoarfrost, as though filled with tears. He had grown so thin in this one night that nothing but his hide and bones were left on him. Vasili Andr<sup>dich</sup> was cold, like a frozen carcass, and his legs were sprawling, and he remained bent, when he was rolled off Nikita. His bulging hawk eyes were frozen, and his open mouth, beneath his clipped moustache, was filled with snow. But Nikita was alive, though badly frozen. When Nikita was awakened, he was sure that he was dead, and that what was taking place with him was happening in the other world, and not in this. But when he heard the shouting peasants, who were digging him out and rolling stiffened Vasili Andr<sup>ch</sup> off from him, he was at first surprised to

find out that people shouted in the same way in the other world and had the same kind of a body ; but when he comprehended that he was still in this world, he was rather sorry than glad, especially when he felt that his toes on both his feet were frozen off.

Nikita lay in the hospital for two months. They cut off three of his toes, and the others healed up, so that he could work again, and he continued to work another twenty years, at first as a labourer, and later, in his old age, as a watchman. He died only this last year, at home, as he had desired, under the holy images, and with a burning taper in his hands. Before his death he asked his old wife's forgiveness and forgave her for the cooper; he bade good-bye also to his boy and his grandchildren, and died, sincerely happy because by his death he was freeing his son and daughter-in-law from the burden of additional bread, and because he was now in reality passing from this life, of which he had become tired, into that other life, which with every year and hour became more comprehensible and more attractive to him.

We shall soon find out whether he is better off, or worse, there where he awoke after his real death, whether he was disappointed, or whether he found what he had expected.