

POLIKUSHKA

A Novel by Leo Tolstoy

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

1860

1.

" As you wish, madam ! Only the Dutldvs are to be pitied. They are every one of them fine fellows ; and if we do not present at least one manorial servant, one of theirs will certainly have to go," said the clerk. " As it is, all point to them. However, as you wish it."

He changed the position of his right hand over his left, holding both before his belly, bent his head to the other side, drew in his thin lips almost with a smacking sound, rolled his eyes, and grew silent with the obvious intention of keeping a long silence and of listening without retort to all the nonsense which the lady would certainly tell him.

He was a clerk chosen from among the manorial servants. He was clean shaven and wore a long coat of a special cut for clerks, and was standing one autumn evening before his mistress with a report. According to the conception of the mistress, this report consisted in listening to accounts of past estate operations and laying out the future ones. According to Egor Mikhaylovich's, the clerk's, conception, a report was a ceremony consisting in standing up straight on both his toed-out feet in the corner, with his face turned

to the divan, listening to all kinds of irrelevant tattle, and by all kinds of means exasperating the mistress to a point when she would hurriedly and impatiently say, " All right, all right ! " to all of Egor Mikhaylovich's propositions.

Just now the question under discussion was the conscription. After St. Mary's Intercession, three men had to be presented. Two had unquestionably been determined upon by fate, through the coincidence of domestic, moral, and economic conditions. In regard to these there could be no wavering or discussion, neither on the side of the Commune, nor on the mistress's side, nor on the side of public opinion. The third one was in dispute. The clerk wanted to save all three young Dutlovs and to offer the married manorial servant, Polikushka, who had a very bad reputation and who had frequently been caught stealing bags, lines, and hay ; but the mistress, who

had often shown favours to Polikushka's ragged children, and who had been mending his morality by means of gospel precepts, did not want to give him up. At the same time she was not ill-disposed toward the Dutlovs, whom she did not know and had never seen. For some reason she was not able to perceive, and the clerk could not make up his mind to explain it to her outright, that if Polikushka would not go, Dutlov would certainly have to.

" I do not wish the Dutlovs any misfortune," she said, feelingly. " If you do not wish it, you will have to pay three hundred roubles for a recruit," was the reply which ought to have followed upon that, but diplomacy did not permit it.

And thus Egor Mikhaylovich stood calmly, even leaning slightly against the doorpost, but preserving an expression of servility upon his countenance, and watched the lady's quivering lips and the bobbing of the ruche on her cap, together with her shadow upon the wall below the picture. He did not consider it in the least necessary to make out the meaning of her words. The lady spoke long and much. He had a spasm of yawning back of his ears, but he cleverly changed that spasm into a cough by putting his hand over his mouth and making a pretence at clearing his throat.

I lately saw Lord Palmerston sitting with his hat on, while a member of the opposition thundered against the ministry, and suddenly getting up and replying to all points of his opponent in a speech which lasted three hours. When I saw that I was not surprised, because I had had occasion of seeing something similar a thousand times between Egor Mikhâylovich and his mistress. Either because he was afraid of falling asleep, or because it seemed to him that she was too much carried away, he transferred the weight of his anatomy from his left leg to his right, and began with a sacramental exordium, as he always began :

" As you please, madam, only – only there is a gathering now in front of my office, and we must make an end of it. The official order says that the recruits have to be taken to town by St. Mary's Intercession. The peasants point to the Dutlovs and to no one else. The Commune does not consider our interests: they do not care if we ruin the Dutldvs. I know what a hard time they have had. Ever since I have had charge of things here, they have been poor. The old man has just had the pleasure of seeing his younger nephew, when they are to be ruined again. I am caring for your property, permit me to tell you, as though it were my own. It is a pity, madam, whatever your pleasure may be. They are no kith nor kin to me, and I have received nothing from them – "

" Neither did I have the intention, Egdr," the lady interrupted him, though she at once concluded that he had been bought by the Dutldvs.

" But theirs is the best peasant farm in the whole Pokrdvskoe : they are God-fearing, industrious men. The old man has been a church elder for thirty years ; he does not drink, does not swear, and attends church." (The clerk knew how to get at her.) " The main

thing is, permit me to inform you, that he has only two sons ; the rest are his nephews. The Commune points to them, but, in reality, he ought to cast a double lot. Others, on account of their want, have divided up with three sons, and now they are all right, but these have to suffer for their virtue."

Here the lady was entirely at a loss: she did not understand what a " double lot " and what the " virtue " was; she only heard sounds and watched the nankeen buttons on the clerk's coat: the upper button he apparently buttoned less frequently, so it was firmly attached, but the middle button had been pulled out and hung loose, so that it ought long ago to have been sewed on again. As all know, at a talk, especially on business matters, it is not at all necessary to understand what one is told, but one must remember precisely that which one intends to say. Even thus the lady acted.

"Why do you not want to understand me, Egdr Mikhaylovich ? " she said. " I do not want Dutlov to be a soldier. It seems to me that you know me well enough to understand that I am doing all I can to help my peasants, and that I do not wish them harm. You know that I am ready to sacrifice everything in order to free myself from this sad necessity and not to have to give up Dutldv and Khoryushkin." (I do not know whether it occurred to the clerk that in order to free herself from the sad necessity it was not necessary to sacrifice everything, but that three hundred roubles would do it ; anyway, this thought might have occurred to him.) " But I will tell you this much : I will not give up Polikushka for anything. When, after the last affair with the clock, he himself confessed and wept, and swore that he would mend his ways, I spoke with him for a long time, and I saw that he was touched and that he sincerely repented of his deed." (" Off she goes ! " thought Egor Mikhaylovich and began to watch the syrup which was in her glass of water. " Is it orange or lemon ? I suppose it is something pungent," he thought.) " Seven months have passed since, and he has not been drunk once, and he behaves beautifully. His wife tells me that he is a different man now. How can you expect me to punish him now since he has improved so ? And is it not inhuman to send a man to the army when he has five children and is all alone ? No, you had better not mention that to me, Egor - "

And the lady sipped from her glass.

Egdr Mikhaylovich watched the water gurgling down her throat, and then he retorted, briefly and sharply :

" So you order me to determine on Dutlov ? "

The lady clapped her hands.

" Why do you not want to understand me ? I do not wish the Dutlovs any misfortune, and I have nothing against them. God is my witness that I am always ready to do something for them." (She looked at the picture in the corner, but remembered that it was not God. "Well, that makes no difference," she thought. It is strange she did not

think of the three hundred roubles.) " But what am I to do ? How do I know what ought to be done ? I can't know it. I depend upon you : you know what I want. Do so as to satisfy all, according to the law. What is to be done ? They are not the only ones. Everybody has troublesome moments. Only I will not allow Polikushka to go. You must understand that that would be terrible on my part."

She would have spoken much longer, she was so animated ; but just then a chambermaid entered the room.

« What is it, Dunyasha ? "

" A peasant has come to ask Egdr Mikhaylovich whether he commands the gathering to wait ? " said Dunyasha, looking angrily at Egor Mikhaylovich. (" What a clerk ! " she thought. " He has excited the lady, and now she will not let me fall asleep before two o'clock.")

" So go, Egor," said the lady, " and do the best you can."

" Yes, madam." He said nothing about Dutlov. " Whom do you command me to send to the gardener for the money ? "

" Has Petrusha not yet returned from town ? "

" No, madam."

" Can't Nikolay drive down there ? "

" Father is down with the lumbago," said Dunyasha.

" Shall you not order me to drive there to-morrow ? " said the clerk.

" No, you are wanted here, Egor." The lady fell to musing. " How much money is it ? "

" Four hundred and sixty roubles, madam."

" Send Polikiishka," said the lady, casting a determined look at Egor Mikhaylovich.

Egor Mikhaylovich, without opening his teeth, stretched his lips, as though to smile ; he did not change the rest of his face.

" Yes, madam."

" Send him to me ! "

" Yes, madam," and Eg6r Mikhaylovich went to the office.

II.

Polikushka, as an insignificant and slovenly man, and as being from another village, did not enjoy the protection of housekeeper, or butler, or clerk, or chambermaid, and his "corner" was the worst imaginable, although there were seven in his family.

The "corners" had been built by the late master. They were arranged as follows: In a stone hut, twenty-five feet square, there stood in the middle a Russian oven; around it there was a "colidor," as the manorial servants called it, and in every corner a "corner" was fenced off with boards. There was, consequently, little space in each, especially little in Polikushka's corner, the farthest from the door. A nuptial couch with a quilt coverlet and chintz pillows, a cradle with a baby in it, a little three-legged table, on which the food was prepared, the clothes were washed, and all the house-goods placed, and on which Polikushka himself worked (he was a veterinarian); vats, clothes, chickens, a calf, and the seven of the family filled the whole corner. Nobody would have been able to move, if the common oven had not offered one-fourth, upon which things and people were placed, and if it had not been possible to go out on the steps. To tell the truth, it was not possible: in October it was cold, and of warm clothes there was but one sheepskin coat for the whole seven of them; but the children could warm themselves by running, and the grown ones by working, or any of them by climbing on the oven, where it was often forty degrees Réaumur.

One would think that it was dreadful to live under such conditions; but they did not mind it, — they managed to get along. Akulma washed the children and fed them and her husband; she spun, and wove, and bleached her linen, cooked and baked in the common oven, and exchanged words and gossip with her neighbours. Iler monthly allowance of food sufficed not only for the children, but as an extra for her cow. The wood was free, and so was the feed for the cattle. Also some hay from the stable fell to their share. They had a garden strip. The cow had had a calf; there were also chickens of their own.

Polikushka was attached to the stable. He looked after two stallions, and bled the horses and cattle; he cleaned hoofs, lanced sores, and put on ointments of his own invention, and for this he received money and provisions. There were also the manorial oats which they had, and in the village there was a peasant who regularly every month gave twenty pounds of mutton for two measures of the oats.

One could get along, if there were not a grief to account for, and the grief for the family was great indeed. Polikushka had in his youth been working in a stud, in another village. The groom, under whose charge he was, was the first thief in the whole district: he was deported to Siberia. Polikushka had received his instruction from this groom, and, being young, he became accustomed to "these trifles," so that, no matter how much he tried, he could not cure

himself of the habit. He was a young, weak man ; he had no parents, and there was no one to teach him.

Polikushka liked to drink, but he did not like things to lie around loose. A strap, a saddle-cloth, a lock, a coupling-pin, or anything more expensive, found a place with Polikéy Ilich. There were everywhere people who accepted these things and paid for them in wine or money, according to agreement. These earnings are the easiest, say the people: one needs nothing here, neither study, nor work, and when you have tried it once, you do not wish to do any other work. There is just one bad thing about these earnings : although the things come easy and cheap, and such a life is pleasant, bad people sometimes spoil your trade, and you have to pay for it all at once, and then you are not especially glad of living.

Just so it had happened with Polikushka. Polikushka was married, and God gave him happiness : his wife, the cattle-keeper's daughter, was a healthy, intelligent, industrious woman, and she bore him children, one better than the other. Polikushka did not abandon his trade, and every tiring went well. Suddenly he had bad luck, and he got caught. He got caught on a mere trifle : he had put away a peasant's leather reins. They were found, and he received a beating, and was taken to the lady, after which he was watched.

He was caught a second and a third time. The people put him to shame ; the clerk threatened him with military service ; his wife wept and grieved her life away ; everything began to go topsyturvy.

He was a kind and not at all a bad man, only he was weak, liked to take a drink, and had become so used to it that he could not let it alone. His wife would scold him, and even beat him, when he came home drunk, and he would weep.

" I am an unfortunate," he would say, " and what shall I do ? May my eyes burst, I will give it up, I will do it no more ! "

Behold, two months later he would again go away from home ; he would be drinking, and be gone for two days.

" He must be getting money somewhere," people would say.

His last affair was with the office clock. There was in the office an old wall clock, that had long been out of repair. He happened to come in by himself through the open door : he was tempted by the clock, so he took it down and carried it away to town, where he disposed of it. It so happened that the shopkeeper, to whom he had sold the clock, was some kin to a manorial woman ; when he came to the country for the holidays he told about the cluck. They began to inquire about it, as though really anybody cared much about the clock. The clerk particularly was not fond of Polikushka. The whole thing was found out. The lady was informed of it. The lady called up Polikushka. He immediately fell down before her feet, and with feeling and touchingly, as his wife had instructed him, confessed his whole guilt. He acquitted himself well. The lady began to reason

with him. She talked and talked, and preached to him about God, and virtue, and the life to come, and about his wife and children, and moved him to tears. The lady said :

" I shall forgive you, only you must promise me never to do it again."

« I sha'n't do it in all my life ! May I go through the floor, and may my entrails be tom out, if I do ! " said Polikushka, weeping touchingly.

Polikushka came home, and there bawled all day long like a calf, and lay on the oven. Since then nothing wrong had been noticed in Polikushka. Only his life was not a joy to him : people looked upon him as a thief, and when the time of the conscription came, they all pointed to him.

As was said before, Polikushka was a veterinarian. How he had suddenly become a veterinarian, nobody knew, least of all he himself. In the stable of the stud he had, under the deported groom, exercised no other function than that of cleaning the manure out of the enclosures, and sometimes grooming the horses and hauling water. He could not have learned it there. Then he was a weaver; then he worked in a garden and cleaned the paths ; then for a punishment he broke bricks ; then, working out, he hired himself out as a janitor with a merchant. Consequently he had had no experience there, either.

During his last stay at home he slowly began to acquire a wide reputation as an unusual, even a supernatural, veterinarian. He bled horses once or twice ; then he threw a horse and fumbled around in its thigh ; then he de-manded that the horse be taken to a trave, where he began to cut its frog to the quick, though the horse struggled and even whined, saying that that meant to " let the subungulate blood." Then he explained to a peasant that the blood ought to be let from both veins " for greater lightness," and began to strike the dull lancet with a mallet; then he pulled the selvage of his wife's kerchief underneath the belly of the innkeeper's horse. Finally he began to sprinkle vitriol on all kinds of sores, to put on wet compresses from a vial, and to give them sometimes internal doses, such as occurred to him. The more he tormented and killed the horses, the more people believed him, and the more horses were brought to him.

I feel that it is not quite proper for people of our class, for gentlemen, to laugh at Polikushka. The artifice which he employed in order to gain confidence is the same which has affected our fathers and us, and will affect our children. A peasant, who with his belly presses down the head of his only mare, which not only forms his wealth, but is almost part of his family, and who in faith and terror looks at the solemn and frowning face of Polikushka, and at his thin, bared arms, while his hands purposely press the painful spot and he boldly cuts the sound flesh with the secret thought, " The bow-legged one will get over it," and pretends that he knows

where the blood is, and where the pus, where the dry vein and where the wet vein, while he holds with his teeth a rag bandage or a vitriol vial, – that peasant would not suspect that Polikushka's hand could be raised to cut with–

out knowing what he was doing. He himself could not do it. After the horse had been cut open, he would not reproach himself for having permitted it to be cut open without cause. I do not know how you feel about it, but I have experienced precisely the same with a doctor who, at my request, has tormented people who were near to my heart. A lancet and a mysterious whitish vial with a sublimate, and the words "apoplexy, piles, let blood, matter," and so forth, are they any different from "nerves, rheumatism, organisms," and so forth? Wage du zu irren und zu träumen, refers not so much to poets as to doctors and veterinarians.

III.

That very evening, while the gathering, choosing a recruit, was dining near the office in the chill murkiness of an October night, Polikushka was sitting on the edge of the bed at the table and in a bottle mixing a horse medicine, about which he knew nothing. Here was sublimate, sulphur, Glauber's salt, and some grass, which Polikushka had collected, having once come to the conclusion that this grass was good for asthma, and regarding it as proper also in other diseases.

The children were already lying down, two on the oven, two on the bed, and one in the cradle near which Akulina was sitting spinning. A dip from the unguarded manorial candles, in a wooden candlestick, was standing on the window, and, in order that her husband might not be disturbed in his important work, Akulina got up several times to snuff the dip with her fingers.

There were some freethinkers who regarded Polikushka as a worthless veterinarian and a worthless man; others, again, and they were in the majority, looked upon him as a bad man, but a great master of his art. Akulina, however, notwithstanding the fact that she frequently scolded and even beat him, regarded him as unquestionably the first veterinarian and the first man in the world.

Polikushka poured some ingredients into the palm of his hand. (He did not use a scale, and ironically referred to the Germans who used it by saying, "This is not an apothecary shop!") Polikushka added this ingredient

it, and sat down on the bed, his face shone with contentment and with the pride of a man who has finished his day's work. He was happy, either because he thought of how on the morrow he would take hold of the horse's tongue and pour down its throat that wonderful mixture, or because he reflected that a useful man is never refused

anything, and that even now Nikita had sent him some tobacco.

Suddenly the door, which was hanging on one hinge, was thrown back, and into the room entered the girl " from up there," not the second, but the third- servant, who was kept to be sent on all kinds of errands. " Up there," as everybody knows, means the manor, even if it be down below. Aksyutka, as the girl was called, always flew like a bullet, whereat her arms did not bend, but swayed like a pendulum, according to the rapidity of her motion, not at her sides, but in front of her body ; her cheeks were always redder than her pink dress ; her tongue always moved as fast as her legs. She flew into the room and, for some reason getting hold of the oven, began to sway, and, as though wishing to utter by all means not more than two or three words at once, suddenly, out of breath, delivered the following, as she turned to Akulina:

" The lady has commanded Polikéy Ilich to come up there this very minute, so she has commanded - " She stopped, and with difficulty drew breath. " Eg6r Mikhaylovich was at the lady's, they spoke about recruits, they mentioned Polikéy Ilich - Avdotya Nikolaevna has commanded him to come this very minute. Avddtya Nikolaevna has commanded " (again a sigh) " him to come this Very minute."

Aksyutka looked for about half a minute at Polikushka, at Akulina, at the children, who stuck their heads out from underneath their coverlets, picked up a nutshell which was lying on the oven, threw it at Anyutka, and, once more repeating " this very minute," like a whirlwind

flew out of the room, and the pendulums began to sway with customary rapidity across the line of motion.

Akulina got up again and fetched her husband's boots. They were worthless, torn, soldier's boots. She took the caftan down from the oven and handed it to him, without looking at him.

" Ilich, won't you change your shirt ? "

" No," said Polikushka.

Akulina did not once look at his face while he silently put on his boots and caftan, and it was well for her that she did not. Polikushka's face was pale, his lower jaw was trembling, and in his eyes there was that tearful and submissive and deeply wretched expression which is found only in good, weak, and guilty persons. He combed his hair and was on the point of leaving ; his wife stopped him, fixed the cord of his shirt, which was hanging over his coat, and put his cap on his head.

" Oh, Polikéy Ilich, does the lady want to see you ? " was heard the voice of the joiner's wife beyond the partition.

It was but that very morning that the joiner's wife had had a heated dispute with Akulina on account of a pot of lye which Polikushka's

children had spilled, and in the first moment it gave her pleasure to hear that Polikushka was called to the lady, for it certainly meant no good. Besides, she was a sly, diplomatic, and venomous woman. No one knew better than she how to cut one with a word ; at least she thought so about herself.

" No doubt they want to send you to town to make some purchases," she continued. " I suppose she is after having a trustworthy man, and so she is sending you. In that case, Polikéy Ilich, please buy me a quarter of a pound of tea."

Akulina held back her tears, and her lips were compressed into an evil expression. Nothing would she have liked better than getting her fingers into the nasty hair of that slut, the joiner's wife. But, as she looked at her children and thought that they would be left orphans and she a soldier-widow, she forgot the venomous joiner's wife, covered her face with her hands, sat down on the bed, and her head fell down on the pillows.

" Mamma, you are crussing me," said the lisping little girl, pulling her dress away from under her mother's elbow.

"I wish you were all dead ! I have borne you for misfortune ! " exclaimed Akulina and sobbed out loud, to the delight of the joiner's wife, who had not yet forgotten the lye of the morning.

IV.

Half an hour passed. The baby began to cry, and Aku-lina got up to feed it. She was no longer weeping, but, leaning her still pretty, thin face upon her arms, she fixed her eyes on the flickering remnant of the candle, and thought of why she had married, why so many soldiers were needed, and how she could pay back the joiner's wife.

Her husband's steps were heard. She dried the vestiges of her tears and got up to let Polikushka come in. Polikushka entered with a dashing. gait, threw his cap upon the bed, drew long puffs of breath, and ungirded himself.

" Well ? What did the lady want you for ? "

" Hem ! We might have known ! Polikushka is no good ! But when anything is up, who is wanted ? Polikushka."

" What is up ? "

Polikushka was in no hurry to answer. He lighted his pipe and spit out.

" She has commanded me to go to town to fetch some money from the merchant."

" To get some money ? " asked Akulina.

Polikushka smiled and shook his head.

" She is great on talking ' ' You,' says she, * are marked as an untrustworthy man, only I trust you more than anybody else.' " Polikushka spoke loud in order that the neighbours might hear him. "'You have promised me to mend,' says she, ' so here is the first proof that I trust you : go,' says she, ' to the merchant, get the money, and bring it back ! ' < We,' says I, ' madam, we,' says I, ' are all your serfs, and we must serve you as we should serve God, because I feel that I can do everything for your comfort and must not swerve from any duty ; whatever you will command I will do, because I am your slave.' " He again smiled that peculiar smile of a weak, good, guilty man. " ' So you will do it well ? ' says she. ' Do you understand that your fate depends upon it ? ' says she. ' Of course I understand that I might do anything. If people have said something against me, it is easy enough to slander a man, but I, it seems to me, have never contrived against your comfort.' I just talked to her so fine that my mistress softened. ' You will be my first servant,' says she." He was silent for a moment, and again the same smile was on his face. " I know how to speak with them. When I worked out, I was sometimes jumped upon by people. If I only had a chance to speak with them I greased them up so that they became smoother than silk."

"How much money is it ?" Akulina asked again.

" Fifteen hundred roubles," Polikushka answered, carelessly.

She shook her head.

" When will you go ? "

" She has commanded me to go to-morrow. * Take any horse you wish,' says she. « Go to the office, and God be with you ! ' "

" The Lord be praised," said Akulina, rising and crossing herself. " May God help you, Ilich," she added, in a whisper, so that she might not be heard behind the partition, and holding him by the shirt-sleeve. " Ilich, listen to me ! I implore you by Jesus Christ to kiss the cross and swear before leaving that you will not take a drop into your mouth."

" You don't suppose I will, when I am travelling with such money ? " he blurted. " Somebody was playing the

piano there, oh, so awfully cleverly ! " he added, after a moment's silence and smiling. " I think it was the young lady. I was standing up there before the lady, but there, behind the door, the miss was

rattling it off fine. She just would let herself loose and roll it off so softly,— it was just a joy to listen. I should like to play myself, really I should. I'd study it out. I am a great hand at such things. Let me have a clean shirt for to-morrow."

They lay down to sleep happy.

V.

In the meantime there was a noisy gathering near the office. It was not a trifling matter. The peasants were out in full force, and while Egor Mikhaylovich was with the mistress the heads were covered and more voices than before could be heard in the common conversation, and the voices were louder than before. The groan of the heavy voices, now and then interrupted by breathless, hoarse, shrieking speech, hovered in the air, and this groan, like the sound of a roaring sea, reached the windows of the lady, who experienced a nervous disquietude akin to the sensation provoked by a storm. It gave her a twinge of dread and discomfort. She seemed to feel that the voices would any minute grow louder, and that something would happen. "Why can't they do everything quietly, peacefully, without quarrelling, and without a noise," she thought, "in a Christian, fraternal, and religious manner?"

Several voices were speaking together, but louder than all shouted Fédor Ryezun, the carpenter. He was a doubler¹ and was attacking the Dutlovs. Old man Dutlov was defending himself ; he stepped out from the crowd, behind which he had been standing, and, in a strangling voice, swinging his arms, and holding his beard, spoke so much through his nose that he himself would have found it hard to understand what he was saying. His children and nephews stood in a serried rank close to him. Old Dutlov reminded one of the mother hen in the

1 Doublers are families possessing two able-bodied men.

game of "Vulture." The vulture was Ryezun, and not Ryezun alone, but all the doublers and singlers, almost all men of the meeting, who were attacking Dutlov.

Matters were like this : Dutlov's brother had been made a soldier some thirty years before, and so he, being a tripler, did not wish to be in turn for the conscription, claiming that his brother's service exempted him, and demanding to be placed on a level with the doublers, among whom the common lot for the third recruit should be cast.

There were four more triplers, besides Dutlov ; but one of them was the elder, and the lady had excused him ; from another family a recruit had been sent up the previous conscription. From the remaining two families two soldiers had been appointed. From these

one had not come at all to the gathering, and only his wife stood sadly back of the crowd, hoping that somehow the wheel would turn in her favour ; the other of the two appointed soldiers, red-haired Roman, in a torn coat, though he was not poor, stood leaning against the porch and, with drooping head, kept silent all the time, except that now and then he glanced attentively at the loudest speaker, after which he again lowered his head. His whole form seemed to exhale wretchedness. Old Semén Dutlov was a man to whom anybody, who knew him but slightly, would entrust hundreds and thousands of dollars for safekeeping. He was a reserved, God-fearing, industrious man ; he was, besides, a church elder. For this reason the excitement with which he spoke was the more striking.

Ryezun, the carpenter, on the other hand, was a tall, swarthy, riotous, drunken, bold man, especially glib in disputes and debates at the meetings and in the marketplace with workmen, merchants, peasants, or gentlemen. Now he was calm and malicious, and from the height of his stature, with all the power of his sonorous voice and oratorical talent, was crushing the drawling church elder, who was now completely lifted out from his peaceful rut.

Among the participants in the debate there was also round-faced, young-looking, square-headed, curly-bearded, thick-set Gerasim Kopylov, one of the speakers who followed after Ryezun. He belonged to the younger generation and was distinguished for his sharp speech, and had already gained prominence in the meetings of the Commune. Then there was Fédor Mélnichny, a sallow, haggard, lank, stooping peasant, also young, with scant hair in his beard, and small eyes, always bilious and gloomy, finding a bad side in everything, and frequently puzzling the meetings by his unexpected and abrupt questions and remarks. Both these speakers were on Ryezun's side.

Besides these, two babblers now and then took part in the debate : one of them, with a most good-natured physiognomy and long blond beard, Khrapkdv, who kept saying all the time, " Now, my dear friend," and another, a small man, with a birdlike face, Zhidkov, who, too, had a set phrase for everything, " which means, friends," and who addressed everybody and never spoke to the point. They were both now for one side, and now for the other, but nobody paid any attention to them. There were still others like them, but these two kept flitting about between the crowd, shouting more than the rest and frightening the lady ; they were listened to less than the rest, but, stunned by the noise and din, they completely abandoned themselves to the pleasure of their itching tongues.

There were still many other characters among these peasants of the Commune : there were gloomy, decent, indifferent, timid ones ; there were also women back of the men, with sticks in their hands ; but of these I shall tell some other time, if God will grant me to do so. The crowd at large consisted of peasants who stood at the meeting as if at church ; in the rear they conversed in a whisper about domestic affairs, or about clearing the underbrush in the woods, or they waited in silence for the talkers to stop prattling.

Then there were the rich, whose well-being could neither be increased nor diminished by these meetings. Such was Ermfl, with a broad, shining face, whom the peasants called big-bellied because he was rich. Such also was Starostin, upon whose face lay the self-satisfied expression of power : " Say what you please, but nobody will touch me. I have four sons, but not one of them will be made a soldier." Now and then the freethinkers, like Kopylov and Ryezun, teased these also, but they replied calmly and firmly, with the consciousness of their inviolability.

If Dutlov reminded one of the mother hen in the game of " Vulture," his lads did not exactly remind one of fledgelings ; they did not toss about, or squeak, but stood silently in the rear. The eldest, Ignat, was about thirty years old ; the second, Vasili, was also married, but unfit as a soldier; the third, Ilya, his nephew, who had but lately been married, a light-complexioned, ruddy-faced lad in a foppish sheepskin coat (he worked out as a driver), stood looking at the people, now and then scratching the back of his head below the cap, as though it were not at all his business, whereas it was he that the vultures were anxious to tear away.

" If it conies to that, my grandfather was a soldier himself," said one, " so I will decline to draw a lot myself. There is no law on that, my friend. At last conscription they shaved Mikhéich a soldier, although his uncle had not yet returned home."

" Neither your father nor your uncle has served the Tsar," Dutldv was saying at the same time, " and you have served neither the masters, nor the Commune, but have only passed your days in drinking, so that your children had to divide up the property. You can't get along yourself, so you point to others ; but I was a hundredman for ten years, and an elder, and have twice burned down, and nobody has helped me ; and because there is peace and decency on our farm, you want to ruin me ! Give me back my brother ! I suppose he died there. Judge honestly and according to God's law, Orthodox people, and don't pay any attention to what a drunken fellow is babbling."

At the same time Gerasim was saying to Dutldv :

" You are pointing to your brother ; but he was not sent up by the Commune, but the masters punished him for his misdeeds, so he cannot serve you as an excuse."

Gerdsim had hardly finished his speech, when sallow, lank Ffklor Mélnichny, stepping forward, began in a gloomy voice :

" That's it ! The masters send up whom they please, so what good is there in having the Commune take it up ? The Commune has decreed that your son should go ; but if you do not want him to go, you will ask the lady, and she may order my head to be shaven, although I am a singler with children. So here is the law," he said, sarcastically. And, waving his hand in disgust, he went back to his

place.

Red-haired Romdn, whose son had been appointed, raised his head and said, " That's so, that's so ! " and from anger sat down on the steps.

Those were not all the voices that spoke at the same time. Not only were those in the rear speaking of their affairs, but even the babblers did not forget their duty.

" Indeed, Orthodox people," said little Zhidkdv, repeating Dutldv's words, " we must judge in Christian fashion. In Christian fashion, so to speak, my friends, we must judge."

" We must judge according to our consciences, my dear friend," said good-natured Khrapkov, repeating Kopÿlov's words, and pulling Dutlov by his sheepskin coat. "It was the will of the master, and not the decision of the Commune."

" That's right ! That's what it is ! " said others.

" What drunken fellow is barking there ? " retorted Ryezun. " Have you ever given me to drink, or is your son, whom they pick up on the road, going to reproach me with drinking ? Friends, let us pass a resolution. If you want to save the Dutlovs, and will appoint a doubler, or even a sing ler, he will only make fun of us."

" Dutlov has to go ! What is the use in talking ? "

" Of course ! Tripiers have to draw lots first," spoke several voices.

" Let us hear what is the command of the lady ! Egor Mikhaylovich said that they wished to send up a manorial servant," somebody remarked.

This statement for a moment held back the dispute, but soon it was renewed, and again passed over to personalities.

Ignét, of whom Ryezun had said that he had been picked up on the road, began to prove to Ryezun that he had stolen a file from some transient carpenters, and that while drunk he had almost beaten his wife to death.

Ryezun replied that he beat his wife whether he was sober or drunk, and that he did not beat her enough at that, which made everybody laugh. But he felt insulted about the file, and walked over nearer to Ignat, asking him :

" Who stole it ? "

" You did," boldly replied sturdy Ignat, stepping still nearer toward him.

" Who stole it ? Didn't you ? " shouted Ryezun.

" No, you ! " exclaimed Ignat.

After the file, a stolen horse was taken up, and a bag of oats, and a garden strip on the common pasture, and a dead body. And the two peasants said such a lot of terrible things to each other that if only one hundredth part of what they accused each other had been true, they ought to have been both of them, according to the law, at least deported to Siberia.

Old Dutlov in the meantime chose another mode of defence. He did not like his son's shouts. He stopped him, saying : " It is a sin to talk that way ! Stop it, I say ; " and he began himself to prove that tripiers were not only those who had three sons together, but even those who had divided up the land, and he pointed to Starostin.

Starostin smiled slightly, cleared his throat, and, stroking his beard in the manner of a rich peasant, replied that the mistress's will would decide that. Apparently his son must have deserved it, if it was commanded to pass by him.

As regards the divided families, Gerasim, too, shattered Dutlov's argument by saying that it should not have been permitted, as it had not been with the old master, to divide the property, that no one went for berries when the summer was gone, that now singlets would not be delivered up.

" Did they divide it up out of mischief ? Why should they now be completely ruined ? " were heard the voices of those who had divided up, and the babblers joined them.

" Buy a recruit, if you do not like it ! You can do it ! " Ryezun said to Dutldv.

Dutldv in desperation buttoned his caftan and stood back of other peasants.

" Evidently you have been counting up my money," he said, angrily. " Let us hear what Egor Mikhaylovich is going to tell us from the lady ! "

VI.

Egor Mikhaylovich had actually just then left the house. One cap after another was raised above the head, and the nearer the clerk was coining, the more the bald crowns and foreheads, and the gray, half-gray, red, black, and blond heads were uncovered, and by degrees the voices died down until there was perfect silence. Egor

Mikhaylovich stood up on the porch and looked as though he wanted to speak. Egor Mikhaylovich, in his long coat, with his hands uncomfortably stuck in his front pockets, in a factory-made cap poised in front, and standing with firmly planted, spreading feet on a commanding elevation, above the preponderatingly old and handsome bearded heads, which were raised and turned toward him, had an entirely different aspect from that which he had in presence of the lady. He was majestic.

"Here, good men, is the lady's decision: it does not please her to give up a manorial servant, and whomsoever you will yourselves appoint, will go. We need three this year. In reality, it is only two and a half, and one-half is for the next time. It is all the same : if not this time, it will have to be the next."

« Of course ! That is so ! " said several voices.

" According to my judgment," continued Egor Mikhaylovich, " Khoryushkin and Mityukhin's V risk a ought to go, – such is God's own will."

" Precisely ! It's correct ! " said some.

" The third is to be either Dutlov, or one of the doublers. What do you say ? "

" Dutlov," said some, " the Dutldvs are tripiers."

And again the noise rose by degrees, and again mention was made of the pasture strip, and of some sacks stolen from the manor. Egdr Mikhaylovich had been su} >erin-tending the estate for twenty years, and was a clever and experienced man. He stood still awhile, listened for about fifteen minutes, and suddenly commanded all to keep silent, while the Dutldvs would cast lots which one of the three it was going to be. The lots were cut. Khrapkov took one out from the cap which had been shaken up : it was Ilya's lot. All were silent.

" Is it mine ? Let me see," said Ilyä, in a faltering voice.

All were silent. Egor Mikhaylovich ordered them to bring the recruit money on the following day, seven kopeks from each hearth, and, informing them that all was ended, dismissed the meeting. The crowd began to move, putting their caps on as they went around the corner and dinning with their tongues and boots. The clerk stood on the porch, looking at the retreating crowd. When the young Dutldvs had gone around the comer, he called up old Dutldv, who had himself stopped, and went with him to the office.

" I am sorry for you, old man," said Egdr Mikhaylovich, sitting down in an armchair at the table. " It is your turn. Are you going to buy off your nephew, or not ? "

The old man, without making any reply, looked significantly at Egdr

Mikhaylovich.

" There is no getting out of it," Egdr Mikhaylovich replied to his glance.

" I should like to buy him off, Egdr Mikhaylovich, but I have no money. I have lost two horses this summer. I married off my nephew. Evidently this is our fate for living an honest life. It is easy enough for him to talk." (He was thinking of Byezun.)

Egor Mikhaylovich rubbed his face with his hand, and yawned. He was obviously getting tired of the matter, and it was time for tea.

" Old man, don't be sinning ! " lie said. " Take a good look under your floor, and maybe you will find four hundred old roubles there. I will buy you a first-class volunteer. Only the other day a fellow came to see me about it."

" In the Government ? " asked Dutldv, meaning the city by that appellation.

" Well, will you buy him off ? "

" I should like to, I swear by God, but - "

Egdr Mikhaylovich sternly interrupted him :

" Listen to me, old man ! See to it that Ilya does nothing to himself. Whenever I send for him, whether it be this evening, or tomorrow, he must be ready. You will take him there, and you will be responsible for him. If, God for fend, something should happen to him, I will get your eldest son's head shaved. You hear ? "

" It is really wrong to treat doublers that way, Egor Mikhaylovich," he said, after a moment's silence. " My brother died a soldier, and now they take my son : why must I suffer so ? " he said, almost weeping, and ready to fall down before his feet.

" Go now, go," said Egor Mikhaylovich. " I can't help it, such is the law. Watch Ilyd, for you are responsible for him."

Dutldv went home, thoughtfully striking the lindenstick on the tufts of the road.

VII.

Early on the following morning there stood in front of the servants' wing a travelling-cart, in which the clerk travelled, to which was hitched a broad-boned bay horse, for some unknown reason called

Drum. Anyutka, Poli-kushka's eldest daughter, stood barefoot, in spite of the rain with hail and with a cold wind, before the head of the horse, with one hand holding the bridle at a distance, with evident fear, and with the other holding down over her head a yellow and green jacket which in the family fulfilled the duty of a coverlet, fur coat, cap, rug, coat for Polikushka, and many more duties.

There was a stir in the "corner." It was still dark; the morning twilight of a rainy day with difficulty penetrated the window which was here and there pasted up with paper. Akulma, who for a time neglected the cooking in the oven, and the children, of whom the younger ones had not yet wakened, and were freezing, because their coverlet had been taken away to be used as wearing apparel, while in its place had been put their mother's kerchief, - Akulma was busy seeing off her husband.

The shirt was clean. The boots, which, as they say, begged for porridge, caused her especial worry. In the first place, she took off her own thick, woollen stockings, the only ones which she had, and gave them to her husband; in the second, from the saddle-cloth, which had been lying loose in the stable, and which Polikushka had brought home two days before, she had managed to make inner soles in such a way as to stop up the gaps and preserve his feet against dampness. Polikushka himself, sitting with his feet on the bed, was busy turning his belt in such a way as to make it look different from a dirty rope. The cross little lisping girl, who, with the fur coat above her head, was still stumbling over it, had been despatched to Nikita to ask for a cap.

The stir was increased by the manorial servants, who came to ask Polikushka to buy things for them in town, - for this one pins, for that one tea, for another sweetoil, for still another tobacco, and sugar for the joiner's wife, who had by that time got the samovar ready and, to appease Polikushka, had brought him a pitcher of what she called tea.

Although Nikita refused to give his cap, and it became necessary to fix his own, that is, push back the protruding cotton batting and sew up the hole with a veterinary needle; although at first he could not get on the boots with the saddle-cloth soles; although Anyutka was chilled and let Drum out of her hand, and Mashka in the fur coat had to go in her place, and then Mashka had to take off the fur coat, and Akulina herself had to go to hold Drum, - it all ended by Polikushka's putting on all the apparel of the family, leaving behind nothing but the jacket and slippers. After he was all dressed up, he seated himself in the cart, wrapped the coat about him, fixed the hay, once more wrapped himself, separated the lines, wrapped himself more tightly, just as dignified people do, and started.

His boy, Mishka, who had run out on the porch, asked for a ride. Lisping Mashka, too, began to ask for a ride, saying that she was not "fleezing without the coat," and Polikushka checked in Drum and smiled his weak smile, while Akulina put the children into the cart

and, bending over to him, told him in a whisper that he must not forget his oath to drink nothing on his way. Polikushka took the children as far as the smithy, put them down, again wrapped himself, again adjusted his cap, and drove off alone in a slow, dignified trot, his cheeks shaking at every jolt, and his feet striking the body of the cart.

Mäshka and Mishka with such rapidity and with such shrieks ran barefoot to the house over the slippery hill, that a dog, which had found its way from the village to the yard of the manor, looked at them and, suddenly taking its tail between its legs, started home with loud barking, whereat the shrieks of Polikushka's heirs were increased tenfold.

The weather was miserable : the wind cut in the face, and something which was not snow, nor rain, nor hail now and then struck Polikushka's face and bare hands, which he hid with the cold lines under the sleeves of Iris camel-hair coat, and struck the leather covering of the arch, and Drum's old head, which dropped its ears and closed its eyes.

Then it suddenly stopped, and it grew clearer; one could plainly see the bluish snow clouds, and the sun began to peep through, but without determination and without cheerfulness, just like the smile of Polikushka himself. Notwithstanding all that, Polikushka was merged in agreeable thoughts. He, whom they had intended to deport, who had been threatened with military service, whom only a lazy person did not scold and beat, who was always pushed into the worst places, – he now was travelling to receive a " sum " of money, and a big sum at that, and the mistress trusted him, and he was travelling in the clerk's cart with Drum, the lady's driving-horse, like an innkeeper, with leather straps and reins. Polikushka sat up straighter, fixed the batting in his cap, and again wrapped himself in his coat.

However, if Polikushka thought that he exactly resembled a rich innkeeper, he was mistaken. Of course, we all know that merchants from ten thousand on travel in carts with leather trappings ; still it is a different matter. Such a man has a beard, wears a blue or black caftan, drives a well-fed horse, and sits in a box : all you have to do is to see whether the horse is well fed, whether he is well fed, how he sits, how the horse is harnessed, what tires there are on the wheels, how he himself is girded, and you immediately can tell whether the peasant sells by the thousand roubles, or by the hundred. If any experienced man had looked closely at Polikushka, at his hands, his face, his young beard, his belt, at the hay carelessly thrown into the box, at lean Drum, at the worn tires, he would have told at once that a mere peasant was travelling there, and not a merchant, not a wholesale dealer, nor an innkeeper, nor a man dealing by the thousand roubles, nor by the hundred, nor even by the ten roubles.

Polikushka did not think so, and he was mistaken, agreeably mistaken. He would bring back fifteen hundred in the bosom of his

coat. If he will have a mind to, he will turn his horse to Odessa instead of home, and will travel whither God will take him. Still, he will not do it, but will faithfully bring the money back to the mistress and will tell her that he had been entrusted with greater sums than that.

Upon coming abreast with a tavern, Drum began to pull at the left line, to slow down, and to turn in ; but Polikushka, despite the fact that he had money with him, given him for the purchase of various things, gave Drum the whip and drove on. The same he did at the next tavern. At noon he got off his cart and, opening the gate of the merchant's house, where the people of his mistress used to stop, led the horse in, unhitched it, put up the horse and gave it hay, dined with the merchant's labourers, at which occasion he did not fail to tell them on what important errand he had come, and went, with the letter in his cap, to the gardener. The gardener, who knew Polikushka, read the letter, and with obvious suspicion asked him whether it was so that he had been ordered to bring the money back. Polikushka wanted to appear offended, but he could not; he only smiled his smile. The gardener read the letter once more and gave him the money.

Having received the money, Polikushka put it in the bosom of his coat and went to his lodging. Neither the dram-shops nor the tavern tempted him. He experienced a pleasurable irritation in his whole being, and he stopped more than once at the shops with tempting wares, boots, coats, caps, chintz goods, and victuals. After standing there a little while, he went away with the pleasant sensation : " I can buy it all, but I won't."

He went to the market and bought everything he had been commissioned to buy, and haggled for a tanned fur coat, for which twenty-five roubles was asked. The salesman, looking at Polikushka, for some reason doubted his ability to buy it; but Polikushka pointed to his bosom, saying that he could buy out his whole shop, if he wanted ' to, and asked to be allowed to try on the fur coat. He crumpled the fur, beat it, blew into it, even became permeated by its smell, and finally took it off with a sigh.

" The price does not suit me. If you would let it go for fifteen," he said.

The merchant angrily threw the coat across the table, and Polikushka went out, and in a happy mood returned to his lodging. After having eaten his supper, and having watered Drum and given him oats, he climbed on the oven, took out the envelope, examined it for a long time, and asked an innkeeper who could read, to tell the address for him ; it bore the inscription, " With the enclosure of one thousand six hundred and seventeen roubles in assignats." The envelope was made of common paper, and the seals were of brown sealing-wax with the representation of an anchor: there was one large one in the middle and four small ones in the corners ; the sides had

some drops of sealing-wax upon them. Polikushka examined all this

and studied it, and even fingered the sharp edges of the assignats.

lie experienced a childish joy, knowing that such a sum was in his hands. He stuck the envelope into the hole of the cap, put the cap under his head, and lay down to sleep; but even in the night he awoke several times and fingered the envelope. Every time he found the envelope in its place, he experienced the happy sensation that he, Polikushka, the disgraced and offended man, was carrying such a sum, and that he would faithfully deliver it, even more faithfully than the clerk would do it.

VIII.

About midnight the merchant's workmen and Polikushka were wakened by knocks at the gate and the calls of peasants. Those were the recruits who were being brought up from Pokrdvskoe. There were ten of them : Khoryushkin, Mityushkin, and Ilyä (Dutlôv's nephew), two substitutes, the elder, old Dutlov, and the drivers. A night-lamp was burning in the kitchen, and the cook was sleeping on a bench under the images. She jumped up and began to light a candle. Polikushka, too, awoke, and, bending down from the oven, began to look at the peasants as they were coming in. They all entered, crossed themselves, and sat down on the benches. They were all very calm, so that it was difficult to tell who were the recruits and who their guards. They gave their greetings, talked awhile, and asked for something to eat. It is true, some of them were taciturn and sad ; but others again were jolly, having apparently had something to drink. Among these was Ilya, who had never drunk before.

" Well, boys, shall we eat our supper or go to sleep ? " asked the elder.

" Eat supper," replied Ilya, throwing open his fur coat and seating himself on a bench. " Send for brandy ! "

" No brandy now," the elder said, in passing, and again turning to the others. " Take a bite of bread, boys ! What is the use of waking the people ? "

" Give me some brandy," repeated Ilyä, without looking at any one, and in a voice which indicated that he would not stop so soon.

The peasants obeyed the elder's advice, fetched some bread from their carts, ate it, asked for a little kvas, and lay down, some of them on the floor, others on the oven.

Ilya now and then kept repeating : " Let me have some brandy, I say. Let me have it ! " Suddenly he espied Polikushka : " Polikushka, Polikushka ! Are you here, dear friend ? I am going to be a soldier ! They are taking me away from my mother and from my wife - How she cried ! They have sent me up ! Treat me to brandy ! "

" I have no money," replied Polikushka. " With God's aid you may be rejected yet," Polikushka added, to console him.

" No, my friend, I am as pure as a birch ; I have no diseases. What fault can I have ? What better soldiers does the Tsar want ? "

Polikushka began to tell a story of how a peasant gave the doctor a blue assignat, and how he was freed by that.

Ilya moved up to the oven, and they talked more freely.

" No, Polikushka, now it is all ended, and I myself do not want to remain. Uncle has sold me. He could buy me off, but he is sorry for his son, and for the money, too They are sending me up, – now I do not want to myself." (He spoke softly, confidentially, under the influence of calm grief.) " The only thing is, I am sorry for mother : the dear one felt so bad about it ! And I am sorry for my wife : they have ruined the woman just for nothing ; now she will suffer ; a soldier's widow, that's all she will be. It would have been better not to have married. Why did they get me married ? They will be here tomorrow."

" Why have they brought you so early ? " asked Polikushka. "We heard nothing about it, and there you suddenly are – "

" Evidently they are afraid I might do something to myself," replied Ilya, smiling. " They need not fear, I will do nothing. I won't be lost as a soldier, either, only I am sorry for my mother. Why did they get me married ? " he said, softly and sadly.

The door opened and slammed violently, and in came old Dutlov, shaking off his cap, in Ins bast shoes, which were so large that they looked like boats.

"Afanâsi," he said, making the sign of the cross and turning to the innkeeper, " haven't you a lantern so I can go out and give the horses some oats ? "

Dutlov did not look at Ilyä, and calmly began to light a tallow dip. His mittens and whip were stuck in his < belt, and his camel coat was properly girded, as though he had been travelling with a caravan, so habitually simple, peaceful, occupied with his farm task, did his industrious face look.

When Ilya saw his uncle, he grew silent, again gloomily directed his eyes to something upon the bench, and, turning to the elder, said :

" Give me some brandy, Ermila. I want some liquor to drink."

His voice was angry and gloomy.

" This is no time for liquor," replied the elder, sipping from a cup. " You see that the people have had their supper and are now

lying down ; don't make such a fuss about it ! "

The word " fuss " led him to the idea of becoming really unruly.

" Elder, I will cause some misfortune if you do not give me some brandy."

" Can't you bring him to his senses ? " the elder turned to Dutlov, who had lighted the lantern, but had stopped to listen to what would happen next, looking compassionately awry at his nephew, as though surprised to see him act so childishly.

Ilya cast down his eyes and repeated :

" Let me have brandy, or I will do something bad."

" Stop, Ilya ! " the elder said, meekly. " Really, stop it ! It will be better if you do."

But before he had fully finished his words, Ilya jumped up, smashed a window-pane with his fist, and called out, at the top of his voice :

" You would not listen to me, so here you have it ! " and he rushed up to the other window to smash that one too.

Polikushka, in the twinkling of an eye, rolled over twice and concealed himself in the corner of the oven, frightening all the cockroaches. The elder threw down his spoon and ran up to Ilya. Dutlov leisurely put down the lantern, ungirt himself, clicking his tongue all the while, shook his head, and went up to Ilya, who was struggling with the elder and the innkeeper, who did not let him come up to the window. They caught his hands and seemed to be holding them firmly ; but the moment Ilya saw his uncle with the belt, his strength was increased tenfold ; he tore himself away, and, rolling his eyes, advanced toward Dutlov with clenched fists.

" I will kill you ! Don't come up, you barbarian ! You have ruined me, you, with your robber sons, have ruined me ! What did you get me married for ? Don't come up, or I'll kill you !"

Ilyä was terrible. His face was crimson ; his eyes could not find a resting-place ; his whole body, his youthful body, trembled as in an ague. He looked as though he wanted, and were able, to kill all three men who were advancing toward him.

" You are drinking your brother's blood, you bloodsucker ! "

Something flashed in Dutlov's eternally calm face. He made a step forward.

" You won't do it in kindness," he suddenly exclaimed. In an outburst of energy he with a rapid motion seized his nephew, rolled down on the floor with him, and, with the aid of the elder, began to

tie his arms. They struggled for about five minutes ; finally Dutlov got up with the help of the other peasants, pulling Ilya's hand away from his fur coat, to which he was clinging ; after he was up he lifted Ilyd with his arms tied behind and placed him in a sitting posture in the corner, back of the bench.

" I told you it would be worse," he said, out of breath from the struggle and adjusting his shirt belt. " What is the use of sinning ? We shall all die. Put a coat back of his head," he added, turning to the innkeeper, " or else the blood will rush to his head," and he himself took the lantern, girded himself with a cord, and went out to the horses.

Ilya, with dishevelled hair, pale face, and crumpled shirt, surveyed the room, as though trying to recall where he was. The innkeeper picked up the glass shivers and stuck a short coat into the window to keep out the wind. The elder again sat down to his cup.

" Oh, Ilya, Ilyä ! I am sorry for you, truly I am ! But what is to be done ? Khoryushkin is married, too ; evidently such is fate."

" I am perishing through the fault of that rascal of an uncle," Ilya exclaimed, with cold malice. " He is sorry for his own son – Mother said that the clerk told him to buy me off. He does not want to ; he says he can't do it. Brother and I have brought quite a lot to his house ! – He is a scoundrel ! "

Dutlov entered the room, prayed toward the images, took off his wraps, and sat down near the elder. The cook brought him some more kvas and a spoon. Ilya grew silent and, closing his eyes, leaned against the coat. The elder pointed silently at Ilya and shook his head. Dutlov waved his hand.

" Of course I am sorry for him. He is my own brother's duld. But, though I pity him, they have made me out a scoundrel to him. His wife – she is cunning, even though she is young – put it into his head that we had enough money to buy a recruit with. So he reproaches me with it. I pity the lad very much ! "

" He is a nice fellow ! " said the elder.

" I have no power over him. To-morrow I shall send Ignat, and his wife, too, wanted to come."

" Send him, that will be all right," said the elder. He got up and climbed upon the oven. " What is money ? Money is dust."

" If one had money, who would think of stinting it ? " said one of the merchant's workmen, raising his head.

" Oh, the money, the money ! Much sin comes from it," remarked Dutlov. " There is nothing in the world from which there comes so much sin as from money, and it says so in the Gospel."

" So it says," repeated the innkeeper. " A man once told me that there was a man who had saved up a great deal of money ; he did not want to leave any after him, because he loved his money so, and took it with him in his grave. As he was dying he told them to put his cushion in the coffin with him. It did not occur to them what it was, and so they did as he asked them to. Later the sons began to look for the money, but there was none. It occurred to one son that, no doubt, the money was in that cushion. The case was taken to the Tsar, and he permitted them to dig up the grave. Well, what do you think ? They dug it up, but there was nothing in the cushion, and the coffin was full of snakes ; so they filled up the grave again. That's what money does ! "

" Of course, it leads to much sin," said Dutldv, and he got up, and began to pray.

After his prayer he looked at his nephew: he was asleep. Dutlov walked over to him, took off his belt, and himself lay down. Another peasant went to the horses to sleep.

IX.

As soon as everything quieted down, Polikushka, like a guilty person, softly climbed down and began to dress himself. For some reason he felt uncomfortable sleeping in the same room with the recruits. The cocks were now crowing more frequently to each other. Drum had eaten up all his oats and was begging to be taken to the trough. Polikushka harnessed him and took him out past the peasant carts. The cap with its contents was all right, and the wheels of the cart again rumbled over the frozen road to Pokrovskoe.

Polikushka felt more at ease only when he left the town far behind. Before that it seemed to him that they would be in pursuit of him at any moment, that they would stop him and tie up his arms instead of Ilya's, and that on the following day they would enlist him. The cold and terror made a chill creep up his spine, and he kept pulling Drum's reins. The first men he met were a pope in a tall winter cap and a crippled labourer. Polikushka felt even worse than before. At a distance from the town the terror passed away by degrees. Drum was going at a pace ; the road could be seen ahead.

Polikushka took off his cap and felt for the money. " Had I not better put it in my bosom ? " he thought. " I shall have to ungird myself. As soon as I get up the hill, I will get off the cart and fix myself. My cap is sewn up on top, and it can't come out below from the lining. I sha'n't take off my cap before I get home."

Having reached the foot of the hill, Drum of his own free will leaped up the hill, and Polikushka, who wanted, like Drum, to get

home as soon as possible, did not hold him back. Everything was in order, at least he thought so, and he abandoned himself to dreaming of the mistress's gratefulness, of the five roubles which she would give him, and of the joy of his family. He took down his cap, fingered the envelope once more, pulled his cap deeper down over his head, and smiled. The plush on the cap was rotten, and, for the very reason that Akulfna had sewn up the torn corner on the previous day, it fell to pieces at the other end, and that very motion, with which Polikushka, in taking off the cap, was trying in the dark to push the envelope with the money farther into the lining, – that very motion ripped the cap and made the envelope stick out with one corner from the plush.

It was beginning to grow lighter, and Polikushka, who had not slept all night, dozed off. In pulling down his cap, the letter protruded even more. In his sleep Polikushka began to strike his head against the rounds of the cart. He awoke near the house. His first motion was to clasp his cap ; it was tight on his head, and he did not take it off, being convinced that the envelope was in it. He touched Drum with his whip, again assumed the aspect of an innkeeper, and, casting a dignified look about him, began to jolt on his way up to the house.

There was the kitchen, there the " wing ; " there the joiner's wife was carrying rolls of linen ; there was the office, and there the manor, in which Polikushka would soon show that he was a trustworthy and honest man, that " it is easy enough to slander any man," and the lady would say : " Thank you, Polikushka ! Here are for you three," and maybe five, and maybe ten roubles, and would order them to bring him a glass of tea, and maybe a dram of brandy. It would not be bad in this cold. " For the ten roubles we will celebrate the holidays, and buy boots, and will at last pay Nikita the four roubles and a half, for he has been dunning me so much – "

When within about one hundred paces from the house, Polikushka straightened himself up, adjusted his belt and collar, took off his cap, smoothed his hair, and, leisurely stuck his hand into the lining. The hand stirred about in the lining, faster, faster ; he stuck in the other hand; his face grew paler, paler ; one hand came entirely through – Polikushka jumped on his knees, stopped the horse, and began to examine the cart, the hay, the purchases, to feel in his bosom and trousers : the money was not anywhere.

" Ø Lord ! What is that ? What will that be ? " he roared, clasping his head.

But, recalling that he might be seen, he turned Drum back, slammed his cap down on his head, and drove surprised and dissatisfied Drum back again along the road.

" I can't bear being driven by Polikushka," was what, no doubt, Drum thought. " Once in my lifetime has he given me to eat and drink in season, and that, too, only in order to deceive me. How hard I tried, running home ! I am tired, and no sooner do I smell our hay

than he drives me back again."

" Get up, devil's jade ! " Polikushka cried through tears, rising in his cart, jerking the reins over Drum's mouth, and striking him with the whip.

X.

All that day nobody saw Polikushka at Pokrdvskoe. The lady asked for him several times after dinner, and Aksyutka kept flying to Akulma ; but Akulma said that he had not yet arrived, that evidently the merchant had detained him, or that something might have happened to the horse.

" Maybe the horse is lame ? " she said. " Last time Maksim drove the whole day, and he himself had to walk all the way."

Aksyutka again adjusted her pendulums on the way toward the house, and Akulma endeavoured to find explanations for the detention of her husband and tried to calm herself, – but in vain! Her heart felt heavy, and she could not well perform any work for the morrow, which was a holiday. She was the more vexed because the joiner's wife assured her that she had herself seen a man, just like Polikushka, come up as far as the avenue and turn back again.

The children, too, were in impatience and disquietude waiting for their father, but for different causes. Anyutka and Mfishka were left without the fur coat and camel-hair coat, which made it possible for them, even though by turns, to go out into the street, and so they were compelled to make circles about the house, in nothing but their dresses, with increased rapidity, by which they put to no small amount of discomfort the inmates of the " wing," both those who entered it and who came out of it. Once Mashka ran into the legs of the joiner's

away. There had been a light frost the evening before; the Helds, the road, and the roofs were unevenly covered with snow ; that day, as though for the holiday, was bright, sunshiny, and frosty, so that one could hear and see a long distance.

But Akulina, who was standing at the oven and had leaned with her head over the orifice, was so busy with the baking of the flat-cakes that she did not hear Polikushka driving up, and only by her children's cries did she know that her husband had arrived.

Anyutka, being the eldest, had herself greased her hair and dressed herself. She wore a new, though crumpled, pink chintz dress, a present from the mistress, which stuck out like the body of a cart and was an object of envy to the neighbours ; her hair glistened, –

she had used up half a tallow dip on it ; her shoes were not new, but of fine leather. Mashka still wore the jacket and was dirty, and Anyutka did not let her come close to her, for fear of getting soiled.

Mashka was in the yard when her father drove up with the mat-bag. " Father has come," she screeched, and, bolting past Anyutka through the door, soiled her sister's dress. Anyutka, no longer afraid of getting soiled, gave Mashka a thrashing on the spot, while Akulina could not tear herself away from her work. She only shouted to her children : " Look out there ! I'll spank every one of you ! " and looked back at the door. Polikushka, with the bag in his hand, stepped into the vestibule and immediately made for his corner. Akulina thought that he was pale and that on his face there was something intermediate between a tearful expression and a smile ; but she had no time to make it out.

" Well, Polikushka, is everything all right ? " she asked him, standing at the oven.

Polikushka muttered something, but she did not understand him.

" Well," she cried, " have you seen the lady yet ? "

Polikushka sat on the bed in his corner, looking wildly about him and smiling his guilty and deeply miserable smile. He for a long time made no reply.

" Polikushka, why are you so long in answering ? " was heard Akulina's voice.

" Akulina, I have returned the money to the lady. She thanked me so much for it ! " he suddenly said, and began to look around more restlessly, and to smile. Two objects in particular arrested his restless, feverishly open eyes: the ropes that were attached to the cradle, and the baby. He walked over to the cradle and with his thin fingers began hurriedly to untie a knot in the rope. Then his eyes dwelt on the baby ; but just then Akulina, with the flat-cakes on a board, entered the corner. Polikushka rapidly concealed the rope in the bosom of his coat and sat down on the bed.

" What is the matter with you, Polikushka? You act as though beside yourself," said Akulina.

" I have not slept any," he replied.

Suddenly something flashed past the window, and in a twinkling Aksyutka, the girl from up there, flew in like an arrow.

" The lady has commanded Polikéy Dich to come to her this very minute," she said. " This very minute, Avdotya Nikolaevna has commanded – this minute."

Polikushka looked at Akulina and at the girl.

" Directly ! What more does she want ? " he said, in such a simple way that Akulina's fears were allayed. " Maybe she wants to reward me ! Tell her I will be there at once."

He rose and went out. Akulina took a trough, put it on a bench, poured water into it from some pails that were standing at the door and from the hot kettle in the oven, rolled up her sleeves, and tried the water.

" Come, Mashka, I'll wash you."

The angry, lisping girl bawled out loud.

" Come, you brat, I want to put a new shirt on you. Stop your bawling ! Come, I have to wash your sister)'6t."

j In the meantime Polikuska stepped out ; he did not follow the girl, but went to another place. In the vestibule there was a straight staircase near the wall, which led to the loft. Upon coming out into the vestibule, Polikuska looked around him ; seeing nobody there, he bent down and, almost on a run, nimbly and swiftly climbed the staircase.

" What can be the cause of Polikuska's not coming ? " the lady said, impatiently, turning to Dunyasha, who was scratching the head for her. " Where is Polikuska? Why is he not coming ? "

Aksyutka again flew into the yard, and again darted into the vestibule and ordered Polikuska to come to the lady.

" He went long ago," replied Akulma, who, having washed Mashka, had just put her suckling babe into the trough, wetting his scanty hair, in spite of his shrieks. The boy cried, frowned, and tried to catch something with his impotent little hands. Akulma with one of her big hands supported his plump, dimpled, soft back, and with the other washed him.

" See whether he has not fallen asleep somewhere," she said, looking restlessly around.

Just then the joiner's wife, unkempt, with bared breast, holding up her skirts, was going up to the loft to fetch the clothes that were drying there. Suddenly a shriek of terror was heard in the loft, and the joiner's wife, like one demented, with closed eyes, on her hands and feet, more slid down on her back, than ran down the staircase.

" Polikuska ! " she cried.

Akulma dropped her babe.

" He has hung himself ! " roared the joiner's wife.

Akulma ran out into the vestibule, not noticing that the child

rolled backward, like a ball of twine, and, with his feet in the air, fell with his head into the water.

" He is hanging — on a rafter," shouted the joiner's wife, but, upon seeing Akulma, she stopped.

Akulma ran to the stairs ; before she could be held back, she rushed up and, with a terrible cry, fell, like a dead body, on the stairs, and would have been killed if the people who had assembled from all sides had not caught her.

XI.

For a few moments nothing could be made out in the universal turmoil. There were no end of people there ; all cried, all spoke, and the children and old women wept. Akulina lay unconscious. Finally the men, the joiner and the clerk, who had run up to the place, went up-stairs, and the joiner's wife told for the twentieth time : " I was not thinking of anything as I went for the pelerines ; suddenly I looked like this : I saw a man ; again I looked : a cap, turned inside out, was lying near by. His legs were dangling. A chill ran up my spine. It is no small matter to see a man hanging, and it was I who saw him. I do not remember myself how I got down. God saved me by a miracle. Truly, the Lord has shown me His mercy. It is no small matter, considering the height and the dizziness ! I should have been killed."

The people who had gone upstairs told the same. Polikushka was hanging down from a rafter, in nothing but his trousers and shirt, strangled by the rope which he had taken off the cradle. His cap, turned inside out, lay near him. The camel-hair coat and the fur coat lay folded up near by. His feet reached to the floor, and there were no signs of life in him. Akulina regained her senses and again made for the staircase, but people did not let her go up.

" Mother, Sémka has diowned himself," suddenly screeched the lisping girl in the comer. Akulina again plunged forward and ran into the corner. The child lay motionless on his back in the trough, and his little legs did not stir. Akulina grabbed him, but the child did not breathe nor move. Akulina threw him on the bed, leaned on her arms, and burst forth into such a loud, sonorous and terrible laugh, that Mashka, who at first had started laughing herself, closed her ears and, weeping, ran out into the vestibule. The people, sobbing and crying, crowded into the " corner." The child was taken out and rubbed, but all in vain. Akulina tossed on the bed and roared so loud that all who heard that laughter felt terribly.

Only now, as one saw such a variegated crowd of men and women, of old men and children, crowding in the vestibule, could one get an

idea what a mass of people and what kind of people were living in the " wing " of the manor. All were bustling ; all were talking ; many were weeping, and nobody was doing anything.

The joiner's wife still found some people who had not heard her story, and again told of how her tender feelings had been startled by the unexpected sight, and how God had saved her from falling down-stairs. The old butler, in a woman's jacket, told of how a woman had been drowned in the pond in the lifetime of the late master.

The clerk sent messengers to the commissary and the priest and appointed a guard. The girl from up there, Aksyutka, stood looking with bulging eyes through the hole in the loft, and, although she could see nothing, was unable to tear herself away in order to go to the lady. Agafya Mikhaylovna, the old lady's former chambermaid, asked for tea to quiet her nerves with, and was weeping. Grandmother Anna with her experienced, plump hands, saturated with sweet oil, put the body of the child on the table.

The women stood about Akulina and looked silently at her. The children, pressing themselves into the corners, kept looking at their mother and screaming, then grew silent, then again looked at her, and pressed themselves farther into the corners.

Boys and men were gathered near the porch ; they were looking with frightened faces through the doors and windows, seeing nothing and understanding nothing, and asking each other what was up. One said that the joiner had chopped off his wife's foot with an axe. Another said that the washerwoman had brought triplets into the world. A third told them that the cook's cat had gone mad and had bitten a number of people. But the truth began to spread by degrees, and finally reached the lady's ears. It seems they had not time to prepare her for it : rude Egor simply reported the fact to her, by which he so unnerved her that she could not calm herself for a long time afterward.

The crowd was beginning to quiet down ; the joiner's wife got the samovar ready and brewed some tea, whereat the strangers who had received no invitation regarded it as improper to stay any longer. The boys were beginning to fight at the porch ; all knew what the matter was and, crossing themselves, were beginning to disperse, when suddenly somebody called out, " The lady ! The lady ! " and all again assembled and crowded together, in order to make a gangway for her ; they wanted all of them to see what she was going to do.

The lady was pale and in tears ; she crossed the threshold into the vestibule, into Akulina's corner. Dozens of heads were crowded together and looking through the door. One pregnant woman was squeezed so badly that she screamed ; but, immediately taking advantage of this circumstance, she pushed herself forward. Indeed, it was worth while seeing the lady in Akulina's " corner " ! This was for the manorial servants the same as red fires at the end of a show. It is great when it comes to burning red fires, and so it was

great to see the lady in silk and laces go into Akulma's corner. The lady walked up to Akulma and took her hand ; but Akulina drew it back. The old manorial servants shook their heads in disapproval.

" Akulma," said the lady, " you have children, so take care of yourself."

Akulma burst out laughing, and got up.

" All my children are like silver, like silver – I have no paper," she muttered, in rapid speech. " I told Poli-kushka not to take any paper, now they have smeared you, they have smeared you with tar, with tar and soap, lady. No matter how bad the scars are, they will come off." And she burst forth into a more terrible laugh.

The lady turned around and asked them to fetch the surgeon's assistant and a mustard poultice. " Let me have some cold water ! " and she went to look for it herself ; but, upon seeing the dead child, before which stood Grandmother Anna, the lady turned aside, and all saw her cover her face with her handkerchief and weep. Grandmother Anna (What a pity the lady did not see it ! She would have appreciated it, for it was done for her sake) covered the baby with a piece of linen, straightened out his little hands with her plump, nimble hand, and shook her head so, and stretched her lips, and blinked significantly, and sighed so that one could see what a good heart she had. But the lady did not see it, and could not see it. She sobbed ; she had a fit of hysterics and had to be helped out into the vestibule and taken home.

" That's all there was of her," thought some, and began to disperse. Akulma kept laughing and talking nonsense. She was taken to another room : they bled her and put mustard poultices on her and ice on her head ; but she understood as little what was going on, and did not weep, but laughed and said and did such things that the good people who were attending her could not keep from laughing themselves.

XII.

It was not a merry holiday in the Pokrdvskoe manor. Although it was a beautiful day, the people did not come out for a stroll ; the girls did not assemble in order to sing songs ; the factory lads, who had come from town, did not play the accordion, or the balalayka, and did not play with the girls. All were sitting in their corners, and if they were talking, they spoke as softly as though the evil one were present and could hear them.

In the daytime it was still tolerable ; but in the evening, as it grew dark, the dogs began to whine, and, as though portending misfortune, a wind rose and blew into the chimneys, and such a terror fell upon the inhabitants of the manor yard that whoever had

candles lighted them before the images ; who had a " corner " to himself went to ask permission to stay overnight with his neighbours, where there were many people ; and who had to go to the stalls, did not go, and without pity left the cattle without feed for that night. All the holy water, which the people kept in bladders, was used up that night. Many even heard somebody walking on the lofts with heavy tread, and the blacksmith saw a dragon fly straight upon the loft.

In Polikushka's corner there was no one; the children and the demented woman were transferred elsewhere. There lay only the body of the child, and two old women and a pilgrim were there ; the pilgrim in her zeal read the psalter, not over the babe, but just on the occasion of the whole calamity. The mistress had commanded it. These old women and the pilgrim themselves heard, at the end of every division in the psalter, the rafter creaking up-stairs and somebody groaning. Then they said, " Let God rise," and everything grew quiet again.

The joiner's wife called a relative of hers to stay with her that night, but she did not go to sleep and drank up all the supply of tea which she had laid in for a week. They, too, heard the rafters creak up-stairs and what seemed to be bags falling down. The peasants on guard gave courage to the manorial servants, or else they would have died from fear that night. The peasants lay in the vestibule on hay, and later affirmed that they, too, had heard wonderful things in the loft, although they had been doing nothing that night but calmly discussing the conscription, munching bread, scratching themselves, and, above all, filling the vestibule with their peculiar peasant odour, so that the joiner's wife, passing by them, spit out and berated them for being louts.

However it be, the dead man was hanging all the time in the loft, and it seemed as though the evil spirit that night had veiled the " wing " with his immense pinion, displaying his power and more than ever coming near to those people. At least all of them felt so. I do not know whether that fear was just. I even think that it was not at all. I think that if a bold fellow had taken a candle or lantern that night and, protecting himself or even not protecting himself with the sign of the cross, had walked up to the loft, and, with the candle-light slowly dispelling the terror of the night in front of him and lighting up the rafters, the sand, the chimney with its covering of spider-webs, and the pelerines, which the joiner's wife had forgotten there, - if he had made his way up to Polikushka, and if, not submitting to the feeling of terror, he had raised the lantern to the level of his face, he would have seen the familiar, haggard body, with its legs standing on the floor (the rope had slipped), lifelessly bent sidewise, with the collar of the shirt, underneath which the cross could not be seen, unbuttoned, and his head drooping on his breast, and his good face with open, dead eyes, and his meek, guilty smile, and solemn calm and quiet over everything. Really, the joiner's wife, who, pressing into the corner of her bed, with dishevelled hair and frightened eyes was telling that she had heard bags fall, was by far more terrible than

Polikushka, although he had taken off his cross and had put it on the rafter.

" Up there," that is, in the manor, there reigned the same terror as in the " wing." The lady's room smelled of eau de Cologne and medicine. Dunyasha was heating yellow wax for a plaster. What the plaster was for I do not know ; but I do know that the plaster was made every time the lady was ill. Just now she was unnerved to the point of illness. To keep up Dunyasha's courage, her aunt had come to stay overnight with her. These three and the girl were sitting in the maids' room and speaking softly.

" Who will go for the oil ? " asked Dunyasha.

" I won't go for anything in the world, Avddtya Nikolaevna," replied the second girl.

" Don't say that ! You will go with Aksyutka."

" I will run down by myself," said Aksyutka, immediately losing her courage.

Aksyutka with one hand raised her skirt and, not being able on that account to swing both her arms, swung her one arm twice as violently across the line of motion and darted away. She shuddered and felt that if she heard or saw anything, even if it were her own living mother, she would be undone from fear. She flew with closed eyes over the familiar path.

XIII.

" Is the lady sleeping or not ? " a thick peasant voice suddenly spoke near Aksyutka. She opened her eyes, which had been closed, and saw somebody's figure which, she thought, was taller than the " wing " ; she screamed, and bolted back so that her skirt had no time to fly after her. With one bound she was on the porch, with another in the maids' room, where she with a savage cry threw herself down on the bed. Dunyasha, her aunt, and the second girl almost died from fear; but before they had fully recovered, slow, heavy, indecisive steps were heard in the vestibule and at the door. Dunyasha made for the lady's room, dropping the plaster; the second girl hid herself behind some skirts hanging on the wall ; the aunt, more courageous than the rest, was on the point of holding down the door, but it opened and a peasant entered the room. It was Dutldv in his boat-like boots.

He paid no attention to the terror of the girls. He searched with his eyes for the images, and, not having discovered the small image which was hanging in the left corner, he made the sign of the cross

toward a cupboard, put his cap on the window, and, sticking his hand far into his short fur coat, as though wishing to scratch himself under the arm, fetched out the letter with the five brown seals with the representations of an anchor upon them. Dunyasha's aunt clasped her breast. She barely had strength to say :

" You have frightened me, Naûmych ! I can't spea-eak a word. I thought the end had come."

" How could you do it ? " said the second girl, moving out from behind the skirts.

" You have disturbed the lady, too," said Dunyasha, coming in through the door. " What makes you come to the girls' porch, without asking permission ? A regular lout ! "

Without excusing himself, Dutlov repeated that he wanted to see the lady.

" She is not well," said Dunyasha.

Just then Aksyutka snorted with such an indecently loud laugh that she had to hide her head in the pillows of the bed, from which she, in spite of the threats of Dunyasha and her aunt, could not take it away without blurting out again, as if something were bursting in her pink breast and red cheeks. It seemed so funny to her that all should have been frightened, – and she again hid her head and, as though in spasms, twisted her shoes and bobbed up with her whole body.

Dutlov stopped and looked attentively at her, as though to give himself an account of what was going on in her, but, not being able to make out a thing, he turned aside and continued his speech.

" It is, as I say, a very important matter," he said. " Tell her that a peasant has found the letter with the money."

" What money ? "

Before going in to report, Dunyasha read the address, and asked Dutlov where and how he had found the money which Polikushka was to have brought home from town. Having found out all the details and pushing the errand-girl, who did not stop snorting, into the vestibule, Dunyasha went to the lady, but, to Dutlov's surprise, the lady did not receive him, and did not say anything sensible to Dunyasha.

« I know nothing, and do not want to know," said the lady, " what peasant and what money you are talking of. I cannot and do not want to see anybody. I want him to leave me in peace."

" What am I to do ? " said Dutlov, turning around the envelope. " It's no small amount. What does it say here ? " he asked Dunyasha, who again read the address for him.

Dutlov somehow could not believe it. He hoped that, maybe, the money did not belong to the lady, and that the address had not been properly read to him. But Dunyasha read the same. He sighed, put the envelope in the bosom of his coat, and was getting ready to leave.

" I suppose I shall have to give it to the commissary," he said.

" Wait, I will try once more," Dunyasha stopped him, having carefully watched the disappearance of the envelope in the bosom. " Let me have the letter ! "

Dutlov fetched it out again, but did not at once deposit it in Dunyasha's outstretched hand.

" Tell her that Semdn Dutlov found it on the road."

" But let me have it ! "

"I thought it was just a letter,*but a soldier read it and said that it had money in it."

" Let me have it ! "

" I did not even dare go home on account of it – " again said Dutldv, without parting from the precious envelope. " Tell her so."

Dunyasha took the envelope, and went with it again to the lady.

" Ah, my God, Dunyasha ! " said the lady, in a reproachful voice. " Don't tell me about that money ! When I think of that baby – "

" The peasant does not know to whom you command him to give it," again said Dunyasha.

The lady opened the envelope, shuddered, the moment she saw the money, and reflected for awhile.

" How terrible money is ! How much evil it does ! " she said.

" It is Dutlov, madam. Do you command him to go, or shall you deign to come out to see him ? Is all the money there ? " asked Dunyasha.

" I do not want that money. This is terrible money. How much wrong it has done already ! Tell him to keep it, if he wants to," the lady suddenly exclaimed, trying to find Dunyasha's hand. " Let him take it, and do with it what he pleases."

" It is fifteen hundred roubles," remarked Dunyasha, smiling slightly like a child.

" Let him take it all," impatiently repeated the lady. " Do you not understand me ? This is unlucky money, and don't you ever speak of it to me ! Let the peasant that found it take it ! Go, go now ! "

Dunyasha went to the maids' room.

" Is it all there ? " asked Dutlov.

" Count it up yourself," said Dunyasha, giving him the envelope. " I am commanded to give it to you."

Dutlov put his cap under his arm, and, bending over, began to count.

" Haven't you an abacus ? "

Dutlov understood that the lady did not know enough to count it up, and had ordered him to count it.

" You can count it up at home. It is for you! Your money ! " said Dunyasha, angrily. " ' I do not want to see it,' she said ; ' give to him who brought it ! ' "

Without unbending his back, Dutlov fixed his eyes upon Dunyasha.

Dunyasha's aunt clapped her hands.

" Holy saints ! What luck God has given you ! Holy saints ! "

The second girl could not believe it.

" Avddtya Nikoläevna, you are jesting."

" There is no jesting here. She commanded me to give it to the peasant – Take the money and go ! " said Dunyasha, without concealing her anger. " It's grief to some and luck to others."

"It's no trifling matter, – fifteen hundred roubles," said the aunt.

" More," confirmed Dunyasha. " Well, I suppose you will place a ten-kopek candle before St. Nicholas," Dunyasha remarked, scornfully. " Why don't you come to your senses ? It would be luck enough for a poor man ! But he has plenty of his own."

Dutlov finally comprehended that it was no joke. He collected the money which he had laid out to count and put it back into the envelope ; but his hands were trembling, and he kept looking at the girls, to convince himself that it was not a joke.

"I declare, he can't come to, he is so happy," said Dunyasha, letting him see that she despised both the peasant and the money. " Let me put it up for you ! "

She was on the point of taking it ; but Dutlov would not let her ; he crumpled the money, pushed it in deeper, and took his cap.

" Are you happy ? "

" I do not know what to say. It is just – "

He did not finish his sentence ; he only waved his hand, smiled, almost burst out in tears, and went out.

The bell in the lady's room was rung.

" Well, did you give it to him ? "

" I did."

" Was he happy ? "

" He was just like insane."

" Ah, call him back ! I want to ask him how he found it. Call him in here. I can't go out."

Dunyasha ran out and found the peasant in the vestibule. He had not yet put on his cap, but, bending over, having taken out his pouch, he was loosening its cords, while holding the money in his teeth. It may have appeared to him that so long as the money was not in the pouch it was not his. When Dunyasha called him he became frightened.

" What is it, Avdotya – Avdotya Nikolaevna ? Does she want to take it back ? If you will take my part, upon my word, I will bring you some honey."

" As you have brought it to me before."

The door was again opened, and the peasant was taken before the lady. He did not feel happy. " Oh, she will take it back ! " he thought for some reason, lifting his feet as though walking through high grass, and trying not to make a noise with his bast shoes, as he passed through the rooms. He did not understand a thing that was going on around him. He passed by a mirror, saw some flowers, and a peasant in bast shoes lifting his feet, and a gentleman painted with eyes, and some kind of a green vat, and something white – Behold, that something white began to speak, – it was the lady. He could not make out a thing, – he only bulged out his eyes. He did not know where he was, and everything appeared as though in a fog.

" Is it you, Dutldv ? "

" Yes, madam. Just as it was, so I left it," he said. " I am not at all glad, I swear to God ! I just wore out the horse – "

" It is your luck," she said, with a contemptuous but kindly smile. " Take it ! "

He only rolled his eyes.

" I am glad that you got it. May God grant you to use it for your good ! Well, are you glad ? "

" Of course I am ! I am very glad, madam ! I will pray for you all the time. I am so glad that our lady, thank God, is living. It was not my fault."

" How did you find it ? "

" It means that I always could have tried for the lady in honour, and not - "

" He is all mixed up, lady," said Dunyasha.

" I had taken my nephew to have him enlisted ; I was coming home, when I found it on the road. Polikushka must have dropped it."

" Go, go, my dear ! I am glad."

" I am so glad, madam ! " said the peasant.

Then he said that he had not thanked her properly, and that he did not know what he ought to do. The lady and Dunyasha smiled. He again stepped as if going through the grass, and had the hardest time to keep himself from starting on a trot. It still appeared to him that they might stop him and take it away from him.

XIV.

After coming out into the air, Dutlov walked off the road to the lindens, ungirt himself in order to get more easily at his pouch, and began to put the money away. His lips trembled, stretching out more and more, although he did not speak a single word. After having put away the money and fastened his belt, he made the sign of the cross and went, like a drunken man, reeling along the road: he was so occupied with the thoughts that burst upon him. Suddenly he saw before him the form of a peasant who was coming toward him. He called out to him : it was Efim who was standing sentinel near the wing, with a club in his hand.

" Oh, Uncle Semén," Efim exclaimed, cheerfully, coming nearer, for he felt ill at ease by himself. " Well, uncle, have you taken down the recruits ? "

" I have. What are you doing there? "

" I have to guard Polikushka, who has hung himself."

" Where is he ? "

«There, in the loft, they say, he is hanging," replied Efim,

pointing with the club to the roof of the wing in the dark. Dutlov looked in the direction of the arm, and, although he did not see a thing, he frowned, blinked, and shook his head.

" The commissary has come," said Efim, " so the coachman said. They will take him off at once. It is a terrible thing at night, uncle. I won't go up-stairs at night for anything in the world, if they ask me. Egor Mikhaylovich may kill me, but I won't go."

" What a sin, what a sin ! " repeated Dutlov, apparently for propriety's sake, without thinking of what he was saying, and wanting to go on ; but the voice of Egor Mikhaylovich stopped him.

" Oh, there, guard, come here ! " shouted Egor Mikhaylovich from the porch.

Efim replied to him.

" Who was that other peasant with you ? "

" Dutlov."

" You, Semén, come here ! "

Upon coming nearer, Dutlov, in the light of the lantern, recognized Egor Mikhaylovich and a small man, an official in a cap with a cockade and uniformed overcoat : it was the commissary.

" The old man will go with us," said Egor Mikhaylovich, when he saw him.

It gave the old man a twinge, but there was no getting out of it.

" You, Efim, young lad, run up to the loft where the man has hanged himself and fix the staircase so that his Honour can pass over it."

Efim, who had said that he would not go up to the wing for anything in the world, now ran toward it, clattering with his bast shoes as though they were logs.

The commissary struck fire and lighted his pipe. He lived within two versts, and had just been hauled up by the chief of the rural police for drunkenness, and so he now was in a fit of zeal : having arrived at ten o'clock at night, he wanted immediately to examine the dead man. Egor Mikhaylovich asked Dutlov what he was doing there. On their way up, Dutlov told the clerk about the money which he had found and what the lady had done to him. Dutlov said that he came to ask Egor Mikhaylovich's permission. To Dutlov's terror, the clerk demanded the envelope, and looked at it. The commissary, too, took the envelope into his hands and briefly and abruptly asked for the details.

" Well, the money is gone," thought Dutlov, and was beginning to prove his innocence. But the commissary gave him back the money.

" What luck for this tawny-handed fellow ! " he said.

" It comes pat to him," said Egor Mikhaylovich, " he has just taken his nephew up to have him enlisted : now he will buy him off."

" Ah ! " said the commissary, walking ahead.

" Will you buy Ilya off ? " asked Egor Mikhaylovich.

" How can I ? Will there be enough money for that ? And, besides, it is too late."

" As you please," said the clerk. They both followed the commissary.

They went to the wing, in the vestibule of which the malodorous guards were waiting with a lantern. Dutlov walked behind them. The guards looked guilty, which could be due only to the smell which they had raised there, for they had done no wrong. All were silent.

" Where ? " asked the commissary.

" Here," Egor Mikhaylovich said, in a whisper. " Efim, you are a young lad, so go ahead with the lantern ! "

Efim had already fixed the upper deal and seemed to have lost all fear. Stepping over two and three steps at a time, he with cheerful face marched ahead, now and then turning back and with the lantern lighting up the way for the commissary. Egor Mikhaylovich came after the commissary. Dutlov, who had put one foot on the staircase, drew a sigh, and stopped. About two minutes passed, and their steps died down in the loft ; evidently they had reached the body.

" Uncle, they are calling you," Efim called down through the hole.

Dutlov ascended the stairs. Only the busts of the commissary and of Egor Mikhaylovich could be seen back of the rafter in the light of the lamp ; back of them somebody else was standing with his back to him. It was Polikushka. Dutlov climbed over a beam, and, crossing himself, stopped.

" Turn him around, boys," said the commissary.

Nobody stirred.

" Efim, you are a young lad," said Egor Mikhaylovich.

The young lad stepped over the beam, and, turning Polikushka around, stood near by, looking with a most cheerful glance now at Polikushka and now at the authorities, as one who is showing an albino or Julia Pastrana looks now at the public and now at the object of his show, ever ready to fulfil the wishes of the public.

" Turn him around once more ! "

Polikushka was swung around once more ; he slightly swayed his hand and stirred up the sand with his foot.

" Take him down ! "

"Do you want the rope cut, Vasili Borisovich?" said Egor Mikhaylovich. " Det us have an axe, boys! "

The guards and Dutlov had to be commanded twice to * put their hands to it ; but the young lad handled Polikushka as though he were a carcass of a sheep. Finally the rope was cut, and the body taken down and covered up. The commissary said that on the morrow the physician would come, and dismissed the people.

XV.

Dutlov went to his house, moving his lips. At first he felt ill at ease, but in the measure as he approached the village, this feeling passed away, and the sensation of joy more and more penetrated his soul. In the village could be heard songs and drunken voices. Dutlov never drank and now went straight home. It was late when he entered his hut. His wife was asleep. His elder son and the grandchildren were sleeping on the oven, while his second son slept in the storeroom. Ilya's wife only was not asleep: she was sitting on a bench in a dirty, every-day shirt, and with uncovered hair, and was weeping. She did not get up to open the door for the uncle, but only wept the louder and pronounced lamentations. According to the opinion of the old woman, she lamented very well and eloquently, although on account of her youth she could not have had much experience in the matter.

The old woman got up and fixed a supper for her husband. Dutldv sent Ilyé's wife away from the table. " Stop it, stop it ! " he said. Aksinya rose, and, lying down on a bench, did not cease weeping. The old woman silently set the table for him, and then cleaned all off. Dutlov did not say a word. After his prayer, he belched, washed his hands, and, taking the abacus down from the nail, went into the storeroom. There he said something in a whisper to the old woman ; then she came out, and he began to rattle with the abacus. Finally he slammed to the lid of a coffer and climbed into the space under the floor. He was long busy in the storeroom and under the floor.

When he came back the room was dark, the light of the torch having gone out. The old woman, who in the daytime was quiet and listless, now was rolling on the hanging-bed and snoring as loud as she could. Ilya's tearful wife was also asleep and breathing softly. She slept on the bench, without having undressed herself, just as she was, and without having put anything under her head.

Dutlov began to pray, then looked at Ilya's wife, shook his head, put out the torch, belched once more, climbed on the oven, and lay down with his little grandson. In the dark he threw down the bast shoes and lay down on his back, looking at the cross-beam above the oven, which was barely visible above his head, and listening to the cockroaches that were swarming along the wall, and to the sighs, the snoring, the rubbing of one leg against another, and the sounds of the cattle in the yard.

He could not fall asleep for a long time. The moon rose; it grew lighter in the room and he could see Aksinya in the corner, and something else, which he could not make out. He did not know whether it was a camel-hair coat which his son had forgotten, or whether it was a vat which the women had placed there, or a man standing there. He probably dozed off, but he began to gaze at it again.

Apparently the gloomy spirit, who had led Polikushka to commit that terrible deed and whose presence all the manorial servants felt on that night, had evidently reached with his pinion down to the village, to Dutlov's hut, where lay the money which he had used for Polikushka's ruin. At least Dutlov felt his presence, and it unnerved him: he could neither sleep nor get up. Seeing something which he could not make out, he recalled Ilya with his tied arms, and Aksinya with her eloquent lamentation, and PoEkushka with the swinging arm-wrists. Suddenly it appeared to the old man that somebody had passed by the window.

"What is that? Is the elder coming to see me?" he thought. "What does he want now?" thought the old man, hearing steps in the vestibule. "Did the old woman not latch the door as she went out to the vestibule?"

The dog barked in the back yard, and he kept walking through the vestibule, as the old man later told, as though he were looking for a door; then he passed on, began to grope along the wall, stumbled against a vat, which made a hollow noise. Again he began to grope, as though looking for the latch. Now he held it. A shiver ran up the old man's body. Now he pressed the latch and came in, in human form. Dutlov knew that it was he. He wanted to make the sign of the cross, but could not. He went up to the table, upon which lay the tablecloth, pulled it off, threw it on the floor, and climbed on the oven. The old man saw at once that he had assumed Polikushka's form. He grinned, and his hands dangled. He climbed up on the oven and threw himself straight on the old man and began to choke him.

"It is my money," said PoEkushka.

"Let me go, I will not do it," Semén wanted to say, but could not.

PoEkushka choked him with all the weight of a stone mountain pressing on his chest. Dutlov knew that if he said a prayer, he would let him go, and he knew what kind of a prayer it was, but he could not pronounce it.

His grandchild was sleeping near him. The boy gave a piercing shriek and began to cry : his grandfather had jammed him against the wall. The boy's cry released the old man's lips.

" Let God rise," said Dutldv. He released him a little. " And his enemies will be dispersed," lisped Dutlôv.

He went down from the oven. Dutlov heard him strike the floor with both his feet. Dutldv kept saying prayers which he knew, saying them one after the other. He went to the door, past the table, and so slammed it that the whole house shook. But all were asleep, except the old man and his grandson. The old man kept saying his prayers and trembling with his whole body ; the grandson wept, falling asleep, and pressed close to his grandfather.

Everything was quiet again. The old man lay motionless. A cock crowed behind the wall, right under Dut-lov's ear. He heard the hens stirring and the young cock trying to crow after the old one, but making a failure of it. Something moved over the old man's legs : it was the cat. It jumped down with its soft feet on the floor and began to mew near the door.

The old man got up. He raised a window ; outside it was dark and muddy ; a wagon Ember was standing under the window. He went barefoot, making the sign of the cross, out into the yard to the horses. It was at once apparent that the master had come. The mare which was standing under the penthouse near a buttress had become entangled in her halter, had spilled some chaff, and, raising her leg and turning her head back, was waiting for her master. The colt had rolled himself on the manure heap. The old man raised him on his feet, disentangled the mare, added some feed, and went back to the house.

The old woman got up and lighted a torch.

"Wake the boys, I will go to town," and, lighting a wax taper from the images, he crawled with it into the space below the floor. Not only at Dutlôv's house, but in the houses of all the neighbours, the fires were made, when he came out from it. The boys were up and dressing themselves. The women went in and out with buckets and pails of milk. Ignat was hitching up the cart. His second son was greasing another. The young woman no longer wept, but, having dressed herself and put on her kerchief, was sitting on a bench in the room, waiting for the time when she would go to town to bid her husband farewell.

The old man seemed to be unusually stern. He did not say a word to any one, put on his new caftan, girded himself, and with all of Polikiishka's money went to Egdr Mikhaylovich.

" Don't lose time ! " he shouted to Ignat, who was turning a wheel on a raised and greased axle. "I will be back at once, so let everything be ready ! "

The clerk had just got up and was drinking tea. He himself was getting ready to go to town to present the recruits.

" What do you want? " he asked.

" Egdr Mikhaylovich, I want to buy off the lad. Do me the favour ! You told me the other day that you knew a volunteer in town. Instruct me what to do, for we are ignorant."

" Well, have you thought the matter over ? "

" I have, Egdr Mikhäylovich : I am sorry for him, he is my brother's son. Whatever he may be, I pity him. This money is the cause of too much sinning. Do me the favour, instruct me ! " he said, bowing as far as his waist.

Egdr Mikhaylovich, as always in such cases, for a long time thoughtfully and silently smacked his lips, and, having considered the matter, wrote two notes and told him how and what to do in town.

When Dutlov came home, the young woman had already left with Ignat, and the dappled, pot-bellied mare, all hitched up, was standing at the gate. He broke a stick out from the wattled fence, wrapped himself in his coat, seated himself in the cart box, and started his horse. Dutlov drove his mare so fast that she at once lost all her belly, and Dutlov no longer looked at her, so as not to be touched to sympathy. He was vexed by the thought that he would somehow be too late at the conscription, that Ilyd would be enlisted, and that the devil's money would be left on his hands.

I shall not describe in detail all the adventures of Dutlov on that morning ; I will only say that he had unusual bad luck. The master, to whom Egdr Mikhaylovich had given him a note, had a volunteer all ready, who was indebted to him to the amount of twenty-three roubles and who had been approved of by the military board. The master wanted four hundred for him, and a burgher, who had been trying to get him for the last three weeks, had offered three hundred for him. Dutlov finished the matter in a very few words.

" Will you take three twenty-five ? " he said, stretching out his hand, but with such an expression that it was evident that he was ready to add more immediately.

The master pulled his hand away and continued to ask four hundred.

"Won't you take three and a quarter?" repeated Dutlov, seizing the master's right hand with his left and threatening to come down on it with his right. " Won't you take it ? God be with you ! " he suddenly exclaimed, striking the master's hand and swinging his body away from him. " I suppose it has to be ! Take three and a half ! Get the receipt ready. Bring here the lad ! And here is the earnest. Two red bills, will that do ? "

Dutldv ungirt himself and drew out the money.

The master did not draw his hand back, but pretended not to be satisfied yet. He did not accept the earnest, and wanted him to stand treat for the company and the volunteer.

" Don't sin," repeated Dutldv, pushing the money into his hand ; " we shall all die," he repeated, in such a meek, persuasive, and confident tone that the master said :

" Let it be ! " and again clapped Dutldv's hand and began to pray. " God grant you luck ! " he said.

The volunteer was wakened. He had been sleeping off a spree from the day before. They examined him and went with him to the office of the military board. The volunteer was merry, asked for rum, for which Dutldv gave him some money, and lost his courage only as they entered the vestibule of the government building.

For a long time there stood in the vestibule the old master in a blue cloak and the volunteer in a short fur coat, with raised eyebrows and bulging eyes. For a long time they kept whispering, trying to get somewhere, wishing to see somebody, for some unknown reason doffing their caps in front of every scribe, and in deep meditation listening to the decision which a scribe, whom the master knew, brought out to them. All hope to get the matter settled on that day was abandoned, and the volunteer was again growing merry and talkative, when Dutldv suddenly espied Egdr Mikhaylovich, to whom he at once clung, begging him with low obeisances to help him.

Egor Mikhaylovich aided him so well that at about three o'clock the volunteer, to his great disgust and surprise, was taken into the enlistment-room, where under universal merriment, which for some reason was shared by all, from the guards to the president, he was undressed, shaved, dressed again, and let out through a door. Five minutes later Dutldv counted out the money, received a receipt, and, bidding the merchant and volunteer good-bye, went to his lodging to the merchant's, where the Pokrdv-skoe recruits were.

Ilyd and his young wife were sitting in a corner of the merchant's kitchen ; the moment the old man entered, they stopped talking and fixed their submissive, hostile glance upon him. As usual, the old man said his prayer, ungirt himself, fetched out the document, and called into the room his eldest son Ignat and Ilyd's mother, who were in the yard.

" Don't sin, Ilya ! " he said, walking over to his nephew. " You told me a terrible word last night. Don't you know I pity you ? If it had been in my power I should not have given you up. Now God has given me luck, and so I have not spared the money. Here is the document," he said, placing the receipt on the table and cautiously opening it with his crooked, unbending fingers.

Into the room came all the Pokrdvskoe peasants, the merchant's

workmen, and even strangers. All had guessed what was up, but no one interrupted the old man's solemn speech.

" Here is the document ! I paid four hundred roubles for it. Don't blame your uncle."

Ilyä rose, but was silent, not knowing what to say. His lips quivered from agitation ; his old mother went up to him, sobbing, and wanted to fall around his neck ; but the old man slowly and commandingly pushed her hand aside and continued speaking.

" You told last night a word," the old man repeated once more, " and with that word you have, so to speak, stuck a knife into my heart. Your father, dying, entrusted you to me, and you had been like my own son to me, and if I have in any way offended you, we are all living in sin. Is it not so, Orthodox people ? " he turned to the peasants who were standing around him. " Here is also your own mother, and your young wife : here is the receipt. God take the money ! Forgive me, for Christ's sake !"

Turning back the flap of his camel-hair coat, he slowly knelt down and bowed down to the ground before Ilyä and his wife. The young people tried in vain to keep him back: he did not get up until his head had touched the floor, after which he adjusted his clothes and sat down on a bench. Ilyä's mother and wife wept with joy ; in the crowd were heard words of approval. " This is just and godly," said one. " What is money ? You can't buy a lad for money," said another. " What a joy ! " said a third, " in short, he is a just man." Only the peasants who were to be enlisted as recruits said nothing and silently went out into the yard.

Two hours later the carts of the Dutlovs left the suburb of the town. In the first of these, drawn by the dappled mare with the big belly and sweaty neck, sat the old man and Ignat. In the back of the cart shook bundles of water-chestnuts and white-bread. In the second cart, which was not guided by any one, sat the staid and happy young woman and her mother-in-law, their heads covered with kerchiefs. The young woman kept a wine-bottle under cover. Ilya, curling up, with his back to the horse and with a red face, was being jolted in the front of the cart, eating white-bread and never ceasing to talk. The voices and the rumble of the wheels on the pavement, and the snorting of the horses, - everything mingled in one merry sound. The horses, swaying their tails, increased their pace as they felt the nearness to home. Passers-by and people in vehicles looked back at the happy family.

Just as they left the town, the Dutlovs overtook a party of recruits. A group of recruits stood around a dramshop. One of them, with that unnatural expression which a shaven head gives a person, having his gray cap poised on the back of his head, was strumming a balaläyka ; another, without a cap, with a brandy-bottle in one hand, was dancing in the middle of the circle.

Ignat got out of the cart to shorten the traces. All the Dutlovs

watched the dancer, with curiosity, approval, and merriment. The recruit did not seem to see any one, but he felt that the admiring public was growing larger, and that increased his strength and agility. He danced briskly. He was frowning, his ruddy face was motionless, and his mouth had stopped on a smile which had long ago lost its expression. It seemed as though all the powers of his soul were directed toward the one object of placing his feet as fast as possible now on the heels and now on the toes.

Now and then he stopped and winked to the balaläyka player, who began more briskly to strum all the strings and even to strike the wood with his knuckles. The recruit stopped, but even in this motionless position he seemed to be dancing. Suddenly he began to move slowly, jerking his shoulders ; then he suddenly darted upward, squatted down while in full motion, and with a wild scream began to dance the national jig.

The boys laughed ; the women shook their heads ; the men smiled approvingly. An old under-officer stood calmly near the dancer, with an expression which said : " This is new to you, but quite old to us." The balaläyka player was apparently tired ; he looked lazily around, as he struck a false chord, and suddenly knocked his fingers on the wood of the instrument, and the dance was over.

"Oh, Alékha," said the musician, pointing to Dutlov. " There is your godfather ! "

" Where ? My dear friend ! " shouted Alékha, that same recruit whom Dutlov had bought, and, tripping forward with tired feet and holding the brandy-bottle over his head, he moved up to the cart. "Mishka, a glass ! " he shouted. " Master ! My dear friend ! What a pleasure this is, indeed ! " he exclaimed, sticking his drunken head into the cart and treating the men and the women to brandy. The men drank it, but the women declined it. " My dear ones, what can I offer you ? " cried Alékha, embracing the women.

A pastry woman was standing in the crowd. Alékha saw her ; he grabbed her tray and poured the contents of it into the cart.

" Don't be afraid, I will pay you, - the devil," he screeched in a tearful voice, and immediately pulled out of his pocket a tobacco-pouch with money, which he threw to Mishka.

He stood leaning against the cart, and looked with moist eyes upon those who were sitting in it.

" Which one is the mother ? " he asked. " Is it you ? I must treat her, too."

He stood thinking for a moment, then he fumbled in his pocket, fetched from it a new, folded kerchief, untied the sash with which he was girded under his overcoat, quickly took the red kerchief down from his neck, crumpled the whole lot, and stuck them into the old woman's lap.

" Here it is, a gift from me," he said, in a voice which grew ever more quiet.

" What for ? Thank you, my dear ! What a simple lad," said the old woman, turning to old Dutlov, who had come up to their cart.

Alékha grew completely quiet, and, looking dull, as though falling asleep, dropped his head lower and lower.

" I am going for you, and am perishing for you ! " he said. " And so I make you gifts."

" I suppose you have a mother of your own," said one in the crowd. " What a simple lad ; what a pity ! "

Alékha raised his head.

" I have a mother," he said. " I have a father too. They have disowned me. Listen, old woman ! " he added, taking the hand of Ilya's mother. " I have given you presents. Listen to me, for Christ's sake ! Go to the village of Vddnoe! Ask there for old woman Nik6-novna ; she is my mother, you hear ? - and tell her, that old woman, old Nikénova, the third hut from the end, a new well - tell her that Alékha, her son - you know - Musician, let her go ! " he shouted.

And he began to dance once more, speaking all the time, and smashing the bottle with what brandy there was left in it against the floor.

Ignat climbed into the cart and wanted to drive on.

" Good-bye, God grant you luck ! " said the old woman, wrapping herself in her fur coat.

Alékha suddenly stopped.

" Go to the devil ! " he shouted, threatening them with clenched fists. " May your mother ! - "

" 0 Lord ! " exclaimed Ilyé's mother, making the sign of the cross.

Ignat pulled the mare's reins, and the cart again rumbled along. Alékha, the recruit, stood in the middle of the road and, clenching his fists, with an expression of rage in his face, cursed the peasants as much as he could.

" What are you stopping for ? Go on ! Devils, bloodsuckers ! " he cried. " You won't get away from me ! Devils ! Bast shoe churls ! - "

With this word his voice faltered, and just as he stood, so he fell in a heap on the ground.

The Dutlovs soon rode out into the open country and, upon looking back, no longer saw the recruits. After having driven about five versts at a slow pace, Ignat got down from his father's cart, in which the old man had fallen asleep, and walked by the side of Ilyd's cart.

The two emptied the brandy-bottle which they had brought with them from town. A little later, Ilya started a song and the women seconded him. Ignat shouted merrily, keeping time with the song. A merry post trdyka came rapidly toward them. The driver shouted briskly to his horses, as he came abreast with the two merry carts; the postilion looked back and winked to the red faces of the peasants and women, who were being jolted in the cart, singing a merry song.

THE END.