

THE COSSACKS A Novel of the Caucasus

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I.

Everything was quiet in Moscow. In a few isolated places could be heard the squeak of wheels over the wintry street. There were no lights in the windows, and the lamps were extinguished. From the churches rang out the sounds of bells which, billowing over the sleepy city, reminded one of morning.

The streets were empty. Here and there a night cabman caused the sand and snow to become mixed under the narrow runners of his sleigh, and, betaking himself to the opposite corner, fell asleep, waiting for a passenger. An old woman walked by, on her way to church, where, reflected from the gold foils of the holy images, burnt with a red light a few unsymmetrically placed wax tapers. Working people were rising after the long winter night, and walking to work.

But for gentlemen it was still evening.

In one of the windows of Chevalier's establishment there peeped, contrary to law, a light through the closed shutter. At the entrance stood a carriage, a sleigh, and cabs, closely pressed together, with their backs to the curbstone. Here was also a stage troyka. The janitor,

wrapped in his furs and crouching, seemed to be hiding around the corner of the house.

"What makes them keep up this unending prattle?" thought the lackey with the haggard face, who was sitting in the antechamber. "And that, too, when I am keeping watch!"

In the adjoining, brightly illuminated room could be heard the voices of three young men, who were dining. They were sitting at a table, upon which stood the remnants of a supper and wine. One of them, a small, clean-looking, haggard, and homely fellow was seated and looking with kindly, though wearied, eyes at him who was to depart. Another, a tall man, was reclining near the table, that was covered with empty bottles, and playing with his watch-key. A third, in a new short fur coat, paced the room, now and then stopped to crack an almond between his fairly fat and powerful fingers, with their manicured nails, and smiled for some reason or other. His eyes

and face were flushed. He spoke with ardour and in gestures ; but it was evident that he could not find words, and that all the words which occurred to him appeared insufficient to express everything that was upon his heart. He was continually smiling.

" Now I may say everything ! " said the departing man. " I do not mean to justify myself, but I should like to have you understand me as I understand myself, and not as the malicious regard this affair. You say that I am guilty toward her," he turned to the one who looked upon him with kindly eyes.

" Yes, guilty," answered the short, homely fellow, and there seemed to be even more kindness and weariness expressed in his glance.

" I know why you say so," answered the departing man. " To be loved is, in your opinion, just such happiness as to love, and it is sufficient for a whole life, if you once obtain it."

" Yes, quite sufficient, my dear ! More than enough," confirmed the short, homely fellow, opening and closing his eyes.

" But why should one not love ? " said the departing man, falling into a reverie, and looking at his companion, as though with compassion. " Why not love ? Don't feel like loving – No, to be loved is a misfortune when you feel that you are guilty because you are not returning the love, nor ever can return it. O Lord !" and he waved his hand. " If all this had happened in a sensible way ! But no, it is all topsyturvy, not according to our ways, but in its own peculiar manner. I feel as though I had stolen that sentiment. And you think the same way; do not deny it, you certainly must think that way. And would you believe it ? Of all the mean and stupid acts that I have managed to commit in my life, this is the only one for which I do not feel, nor ever can feel, remorse. Neither in the beginning, nor later, have I lied to myself, nor to her. I imagined that at last I had fallen in love with her ; and then I saw that it was an involuntary lie, that it was impossible thus to love, and I was unable to go any farther ; but she did go farther. Am I to be blamed because I could not? What could I do?"

" Well, now it is all ended!" said his friend, lighting a cigar in order to dispel sleep. " There is this much : you have not loved yet, and you do not know what love is."

The one who wore the short fur coat was on the point of saying something, and he grasped his head with both his hands. But he did not express what he intended to say.

" I have not loved ! Yes, it is true, I have not loved. I certainly desire to love, and there is nothing stronger than my desire ! And then again, is there such a love ? There always remains something unfinished. Well, what is the use of speaking ? I have blundered and blundered in my life. But now all is ended, you are right. And I feel that a new life is to begin."

" In which you will blunder again," said the one who was lying on the sofa and playing with his watch-key ; but the departing man did not hear him.

" I am both sad and happy to leave," he continued.

" Why sad ? I do not know."

And the departing man began to speak of himself, without noticing that the others were not as much interested in this as he. Man is never such an egotist as in the moment of sentimental transport. It seems to him then that there is nothing in the world more beautiful and interesting than he himself.

" Dmitri Andreevich, the driver refuses to wait ! " said, upon entering, a young manorial servant, in a fur coat, and wrapped in a scarf. " The horses have been standing since twelve o'clock, and now it is four."

Dmitri Andreevich looked at his Vanyusha. In his scarf, felt boots, and sleepy face he heard the voice of another life which called him, – a life of labour, privation, and activity.

" That is so, good-bye ! " he said, searching for the unhooked eye of his fur coat.

In spite of the advice of his friends to give the driver a pourboire, he donned his cap, and stood in the middle of the room. They kissed once, twice, then stopped, and kissed for the third time. The one who was in the short fur coat walked up to the table, emptied a beaker that was standing upon it, took the hand of the short, homely fellow, and blushed.

"No, I will say it – I ought to be and can be frank with you, because I love you – You love her ? I always thought so – yes ? "

" Yes," answered his friend, smiling more gently still.

" And maybe – "

" Please, I have been ordered to put out the lights," said the sleepy lackey who had heard the last conversation, and was ruminating why it was gentlemen eternally talked of one and the same thing. " Against whom shall the bill be charged ? Against you ? " he added, turning to the tall gentleman, knowing in advance who it would be.

" Against me," said the tall man. " How much is it ? "

" Twenty-six roubles."

The tall man mused for awhile, but said nothing, and placed the bill in his pocket.

The other two continued their conversation.

" Good-bye, you are a fine fellow ! " said the short, homely man with the gentle eyes.

Tears stood in the eyes of both. They walked out to the entrance.

" Oh, yes ! " said the departing man, blushing, and turning to the tall gentleman. " You will fix the bill with Chevalier, and then write to me about it."

" All right, all right," said the tall gentleman, putting on his gloves. " How I envy you ! " he added, quite unexpectedly, as they walked out to the entrance.

The departing man seated himself in his sleigh, wrapped himself in his fur coat, and said, " Well, we will start," and moved in his seat to give a place to him who had said that he envied him ; his voice was trembling.

The friend who saw him off said, " Good-bye, Mitya, may God grant you - " He did not wish anything but that he should leave as soon as possible, and so he could not finish what it was he wished him.

They were silent. Again somebody said, " Good-bye ! "

Somebody said, " Go ! " and the driver started his horses.

" Elizär, the carriage ! " shouted one of these who had seen him off.

The cabmen and the coachman stirred, called to their

horses, and pulled the reins. The frozen sleigh squeaked over the snow.

" This Olenin is a fine fellow," said one of the two. " But what pleasure is there in going to the Caucasus, and as a yunker¹ at that ? I would not do it for anything. Will you dine at the club to-morrow ? "

« Yes."

And the friends parted.

The departing man felt warm, even hot, in his fur coat. He sat down in the bed of the sleigh and stretched himself; and the shaggy stage-horses flew from one dark street into another, past houses he had never seen. It appeared to Olénin that only those who departed travelled through these streets. Around him it was dark, speechless, gloomy, and his soul was full of recollections, love, regrets, and of pleasurable tears that choked him.

1A non-commissioned officer of the nobility.

II.

" I love ! I love them very much ! They are fine ! It is good ! " he repeated, and he wanted to weep. But he was not quite sure why he wanted to weep, who were fine, and whom he loved.

He now gazed at some house, and wondered why it was built in such a strange manner ; and again he wondered why the driver and Vanyusha, who were such strangers to him, were so close to him and jolted and shook simultaneously with him from the sudden jerks of the side horses who tugged at the frozen traces, and he repeated, " They are fine, I love them," and once he even said, " There she goes ! Superb ! " and he wondered why he said that, and asked himself, " Am I drunk ? "

It is true nearly two bottles of wine had fallen to his share, but it was not the wine alone that had produced that effect upon Olénin. He thought of what appeared to him to be the intimate words of friendship which had timidly, as though accidentally, been told him at his departure. He thought of the pressure of the hands, of the glances, the silence, and the voice of him who said " Good-bye, Mitya ! " when he was seated in the sleigh. He thought of his own determined frankness. And all this touched him.

Before his departure, not only his friends and his relatives, not only indifferent people, but even those who were unsympathetic, or ill-wishing – all seemed to have been in league to love him better, and to forgive him, as before confession or death.

"Maybe I shall not return from the Caucasus," he thought. And he thought that he loved his friends, and somebody else. And he was sorry for himself. But it was not the love for his friends that touched him and elevated his soul, so that he was unable to restrain those meaningless words that issued unbidden from his mouth, – nor was it the love for a woman (he had never loved) that had brought him to this state. It was the love of self, the ardent, hopeful, young love of everything good in his soul (it seemed to him that it was filled with nothing but that which was good), that caused him to weep and mutter incoherent words.

Olénin was a young man who had never finished his university course ; who had never served (he was merely a supernumerary in some government office) ; who had spent half his fortune; and who until his twenty-fourth year had chosen no career for himself, and had never done anything. He was what is called a " young man " in Moscow society.

At eighteen years of age Olénin had been as free as only were rich young Russians of the forties who at an early age were left as orphans. He knew neither physical nor moral fetters; he could do everything, and he wanted nothing, and nothing bound him. He had

neither family, nor country, nor faith, nor want. He believed in nothing, and acknowledged nothing. Yet, though he acknowledged nothing, he was not a gloomy, blasé, and meditative youth, but, on the contrary, was easily carried away.

He had decided that there was no love, and yet the presence of a young and beautiful woman made him breathless with delight. He had long known that honours and distinction were nonsense, but he experienced an involuntary pleasure when Prince Sérgi walked up to him at a ball, and addressed him graciously.

He allowed himself to be carried away by his raptures only so long as they did not bind him. The moment he devoted himself to one subject, and felt the approach of labour and struggles, – the petty struggles with life, – he instinctively hastened to tear himself away from his sentiment or from affairs, and to regain his liberty. Thus he had begun his worldly life, his service, farming, music, to which he thought at one time of devoting himself, and even love of women, in which he did not believe.

He pondered how to expend all that strength of youth, which comes to man only once in a lifetime, – whether on art, on science, on love for a woman, or on practical life ; he wished to employ not the power of his mind, heart, and education, but that unrepeated impulse, that power, granted to man but once, to make of himself everything he wishes, and, as he thinks, everything of the world he may wish.

It is true there are people who lack this impulse, and who, upon entering life, put on the first yoke they find, and continue to work honestly in it until the end of their days. But Olénin was too vividly conscious of the presence of that all-powerful god of youth, of that ability to transform himself into one desire and one thought, of the ability to wish and do, to throw himself headlong into a bottomless abyss, not knowing why, or wherefore. He carried this consciousness with him, was proud of it, and, without knowing it, was happy in its possession.

So far he had loved himself only, nor could he help loving himself, because he expected nothing but good things of himself, and had not yet been disappointed in himself. At his departure from Moscow he was in that happy, youthful frame of mind when a young man, having become conscious of his previous mistakes, suddenly says to himself that the past was wrong, that everything that preceded was accidental and insignificant, that he had not heretofore tried to live decently, but that now, with his departure from Moscow, a new life would begin, in which there would be none of those blunders, and no remorse, and in which he certainly would be happy.

When one sets out for a long journey, the imagination at the first two stages remains in the place whence one has set out; then, suddenly, on the first morning which one passes on the road, one is transferred to the goal of the journey, and there builds castles of the future. The same happened to Olénin.

As he drove out of the city, and gazed at the snow-covered fields, he rejoiced at being all alone in their midst, wrapped himself in his fur coat, let himself down in the bed of the sleigh, became calm, and dozed off. His leave-taking with his friends unstrung him, and he recalled his whole last winter which he had passed in Moscow ; and pictures of that past, interrupted by indistinct thoughts and reproaches, began to rise unbidden before his imagination.

He recalled the friend who had seen him off, and his relations with the maiden of whom they had been speaking. That girl was rich. " How could he have loved her, when he knew that she was in love with me? " he thought, and evil suspicions rose in his mind. "When you come to think of it, there is much dishonesty in people. Hut why have I not yet loved? " the question occurred to him. " Everybody tells me that I have not yet loved. Am I really a moral monster ? "

And he began to recall the subjects of his temporary transports. He recalled the first experience of his worldly life, and the sister of one of his friends, with whom he used to pass evenings at the table with a lamp upon it that cast a light upon her slender fingers at work, and upon the lower part of her fair oval face, and he remembered those conversations that dragged along like a child's game called "the fox is alive," and the general awkwardness, and the embarrassment, and the continuous feeling of provocation at this strained relation. A voice told him, " It is not that, not that," and it really turned out that way.

Then he recalled the ball and the mazurka with beautiful I)----. " How I was in love that night, and how

happy I was ! And how pained and mortified I was when I awoke the next morning, and felt that I was free ! Why does not love come ? and bind my hands and feet ? " he thought. " No, there is no love ! My neighbour, who told me, and Dubrovin, and the marshal of nobility, that she loved the stars, was not that either."

And he thought of his farming activity in the country, and found no pleasant incident upon which to rest his memory. " Will they think for a long time of my departure ? " it suddenly occurred to him. But whom did he mean by " they " ? He did not know, and immediately a thought came to him that made him frown and utter indistinct sounds: it was the recollection of M. Capelle and the 678 roubles which he owed his tailor; and he recalled the words with which he begged the tailor to wait another year, and the expression of amazement and of submission to fate which appeared on the tailor's countenance.

" 0 Lord, Lord ! " he repeated, blinking, and trying to dispel the unbearable thought. " And yet, she loved me, in spite of it," he thought of the maiden of whom they had been speaking at the leave-taking. "If I married her, I should have no debts, but now I still owe Vasilev."

And he recalled the last evening which he had passed at the gaming-table with Vasilev in the club, whither he had driven straight from her house ; and he recalled his humiliating requests to continue playing, and Vasilev's cold refusals. " One year of strict economy, and all that will be paid, and the devil take them - " But in spite of his self-assurance, he again started to count up his debts, and to consider when they would fall due, or when he should be able to pay them.

" Why, I owe Morelle, also, in addition to Chevalier," he suddenly thought, and the whole night in which he had run up such a bill stood before him. It was a carousal with the gipsies, which was given by some visitors from St. Petersburg, Sashka B----, aid-de-camp, and Prince

D----, and that distinguished old gentleman. " What

makes those gentlemen so satisfied with themselves ? " he thought. " And on what ground do they form a separate circle to which others ought to feel themselves flattered to be admitted ? Because they are aids-de-camp ? It is really terrible what stupid and mean people they consider others to be ! However, I showed them that I did not have the least desire to get better acquainted with them. Still, I think, Manager Andréy would be very much puzzled if he heard me saying ' thou ' to such a gentleman as Sashka B----, colonel and aid-de-camp - And nobody

drank as much as I on that evening ; I taught the gipsies a new song, and everybody listened. Though I have done many a foolish tiring, I am a nice, a very nice young man," he thought.

The morning found Olenin at the third stage. He drank tea, transferred with Vanyusha's aid the bundles and portmanteaus, and sat down gravely, precisely, and accurately among them, knowing where each thing was, - where the money was and how much of it; where the passport, and the stage permit, and the highway receipt were, - and all that seemed to him so practically arranged that he was happy, and the distant journey presented itself to him as a protracted outing.

During the morning and midday he was lost in arithmetical calculations: how many versts he had behind him ; how many were left to the next station ; how many to the nearest town ; to dinner, to tea, to Stavrdpol ; and what part of the whole road he had behind him. At the same time he calculated how much money he had ; how much there would be left; how much he needed to acquit himself of all his debts ; and what part of his whole income he would spend in a month. In the evening, after having had his tea, he figured out that to Stavrdpol seven-elevenths of the whole road were left; his debts amounted to but seven months of strict economy, and to one-eighth of his fortune ; and having calmed himself, he wrapped himself up, let himself down in the bed of the sleigh, and again fell asleep.

His imagination now was in the future, in the Caucasus. All his

dreams of the future were connected with pictures of Amalét-bek,¹ Circassian maidens, mountains, avalanches, terrible torrents, and perils. All that presented itself in a dim and indistinct shape ; but enticing glory and threatening death formed the chief interest of that future.

Now, with extraordinary valour and surprising strength, he killed and vanquished an endless number of mountaineers; now he was himself a mountaineer, and together with them defended his independence against the Russians. The moment he thought out the details, he found the old Moscow faces taking part in them. Sashka B----fought with the Russians, or mountaineers, against

him. He knew not how, but even M. Capelie, the tailor, took part in the victor's triumph.

If he recalled his old humiliations, foibles, and mistakes in connection with this, that reminiscence gave him only pleasure. It was clear that there, amidst the mountains, torrents, Circassian maidens, and perils, these mistakes could not be repeated. Having once made that confession to himself, there was an end to them.

There was one, the most precious dream, which mingled in every thought of the young man about the future. This dream was woman. There, among the mountains,

¹ Character in a novel by Bestuzhev-Marlinski. she presented herself to his imagination in the shape of a Circassian slave, with a slender figure, long braid, and submissive, deep eyes. He saw in the mountains a lonely cabin, and her on the threshold, waiting for him while he returned to her tired, covered with dust, blood, and glory ; and he dreamed of her kisses, her shoulders, her sweet voice, her submissiveness. She was charming, but uneducated, wild, coarse.

In the long winter evenings he would begin to educate her. She was intelligent, quick-witted, gifted, and rapidly acquired all the necessary information. Why not ? She might easily learn the languages, read the productions of French literature, and understand them. " Notre Dame de Paris," for example, would no doubt please her. She might even speak French. In the drawing-room she might possess more native dignity than a lady of the highest circles of society. She could sing, simply, powerfully, and passionately.

" Oh, what bosh !" he said to himself.

Just then they arrived at some station, and it was necessary to climb from one sleigh into another, and to give a pourboire. But he again searched with his imagination for the nonsense which he had left off, and again there stood before him Circassian maidens, glory, return to Russia, an aid-de-campship, a charming wife. " But there is no love ! " he said to himself. " Honours are nonsense. And the six hundred and seventy-eight roubles ? And the conquered territory which would give me more wealth than I should need for all

my life ? Indeed, it will not be well to make use of all that wealth by myself. I shall have to distribute it. But to whom ? Six hundred and seventy-eight roubles to Capelle, and then we will see - "

And dim visions shrouded his thoughts, and only Vanyusha's voice and a feeling of interrupted motion disturbed his sound, youthful sleep, and, without being conscious of it, he crawled into another sleigh at the following station, and travelled on.

The next morning was the same, - the same stations, the same tea-drinking, the same cruppers of the horses in motion, the same short chats with Vanyusha, the same indistinct dreams and the drowsiness in the evening, and the tired, sound, youthful sleep during the night.

III.

The farther Olénin travelled from the centre of Russia, the more distant his memories seemed to him ; and the nearer he approached the Caucasus, the happier he felt. " To go away for ever, and never to come back, and not to appear in society," it sometimes occurred to him. "The people that I see here are no people; no one knows me here, and not one of them can ever be in Moscow and in the society in which I moved, or find out anything about my past. And not one of that society will ever know what I was doing when I lived among those people."

And an entirely new feeling of freedom from his whole past seized him among the vulgar beings whom he met on the road, and whom he did not regard as people on the same level with his Moscow acquaintances. The coarser the people were, and the fewer the signs of civilization, the freer he felt himself.

Stavropol, through which he passed, mortified him. The shop-signs, - nay, French signs, - the ladies in a carriage, the cabmen who stood in the square, the boulevard, and a gentleman in an overcoat and hat, who was strolling in the boulevard and glancing at the stranger, affected him painfully. " Maybe these people know some of my acquaintances," and he again recalled the club, the tailor, the cards, and society -

After Stavrdpol, however, everything went satisfactorily : it was all wild and, besides, beautiful and warlike. And Olénin grew happier and happier. All the Cossacks, drivers, and inspectors seemed to him to be simple creatures with whom he could make simple jokes, and chat, without stopping to consider to what class of society they belonged. They all belonged to the human race, which was unconsciously dear to Olénin, and they all were friendly to him.

As far back as the Land of the Don Army his sleigh had been exchanged for a cart, and beyond Stavropol it grew so warm that

Olénin travelled without a fur coat. It was spring, an unexpected, joyous spring for Olénin.

At night they could not leave the villages, and they said that in the evening it was dangerous to travel; Vanyusha shuddered, and a loaded gun lay in the stage vehicle. Olénin felt happier still. At one station, the inspector told of a terrible murder that had lately happened on the road. They now and then met armed men.

" That is where it begins ! " Olenin said to himself, and waited for the sight of the snow-capped mountains, about which he had been told so much. Once, toward evening, a Nogäy driver pointed with his whip at the mountains beyond the clouds. Olénin eagerly looked at them, but it was misty, and the clouds half-concealed the mountains. Olénin saw something gray, white, and fleecy, and, however much he tried, he could not find anything attractive in the view of the mountains, of which he had read and heard so much. He concluded that the mountains and the clouds looked precisely alike, and that the special beauty of the snow-capped mountains, of which he had been told so much, was just such a fiction as Bach's music, and the love for a woman, in neither of which he believed, and he ceased waiting for the mountains.

But on the following day, early in the morning, he was awakened by the dampness in his vehicle, and he indifferently turned his eyes to the right. It was a very clear morning. Suddenly he saw, some twenty steps from him, as he thought at first, pure white masses, with their delicate contours and the fantastic and sharply defined outline of their summits, against the distant sky. And when he became aware of the great distance between him and the mountains and the sky, and of the immensity of the mountains, and when he felt the immeasurableness of that beauty, he was frightened, thinking that it was a vision, a dream. He shook himself, in order to be rid of his sleep. The mountains remained the same.

" What is this ? What is it ? " he asked the driver.

"The mountains," the Nogay answered, with indifference.

" I myself have been looking at them for a long time," said Vanyusha. " It is beautiful ! They will not believe it at home I "

In the rapid motion of the vehicle over the even road, the mountains seemed to be running along the horizon, gleaming in the rising sun with their rosy summits. At first the mountains only surprised Olénin, but later they gave him pleasure. And later, as he gazed longer at this chain of snow-capped mountains, which were not connected with other black mountains, but rose directly from the steppe, he began by degrees to understand their full beauty, and to " feel " the mountains.

From that moment, everything he saw, everything he thought, everything he felt, assumed for him a new, severely majestic character, that of the mountains. All the Moscow reminiscences, his

shame and remorse, all the trite dreams of the Caucasus, everything disappeared, and never returned again. " Now it has begun," a solemn voice said to him. And the road, and the distant line of the Terek, and the villages, and the people, all that appeared to him no longer a trilling matter.

He looked at the sky, and he thought of the mountains. He looked at himself, and at Vanyusha, – and again the mountains. There, two Cossacks rode by, and their muskets in cases evenly vibrated on their backs, and their horses intermingled their chestnut and gray legs, – and the mountains. Beyond the Térek was seen the smoke in a native village, – and the mountains.

The sun rose and glistened on the Térek beyond the reeds, – and the mountains. From the Cossack village came a native cart, and women, beautiful young women, walked, – and the mountains. " Abréks¹ race through the steppes, and I am travelling, and fear them not : I have a gun, and strength, and youth," – and the mountains.

1 Mountaineer braves.

IV.

The whole part of the Terek line, along which the Øreden Cossack villages are located, is about eightyversts long, and bears a uniform character, both as to topography and population. The Terek, which divides the Cossacks from the mountaineers, flows turbidly and rapidly, but now broadly and calmly, continually depositing the grayish sand on the low, reed-covered right bank, and washing away the steep, but not high, left shore with its roots of century oaks, rotting plane-trees, and young underbrush.

On the right bank are situated peaceful, but still restless, native villages ; on the left bank lie the Cossack villages, at half a verst from the river, and at the distance of from seven to eight versts from each other. In former days the greater number of these villages were on the very shore ; but the Térek deflected every year more and more to the north of the mountains, and undermined them, so that now only weed-grown old town locations, gardens, pear-trees, plum-trees and poplars, intertwined with blackberry-bushes and wild-growing grape-vines, may be seen in those places. Nobody lives there, and in the sand may be noticed the tracks of deer, boars, hares, and pheasants, who have taken a liking to these spots.

From Cossack village to village runs a road as straight as an arrow, cut through the woods. Along the road are placed cordons in which Cossacks are located ; between the cordons sentinels are stationed in watch-towers. Only a narrow strip of fertile woodland, about two thousand feet in width, forms the possession of the Cossacks.

To the north of them begin the sand-dunes of the Nogäy or Mozddk

steppe, which extends far to the north and connects, God knows where, with the Trukhmén, the Astrakhan, and the Kirgiz-Kaysak steppes. To the south, beyond the Terek, are the Great Chechnya, the Kochkalosov chain, the Black Mountains, another range, and finally the snow-capped mountains, which are just visible, but which have never been traversed by any one. In this fertile, wooded strip, rich in vegetation, has lived since time immemorial a warlike, handsome, and rich Russian population of dissenters, called the Greben Cossacks.

Long, long ago, their ancestors, the dissenters, had run away from Russia and settled beyond the Terek, between the Chechens on the Greben, – the first range of wooded mountains of the Great Chechnya. Living among the Chechens, the Cossacks have intermarried with them, and have adopted the customs, manner of life, and habits of the mountaineers; but they have retained, in all their former purity, the Russian language and ancient faith.

There is still living a tradition among these Cossacks which tells that the Tsar Ivan the Terrible came to the Terek, called the old men from the Greben into his presence, gave them land on this side of the river, advised them to live in peace, and promised them not to disturb their independence, nor to compel them to change their faith.

Even now the Cossack families count their relationship with the Chechens, and their love of freedom, indolence, pillage, and war form the chief features of their character. The influence of Russia finds its expression from its disadvantageous side in the elections, the removal of bells, and in the army which is stationed there or passes through.

A Cossack, by his natural inclination, hates less a warrior brave who has killed his brother, than a soldier who is stationed there to defend his village, but who has smoked up his cabin with tobacco. He respects the hostile mountaineer, but despises the soldier, who is a stranger to him, and an oppressor. A Russian peasant proper is to the Cossack a strange, wild, and contemptible creature, not different from the Little-Russian peddlers and immigrants whom he has seen, and whom he contemptuously designates as "fullers."

His dandyism consists in imitating the Chechen attire. He gets his best ammunition from the mountaineers, and his best horses are bought and stolen from them. A young Cossack brags of his knowledge of the Tartar language, and when he is carousing speaks in Tartar even to his brother Cossack. In spite of this, these Christian people, lost in a corner of the earth, and surrounded by semi-savage Mohammedan tribes and by soldiers, regard themselves as highly civilized, and consider none but Cossacks to be men; upon everybody else they look with contempt.

A Cossack passes the greater part of his life in the cordons, in expeditions, hunting, or fishing. He hardly ever works at home. His presence in the village is an exception, and then he carouses. The

Cossacks all have wine of their own, and intoxication is not so much a common weakness of theirs, as a ceremony, the neglect of which would be considered an apostasy.

Upon woman a Cossack looks as an implement of his well-being. A maiden is permitted to take things easy ; but a wife is compelled to work for him from youth to advanced old age ; he looks upon woman with the Eastern conception of submissiveness and labour. In consequence of this view, a woman, whose physical and moral development is intensified, outwardly submits, but at the same time has, as generally in the East, an incomparably greater influence and weight in her domestic life than women have in the West. Her removal from public life, and her habit of doing man's heavy work, give her greater weight and power in her domestic life.

A Cossack, who considers it indecent to speak kindly or leisurely with his wife in the presence of strangers, involuntarily feels her superiority when he is left with her without witnesses. The whole house, all the property, all the farm, is acquired by her, and is maintained by her labour and care. Although he is firmly convinced that work is disgraceful for a Cossack, and becoming only to a Nogdy labourer and to a woman, he feels vaguely that everything he uses and calls his own is the result of this labour, and that it lies in the power of woman, of his mother and his wife, whom he regards as his slave, to deprive him of everything which he uses.

Besides this, the continuous heavy man's labour, and the cares that are put into her hands, have given the Grebén woman an unusually independent and manly character, and have developed to an astonishing degree her physical strength, sound common sense, determination, and firmness of character. The women are generally more intelligent, more developed and beautiful than the men. The beauty of a Grebén woman is particularly striking by its combination of the purest type of the Caucasian face with the broad and powerful build of the northern woman.

The Cossack women wear the Caucasian garb: the Tartar shirt, half-coat, and foot-gear ; but they wrap their heads with a kerchief in the Russian fashion. The foppishness, cleanliness, and elegance of their attire, and the arrangement of their cabins, constitute a habit and necessity of their lives. In regard to men, the women, and especially the maidens, enjoy absolute freedom.

The village of Xovomlin has been considered to be the root of the Grebén Cossacks. Here, more than elsewhere, the customs of the old Grebéns have been preserved, and the women of this village have ever been famous for their beauty in the whole Caucasus. The Cossacks gain a subsistence from their vineyards and fruit-gardens, from their fields of melons and pumpkins, from fishing and hunting, from their fields of maize and millet, and from rapine.

The village of Novomhn is three versts distant from the Terek, from which it is separated by a dense forest. On one side of the road, which runs through the village, is the river; on the other are the

green vineyards and gardens, and may be seen the sand-dunes of the Nogäy steppe. The village is surrounded by an earthen rampart and prickly hedge. One enters into and issues from the village through a tall gate, swinging on posts, with a small, reed-thatched roof, near which is placed, on a wooden gun-carriage, a monstrous cannon which has not been fired for a hundred years, and which had been at one time taken from the enemy by the Cossacks. A Cossack in uniform, sabre, and with his gun, sometimes stands sentinel at the gate, and just as often he is not there ; sometimes he presents arms to a passing officer, and sometimes not.

Under the roof of the gate there is a white board with the following inscription in black letters: "Houses, 266; male souls, 897 ; female souls, 1,012." The houses of the Cossacks are all raised on posts, three feet or more from the ground, are neatly thatched with reeds, and have a ridge-piece. Though they are not all new, they are straight, with high porches of various shapes, and are not attached one to another, but are freely and picturesquely scattered along broad streets and lanes. In front of the bright, large windows of many cabins, tower above them dark green poplars, tender, pale-foliaged acacias with white fragrant flowers, boldly shining sunflowers, and twining pinks and grape-vines.

On the broad square are to be seen three little shops where may be found dry goods, pumpkin seeds, St. John's bread, and cake ; and behind a high enclosure, back of a row of old poplars, is visible, longer and taller than the rest, the house of the commander of the regiment, with double-winged windows. During week-days, particularly in the summer, but few people may be seen in the streets of the village. The Cossacks are on service, in the cordons and expeditions ; the old men are out hunting, fishing, or helping the women in the gardens and orchards. Only the very old and young remain at home.

V.

It was one of those peculiar evenings which one finds only in the Caucasus. The sun had set behind the mountains, but it was still light. The evening glow embraced one-third of the heaven, and the dull white masses of the mountains stood out sharply in the light of the setting sun. The air was rarefied, immovable, and replete with echoes. A shadow, several versts in length, fell from the mountains upon the steppe. In the steppe, beyond the river, along the roads, everything was quiet.

Now and then appeared a few men on horseback : those were Cossacks from the cordon, or Chech6ns from their village, who looked with surprise and curiosity at the passengers in the vehicle, and tried to make out who those bad people could be. As the evening, so the people, in dread of each other, clung to the habitations, and only beasts and birds, not fearing man, freely roamed over this

wilderness. From the gardens hastened, with merry chatter, before sundown, the Cossack women who had been tying up the wicker fences. And the gardens grew as deserted as the surroundings; but the village became particularly animated.

On all sides the people moved on foot, on horseback, and in squeaky wooden carts to the village. The girls, with shirts tucked up, and with stick in hand, were running, prattling merrily, to the gate, to meet the cattle that were crowding together in a cloud of dust and gnats which they had brought with them from the steppe. The well-fed cows and buffaloes scattered along the streets, and the Cossack women, in their coloured half-coats, were mingling with them. One could hear their shrill chatter, their merry laugh, and their screams, interrupted by the lowing of the cattle.

Here, a Cossack, in accoutrements and on horseback, who had received his leave from the cordon, rode up to a cabin and, bending down, tapped at the window ; and, in reply to the tap, appeared the beautiful head of a young Cossack woman, and one might hear tender words of affection. There, a broad-cheeked, tattered Nogay labourer, having arrived with reeds from the steppe, turned the squeaking cart into the captain's clean, broad yard, threw down the yoke from the oxen, who shook their heads, and passed a few Tartar words with the master.

Near the puddle, which occupied nearly the whole street, and where people had been walking so many years, a barefooted Cossack woman, clinging close to the fences, made her way with a bundle of firewood on her back, raising her shirt high above her white feet. A Cossack, returning from the hunt, cried out to her, " Lift it higher, shameless one," and aimed his gun at her. The Cossack woman let her shirt fall, and dropped her wood.

An old Cossack, with rolled-up trousers, and gray bosom exposed, returning from his sport, carried on his shoulder a basket with quivering silvery trout; to make a short cut, he climbed across his neighbour's broken fence, and pulled off his coat, which was caught upon it. There, a woman was dragging a dry bough, and the strokes of an axe could be heard around the corner. Young Cossack children screamed, spinning their tops wherever they could find an even spot. Women climbed over fences, to save walking around corners. From all the chimneys rose the smoke from dung-chips. In every yard could be heard an increased bustle, preceding the quiet of the night.

Mother Ulitka, the wife of the ensign and schoolmaster, went, like the rest, to the gate of her house, waiting for the cattle which her daughter Maryanka was driving in the street. She had barely opened the gate, when a large buffalo-cow, pursued by gnats, rushed bellowing into the yard ; after her slowly came the well-fed cows, recognizing their mistress with their large eyes, and evenly switching their sides with their tails.

Stately and beautiful Marydnka walked through the gate and, throwing down the stick, fastened the gate, and ran nimbly to scatter the

cattle, and drive them to their stalls.

" Take off your shoes, devil's daughter," cried her mother. " You have muddied your shoes."

Maryanka was not in the least insulted by being called a devil's daughter, but accepted these words as an expression of affection, and continued at her work. Maryanka's face was covered with a kerchief; she wore a rose-coloured shirt and a green half-coat. She disappeared under the penthouse, behind the large, fat cattle, and from the stall was heard her voice, gently admonishing the buffalocow, " Why don't you stand ? Come now ! Oh, there, motherkin ! - "

After awhile the girl and her mother came out of the stable, and walked to the dairy, carrying two large pots of milk, - the day's milking. From the clay chimney of the dairy soon rose dung smoke, and the milk was changed into boiled cream. The girl attended to the fire, and the old woman came out to the gate.

Darkness fell over the whole village. In the air was borne the odour of vegetables, of the cattle, and of the fragrant dung smoke. At the gates and in the streets ran Cossack women, carrying burning rags in their hands. In the yards could be heard the gasping and quiet chewing of the cattle stretching themselves, and the voices of women and children calling in the courtyards and streets. On week-days a man's drunken voice is but rarely heard.

An old, tall, masculine Cossack woman, from the house opposite, walked up to Mother Ulitka to ask her for fire ; she held a rag in her hand.

" Well, mother, are you all done ? " she said to her.

" The girl is making a fire in the stove. Do you need some light ? " said Mother Ulitka, proud of being able to do her a favour.

The two women went into the cabin. The coarse hands, unaccustomed to small objects, trembled as she tore off the lid from the precious box of matches which are a rarity in the Caucasus. The masculine-looking visitor sat down on the threshold, with the evident intention of chatting.

" Well, motherkin, is your husband in the school ? " the visitor asked.

" He is all the time teaching the children, mother. He wrote he would be back for the holidays," said the ensign's wife.

" He is a clever man ; and cleverness pays."

" Of course, it does."

" But my Lukashka is in the cordon, and he can't get any leave to

come home," said the visitor, although the ensign's wife knew all that. She could not refrain from mentioning her Lukashka, whom she had but lately allowed to become a Cossack, and whom she was desirous of marrying off to Maryanka, the ensign's daughter.

" So he is in the cordon ? "

"Yes, mother. He has not been here since the holidays. A few days ago I sent him some shirts by Fomushkin. He says everything is well, and the authorities are satisfied with him. They are looking for abréks, says he. Lukashka, he says, is happy, and everything is all right."

" The Lord be thanked," said the ensign's wife. " In one word he is a f saver.' "

Lukashka was called the " Saver " for the bravery which he had displayed in " saving " a boy from drowning. The ensign's wife mentioned this name, in order to say something agreeable to Lukashka's mother.

" I thank God, mother, he is a good son. He is a fine lad, everybody speaks well of him," said Lukashka's mother, " only I should like to see him married, and then I could die in peace."

"Well, are there not enough girls in the village?" replied the sly ensign's wife, carefully putting the lid on the match-box with her crooked fingers.

" Plenty, mother, plenty," remarked Lukashka's mother, shaking her head, " but your girl, Maryanka, your girl, I say, is one the like of whom you will not find in the Cossack settlements."

The ensign's wife knew the intention of Lukashka's mother ; but, although Lukdashka seemed to her to be a good Cossack, she wanted to ward off the subject, – in the first place because she was the ensign's wife, and a rich woman, while Lukdashka was the son of a Cossack of the rank and file, and poor; in the second place, because she did not wish to lose her daughter so soon ; but chiefly, because propriety demanded it.

" Well, when Maryanka grows up she will be a nice girl," she said, discreetly and modestly.

" I will send the go-betweens, I will. Just let us get the gardens in shape, and then we will come to ask your favour," said Lukashka's mother. " We will come to ask Ilyd Vasilevich's favour."

" What has Ilya to do with it ? " the ensign's wife said, proudly. " I am the person to be asked. There is a time for everything."

Lukashka's mother saw by the stern face of the ensign's wife that it was improper to continue the subject. She lighted the rag with a match and, rising, said : " Bo not forget, mother, but remember

these words. I must go and start a fire," she added.

As she crossed the street and waved the lighted rag in her outstretched hand, she met Maryanka, who bowed to her.

"She is a queen of a girl, and a fine worker," she thought, as she looked at the fair maiden. "She has done growing! It is time for her to get married into some good family, — yes, she ought to marry Lukashka."

Mother Ulitka had cares of her own ; she remained sitting on the threshold, and was lost in thought, until her daughter called her.

VI.

The male population of the village pass their time in expeditions and in cordons, or posts, as the Cossacks call them.

This very Lukashka the "Saver," of whom the two old women had been speaking, was stationed that evening in a watch-tower of the Nizhne-Protok post. This Nizhne-Protok post is situated on the bank of the Terek. Leaning on the balustrade of the tower, he blinked and looked into the distance beyond the Terek, or upon his Cossack companions below him, and from time to time he chatted with them.

The sun was already approaching the snow-covered range which glistened white above the fleecy clouds. The clouds were billowing at the bases of the mountains, and assumed ever darker shades. The air was bathed in evening transparency. A fresh breeze blew from the wild overgrown forest ; but near the post it was still warm.

The voices of the Cossacks at conversation rang clearer, and reechoed in the air. The swift, cinnamon-coloured Terek stood out, with all its moving mass, more sharply from its immovable banks. It was beginning to fall, and here and there the wet sand looked dark brown on the shore and in the shallows.

On the opposite shore, right across from the cordon, there was nothing but a wilderness : only low desert reeds stretched over a vast expanse as far as the mountains. A little on one side, the clay houses, flat roofs, and funnel-shaped chimneys of a Chechen village could be seen on the low bank. The keen eyes of the Cossack who stood on the tower watched, through the evening smoke of the peaceful village, the flitting figures of the Chechen women who moved in the distance, in their blue and red dresses.

Although the Cossacks expected that the abréks would cross over from the Tartar side and attack them at any time, but especially in May, when the forest along the Terek is so dense that a man on foot can hardly make his way through it, and when the river is so shallow that it can be forded on foot in some places ; and although two days

before a Cossack had galloped up from the commander of the regiment with a circular letter in which it said that, according to the information given by spies, a party of eight men intended to cross the Terek, and that, therefore, especial precautions were to be observed, — no special precautions were taken in the cordon. The Cossacks acted as though they were at home, and they walked about without their guns, and their horses were not saddled ; some were engaged in fishing, some in carousing, and others in hunting. Only the horse of the officer of the day was saddled, and walked with three feet hobbled on the greensward along the forest, and only the Cossack on guard wore his mantle, musket, and sabre.

The under-officer, a tall, haggard Cossack, with an unusually long back and short legs and arms, in nothing but an unbuttoned half-coat, was sitting on the mound of the hut, and, with an expression of official laziness and ennui, closed his eyes, and rolled his head from one hand to the other. An old Cossack, with a broad, black beard, streaked with gray, in nothing but his shirt girded with a black strap, was lying near the water, and lazily watching the monotonously roaring water of the meandering Terek. The others, who were also tormented by the heat, were half-dressed ; one was washing his linen in the Terek ; another was plaiting a fishing-line ; another was lying on the ground, in the hot sand of the bank, and mumbling a song. One Cossack, with a haggard and swarthy face, lay, apparently dead drunk, on his belly near one of the walls of the hut, which some two hours before had been in the shade, but upon which now fell the burning slanting rays.

Lukdashka, who was stationed in the watch-tower, was a handsome fellow, about twenty years of age, and very much like his mother. His face and his whole figure expressed, in spite of the angularity of youth, great physical and moral strength. Although he had but lately been taken into the army, one could see from the broad features of his face and from the calm self-confidence of his attitude that he had already succeeded in acquiring that martial and somewhat proud bearing, which is characteristic of the Cossacks and of people in general, who are continually in arms, — that he was a Cossack, and that he knew his full value. His broad mantle was torn in places ; his cap was poised jauntily in Chechen fashion ; his leggings fell below his knees. His attire was not rich, but it fitted him with that Cossack foppishness which consists in the imitation of the Chechen braves.

In a real brave everything hangs loosely and carelessly in tatters ; only the weapons are of the richest. But this ragged attire and the weapons are put on, girded, and adjusted in a certain fashion, which not everybody can acquire, and which immediately catches the eye of a Cossack or mountaineer. Lukashka had this appearance of a Chechen brave. Placing his hands under his sabre, and blinking with his eyes, he kept looking at the distant village. The separate features of his face were not handsome; but upon surveying at once his stately form, and his black-browed and intelligent face, everybody would involuntarily say, "He is a fine chap!"

" What a lot of women that village is pouring out !" he said, in a sharp voice, lazily opening his shining white teeth, and speaking to nobody in particular.

Nazérka, who was lying below, immediately raised his head and said :

" They must be going for water."

" I ought to fire a shot to frighten them," said Lukashka, laughing. " How they would squirm ! "

" You can't shoot so far !"

" Indeed ? Mine will shoot beyond them. Just give me a chance ! When their holiday comes, I will visit Giréy-khan, and will drink their millet beer," said Lukashka, angrily warding off the gnats that pestered him.

A rustling in the forest attracted the attention of the Cossacks. A spotted mongrel pointer, scenting a trail, and excitedly wagging his hairless tail, ran up to the cordon. Lukashka recognized the hunting-dog of his neighbour, Uncle Eroshka, and soon after he made out in the thicket the moving form of the hunter himself.

Uncle Erdshka was a Cossack of enormous stature, with a broad, snow-white beard, and such broad shoulders and chest that in the forest, where there was nobody with whom he could be compared, he appeared, on account of the excellent proportion of all his strong limbs, rather undersized. He wore a ragged, tucked-up coat, buckskin shoes tied with twine to his rag socks, and a rumpled white cap. On his back he carried, over one shoulder, a snare for pheasants, and a bag with a chicken and a falcon for alluring hawks ; over the other shoulder he carried a dead wildcat attached to a leather strap ; he also carried on his back, stuck behind his belt, a pouch with bullets, powder, and bread, a horsetail with which to switch off the gnats, a large dagger in a torn, blood-stained sheath, and a brace of (Jead pheasants. When he saw the cordon he stopped.

" O Lyam ! " he shouted to his dog in such a sonorous bass that the echo was repeated far in the woods; he shifted on his shoulder the huge percussion-gun, which the Cossacks call " flinta," and raised his cap.

"A good day to you, good people! Oh, there!" he turned to the Cossacks, in the same powerful and joyful voice ; he spoke without effort, and yet as loud as if he were talking to some one across the river.

"A good day to you, uncle!" merrily sounded the youthful voices of the Cossacks, from all sides.

"Well, have you seen anything? Do tell me!" cried Uncle Erdshka, wiping the sweat from his broad, red face with the sleeve of his mantle.

" Listen, uncle ? There is some hawk living here in the plane-tree ! Every evening he goes circling in the air," said Nazarka, blinking with his eye, and twitching his shoulder and leg.

"You don't say?" the old man said, incredulously.

"Truly, uncle, you watch awhile," insisted Nazarka, laughing.

The Cossacks all laughed.

The jester had not seen any hawk; but it had long become a habit with the young Cossacks of the cordon to tease and deceive Uncle Erdshka every time he came near them.

" Oh, you fool, talking rubbish ! " said Lukashka from the watch-tower to Nazarka.

Nazarka at once grew silent.

" I must watch, and I will," said the old man, to the great amusement of the Cossacks. " Have you seen any boars ? "

"The idea! Watching boars!" said the under-oilicer, glad to have an opportunity to divert himself, rolling over, and scratching his long back with both his hands. " We have to catch abrdks here, and not boars. Uncle, haven't you heard anything, eh?" he added, blinking without cause, and opening his even row of white teeth.

"Abrdks?" said the old man. "No, I have not. Well, have you any red wine ? Let me have a drink, good man ! I am tired, really, I am. Just give me a chance, and I will bring you some venison, really, I will. Now, let me have it," he added.

" Are you going to watch all night ? " the under-officer asked, as if not hearing what he had said.

" I want to stay up a night," said Uncle Erdshka. "Maybe God will grant me to kill something by the holidays, and then I will give you some, really, I will ! "

"Uncle! Ho, there, uncle!" shouted Lukashka from above, so loudly that all the Cossacks looked up to him. " You go up to the upper arm of the river, there is a fine herd there. I am not lying. Bang ! The other day one of us Cossacks killed one there. I am telling the truth," he added, adjusting the musket on his back, in a voice which left no doubt that he was not jesting.

" Oh, Lukashka the ' Saver ' is here ! " said the old man, looking up. " Where did he shoot ? "

"You did not see me! I must be very small!" said Lukashka. " Near the very ditch, uncle," he added, earnestly, shaking his head. " We were walking along the ditch, when there was a crackling noise, but

my gun was in its case. Ilya banged away. Uncle, I will show you the place ; it is not far from here. Just give me a chance. I know all the paths. Uncle Mosdv ! " he added to the under-officer, with determination and almost commandingly. " It is time to relieve the guard ! " and, picking up his gun, he began to come down from the tower, without waiting for the order.

" Come down ! " said the under-officer, after awhile, looking around him. " It is your watch, isn't it, Gurka ? Go ! Your Lukashka is getting to be clever," added the under-officer, turning to the old man. " He goes a-hunt-ing like you, and can't stay at home; the other day he killed one ! "

VII.

The sun had disappeared, and the shadows of the night rapidly advanced from the forest. The Cossacks had finished their occupations at the cordon, and were getting ready to go to the hut for supper. Only the old man, in expectation of the hawk, remained under the plane-tree, pulling at the cord by which the falcon was tied. The hawk sat on a tree, but did not descend upon the chicken.

Lukashka leisurely placed in the pheasant track, in the blackthorn grove, nooses with which to catch the pheasants, and sang one song after another. In spite of his tall stature and big hands, every kind of work, large and small, was, it appeared, equally successful in Lukashka's hands.

" O Luka ! " he heard Nazarka's shrill voice from near by in the grove. " The Cossacks have gone to their supper."

Nazarka was making his way through the blackthorn, with a pheasant under his arm, and finally crawled out on the foot-path.

" Oh ! " said Lukashka, growing silent for a moment. " Where did you get that cock ? It must be my snare."

Nazarka was of the same age as Lukashka, and had entered the army, like him, in the spring.

He was a short, homely, lean, sickly man, with a squeaky voice that grated upon the ears. He was a neighbour and friend of Lukashka. Lukashka was sitting in Tartar fashion on the grass, and fixing the nooses.

" I do not know whose, but very likely yours."

" Was it beyond the hole near the plane-tree ? That is mine, I placed it there yesterday."

Lukashka got up, and looked at the pheasant. He patted his dark blue head, which the cock stretched forward in fright, rolling his eyes, and took him into his hands.

« We shall prepare a pilau to-day. Go and kill him, and pick his feathers ! »

" Shall we eat it alone, or shall we give it to the underofficer ? "

" He has had enough."

" I am afraid to kill them," said Nazarka.

" Let me have him ! "

Lukashka took out his knife from beneath his dagger, and drew it rapidly across the bird's neck. The bird fluttered, but before he had time to open his wings his bloody head was bent back and hung down.

" This is the way it is done," said Lukashka, throwing down the cock. " It will be a fat pilau."

Nazarka shuddered, looking at the bird.

" Listen, Lukä, the devil will send us again into the 'secret,'" he added, as he raised the pheasant, meaning the under-officer by the word "devil." "He has sent Fomushkin for some red wine, it was his turn. Every night we go out, the enemy comes out against us."

Lukashka walked, whistling, along the cordon.

" Pick up the twine ! " he shouted.

Nazarka obeyed him.

" I will tell him to-day, really I will," continued Nazarka. " We will say we won't go, because we are tired, and that is the end of it. You tell him that ; he will listen to you. What sense is there in going ? "

" Now this is not worth talking about ! " said Lukashka, evidently thinking of something else. " Nonsense ! It would be insulting if he drove us out of the village for the night. For there you can have a good time, but here ? Whether in the cordon, or in the ' secret,' is one and the same. Really ! "

" And will you come down to the Ullage? "

" I will, on the holiday."

« Gurka said that your Dunayka is keeping company with Fomushkin," suddenly said Nazarka.

"The devil take her!" answered Lukàshka, grinning with his even white teeth, but not laughing. " Can't I find another ? "

" Gurka said like this : he went to see her, says he, and her husband was not there. Fomushkin was there, eating a pie. He stayed awhile, and went away ; under the window he heard her say, * The devil is gone ; why, darling, do you not eat the pie ? And,' says she, ' don't go home to sleep ! ' And he said under the window, ' That is fine ! ' "

" You are lying ! "

" Really, upon my word ! "

Lukàshka was silent.

" Well, if she has found another, the deuce take her. There are lots of girls. I am tired of her, anyway."

" What a devil you are ! " said Nazàrka. " You had better try to get into the graces of Maryanka, the ensign's. She is not keeping company with anybody ? "

Lukàshka frowned. " Maryanka ! It is all the same ! " he said.

" Well, you tackle her - "

" What do you think ? Are there not enough of them in the village ? "

And Lukàshka again whistled, and walked along the cordon, tearing off leaves and branches. As he walked between some bushes, he suddenly noticed a smooth withe; he stopped, took out his knife from under his dagger, and cut it off. "It will make a fine ramrod," he said, swishing the withe in the air.

The Cossacks were at their supper in the clay vestibule of the cordon ; they were seated on the floor, around a low Tartar table, and conversing about whose turn it would be to go to the "secret."

" Who goes to-day ? " cried one of the Cossacks, turning to the under-officer through the open door of the hut.

" Who will go ? " replied the under-officer. " Uncle Burlàk has been there, Fomushkin has been," he said, with some indecision. " You go, eh ? You and Nazàrka," he turned to Lukàshka, " and Ergushov will go, if he has had his sleep."

"You never have your sleep, how should he?" said Nazàrka, half-loud.

The Cossacks laughed.

Ergushov was the very Cossack who was drunk, and had been asleep near the hut. He had just waked and, rubbing his eyes, waddled into

the vestibule.

Lukàshka rose, and got his gun in shape.

" Be quick about it ; have your supper, and go ! " said the under-officer. Without waiting for an expression of consent, the under-officer closed the door, evidently having little hope that the Cossacks would obey him. " If I were not commanded, I would not send you ; but the captain might run into us, before we know it. And besides, they say eight abreks have crossed over."

" Well, we must go," said Ergushov, " it's the order ! You can't do otherwise, - times are such. I say, we must go."

Lukàshka, in the meantime, held with both hands a big piece of the pheasant before his mouth, and, looking now at the under-officer, and now at Nazàrka, was apparently quite indifferent to what was going on around him, and laughed at both of them. The Cossacks had not yet gone away to the "secret" when Uncle Erdshka, who

had sat up until night under the plane-tree, without accomplishing anything, entered into the dark vestibule.

"Well, boys," boomed his bass, in the low vestibule, "I will go with you, - you will lie in ambush for Chechens, and I for boars."

VIII.

It was quite dark when Uncle Erdshka and the three Cossacks of the cordon, in felt mantles, and with their guns over their shoulders, walked down the Térek to the place which had been designated as the ambush. Nazàrka did not want to go at all ; but Lukàshka shouted to him, and they got quickly ready. After having walked a few steps in silence, the Cossacks turned away from the ditch, and over an almost imperceptible foot-path through the reeds walked up to the Térek. Near the bank lay a thick black log, cast out by the river, and the reeds around the log looked freshly crushed.

« Shall we ' sit ' here ? " said Nazàrka.

" Why not ? " said Lukàshka. " Sit down here ; I will be back in a minute, as soon as I have shown the place to uncle."

" This is a very fine place. We can't be seen, but we can see everything," said Ergushov. "We had better sit here ; it is a first-class place."

Nazarkà and Ergushov spread out their mantles behind the log, and Lukàshka went away a distance with Uncle Erdshka.

" Not far from here, uncle," said Lukàshka, stepping cautiously in

front of the old man, "I will show you where they passed. I, my friend, am the only one who knows."

" Show me ! You are a good fellow," answered the old man, also in a whisper.

Having taken a few steps, Lukdshka stopped, bent over a puddle, and whistled. "Here they came to drink, you see," he said, just audibly, pointing to a fresh track.

"The Lord preserve you," answered the old man. " The boar must be in the wallow beyond the ditch," he added. " I will sit here, and you go."

Lukdshka shifted his mantle, and went by himself back along the bank, casting rapid glances, now on the left to the wall of reeds, now on the Terek, which foamed below the bank. "He is himself watching, or creeping along somewhere," he thought about the Chechéns. Suddenly a loud rustling and splashing in the water made him shudder and grasp his musket. Upon the shore leaped, breathing heavily, a boar, and the black form, which for a moment stood out from the shining surface of the water, disappeared in the reeds. Lukd quickly took his gun and aimed, but before he had a chance to shoot, the boar was lost in the thicket. He spit out in anger, and walked on. When he came to the place of ambush, he again stopped, and whistled lightly. He received an answer, and walked up to his companions.

Nazarka was rolled up in his mantle, and asleep. Ergnshdv was sitting with his legs crossed under him ; he moved a little, so as to make place for Lukashka.

" How jolly it is to ' sit ' ! Really, it is a fine place," he said. " Have you settled him ? "

" I have shown him the place," replied Lukdshka, spreading his mantle. " I just scared up a strapping boar near the water. It must be the same one. Did you hear the noise he made ? "

" I did hear the noise, and I knew at once it must be an animal. I thought you had scared up the beast," said Ergushov, wrapping himself in his mantle. " I will now take a nap," he added. " Wake me after cockcrow ; because, that's the order. First I'll take a nap, and then you, and I will sit up. That's right."

" Thank you, I do not care to sleep," answered Lukashka.

The night was dark, warm, and calm. The stars were shining only on one side of the horizon ; the other, greater part of the sky, on the side of the mountains, was shrouded by one large cloud. This black cloud, uniting with the mountains, was not agitated by the wind, but moved slowly farther and farther, its curving edges standing out

sharply in the deep, starry heaven.

Only in front of him the Cossack could see the Terek and the dim distance ; behind him and on both sides he was surrounded by a wall of reeds. From time to time the reeds began to wave and rustle against each other, without any apparent cause. Below, the waving cattails looked like bushy branches of trees against the bright edge of the sky. In front of him, at his very feet, was the bank, below which the river was roaring.

Farther away the gleaming mass of moving cinnamoncoloured water monotonously rippled near the shoals and along the bank. Still farther, the water, and bank, and cloud, all blended into impenetrable darkness.

On the surface of the water were long-drawn shadows, which the experienced eye of the Cossack recognized as tree-trunks carried down by the current. Now and then the sheet-lightning, reflecting in the water, as in a dark mirror, indicated the line of the opposite declivitous bank.

The even sounds of the night, the rustling of the reeds, the snoring of the Cossacks, the buzzing of the gnats, and the roaring of the water were occasionally interrupted by a distant shot, the plunge of the bank caving in, the splashing of a big fish, and the crashing of an animal through the wild, overgrown forest.

Once an owl flew down the Terek, flapping its wings together exactly after every two strokes. Right over the Cossacks' heads it turned toward the forest, this time flapping its wings after every stroke, and not alternately, and then fluttered about for a long time before alighting on an old plane-tree. At every such unexpected sound, the waking Cossack strained his ears, blinked, and leisurely fingered his musket.

The greater part of the night had passed. The black cloud, moving to the west, disclosed behind its ragged edges the clear, starry heaven, and the tipping golden horn of the moon gleamed red above the mountains. It was getting chilly.

Nazarka awoke, said something, and again fell asleep. Lukashka, being tired, got up, took his knife from behind his dagger, and began to whittle the stick into a ramrod. He was thinking how the Chechens were living there in the mountains ; how their braves crossed on this side ; how they were not afraid of the Cossacks ; and how they might cross in another place. And he craned his neck, and looked down the river, but he could see nothing. Glancing now and then at the river and at the distant shore which was feebly differentiated from the water in the pale light of the moon, he stopped thinking of the Chechens, and only waited for the time to wake his companions, and go back to the village. In the village he thought of Dunka, his little soul, as the Cossacks call their sweethearts, and he was angry.

There were signs of the morning. A silvery mist gleamed over the water, and some young eagles uttered a shrill whistle near him, and flapped their wings. Finally, the crowing of the first cock was borne afar from the village, then another protracted cockcrow, to which other voices answered.

"It is time to wake them," thought Lukdashka, having finished his ramrod, and feeling that his eyelids were getting heavy. He turned to his companions, and tried to make out to whom each pair of legs belonged. But suddenly it appeared to him that something splashed on the other side of the Terek, and he once more gazed at the dawning horizon of the mountains, under the tipping sickle of the moon, at the line of the opposite shore, at the Terek, and at the trunks which were distinctly visible in the current. It seemed to him that he was in motion, and that the Terek with the tree-trunks was stationary; but that lasted only a minute. He looked down once more.

One large black trunk with a bough more especially attracted his attention. It was moving strangely in the middle of the stream, without rolling or twisting. He even thought that it did not follow the current, but made across the river toward a shoal. Lukashka craned his neck, and began to watch it with fixed attention. The trunk reached the shoal, where it stopped; there was something moving there. Lukashka was sure he had seen a hand rise from underneath the log.

"I will kill an abrék all by myself!" he thought, seized his gun without undue haste, but swiftly planted his forked support, placed his gun over it, softly raised the hammer, holding it with his fingers, and, holding his breath, kept a sharp lookout, and began to aim.

"I will not wake them," he thought. Still, his heart began to beat so powerfully in his breast, that he stopped to listen. The log suddenly splashed, and again made straight for our shore.

"It would be dreadful if I let him through!" he thought, and suddenly, in the feeble moonlight, a Tartar head flashed in front of the log. He aimed straight at that head. It seemed to him to be very near, at the end of his barrel. He looked across.

"That is it, an abrék," he thought joyfully, and suddenly getting up on his knees, he again adjusted the gun, looked for the sight, which was barely visible at the end of the long barrel, and, according to a Cossack custom, acquired in childhood, pronounced "To the Father and the Son," and pulled the trigger. The flash for a moment lighted up the reeds and the water. The sharp, crackling sound of the discharge rang out over the river, and passed into a distant rumble. The log no longer swam across the river, but down the current, rolling and quivering.

"Hold him, I say!" cried Ergushov, fingering his musket, and raising himself behind the log.

"Keep quiet, devil!" Lukashka whispered to him with clinched teeth.
" Abrdks ! "

" Whom did you shoot ? " asked Nazarka. " Whom did you shoot, Lukashka ?"

Lukashka did not answer. He loaded his gun, and watched the log that was carried down the stream. It stopped on a shoal, not far off, and something large, moving on the water, appeared from behind it.

" What did you shoot ? Why don't you tell ? " repeated the Cossacks.

" Abréks, I told you," repeated Lukashka.

" Stop guying us ! The gun, I guess, went off by itself ! "

" I have killed an abrék ! That's what I have killed ! " said Lukashka, in a voice trembling with excitement, leaping to his feet. " A man was swimming - " he said, pointing to the shoal. " I have killed him. Look there ! "

" Stop telling lies ! " said Ergushov, rubbing his eyes.

" What lies ? Look there ! Look," said Lukashka, grabbing him by the shoulders and bending him downward toward him with such force that Ergushov groaned.

Ergushov looked in the direction pointed out by Lukashka, and, noticing a human form there, at once changed his tone.

" I declare ! I tell you, there will be others. I tell you for sure," he said, quietly, and began to examine his musket. " That was the leader who was making across ; they are already here, or not far away, on the other shore ; I am telling you for sure."

Lukashka ungirded himself, and began to take off his mantle.

" Whither do you want to go, fool ? " cried Ergushov. " You just move, and it will be up with you, I am telling you for sure. If you have killed him he will not get away. Let me have some powder. Have you any ? Nazdr! You go at once to the cordon, but don't go along the bank; they'll kill you, I am telling you for sure."

" You will see me go alone ! Go yourself ! " Nazarka said, angrily.

Lukashka took off his mantle, and walked up to the bank.

"Don't expose yourself, I tell you," said Ergushov, pouring powder on the pan of his gun. " I see he is not moving now. It is not far to morning, and by that time they'll come up from the cordon. Go on, Nazarka ! Oh, you are afraid ! Don't be afraid, I say."

" Lukashka, Lukashka," said Nazarka, "tell us how you killed him."

Lukashka changed his mind about going immediately into the water.

" Go to the cordon at once, and I will stay here. Tell the Cossacks to scatter. If they are on this side, we ought to catch them."

" I say they will get away," said Ergushdv, rising. " We ought to catch them, that's so."

And Ergushov and Nazarka got up, and, crossing themselves, went to the cordon, not along the bank, but making their way through the buckthorns and getting out on the forest path.

" Look out, Lukdshka, don't stir ! " said Ergushdv, " or they'll cut your throat here. Be on the lookout, I tell you."

" Go ou, I know," said Lukashka, and, examining his gun, he took up his seat behind the log.

Lukashka sat all alone, watching the shoal, and listening for the Cossacks ; but it was quite a distance to the cordon, and impatience tormented him ; he was dreadfully afraid that the abréks who came with the man he had killed would get away. He was just as much in dread that the abréks would get away, as he had been mortified the night before at the escape of the boar. He gazed all around him, and at the opposite bank, expecting to see a man any time ; he planted his forked support, and was ready to shoot. It did not even occur to him that he might be killed.

IX.

Day was dawning. The whole form of the Chechén, which had been carried to the shoal, and was barely moving there, was now distinctly visible. Suddenly the reeds crashed near the Cossack, steps were heard, and the cattails came into motion. The Cossack cocked his gun, and said, " To the Father and the Son." As soon as the hammer clicked, the steps were silenced.

" 0 Cossacks ! Don't kill uncle," was heard the quiet bass, and, pushing aside the reeds, Uncle Erdshka stood right before him.

" I came very near killing you, upon my word I " said Lukashka.

" What have you shot ? " asked the old man.

The melodious voice of the old man, ringing through the forest and down the river, suddenly broke the stillness and mystery of the night, which had surrounded the Cossack. It seemed as though it had suddenly become lighter and brighter.

"Now, you have seen nothing, uncle, but I have killed a beast," said Lukashka, uncocking his gun, and rising in feigned composure.

The old man did not take his eyes off the clearly discernible white back, around which the Terek rippled.

" He had been swimming with the log on his back. I watched for him. Just look there! There! He is in blue trousers, and I think there is a gun— You see, don't you ? " said Lukashka.

" Of course I see ! " said the old man, angrily, and there

was a solemn and austere expression in his face. " You have killed a brave," he said, as though with regret.

" I was sitting, and suddenly I saw something black on the other side. I had almost made him out there : it looked as though a man had walked up and dropped into the river. What was it ? A log, a big log was swimming, not down the current, but straight across. I looked, and there a head peeped out from underneath it. What is that? I aimed, but I could not see behind the reeds. He stood up, the beast, having heard me, no doubt, and crawled out on a shoal, and looked about him. ' You are mistaken,' thought I, 'you will not get away.' He crept up, and looked around. (I felt like choking !) I fixed the gun, did not stir, and waited. He stood awhile, and again started swimming; and when he swam out in the moon, his back could be seen. ' To the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost!' I looked, after the smoke had cleared away, and saw that he was struggling. He groaned, or I thought he did. 'Well, thank the Lord,' I thought, 'I have killed him!' And when he was carried on the shoal, and he got out, and wanted to get up, he saw that he had no strength. He floundered and floundered, and lay down. It is clear now, and one can see everything. He does not stir; no doubt he is dead. The Cossacks have gone to the cordon, to keep the others from escaping!"

" So you have caught him ! " said the old man. " It is far now, my friend — " And he again shook his head gloomily. At that moment Cossacks on foot and on horseback could be heard along the bank, conversing loudly and crashing through the branches.

"You are a fine fellow, Lukashka! Pull him to the shore," shouted one of the Cossacks.

Lukashka did not wait for the skiff, but began to undress himself, keeping all the time a close watch on his prey.

" Wait, Nazdrka is bringing up a skiff," cried the underofficer.

" Fool ! He may be alive ! He is feigning ! Take along a dagger," cried another Cossack.

" Nonsense ! " cried Lukashka, taking off his trousers. He undressed himself in a trice, crossed himself, and, leaping up, jumped into the water with a splash ; he took a plunge, reached out far with his white arms, and raising his back high out of the water, and

struggling against the current, made across the Terek, toward the shoal. A crowd of Cossacks were talking loudly on the shore, a few voices at a time. Three horsemen rode far around. The skiff appeared around a bend. Lukashka rose on the shoal, bent over the body, and rolled it around once or twice. " He is certainly dead ! " rang out Lukashka's voice from there.

The Chechen had been shot through his head. He wore blue trousers, a shirt, and a mantle ; and a gun and a dagger were tied to his back. Above it all was fastened a large bough which had at first mystified Lukashka.

" That's the way the carp was caught ! " said one of the Cossacks, who were standing around, when the body of the Chechen was dragged out of the skiff, and lay on the bank, crushing the grass.

" How yellow he is ! " said another.

" Where have ours gone to find them ? They must all be on the other side. If he were not the leader, he would not have swum in this fashion. What sense would there be in swimming all alone ?" said a third.

" I say he must have been a clever fellow, to have gone ahead of the rest. A first-class brave!" Lukashka remarked, sarcastically, squeezing out his wet clothes on the shore, and shuddering all the time. " His beard is painted and cropped."

" And he had fixed his coat in a bag on his back. This made it easier for him to swim," some one remarked.

"Listen, Lukashka," said the under-officer, who was holding the gun and dagger that had been taken from the dead man. "You take the dagger and the coat; and for the gun come and get three roubles. You see it has a rift," he added, blowing down the barrel, " but I should like to have it as a memento."

Lukashka did not reply ; he was evidently annoyed at this begging, but he knew that there was no escaping it.

" Well, the devil ! " he said, frowning, and throwing the coat down on the ground. "If it were a decent coat, but it is only a gabardine."

"It will do to haul wood in," said another Cossack.

" Mosév ! I will go home," said Lukashka, evidently forgetting his annoyance, and trying to make good use of his present to his superior.

" Go, why not ? "

" Take him down to the cordon, boys," the under-officer said, turning to the Cossacks, all the time examining the gun. " And we

must make a tent over his body. They may come down from the mountains to ransom it."

" It is not too hot yet," some one said.

"Won't the jackals tear him up? Would that be well ? " one of the Cossacks remarked.

" We will place a sentinel near by. They will come to ransom the .body, and it would not do to have it all torn."

" Well, Lukäshka, you may say what you please, but you will have to treat the boys to a bucketful," the underofficer added, merrily.

" That is the custom," the Cossacks chimed in. "Just see the luck God has given him ! He has not seen anything yet, but has already killed an abrék."

" Buy the dagger and the coat of me ! I want all the money I can get. I will sell the trousers, too. God be with you," said Lukäshka. " They won't fit me. – he was a lean devil."

One Cossack bought the coat for a rouble. Another gave two bucketfuls for the dagger.

" You will have a drink, boys, for I will set up a bucket," said Lukäshka. " I'll fetch it myself from the village."

« And cut up the trousers for kerchiefs for the girls," said Nazärka.

The Cossacks roared.

" Stop your laughing ! " said the under-officer. " Drag off the body ! Who wants to keep such a thing near the hut – "

" Why are you standing around ? Drag him over here, boys ! " Lukäshka shouted in a voice of command to the Cossacks, who did not like to touch the body, but carried out his orders as though he were their superior. After dragging the body away for a few steps, the Cossacks dropped its legs, which hung down lifeless ; they stepped aside, and stood for a moment in silence. Nazärka walked up to the body, and straightened out the head, which had bent under, so that the round blood-stained wound above the temple and the face of the dead man could be seen.

" You see what a mark he has made there ! Hit him right in his brain ! " he said. " He will not be lost. His people will identify him."

No one said a word, and again the angel of silence passed over the Cossacks.

The sun had risen, and with its broken beams lighted up the dew

foliage. The Terek roared not far off, in the awakening forest. The pheasants called to each other on all sides, greeting the morning. The Cossacks stood, silent and motionless, around the dead man, and gazed at him. His cinnamon-coloured body, in nothing but blue trousers, turned darker from having been soaked in the water, and held together by a belt over his hollow belly, was slender and beautiful. His muscular arms lay straight, down his ribs. His livid, freshly shaven round head, with the clotted wound at one side, was bent back. The smooth, sunburnt forehead stood out sharply from his shaven head. The glassy, open eyes, with their pupils standing low, looked upwards, apparently beyond everything. On his thin lips, with their drawn edges, which could be seen behind his clipped red moustache, there seemed to hover a good-natured, delicate smile. The small finger joints were covered with red hairs; the fingers were bent inwardly, and the nails were dyed red.

Lukashka was not yet dressed. He was wet ; his neck was redder, and his eyes were sparkling more than usual ; his broad cheek-bones quivered ; from his white, healthy body a barely perceptible evaporation rose into the fresh morning air.

"He was a man, too!" he said, apparently admiring the dead body.

" Yes, if he had gotten you, he would not have let you off," said one of the Cossacks.

The angel of silence flew away. The Cossacks began to stir, and to chat. Two went to cut some brush for the tent. Others leisurely walked back to the cordon. Lukashka and Nazfirka hastened to get ready for the village.

Half an hour later, Lukashka and Nazarka, almost on a run, were making their way home, through the dense forest which separated the Terek from their village ; they did not cease talking.

" Don't tell her, remember, that I have sent you. You just go and see whether her husband is at home," said Lukashka, in a shrill voice.

"And I will go and see Yamka. We will have a good time, won't we ? " asked submissive Nazarka.

"When are we to have a good time, if not to-day?" answered Luk fish a.

Upon arriving at the village the Cossacks drank themselves drunk, and went to sleep until the evening.

Two days after this occurrence, two companies of infantry of the Army of the Caucasus came to take up quarters in the village of Novomlin. The company wagons already stood unhitched in the square. The cooks had dug a hole and brought together from the different yards any chips that were not securely put away, and were cooking soup. The corporals were calling the roll. The soldiers of the

convoy were driving down stakes to tie their horses to. The quartermaster-sergeants, who were at home here, rushed through the streets and lanes, assigning quarters to the officers and soldiers.

Here were green caissons drawn up in battle array. Here were the company's carts and their horses. Here were the kettles in which the buckwheat porridge was cooked. Here was the captain, and the lieutenant, and Onisnn Mikhaylovich, the sergeant.

And all this found itself in the very village where, so they said, the companies were ordered to be stationed ; consequently the companies were at home. Why are they stationed here ? Who are these Cossacks ? Do they like to have soldiers stationed in their village ? Are they dissenters or not ? That is nobody's business.

Being dismissed after roll-call, the tired and dusty soldiers, noisily and in disorder, like a settling swarm of bees, scattered over the squares and streets. Paying not the least attention to the unfriendly attitude of the Cossacks, they entered the huts, in groups of two and three, chattering merrily and clattering with their guns: they hung up their accoutrements, opened their bags, and joked with the women.

A large group of soldiers, with pipes between their teeth, gathered in their favourite place, near the gruelkettles. They now watched the smoke which rose imperceptibly to the burning sky, and high up in the air condensed into a white cloud, or the camp-fire which trembled in the clear air like melted glass ; they bantered and ridiculed the Cossack men and women for living differently from the Russians.

In all the yards soldiers could be seen ; one could hear their laughter, and the furious, shrill voices of the Cossack women, defending their houses, and refusing water and utensils. Little boys and girls pressed close to their mothers and to each other, following, with an expression of amazement, all the unfamiliar movements of the soldiers, or they ran after them at a respectful distance. The old Cossacks came out of their cabins, sat down on the mounds, and gloomily and in silence watched the bustle of the soldiers, as though giving everything up in despair, and not understanding what would come of it all.

Olénin, who had been enrolled in the Army of the Caucasus for the last three months, was assigned quarters with the Ensign Ilya Vasilevich, that is, with Mother Ulitka, in one of the best cabins in the village.

" What will this be, Dmitri Andréevich ? " said Vanyusha, out of breath, to Olenin, who, dressed in a mantle, after a five-hour ride, merrily cantered on his Kabarda horse, which he had purchased at Grdznyaya, into the yard of the assigned quarters.

"Why so, Ivdn Vasilevich?" he asked, patting his horse, and cheerfully looking at perspiring Vanyusha, who, with his dishevelled

hair and dejected face, had arrived with the baggage, and was now sorting out things.

Olénin appeared now an entirely different man. Instead of his shaven face, he now wore a young beard and moustache. Instead of his drawn face, sallow from nightly dissipations, there was a healthy ruddy tan on his cheeks and forehead and behind his ears. Instead of a clean new black dress coat, he wore a dirty white mantle with wide folds, and weapons. Instead of clean starched collars, the red collar of a half-coat of Persian silk fitted tightly around his sunburnt neck. He was clad in Circassian fashion, but not correctly so ; anybody could have told that he was a Russian, and not a Chechén brave. Everything was correct, and yet wrong ! But his whole figure breathed health, cheerfulness, and self-satisfaction.

" It is all funny to you," said Vanyusha, " but just try and talk with these people : they won't let you alone, and that is all. You can't get a word out of them." Vanyusha angrily threw down an iron pail at the threshold. " They are anything but Russians ! "

" You ought to have gone to the village commander ! " "But I do not know where all the places are," Vanyusha replied, peevishly.

" Who has been insulting you ? " Olénin asked, casting a glance around him.

" The devil knows them ! Pshaw ! The real master is not here ; they say he has gone to a ' kriga.'¹ And the old woman is a devil, – the Lord preserve me from such," answered Vanyusha, grasping his head. " I really do not know how we shall manage to live here. They are worse than Tartars, upon my word. What of it if they call themselves Christians? Take a Tartar, he is more gentlemanly. ' He has gone to the kriga ! ' I can't make out what they mean by 'kriga'!" Vanyusha concluded, turning aside.

"What? They are not like our country people?" said Olénin, jestingly, remaining on his horse.

i A place near the bank, surrounded by a wattled fence, where fish are caught.

" Let me have the horse, if you please," said Vanyusha, obviously put out by the new order of things, but submitting to fate.

"So a Tartar is more gentlemanly? Eh, Vanyusha?" repeated Olénin, dismounting, and slapping his saddle.

" Yes, you can laugh ! It seems funny to you ! " said Vanyusha, in an angry voice.

" Wait, don't get angry, Ivän Vasilevich," answered Olénin, continuing to smile. "Just let me see the people, and you will see how I will settle them. We will have a glorious time yet I Only do not excite yourself ! "

Vanyusha did not retort anything; he blinked, contemptuously looked in the direction of his master, and shook his head. Vanyusha looked upon Olénin only as upon his master. Olénin looked upon Vanyusha only as upon his servant. They would both have been very much surprised if some one had told them that they were friends. Yet they were friends, without knowing it themselves. Vanyusha had been taken to the house when he was eleven years old, when Olénin was of the same age. When Olénin was fifteen years old, he for awhile gave Vanyusha lessons, and taught him to read French, of which fact Vanyusha was exceedingly proud. And even now, in moments of cheerfulness, he was in the habit of dropping now and then a French word, whereat he grinned stupidly.

Olénin ran up to the porch of the cabin, and pushed the door open into the vestibule. Marydnka, in nothing but a rose-coloured shirt, as Cossack women are dressed at home, leaped away from the door in affright, and, pressing against the wall, covered the lower part of her face with the broad sleeve of her Tartar shirt. As Olénin opened the door still farther, he saw in the half-light the whole tall and stately figure of the young Cossack maiden. With the swift and eager curiosity of youth, he involuntarily noticed the strong, virgin form clearly outlined under the thin chintz shirt, and the beautiful black eyes which were directed upon him with childlike terror and wild surprise.

“ There she is ! ” thought Olénin. “ Yes, there will be many more such, ” it suddenly occurred to him, and he opened another door of the cabin. Mother Ulftka, also in nothing but a shirt, was turned with her back toward him, and, bending over, was sweeping the floor.

“ Good day, mother ! I have come to ask about the quarters, ” he began.

The Cossack woman, without unbending, turned to him her austere, but still comely face.

“ What did you come for ? You want to make fun of me ? What ? I’ll give you fun ! The black plague take you ! ” she cried, looking askance at the stranger, with a scowl.

Olénin had imagined at first that the hard-working brave Army of the Caucasus, of which he was a member, would be received everywhere with joy, especially by the Cossacks, his companions of war, and therefore such a reception puzzled him. However, he did not become confused, and wished to explain that he intended to pay for his quarters, but the old woman would not let him finish his words.

“ Why did you come ? Who needs such a sore ? You sandpapered snout ! Just wait, the master will come, and he will show you the place ! I do not need your damnable money. I guess we have seen that before ! You will smoke up the room with your tobacco, and you mean to pay with money for it ! We have not seen such a sore before ! Oh, that they had shot your heart out ! ” she cried, in a shrill voice,

interrupting Olénin.

" Evidently Vanyusha is right," thought Olénin. " A Tartar is more gentlemanly," and accompanied by Mother Ulitka's curses, he walked out of the cabin. As he was going out, Maryanka, still in her rose-coloured shirt, but

wrapped up to her eyes in a white kerchief, suddenly flashed by him, and out of the vestibule. Rapidly tripping down the steps in her bare feet, she ran away from the entrance, stopped, cast with her smiling eyes a rapid glance upon the young man, and disappeared around the corner of the cabin.

The firm, youthful gait, the wild glance of the sparkling eyes beneath her white kerchief, and the stateliness of the fair maiden's strong frame now produced an even stronger impression upon Olénin. " It must be she ! " he thought ; and forgetting about his quarters, and all the time looking back at Maryänka, he walked up to Vanyusha.

" You see, the girl is just as wild ! " said Vanyusha, who was still busy with the cart, but in somewhat better spirits. " She is just like a filly of the steppes. La femme ! " he added, in a loud and solemn voice, and burst out laughing.

XL

In the evening the master returned from his fishing expedition ; upon discovering that he was to be paid for quarters, he pacified the old woman, and satisfied Vanyusha's demands.

Everything was arranged in the new home. The proprietors passed over to the " warm " cabin, and, for three roubles a month, turned over the " cold " cabin to the yunker. Olénin took a lunch, and lay down for a nap. lie awoke before evening, washed himself, cleaned his clothes, ate his dinner, and, lighting a cigarette, sat down near the window facing the street. The heat had subsided.

The slanting shadow of the cabin, with its carved ridgepiece, lay across the dusty street, and even bent upwards on the lower part of the house opposite. The sloping reed thatch of this house was gleaming in the rays of the setting sun. The air was growing cool. The village was still. The soldiers had found their quarters, and were quiet. The herds had not yet been driven home, and the people had not yet returned from their field labour.

Olénin's quarters were almost at the edge of the village. Now and then, somewhere far beyond the Térek, in the direction from which Olénin had come, could be heard the hollow reports of shots, somewhere in the Chechnya, or in the Kumÿk plain.

Olénin felt at ease after three months of camp life.

His well-washed face felt fresh, his strong body felt clean after the long march, and all his limbs felt strong and rested.

His mind, too, felt fresh and clear. He thought of the expedition, and the past peril. He recalled that he had behaved well during all the perils, that he was not worse than the rest, and that he had been received into the company of brave Caucasians. His Moscow recollections were now God knows where. His old life was wiped out, and a new, an entirely new life, in which no mistakes had yet been committed, began for him. He could, a new man among new people, earn here a new and good opinion of himself. He experienced the youthful feeling of a causeless happiness in life, and, looking now through the window at the boys spinning their tops in the shadow of the house, and now at his new neat lodging, he thought of how pleasantly he would arrange things in this unfamiliar life in the village. He also gazed at the mountains and at the sky, and with all his recollections and dreams mingled the austere feeling of the majesty of Nature. Life had begun differently from what he had expected, when he departed from Moscow, but, nevertheless, surpassing his expectation. The mountains, the mountains, the mountains were in everything he thought and felt.

" He has kissed his dog ! He has licked the jug ! Uncle Eroshka has kissed his dog ! " suddenly cried the Cossack boys who were spinning their tops under the window, running to the lane. " He has kissed his dog ! He has sold his dagger for drinks," cried the boys, crowding together and retreating.

These cries were directed to Uncle Eroshka, who, with his gun on his back and some pheasants in his belt, was returning from the hunt.

" It is my sin, boys, my sin ! " he said, wildly waving his arms, and looking through the windows of the cabins on both sides of the road. " I have sold my dog for drinks, it is my sin ! " he repeated, apparently angry, but pretending that it made no difference to him.

Olénin was surprised at the boys' treatment of the old hunter, and he was still more struck by the expressive and intelligent face and by the powerful frame of the man whom they called Uncle Eroshka.

"Grandfather! Cossack!" he said, turning to him. " Come here, if you please ! "

The old man looked at the window, and stopped.

" Good evening, good man! " he said, raising his cap above his clipped hair.

" Good evening, good man ! " answered Olénin. " Why do the boys call that way to you ? "

Uncle Eroshka walked up to the window.

" They are teasing me, an old man. That is nothing, I like it. Let

them have their fun out of uncle," he said, in the firm singsong intonations, in which respectable old people speak. " Are you the commander of the soldiers ? "

" No, I am a yunker. Where did you shoot these pheasants ? " Olénin asked him.

" I shot three hens in the woods," answered the old man, turning to the window his broad back, where, with their heads stuck through the belt and staining the mantle, hung three pheasants. " Have you never seen any before ? " he asked. " If you want to, you may have two. Here ! " and he put two pheasants through the window. * Well, are you a hunter?" he asked him.

" I am, I myself killed four during the march."

"Four? That is a lot!" said the old man, sarcastically. " And are you a toper ? Do you drink red wine ?"

" Why not ? I do like a drink now and then."

" Well, I see you are a fine fellow ! We will be friends," said Uncle Eroshka.

" Come in," said Olénin, " and we will have some red wine ! "

" I will," said the old man. " Take the pheasants I "

One could see by the old man's face that he took a liking to the yunker ; and he immediately understood that he could have a drink without paying for it, and therefore it was all right to present him with two pheasants.

A few minutes later, the form of Uncle Eroshka appeared in the door of the cabin. It was only then that Olénin noticed the whole size and powerful build of the man, even though his cinnamon-coloured face, with its perfectly white long beard, was all furrowed with deep wrinkles of old age and hard labour. The muscles of his legs, arms, and shoulders were as full and firm as in a young man. On his head, deep scars, all healed over, were visible under his short hair. His thick venous neck was covered with checkered folds, as in an ox. His rough hands were all battered and scratched up.

He crossed the threshold with ease and agility, took off his gun and put it in the corner, with a rapid glance surveyed and estimated the private belongings that were lying in the room, and, without stamping his buckskinclad, slanting feet on the floor, walked into the middle of the room. With him entered into the room a strong and disagreeable odour of red wine, brandy, powder, and clotted blood.

Uncle Eroshka bowed toward the images, straightened out his beard, and, walking up to Olénin, gave him his fat black hand.

"Koshkildy!" he said. This means, in Tartar, "We wish you health,"

or " Peace be with you," as they say.

" Koshkildy ! I know," answered Olénin, giving him his hand.

"No, you do not know, you do not know the proper way, you fool ! " said Uncle Eroshka, reproachfully shaking his head. "When they say ' Koshkildy' to you, you must answer, * Allah razi lo sun! God save you!' That's the way, my father, and not ' Koshkildy ! ' I'll teach you everything. We had a Russian here, by the name of Ilyd Moséich : he and I were chums. He was a fine fellow. Toper, thief, hunter. Oh, what a hunter he was ! I taught him everything."

" What are you going to teach me ? " asked Olénin, becoming more and more interested in the old man.

" I will take you out hunting ; I will teach you to catch fish ; I will show the Chechéns to you ; and if you want a sweetheart, I will find you one. That's the kind of a man I am ! I am a joker ! " and the old man burst out laughing. "I will sit down, my father, I am tired. Karya ? " he added, with an interrogative look.

" What does karya mean ? " asked Olénin.

" It means ' good ' in the Georgian language. I am just saying it; it is a byword of mine, my favourite word. Karya, – when I say that, I mean I am joking. Now, father, order up some red wine. Have you a soldier who is serving you ? Have you ? Ivan ! " called out the old man. " All your soldiers are named Ivän. Is yours Ivdn, too ? "

" That's right, Ivan, Vanyusha ! Please get some red wine from the landlord, and bring it here."

" It's all the same, Vanyusha, or Ivan. Why are all your soldiers called Ivan ? Ivan ! " repeated the old man. " You ask from the tapped cask. They have the best red wine in the village. Don't give more than thirty kopeks an eighth measure ; remember, don't give any more, for she is a hag, and will – Our people are a damned, foolish lot," continued Uncle Eroshka, in a confidential tone, after Vanyusha had left. " They do not regard you as men. You are worse than a Tartar to them. The Russians they call beggars. But, in my opinion, though you are a soldier, you are a man all the same, and you have a soul in you. Am I not judging right ? Ilya Moséich was a soldier, but what a fine fellow he was ! Is it not so, my father ? That's why ours do not like me ; but

that makes no difference to me. I am a cheerful fellow ; I love everybody, – I am Erdshka, that's right, my father ! "

And the old man gently slapped the young man on the shoulder.

In the meantime, Vanyusha, who had gotten all his house affairs in good order, had been shaved by the company barber, and had taken his trousers out of his bootlegs, as a sign that the company was now lodged in commodious quarters, was now in the best of spirits. He gazed attentively, but not malevolently, at Erdshka, as though he were a strange wild beast, shook his head at the floor which he had soiled, and, taking out from under the bench two empty bottles, went to see the landlady.

" Good evening, my good people ! " he said, having decided to be particularly gentle. " My master has told me to buy some red wine. Fill these, good people ! "

The old woman did not answer. The maiden was standing in front of a small Tartar mirror, and fixing a kerchief on her head ; she looked silently at Vanyusha.

" I will pay cash, worthy people," said Vanyusha, rattling the copper coins in his pocket. " You be good, and we will be good, – and that will be best," he added.

" How much ? " the old woman asked, curtly.

" An eighth measure."1

" Go, my dear, and draw it for them," said Mother Ulitka, turning to her daughter. " Draw it off from the cask that has been tapped, my darling."

The girl took the keys and a decanter, and walked out of the room together with Vanyusha.

iThat is, one-eighth of a " bucket," which latter is about two and a half gallons.

" Tell me who is that woman ? " asked Olénin, pointing to Maryanka, who was just then passing by the window.

The old man winked, and nudged the young man with his elbow.

" Wait," he said, and leaned out of the window. " Kkhm ! Kkhm ! " he coughed and bellowed. " Maryanushka ! Ø Maryanka ! Love me, my darling ! I am a joker," he added, in a whisper, turning to Olénin.

The girl did not turn her head, but, evenly and vigorously swinging her arms, passed by the window with the foppish, dashing gait peculiar to the Cossack women. She only cast a slow glance upon the old man with her black, shaded eyes.

" Love me, and you will be happy ! " cried Eroshka, and, winking, looked questioningly at Olénin. " I am a dashing fellow, I am a joker," he added. " She is a queen, eh ? "

" A beauty," said Olénin. " Call her up ! "

"Not a bit of it ! " said the old man. " They are trying to get her married to Lukāshka. Luka is a fine Cossack, a brave, – the other day he killed an abrék. I will find a better one for you. I will find you one that is all dressed in silk and silver. I told you I would get you one, and so I will. I'll find a beauty for you."

" You are an old man, and see what you are saying ! " said Olénin. " This is sinful."

" Sinful ? Where is the sin ? " the old man answered, with determination. " Is it a sin to look at a pretty girl ? A sin to stroll with one ? A sin to love one ? Is it so with you ? No, my father, it is not a sin, but a salvation. God has made you, and He has made a girl. He, my friend, has made everything. And so it is not a sin to look at a pretty girl. That's what she is for : to be loved, and to be looked at. That's the way I judge, my good man."

Having crossed the yard and entered into the dark, cool outhouse, filled with casks, Marydnka, with the usual prayer, walked up to one of them, and put in the siphon. Vanyusha stood in the door and smiled, looking at her. It seemed very funny to him that she wore nothing but a shirt, which fitted her behind, but was tucked up in front, and still funnier that half-rouble pieces hung down from her neck. He thought that it was un-Itussian, and that the people of his village would have a laugh if they saw such a girl. " La fille comme c'est très bié, for a change," he thought, " I will say now to my master."

" What are you gaping for, you devil ? " suddenly cried the girl. « Let me have your decanter ! "

Having filled the decanter with cool red wine, Maryanka handed it to Vanyusha.

" Give the money to mother ! " she said, pushing away Vanyusha's hand with the money.

Vanyusha smiled.

" What makes you so angry, my dear people ? " he said, good-naturedly shuffling his feet, while the girl closed the cask.

She began to laugh.

" And are you kind people ? "

"My master and I are very kind people," Vanyusha replied, convincingly. "We are such kind people that wherever we have lived

the people have been grateful to us. Because, you see, he is a nobleman."

The girl stopped and listened.

"Is he married, your master?" she asked.

"No! Our master is young and a bachelor. Because, you see, noblemen can never marry young," Vanyusha replied, instructively.

"What do I know? He is as fat as a buffalo, and too young to marry! Is he the commander of the whole lot of you?" she asked.

"My master is a yunker, that means, not yet an officer. But he knows a lot more than a general, or any big man. Because, you see, not only our colonel, but the Tsar him-

self knows him," Vanyusha explained, proudly. "We are not like any other military trash, but our master's father was a senator. He had a thousand souls, or more, and they send us a thousand roubles at a time. And that's why they always like us. Take many a captain, and he has no money. So what's the use?"

"Go, I want to lock up," the girl interrupted him.

Vanyusha brought the wine, and he announced to Olénin that "La fille c'est très joulie," and immediately went away, with his stupid laugh.

XIII.

In the meantime, they were beating the tattoo in the square. The people were returning from their work. The herds were lowing in the gates, crowding together in a dusty, gold-like cloud, and the girls and women were bustling in the streets and yards, driving the cattle to their stalls.

The sun had entirely disappeared behind the distant snow-capped range. A bluish shadow was stretched out over the earth and sky. Over the darkling gardens the stars were barely gleaming, and the sounds slowly died down in the village. After housing their cattle, the Cossack women congregated in the corners of the streets, and sat down on the mounds, cracking pumpkin seeds. Maryänka joined one of these circles, after she had milked her two cows and the buffalo.

The circle consisted of a few women and girls, and one old Cossack.

They were talking about the dead abrék. The Cossack told the story, and the women asked him questions.

"I suppose he will get a good reward for it," said a Cossack woman.

" I should say so. They say they will send him a cross. Mosév did not treat him right. He took away his gun, but the authorities in Kizlyar found out about it."

" He is a mean fellow, that Mosév."

" I have heard them say that Lukâshka is here," said a girl.

"He and Nazârka are on a spree at Yâmka's."

(Yâmka was an unmarried, dissolute woman, who kept a saloon.)

" They say they have drunk half a bucket."

"Now that was a piece of luck for the 'Saver'!" said some one. " He is indeed a ' Saver ' ! I must say he is a fine fellow ! Awfully clever ! As brave as can be ! His father, Kiryak, was a brave man, too! And he is just like his father. When he was killed, the whole village wept for him. There they are coming, I think," continued the speaker, pointing to the Cossacks who were moving in the street toward them. " Ergushdv is along with them. What a toper he is ! "

Lukashka, Nazarka, and Ergushdv, having emptied half a bucket, were walking to the girls. They were all redder in their faces than usual ; particularly Cossack Ergushdv staggered along and, laughing loudly, kept punching Nazarka in his sides.

" Wench, why don't you sing songs ? " he shouted to the girls. " I say, sing for our amusement ! "

" Have you passed a pleasant day ? Have you passed a pleasant day ? " were heard the greetings.

" What singing ! Is this a holiday ? " said a woman. " You are puffed up, so sing yourself !"

Ergushdv laughed out loud, and punched Nazarka. " Start a song, and I will sing, too. I am clever at that, I say."

" Well, beauties, are you asleep ? " said Nazarka. " We have come from the cordon to have something to drink. And we have drunk to Lukashka's good luck."

Lukashka walked up to the circle, leisurely raised his lambskin cap, and stopped opposite the girls. His broad cheeks and his neck were flushed. He stood there and spoke softly and gravely ; but in the deliberation and gravity of his movements there was more animation and strength than in Nazarka's prattle and bustle. He reminded one of a playful colt which raises its tail and snorts, and then suddenly stops as though fastened to the ground by all its feet. Lukashka stood quietly before the girls ; his eyes were smiling ; he said little, and looked now at his drunken companions, and now at the girls. When Maryanka came to the corner, he raised his cap with

an even, leisurely motion, stepped aside, and again planted himself in front of her, lightly spreading his legs, thrusting his thumbs into the belt, and playing with his dagger. Maryänka returned his greeting by a gentle inclination of her head, sat down on the mound, and took some seeds out of the bosom of her shirt. Lukashka looked at Marydnka, without turning his eyes away from her, and, cracking seeds, kept spitting out the shells. Everybody grew silent when Marydnka joined them.

" Well, are you going to stay long ? " asked a woman, breaking the silence.

"Until to-morrow morning," Lukâshka answered, gravely.

" Well, God grant you a good advantage ! " said the old Cossack. " I am glad. I have just been talking about you."

" And I say so, too," said drunken Ergushdv, laughing. " There are some guests here ! " he added, pointing to a soldier who was passing by. " Soldiers' brandy is good. I like it ! "

"They have sent us three devils," said a woman. " Grandfather went to the village elder's office, but they said that nothing could be done."

" Oh, so you have found out what woe is ! " said Ergushdv.

" I suppose they have dirtied up your house with tobacco," said another woman. " Let them smoke all they want to in the yard, but I won't let them in the house. Even if the elder should come, I would not let them. They will steal, too. Look at the elder, that son of a devil ! He has not quartered any soldiers upon himself."

"You don't like them!" again said Ergushov.

« And they say that the girls have to make the beds for the soldiers, and fill them with red wine and mead," said Nazârka, spreading his legs like Lukâshka, and poising his cap jauntily, too.

Ergushdv roared and grasped and embraced a girl who was sitting nearest to him. " I tell you, it is so."

"Keep off, you pitch!" screamed the girl. "I will tell my mother."

"Tell her!" he cried. "But really, Nazârka is telling the truth : there was a circular letter about it, and he can read. That's so." And he was trying to hug another girl, the next one in order.

" Don't be so familiar, scamp ! " laughingly shrieked ruddy, round-faced Ustenka, raising her hand to box his ears.

The Cossack stepped aside and almost fell.

" And they say that a girl has no strength. She almost killed me."

" You are regular pitch. The devil has brought you from the cordon," said Ustenka, and, turning away from him, snorted out with a laugh : " You sleepyhead, you have missed an abrék ! He would have cut your throat, and that would have been well."

" You would have blubbered ! " Nazârka said, and laughed.

" Just watch me blubbering ! "

"You see, she does not even care. Would she weep? Nazârka, eh ? " said Ergushov.

Lukâshka was all the time gazing silently at Maryânka. His glance evidently embarrassed the girl.

" Say, Maryânka, have they quartered a commander on you ? " he asked, moving up to her.

Maryânka, as usual, did not answer at once, and leisurely lifted her eyes on the Cossacks. Lukâshka's eyes were smiling, as though something special, quite different from the conversation, were taking place between him and the girl.

" Yes, they are all right, for they have two cabins," said an old woman for Maryânka, " but at Fomushkin's they have lodged their commander, and they say he has so filled up the room with his things that the Fomushkins have no place left. Who has ever heard such a thing ? They have driven a whole horde of them into the village ! What is to be done ? " she said. " And they will act here worse than the black plague ! "

" They say they are going to build a bridge across the Téreka," said one of the girls.

" And they told me," said Nazârka, walking up to Ustenka, " that they will dig a ditch to put the girls in, because they do not love young fellows." And again he made his favourite bow, at which all laughed, and Ergushov immediately started to hug an old woman, passing by Maryânka, who was next in order.

" Why don't you hug Maryanka ? Take them all in order ! " said Nazârka.

"No, my old woman is sweeter," cried the Cossack, kissing the struggling woman.

" He will choke me to death ! " she cried, laughing.

The even tramp of steps at the end of the street interrupted the laughter. Three soldiers, in overcoats, with guns across their shoulders, were keeping step, as they walked to relieve the guard at the company's chest.

The corporal, an old bachelor, looked angrily at the Cossacks, and led the soldiers in such a way that Lukâshka and Nazârka, who were standing in the road, should be obliged to step aside. Nazârka moved away, but Lukâshka only blinked and turned his head and broad back, and did not stir.

" People are standing here, so you walk around," he said, looking askance, and contemptuously shaking his head to the soldiers.

The soldiers passed by in silence, keeping step in the dusty road.

Maryanka laughed, and so did all the girls after her.

" What gallant lads ! " said Nazârka. " Just like long-skirted chanters ! " And he marched down the street, in order to mock them.

They all burst out laughing again.

Lukâshka slowly walked up to Maryanka.

" Where is your officer stationed ? " he asked.

Maryanka thought awhile.

" We gave them the new cabin," she said.

" Is he old or young ? " asked Lukâshka, sitting down near her.

" Do you suppose I have asked him ? " answered the girl. " I went to fetch some red wine for him, and saw him through the window with Uncle Erdshka, – he is a red-haired fellow. They have brought a whole cartload of things."

And she lowered her eyes.

" I am so glad that I had a chance to get leave of absence from the cordon ! " said Lukâshka, moving up nearer to the girl on the mound, and all the time watching her eyes.

" Well, how long are you going to stay?" asked Maryanka, slightly smiling.

" Till to-morrow morning. Give me some seeds ! " he added, stretching out his hand.

Maryanka was all smiles, and opened the collar of her shirt.

" Don't take them all," she said.

" Truly, I was very lonely without you, upon my word," Lukâshka said, calmly, in a quiet whisper, taking the seeds out of the bosom of the girl's shirt ; and, bending still closer to her, he began to tell her something in a whisper, with smiling eyes.

" I won't come, that's all," Maryanka suddenly exclaimed, turning away from him.

" Truly – I wanted to tell you something," whispered Lukäshka.
" Upon my word ! Do come, Maryanka ! "

Maryänka shook her head in refusal, but smiling.

" Sister Maryänka ! O sister ! Mother is calling you to supper," cried Maryänka's little brother, running up to the women.

" I'll be there in a minute," answered the girl. " Go, my dear, go by yourself! I am coming."

Lukäshka rose and raised his hat.

« I guess I had better go home myself," he said, pretending to be indifferent, but with difficulty repressing a smile. He disappeared around the corner of the house.

In the meantime, night had entirely descended upon the village. The bright stars were gleaming in the dark heaven. The streets were dark and deserted. Nazärka remained with the women on the mound, and their laughter could be heard; but Lukäshka, having softly walked away from the girls, crouched like a cat, and suddenly, holding his dangling dagger, began to run, noiselessly, not to his house, but in the direction of the ensign's cabin. Having run along two streets and turned into a lane, he lifted his mantle and seated himself on the ground in the shadow of a fence.

"Just look at the ensign's daughter!" he thought of Maryänka. " She will not have any fun, the devil ! My time will come."

The steps of an approaching woman distracted his thoughts. He began to listen and to smile to himself. Maryänka, with drooping head, was walking with rapid and even steps straight toward him, striking with a stick against the pickets of a fence. Lukäshka rose a little. Maryänka was startled, and stopped.

" Accursed devil ! You have frightened me. You did not go home," she said, laughing loud.

Lukäshka embraced the girl with one hand, and with the other he touched her face.

" I wanted to tell you – upon my word ! " his voice was quivering and broken.

" What talk have you found for the night ? " answered Maryanka.
" Mother is waiting for me, and you had better go to your mistress."

Having freed herself from his arms, she ran a few steps ahead. When she reached the fence of her yard, she stopped and turned to the Cossack who was running by her side, still persuading her to stay an

hour with him.

" Well, what is it you wanted to say, you night-bird ? " and she laughed again.

" Do not make fun of me, Maryanka ! Upon my word ! What if I have a mistress ? The devil take her ! You just say the word, and I will love you so ! I will do anything you want me to. Do you hear ? " (He jingled the money in his pocket.) "Now we will have a fine time. Other people are enjoying themselves, but how about me ? I get no pleasure from you, Maryanushka ! "

The girl did not reply. She stood before him, and, with the rapid motion of her fingers, broke the stick into small pieces.

Lukashka suddenly clinched his fists and set his teeth.

" Why should I be waiting all the time ? Do I not love you, my dear ? Do anything you please with me ' " he suddenly said, frowning angrily, and seizing both her hands.

Maryanka did not change the calm expression of her countenance and voice.

"Don't be so bold, Lukdshka, but listen to me!" she answered, without tearing her hands away, but pushing him aside. " Of course, I am a girl, but you listen to me ! I cannot do as I please, but if you love me, I will tell you something. You let my hands go, and I will tell you. I will marry you, but you will not live to see me do foolish things," said Maryanka, without turning her face away.

" As to marrying, – it is not in my power. Maryanka, I want you to love me," said Lukdshka, suddenly changing his gloomy and ferocious manner to one of gentleness, submission, and tenderness. He smiled, and looked her straight in the eyes.

Maryanka pressed close to him and gave him a smacking kiss on his lips.

" My darling ! " she whispered, passionately embracing him. Then, suddenly tearing herself away, she ran, and, without turning around, walked through the gate of her house.

Maryanka did not stop, in spite of the Cossack's request to wait another minute, and to hear what he had to say.

" Go on ! They will see us ! " she said. " Look there, I think I see the devil of a lodger walking in the yard."

" The ensign's daughter," Lukashka thought to himself, "will marry me! Marrying is all right, but you love me ! "

He found Nazärka at Yamka's. After celebrating together, he went to Dunäyka and, in spite of her infidelity, remained there over night.

XIV.

Olenin was actually in the yard when Maryanka came in through the gate, and he heard her say, " The devil of a lodger is walking." All that evening he had passed with Uncle Eroshka on the porch of his new lodging. He had ordered a table, a samovar, wine, a burning candle to be brought out, and, while drinking his tea and smoking a cigar, he listened to the stories of the old man, who was seated at his feet on the steps.

Though the air was calm, the candle guttered, and the light flickered in all directions, illuminating now the post of the porch, now the table and dishes, now the white clipped head of the old man. Night-moths flitted about and, shedding the dust from their wings, dashed against the table and the glasses, or flew into the candle-light, or disappeared in the darkness of the air, beyond the illuminated circle.

Olénin and Eroshka emptied together five bottles of red wine. Eroshka always filled the glasses, and, giving one to Olénin, drank to his health, and talked without cessation. He told him about the former life of the Cossacks, about his father, " The Broad," who used to carry on his shoulders a boar's carcass weighing four hundred pounds, and to drink two buckets of wine at one sitting. He told of his own young days, and of his friend Girchik, with whom he used to haul felt mantles across the Térék, during the black plague. He told him of one of his hunts when he killed two stags in one morning. He told him of his mistress who used to run after him at night to the cordon. And he told all this so eloquently and picturesquely that Olénin did not notice how the time was passing.

" That's the way it is, my father," he said. " You did not know me during my golden time, or I would have shown you everything. To-day Erdshka has licked the pitcher, but formerly Erdshka's fame thundered through the army. Who had the best horse ? Who had a Gurda sabre ? To whom did they go to get a drink, or have a spree? Who was sent into the mountains to kill Akhmét-khan ? Always Erdshka ! Whom did the girls love ? Always Erdshka, because I was a genuine brave. I was a toper and thief, and used to steal the herds in the mountains, and I was a singer, too : I could do anything. There are no such Cossacks nowadays. It makes you feel bad to look at them. They are no taller than this" (Erdshka pointed to about three feet from the ground) " when they put on some stupid boots, and do nothing but look at them in glee. Or they puff themselves up with wine ; and they do not drink like men, but God knows how. And who was I ? I was Erdshka the thief ; I was known not only in the villages, but in the mountains as well. I had chums among princes. I was friendly with everybody. Whether Tartar, or Armenian, or soldier, or officer, - it was all the same to me, so long as he was a tippler. ' You,' he says, ' must cleanse yourself from foul

contact : do not drink with the soldiers, do not eat with the Tartars ! ' "

" Who says that ? " asked Olénin.

"Our chanters say so. But just listen to a Tartar mullah or kadi. He says, 'You infidel Giaours, why do you eat pork ? ' So everybody keeps his own law. But, in my opinion, it is all one. God has made everything for man to enjoy. There is no sin in anything. Take an example from a wild animal. He lives in the Tartar reeds as well as in ours. Wherever he goes is his home. What God has given him, he devours. And ours say that we shall have to lick the frying-pans for that ? But I think it is all false," he added, after a silence.

" What is false ? " asked Olénin.

" What the chanters say. In Chérvlenaya, my father, the army elder was a chum of mine. He was a fine fellow, just like me. They killed him in the Chechnya country. He used to say that the chanters got that all out of their own heads. ' You give up the ghost,' he would say, 'and the grass will grow out on your little mound, and that is all.' " The old man laughed. " He was a desperate fellow."

" How old are you ? " asked Olénin.

" God knows ! Seventy or more. When you had a Tsaritsa, I was a grown-up lad. So figure out how much it is ! Will that make seventy ? "

" Yes. But you are still a fine fellow."

" Well, thank the Lord, I am well, entirely well ; only a hag of a woman has ruined me - "

" How so ? "

" Just ruined me - "

" When you die, will the grass grow over you ? " Olénin repeated his words.

Eroshka evidently did not wish to elucidate his meaning. He kept silent for a moment.

" And what did you think ? Drink ! " he cried, smiling, and giving him a glass of wine.

XV.

" So, what was I saying ? " he continued, trying to collect his thoughts. " That's the kind of man I am ! I am a hunter. There is no

other hunter in the whole army to match me. I will find and show to you every kind of animal, and every kind of bird ; I know where everything is. I have dogs, and two guns, and nets, and a snare, and a hawk, – I have everything, thank God ! If you are a genuine hunter, and not given to boasting, I will show you everything. This is what I am ! If I find a track, I at once know what animal it belongs to ; and I know where it lies down, and where it comes to drink, or to wallow. I sit the whole night on a scaffolding and watch, – what's the use of staying at home ! I would only commit a sin, and puff myself up with drink. And the women come around and prattle, and the children scream : it is enough to make one crazy. So I go out at twilight, choose a nice place, press down the reeds, and sit down, good fellow that I am, and wait for things to happen. I know everything that is going on in the woods. I look at the sky, and see the stars moving; and I look at them to find out the time. I look around, – the forest is rustling, and I am waiting for something to crash, and for a wild boar to come to his wallow. I hear the squeaking of young eagles, and the noises of the cocks and geese in the village. If it is the geese, – it is not midnight yet. And I know all that. And if I hear the report of a gun somewhere in the distance, I think who has been shooting. Is it a Cossack who has been lying in wait for an animal, just as I am lying ? And has he killed him, or has he only wounded him, and will the beast go through the reeds, leaving a track of blood, without being found ? I do not like that ! Oh, I do not like that ! Why has he ruined an animal ? Fool ! Fool ! Or I think, ' Maybe an abrék has killed some silly young Cossack ! ' All that passes through my mind. Once I was sitting near the water, and I saw a cradle carried down the river. It was in good condition, only the edge was broken off. Then the thought came to me, whose cradle it was. And I thought your devilish soldiers must have gone to some native village, where they raped the Chechén women, and one devil grabbed a baby by the legs, and banged it against the corner of the house. Don't they do such things ? Oh, some people have no souls ! And then all kinds of thoughts came to me, and I felt sorry for them. It occurred to me that they might have thrown away the cradle, and driven the woman off, and burnt the house, and that the Chechén brave picked up his musket and went out ravaging on our side. And so I sit and think. And when I hear a herd in the thicket, my heart goes pit-a-pat. Come up, dear ones ! And I am afraid they will scent me, and I sit without stirring, and my heart is in a flutter, and it almost lifts me up bodily. Last spring a fine herd came up, and it looked black. ' To the Father and the Son – ' and I was about to shoot. Then she grunted at her young ones, as much as to say, ' Look out, children, a man is sitting there,' and they crashed through the brush. And there she had been so close to me that I almost could have bitten into her."

« How did the sow tell her young ones that a man was sitting there ? ” asked Olenin.

“ What did you think ? Did you think that the beasts are stupid? No, they are more intelligent than man, even though it be a boar. They know everything. Let us take this example: a man walks along an animal's trail and does not notice it, but when a boar strikes your

trail, he scents you at once, and off he makes ; evidently he has sense enough to discover your scent while you cannot even perceive your own. And why not ? You want to kill him, but he wants to disport himself in the woods. You have your law, and he has his. He is a boar, but he is not worse than you ; he is God's creature, too. Pshaw ! Man is stupid, stupid, stupid ! " The old man repeated these words several times, and, lowering his head, fell to musing.

Olénin, too, was pensive, and, walking down the steps, silently paced the yard, with Ids arms behind his back.

When Proshka awoke from his reverie, he raised his head and began to gaze steadily at the night-moths which were circling around the quivering candle-light and falling into it.

« Fool ! Fool ! " he said. " Whither do you fly ? Fool ! Fool ! " He raised himself and began to drive off the moths with his stout fingers.

" You will burn yourself, little fool ! Fly thither, here is room enough," he uttered, in a tender voice, trying carefully to catch it by its wings with his stout fingers, and to liberate it again. You are destroying yourself, and I am sorry for you."

He remained sitting for a long time, and drinking from the bottle. But Olénin continued to pace the yard. Suddenly he was attracted by a whisper on the other side of the gate. Involuntarily holding his breath, he could make out a woman's laugh, a man's voice, and the sound of a kiss. He purposely shuffled his feet on the grass, and walked over to the other side of the yard. But a little while later the wicker fence creaked. A Cossack, in a dark mantle and white lambskin cap (it was Lukäshka), walked along the fence, and a tall woman in a white kerchief passed by Olénin.

" I have nothing to do with you, and you nothing with me," Maryanka's firm gait seemed to say. He followed her with his eyes up to the steps of the cabin, and saw her through the window taking oil her kerchief and sitting down on a bench. And suddenly the feeling of pining, of indistinct desires and hopes, and of a certain envy toward some one took possession of the young man's soul.

The last lights in the cabins were extinguished. The last sounds died down in the village. And the wicker fences, and the white cattle in the yards, and the thatches of the houses, and the slender poplars, – everything seemed to sleep a healthy, tranquil sleep after its hard labours. Only the uninterrupted dinning of the frogs reached the intent ear from the moist places in the distance. The stars were less abundant in the east, and seemed to melt away in the growing light. Overhead they receded farther and farther, and became ever more abundant.

The old man had fallen asleep, leaning on his arm. A cock crowed in the yard across the street. But Olénin continued to walk, lost in thought. He walked up to the fence and began to listen. Some young

Cossacks were tuning a merry song, and above them rose especially one shrill, youthful voice.

" Do you know who it is that is singing there ? " said the old man, upon awaking. "It is Lukashka the Brave. He has killed a Chechén, and so he is celebrating. And what is he rejoicing over, fool ? "

" Have you killed any people ? " asked Olénin.

The old man suddenly raised himself on both elbows and moved his face close to Olénin's.

" Devil ! " he cried to him. " Why do you ask ? One must not speak of this. It is a very clever thing to kill a man. Oh, so clever! Good-bye, my father, I have had enough to eat and to drink," he said, rising. " Shall I come to-morrow to take you out hunting?"

" Do come ! "

" Be sure and get up early, or there will be a fine."

" Don't be afraid ! I will get up before you," answered Olénin.

The old man went away. The song was finished. Footsteps and merry talking could be heard. A little later the singing began once more, but farther away, and Eroshka's loud voice joined the former voices.

" What people ! What a life ! " thought Olénin, sighing, and alone returned to his room.

XVI.

Uncle Erôshka was a lonely Cossack, out of service. His wife had become an Orthodox Christian twenty years before, and, having run away from him, had married a Russian sergeant. He had no children. It was not an idle boast, when he said that he had been the bravest man in the village. He had been known throughout the army for his old-fashioned deeds of bravery. He had upon his conscience more than one murder of Chechéns and Russians. He used to go to the mountains, had stolen from the Russians, and had been twice in jail. The greater part of his life he passed in hunting and in the forest, where, for days at a time, he ate nothing but a piece of bread, and drank nothing but water. But when he returned to the village, he went on a spree from the morning to the evening.

After returning home from Olénin he went to sleep for about two hours. He awoke long before daybreak, and lay on his bed and tried to form an opinion of the man whose acquaintance he had made the evening before. He was very much pleased with Olénin's simplicity (which simplicity consisted in letting him have all the wine he wanted). And he was pleased with Olénin himself. He was wondering

why all the Russians were simple and rich, and why they knew nothing, and yet were learned men. lie was meditating over these questions, and also considering what to ask of Olénin.

Uncle Erëshka's cabin was quite large and not old; but the absence of a woman was visible in everything. In spite of the usual care which the Cossacks bestow upon their house, his best room was filthy and in the greatest disorder. On the table were thrown his blood-stained coat, one half of a milk cake, and next to it a plucked and dismembered jackdaw to feed his hawk with. On the benches lay scattered his buckskin shoes, a gun, a dagger, a pouch, wet clothes, and rags. In the corner, in a tub of dirty, ill-smelling water, another pair of buckskins was soaking. On the floor were flung a net and a few dead pheasants ; and near the table promenaded a chicken with one of its legs fettered, and tapping on the dirty floor. In the cold oven stood a clay pot filled with some kind of a milky liquid. On the oven screamed a falcon, which tried to tear itself away from its cord, and a moulting hawk sat solemnly on the edge, looking askance at the chicken, and now and then bending its head from right to left. Uncle Erëshka himself lay on his back on a bed which had been built in between the oven and the wall ; he wore nothing but a shirt, and, resting his muscular legs on the oven, was picking with his stout fingers the scabs on his hands which had been scratched up by the hawk, for he was in the habit of handling him without gloves. The air of the whole room, but especially in the neighbourhood of the old man, was saturated by that strong but disagreeable and mixed odour which always accompanied him.

" Uyde-ma " (that is, at home), " uncle ?" He heard in the window a shrill voice which he at once recognized as belonging to his neighbour Lukàshka.

" Uyde, uyde, uyde ! At home, come in ! " cried the old man. " Neighbour Märka, Luka Marka, what brings you to uncle ? Are you going back to the cordon ? "

The hawk was startled by his master's voice, and flapped its wings, tugging at its fetters.

The old man was fond of Lukashka, and he excluded him alone from the contempt which he felt for the whole young generation of Cossacks. Besides, Lukàshka and his mother, being his neighbours, frequently gave him wine, boiled cream, and other domestic products, which Erëshka did not possess. Uncle Erdshka, who was all his life carried away by one thing or another, always gave a practical explanation to his impulses : " Well ? They are people of means," he said to himself. " I will bring them some venison or a hen, and they will not forget uncle: they will bring him a pie or cakes now and then."

" Good morning, Märka ! I am glad to see you," the old man cried, merrily, and, with a rapid motion throwing down his bare legs from the bed, jumped up, made two or three steps over the creaking floor, looked at his bandy legs, and suddenly found them very funny; he smiled, gave one stamp with his bare heel, and then a second stamp,

and struck an attitude.

" Did I do it smartly ? " he asked, his small eyes sparkling with delight.

Lukāshka barely smiled.

" Are you going back to the cordon ? " the old man asked.

" I have brought you some red wine which I had promised you at the cordon."

" Christ save you ! " said the old man ; he picked up his wide trousers and half-coat, put them on, girded himself with a strap, poured some water from a clay pot on his hands, wiped them against some old trousers, with a piece of a comb straightened out his beard, and stood up in front of Lukāshka. " I am ready," he said.

Lukāshka took a wine-glass, wiped it, filled it with wine, and, sitting down on a bench, offered it to the old man.

"To your health ! To the Father and the Son !" said the old man, with solemnity receiving the wine. " May all your wishes be fulfilled ! May you be a brave, and earn a cross ! "

Lukashka, too, uttered a prayer, drank his wine, and put the glass on the table. The old man rose, brought a dried fish, put it on the threshold, broke it with a stick, so as to soften it, and, laying it with his shrivelled hands on his one blue plate, placed it on the table.

" I have everything, even a lunch, thank God ! " he said, proudly. "Well, how is it with Mosév?" the old man asked.

Lukāshka told him how the under-officer had taken away his gun, apparently trying to get the old man's opinion of the matter.

" Don't stand out for the gun," said the old man. " If you will not give the gun, you will not get a reward."

" But, uncle ! What reward can there be for an unmounted Cossack ? And it was a fine gun, a Crimean one, and it is worth eighty roubles."

" Oh, let it go ! I once had a quarrel with the captain : he wanted my horse. ' Give me your horse,' he said, ' and I will recommend you for an ensign.' I did not give it to him, and so nothing came of it."

" But here, uncle ! I shall have to buy a horse, and they say I can't get one across the river for less than fifty roubles. Mother has not yet sold her wine."

" Ah, we did not worry about such matters ! " said the old man.

" When Uncle Eroshka was of your age, he stole whole herds from the Nogäys, and drove them across the Terek. Many a time I swapped a first-class horse for a bottle of brandy or for a felt mantle."

" Why did you give it so cheap ? " said Lukäshka.

"Fool, fool, Märka!" the old man said, contemptuously. " How could it be otherwise ? That is what you are stealing for, – not to be stingy. I suppose you people have not even seen how horses are driven. Why don't you talk ? "

" What shall I say, uncle ? " said Lukashka. " We are evidently a different lot."

"Fool, fool, Marka ! A different lot!" answered the old man, mocking the young Cossack. " At your age I was no such Cossack."

" How was it ? " asked Lukdshka.

The old man contemptuously shook his head.

" Uncle Eroshka was simple, he was not stingy. And so the whole Chechnyd were my friends. If a chum of mine came to see me, I silled him full of brandy, calmed him down, and put him to bed with me; and whenever I called on him I took some candy to him for a present. That is the way people used to act, and not as now ; the only amusement young chaps have is to crack seeds, and spit out the shells," the old man concluded, contemptuously, imitating the way the Cossacks of the present time crack seeds and spit out the shells.

" I know that," said Lukdshka. " It is so ! "

"If you want to be a fine fellow, you must be a brave, and not a peasant. And it is only a peasant that buys a horse by counting out the money, and taking the horse for it."

They were silent.

" But it is dull without a horse, uncle, both in the village and at the cordon ; and you can't go anywhere to have some fun. They are all such timid people. Even Nazdrka. The other day we were in the native village ; Giréy-khan wanted us to go with him into the Nogdy country for horses, but no one would go ; how could I go myself ? "

" And what about uncle ? Do you think I am dried up ? No, I am not. Give me a horse, and I will go at once into the Nogäy country."

" What is the use of wasting words ? " said Lukashka. " You tell me whether I may trust Giréy-khan ? He says, ' Just take the horses as far as the Térek, and there I will find a place for them, even if there be a whole drove.' He is one of those that shave their heads, so I do not know whether I can believe him."

" You may believe Giréy-khan. His whole family are good people; his father was a trusty friend. Only take your uncle's advice, for I will not advise you badly : make him take an oath, then it will be all right. And when you go with him, always have your pistol ready, particularly when you divide the horses. Once I came very near being killed by a Chechén, when I asked him ten roubles for a horse. You may believe him, but do not lie down without a gun."

Lukāshka listened attentively to the old man.

"Uncle, I have heard them say that you have the burst-grass," he said, after a moment's silence.

" I have not the burst-grass, but I will teach you how to get it : you are a good fellow, and you never forget the uncle. Shall I teach you ? "

" Yes, uncle."

" You know the turtle ? Well, she is a devil, the turtle is!"

" Of course I know ! "

" Find her nest, and make a little wattled fence around it, so that she cannot get through. So she will come, will circle around, and go back again ; she will find the burst-grass, will bring it, and break the fence with it. You get there early in the morning, and watch : where it is broken, there lies the burst-grass. Pick it up, and take it wherever you please. There will be no lock and no wall against you ! "

" Have you tried it, uncle?"

"No, I have not, but good people have told me of it. I only had an incantation. I used to say the ' Hail to Thee,' whenever I mounted my horse. No one ever killed me."

" What is that ' Hail to Thee,' uncle ? "

" Don't you know it ? What a people ! That s right, ask uncle for it. Listen ! Say after me :

"'Hail to Thee, who art living in Zion.

He is your King.

We will mount the horse.

Sophonius weeps.

Zacharias speaks.

Father Pilgrim

Lover-over of men.*

" Lover-over of men," repeated the old man. " Do you know it? Tell it!"

Lukäshka laughed.

" Well, uncle, is this why you were not killed ? Maybe."

" You are getting too clever. You learn it, and repeat it. It will do you no harm. When you sing the ' Pilgrim,' you are all right," and the old man laughed himself. " Still, Lukäshka, don't go to the Nogay country, that's what I tell you ! "

" Why not ? "

" This is not the time, and you are not the people for it. You Cossacks have turned into a dungheap. And then there are such a lot of Russians here ! They will put you in jail. Truly, give it up. You are not the people for it ! Now, Girchik and I - "

And the old man began to tell his endless stories.

But Lukashka looked out of the window.

" It is daylight now, uncle," he interrupted him. " It is time for me to go ; come and see us sometime."

" Christ save you ! I will go to the officer ; I have promised to take him out hunting. He seems to be a good man."

XVII.

From Erdshka's Lukäshka went home. As he was going back, a damp mist had risen from the ground and shrouded the village. The cattle could not be seen, but were heard stirring in all directions. The cocks called each other more frequently and more noisily. The air grew more transparent, and people were getting up. Coming close to his home, Lukäshka made out the fence, wet from the mist, the porch of the cabin, and the open stall. In the yard the sound of wood-chopping could be heard though the mist. Lukäshka walked into the cabin. His mother was up and, standing in front of the oven, was throwing some billets of wood into it. His young sister was still asleep on the bed.

" Well, Lukäshka, have you had your spree ? " his mother asked, quietly. "Where were you last night?"

" In the village," her son answered, unwillingly, getting his musket out of the case, and examining it.

His mother shook her head.

Having put some powder on the pan, Lukāshka took down the pouch, drew from it several empty shells, and began to fill the cartridges, carefully closing them up with a small bullet wrapped in a rag. He pulled out the filled cartridges with his teeth, and examined them, and then put away the pouch.

" Well, mother, I told you to fix the bags. Have you mended them ? " he said.

" Of course ! The dumb girl mended them last night. Is it time for you to go back to the cordon ? I have not had a chance to see you."

"The moment I am all ready, I have to go," replied Lukashka, tying up the powder-bag. " Where is the dumb girl ? Has she gone out ? "

" I think she is splitting wood. She has been worrying about you all the time. ' I shall not see him,' she said. She pointed with her hand to her face, and clicked and pressed her heart with her hand, as much as to say, ' It is a pity.' Shall I call her ? She has understood all about the abrék."

" Call her," said Lukashka. " I had somewhere some lard, bring it to me. I must grease my sabre."

The old woman went out, and a few minutes later Lukashka's dumb sister walked over the creaking steps into the room. She was six years older than her brother, and would have resembled him remarkably, but for the dull and coarsely changeable expression of the face, which is common to all the deaf and dumb. Her attire consisted of a coarse shirt in patches ; her feet were bare and dirty; on her head she wore a blue kerchief. Her neck, arms, and face were as muscular as a peasant's. It was evident from her garb, and from everything, that she always did a hard man's labour. She brought in an armful of wood which she threw down near the oven. Then she walked up to her brother, with a happy smile, which wrinkled up her whole face, touched him by the shoulder, and began to make rapid signs to him with her hands, her face, and her whole body.

" Well done, well done ! A fine girl, Stépka ! " replied her brother, shaking his head. " You have fixed everything, and mended it, you are a fine girl ! Here is something for it!" He took out of his pocket two honey-cakes, and gave them to her.

The dumb girl blushed, and made a wild noise, to express her joy. She took the cakes, and began more rapidly still to make the signs, pointing often in one direction, and passing her stout finger over her brow and face. Lukashka understood her, and nodded, smiling softly. She was telling him that her brother ought to have treated the girls, and that the girls liked him, and that the girl Maryanka was better than any of them, and that she loved him. She indicated Maryanka by pointing rapidly in the direction of her yard, and to

her brows and face, smacking her lips, and shaking her head. " She loves you," she said by pressing her hand to her breast, kissing her hand, and as though hugging something. The mother returned to the room, and when she saw what the dumb girl was saying she smiled and shook her head. The dumb girl showed her the honeycakes, and again shouted for joy.

" I told Ulftka the other day that I would send a go-between," said the mother. " She received my remarks kindly."

Lukdashka looked silently at his mother.

" But, mother, you must take down the wine ! I need a horse."

"I will take it down when I have time. I will fix the casks," said the mother, obviously not wishing to have her son meddle with domestic affairs. " When you go," said the old woman to her son, "take along the bag in the vestibule. I have borrowed from people to let you have something at the cordon. Or shall I put it in the saddle-bag ? "

" Very well," replied Lukashka. " If Giréy-khan from across the river comes to see me, send him to the cordon, for they won't let me off for quite awhile. I have some business with him."

He was getting ready.

" I will send him, Lukashka, I will. So you have been celebrating at Yamka's, I suppose ? " said the old woman. " When I got up in the night to attend to the cattle, I thought I heard your voice singing."

Lukashka did not reply. He walked out into the vestibule, slung the bags across his shoulder, tucked up his coat, picked up the gun, and stopped on the threshold.

" Good-bye, mother ! " he said to her, closing the gate after him. " Send me a keg with Nazärka. I have promised the boys ; he will come to see you."

" Christ save you, Lukashka ! God be with you ! I will send you, from the new cask," answered the old woman, walking up to the fence. " Listen to what I have to say," she added, bending over the fence.

The Cossack stopped.

" You have been celebrating here ! Well, God be praised ! Why is a young man not to have a good time ? Well, God has granted you a piece of good luck. But, down there, look out, my son, don't do it—Keep on the good side of the officer ! You must not do otherwise ! I will sell the wine, and will save the money for the horse, and will get you the girl in marriage."

"Very well, very well! " said the son, frowning.

The dumb girl shouted to attract his attention. She pointed to her head and hand, which meant, "A shaven head, — a Chechén." Then, frowning, she did as though she aimed with a gun, cried out, or rather cowered, shaking her head. She was telling Lukashka to kill another Chechén.

Lukashka understood her. He smiled, and with light steps, holding the gun on his back, below the felt mantle, disappeared in the dense mist.

The old woman stood awhile silently at the gate, then returned to the hut, and at once went to work.

XVIII.

Lukashka went to the cordon. At the same time Uncle Eroshka whistled to his dogs, and, climbing across the fence, went by back ways to Olénin's lodging. He did not like to meet women when he went out hunting. Olénin was still asleep, and Vanyusha, who was awake, but not yet up, was considering whether it was time or not, when Eroshka, with gun on his back, and in complete hunter's trappings, opened the door.

"Switches!" he cried, in his bass voice. "To arms! The Chechéns have come! Ivàn! Get the samovar ready for your master! You, too, get up! Lively!" cried the old man. "That's the way with us, my good man! See, the girls are all up! Look through the window, look! She is going for water, and you are still asleep."

Olénin awoke, and leaped up. And how refreshed and merry he felt at the sight of the old man, and at the sound of his voice!

"Lively! Lively, Vanyusha!" he shouted.

"That is the way you go out hunting! People are getting their breakfast, and you are asleep. Lyam! Come here!" he called to his dog.

"Is your gun ready?" he shouted, as though there were a whole crowd in the room.

"Well, I am guilty, but what is to be done? Powder, Vanyusha! And the wads!" said Olénin.

"The fine!" cried the old man.

"Du té voulez-vous?" said Vanyusha, grinning.

"You are not one of us! You are not talking in our language, you devil!" the old man cried to him, showing the roots of his teeth.

" A first offence is generally forgiven," joked Oldnin, pulling on his big boots.

" The first offence is forgiven," answered Eroshka, " but if you sleep late the next time, your fine will be a bucket of red wine. When it gets warmer, you can't find the stags."

" But even if we find them, they are more intelligent than we," said Oldnin, repeating the old man's words which he had said the evening before. " You cannot cheat them."

" Laugh all you please ! First kill one, and then talk. Come, now, lively ! Look there, your landlord is coming to see you," said Erdshka, looking out of the window. "Just see bow he is dressed up! He has put on a new coat so as to let you know that he is an officer. Oh, what a people ! What a people ! "

And indeed, Vanyusha announced to the master that the landlord wanted to see him.

" L'argent," he said, significantly, to prepare his master for the meaning of the ensign's visit. He was soon followed by the ensign himself, who entered the room swaggering, and with a smile on his face, and wished Oldnin a pleasant Sunday. He wore a new mantle, with the shoulder-straps of an officer, and polished boots, which is a rarity among Cossacks.

The ensign, Ilya Vasilevich, was an educated Cossack, who had been in Russia, and was a school teacher ; but above all he was noble. He wanted to appear noble, but under the monstrous veneer of his glibness, self-confidence, and preposterous speech one could not help perceiving the same Uncle Erdshka. This was also evident from his sunburnt face, from his hands, and red nose. Oldnin invited him to sit down.

" Good morning, Father Ilya Vasilevich ! " said Erdshka, arising, and, as Oldnin thought, making an ironically low bow.

" Good morning, uncle ! Are you already here? " replied the ensign, carelessly nodding his head to him.

The ensign was a man of about forty years of age, with a gray, wedge-shaped beard, lean, slender, and handsome, and still very well preserved for his forty years. When he came to see Oldnin, he was obviously afraid lest he should be taken for a common Cossack, so he wanted to make him feel his importance right away.

" This is our Egyptian Nimrod," he said, turning with a self-satisfied smile to Oldnin, and pointing to the old man. " A hunter before the Lord. He is a great hand at everything. Have you made his acquaintance already?"

Uncle Erdshka, looking at his feet, which were wrapped in wet

buckskins, thoughtfully shook his head, as though wondering at the ensign's glibness and learning, and mumbled to himself, " Gyptian Nimbrod ! What a name ! "

" Yes, we want to go hunting," said Oldnin.

" That is right," remarked the ensign, " but I have a little business with you."

" What is it you wish ? "

" Whereas you be a nobleman," began the ensign, " and whereas I am able to understand myself as also having the rank of an officer, and we consequently may treat each other as of equal rank, just as with all noblemen " (he stopped, and with a smile glanced upon the old man and upon Oldnin) – " But if you should have the desire, in accordance with my agreement, for my wife being a foolish woman, in our condition of life, she could not in the present time completely grasp your words of yesterday's date. And thus my lodgings might have gone to the adjutant of the regiment for six roubles, without the stable, and, as being a nobleman, I can always remove one for gratis. And whereas you should wish, I, being myself of the rank an officer, can personally come to an agreement with you, and as an inhabitant of this country, not as is the habit, I am able to comply with all the points of the agreement – "

" He talks clearly," mumbled the old man.

The ensign talked long in the same strain. Of this, all Olenin was able to make out, not without great difficulty, was that the ensign wanted to get six roubles a month for his quarters. He gladly complied with his wish, and offered his guest a glass of tea. The ensign declined it.

" According to our foolish custom," he said, " we regard it almost a sin to use a general glass. Though, in accordance with my education, I might understand it ; my wife, in her human weakness – "

" Well, will you have a glass of tea ? "

"If you will permit me, I will bring my own glass, my special glass," answered the ensign, and walked out on the porch. " Fetch me a glass ! " he shouted.

A few minutes later the door opened, and a young sunburnt hand, in a rose-coloured sleeve, holding a glass, was stretched out through the door. The ensign walked up, took the glass, and said something in a whisper to his daughter. Olénin filled the special glass for the ensign, and a general glass for Erdshka.

" However, I do not wish to keep you," said the ensign, burning his lips in his haste to finish his glass. " I, so to say, have myself a great passion for fishing, and I am here only on vacation, so to say, on a recreation from my duties. I also have a desire to try my

luck, and to see whether the ' Gifts of Terek '1 will not fall to my lot. I hope you will visit me sometime, to drink the ' family ' cup, according to our village custom," he added.

The ensign bowed, pressed Olenin's hand, and went out. As Olénin was getting ready to go, he heard the ensign's commanding voice giving orders to the members of his o o o

1 Poem by Lérmontov.

family. A few minutes later Olénin saw the ensign in trousers rolled up over his knees and in a torn half-coat, with a net across his shoulder, walking past the window.

"The rascal!" said Uncle Erushka, finishing his tea from the general glass. " Well, will you really pay him six roubles? Who has ever heard the like? You may have the best cabin in the village for two roubles. What a beast! Why, I will let you have mine for three roubles."

" No, I had better remain here," said Olénin.

" Six roubles ! It is evidently fool's money you have ! Pshaw," said the old man. " Fetch the red wine, Ivan ' "

Having taken a snack and drunk some brandy for the journey, Olénin and the old man went out into the street, at about eight o'clock.

At the gate they met a cart all hitched up. Maryanka, her head wrapped down to her eyes with a white kerchief, wearing a half-coat over her shirt, in boots, and holding a long switch in her hands, was pulling the oxen by a rope that was attached to their horns.

" Motherkin," said the old man, making a motion as though he wanted to hug her.

Maryanka raised her switch at him, and gave them both a merry glance with her beautiful eyes.

Olénin felt even more cheerful than before.

" Well, come ! Come on ! " he said, shouldering his gun, and feeling the girl's eyes resting upon him.

" Get up ! " Maryanka's voice rang out behind them, and soon after the moving cart was heard to creak.

As long as the road led back of the houses of the village, over pastures, Erushka kept talking. He could not forget the ensign, and he did not stop abusing him.

" But why are you so angry at him ? " asked Olénin.

"He is stingy! I do not like him," answered the old man. "When he

dies, everything will be left. For whom is he hoarding ? He has put up two buildings. A second garden he got by a lawsuit from his brother. And he is a great hand at writing documents ! They come to him from other villages to get their documents written by him. And as he writes, so it happens. He always strikes it right. For whom is he hoarding ? He has but one boy and one girl, and when she is married, there will be nobody left."

" Then he is laying up for the dowry," said Olénin.

" What dowry ? They are anxious to get the girl, – she is a line girl. He is such a devil that he wants to marry her to a rich man. He wants to skin him out of a big marriage gift. Lukd is a Cossack ; he is a neighbour of mine and my nephew ; a fine chap who has killed a Chechén, and they have tried to get her for him, but he will not let him have her. He finds one excuse after another. ' The girl is too young,' he says. But I know what he is thinking about. He wants them to come with gifts. He is acting shamefully about that girl. But Lukäshka will get her in the end, for he is the first Cossack in the village, a brave ; he killed an abrék, and they will give him a cross."

" What is that now ? As I was walking in the yard last night, I saw my landlady's daughter kissing a Cossack," said Olénin.

" You are bragging," shouted the old man, stopping.

"Upon my word!" said Olénin.

" A woman is a devil," said Eréshka, pensively.

" What kind of a Cossack was it ? "

" I did not see."

" What was the colour of the hair on his cap ? White ? "

" Yes."

" And a red coat ? About your size ? "

" No, a little taller."

" That's he ! " Erdshka roared. " That's he, my Mdrka. I call him Märka for fun. That's he. I love him ! I was just like him, my father. What is the use asking them ? My mistress used to sleep with her mother and sister-in-law, but I climbed in all the same. She used to live up-stairs. Her mother was a witch, a devil: she hated me dreadfully. I used to come with my chum, they called him Girclrik. I would walk up under the window, climb on his shoulders, raise the window, and grope my way in. She slept on a bench. Once I awakened her. She began to groan, for she did not recognize me. ' Who is there ? ' But I did not dare answer. Her mother was already stirring. I took off my cap, and gagged her with it : then she

recognized me by the border of my cap. She leaped up from her bed. At other times, I did not need any of these stratagems. And she would bring me boiled cream, and grapes, and everything," added Erdshka, who explained everything in a practical manner. " And she was not the only one. It was a fine life I led."

" And now ? "

" Let us follow the dog ! When a pheasant alights on a tree, shoot I "

" Would you court Maryänka ? "

" You watch the dogs! I will tell you about it in the evening," said the old man, pointing to his favourite dog, Lyam.

They grew silent. Having walked about one hundred steps, talking now and then, the old man stopped once more and pointed to a stick that was lying across the path.

" What do you think about it ? " he said. " Do you think it is lying right ? No, the stick is lying badly."

" What is there bad in it ? "

He smiled.

"You do not know anything. Listen to me! When a stick lies like that, you must not step over it, but walk around it, or throw the stick away, and say the prayer, « To the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost,' and then you may go with God's aid. It will not hurt you then. Old people used to tell me that."

" What nonsense !" said Olénin. " Tell me rather about Maryanka. Well, so she keeps company with Lukash ka ? "

" Sh ! Now keep quiet," the old man again interrupted the conversation, in a whisper. "Just listen. We will go around through the forest."

And the old man, stepping inaudibly in his buckskins, walked ahead on a narrow path which entered a dense, wild, overgrown forest. He looked now and then, frown-ingly, back upon Olenin, who produced a rustling noise and a thud with his big boots, and, carrying his gun carelessly, several times caught in the branches of the trees that hung over the path.

" Don't make any noise ! Go more softly, soldier ! " he said to him, angrily, in a whisper.

The air felt as though the sun were up. The mist was beginning to disperse, but it still enveloped the tops of the trees. The forest seemed to be terribly high. The view changed at every step forward. What seemed to be a tree, turned out to be a bush ; the reeds looked

like trees.

XIX.

The mist had lifted, so that the moist reed thatches could be seen, and now was changed into dew that dampened the road and the grass near the fences. The smoke rose in clouds from the chimneys. The people were leaving the village, some to go to their work, others to the river, and others again to the cordon. The hunters walked together over the damp, grass-grown path. The dogs ran, wagging their tails and looking at their master, on both sides of them. Millions of gnats hovered in the air, and pursued the hunters, covering their backs, eyes, and hands. The air was fragrant with grass and the dampness of the woods. Olénin continually looked back at the ox-cart, in which Maryanka sat, urging on the oxen with a stick.

Everything was quiet. The sounds of the village, audible before, no longer reached the hunters ; only the dogs crashed through the thorn bushes, and now and then a bird uttered a sound. Olénin knew that the woods were dangerous, that abréks were always concealed in such places. He also knew that for a man on foot a gun was a great protection in the forest. Not that he was afraid, but he felt that any other person would feel afraid ; and, looking with strained attention into the misty, damp forest, and listening to the occasional faint sounds, he fingered his gun and experienced a novel and pleasant sensation.

Uncle Eréshka walked ahead and stopped at every puddle, where there were double tracks of animals ; he examined them carefully and showed them to Olénin. He said very little ; occasionally he made some remark in a whisper. The road over which they were walking was rutted by cart-wheels, and thickly overgrown with grass. The cork-elm and plane-tree forest on both sides of the road was so dense and so choked with underbrush that it was impossible to look through it. Nearly every tree was thickly overgrown to its top with wild grapevines ; and below, grew thick blackthorn bushes. Every small clearing was overrun with blackberry vines and reeds with their gray, wavy tops. Here and there large animal tracks and small tunnelled trails of pheasants led from the road into the thicket. The rankness of the vegetation in this forest, which had not been tracked by cattle, greatly impressed Olenin at every step he took, for he had never seen anything like it. This forest, the peril, the old man with his mysterious whisper, Marydnka with her strong, stately figure, and the mountains, – all this appeared to Olenin like a dream.

"The dog has treed a pheasant," whispered the old man, looking around, and pulling his cap over his face. " Hide your mug, it is a pheasant ! " He angrily waved his hand to Olénin and crept on, almost on his hands and knees. " It does not like a man's mug."

Olénin was some distance behind him, when the old man stopped and began to examine the tree. A cock called from the tree to the dog, which was barking at him, and Olénin noticed the pheasant. But just then a report, like a cannon, rang out from Erdshka's monstrous gun, and the cock flew up, dropping some of his feathers, and fell to the ground. Walking up to the old man, Olénin scared up another. Putting his gun to his shoulder, he aimed and fired. The pheasant circled upwards and then, catching in the branches, fell like a stone into the thicket.

" You are a brick ! " cried the old man, who could not shoot a bird on the wing, and smiled.

They picked up the pheasants and went on. Excited by the motion and by the praise, Olénin kept up a conversation with the old man.

" Wait ! We will go in this direction," the old man interrupted him. " I saw a deer trail here yesterday."

Having turned into the thicket and gone some three hundred paces, they came to a clearing that was overgrown with reeds, and in places overflowed with water. Olénin kept falling behind the old huntsman, and suddenly Uncle Erdshka crouched, about twenty steps in front of him, excitedly nodding his head and waving his hand. When Olénin came up to him, he saw the track of a man's feet, to which the old man was pointing.

" You see ?"

« I do. What of it ? " said Olénin, trying to speak as calmly as possible. " It is a man's track."

Involuntarily the thought of Cooper's " Pathfinder " and of abréks flashed through his head, and when he saw the mysterious manner in which the old man walked ahead, he could not make up his mind to ask him any questions, and was in doubt whether it was the peril or the hunt which caused this mystery.

" No, that is my track," the old man answered, simply, and pointed to the grass, underneath which a faint animal track was visible.

The old man went ahead. Olénin did not fall back. Having walked about twenty paces, they went down-hill and came to a spreading pear-tree in a thicket ; underneath it the earth was black, and fresh animal dung lay upon it.

The place was all covered with grape-vines, and resembled a covered cosy arbour, dark and cool.

"He has been here this morning," said the old man, sighing. " The lair is still fresh and steaming."

Suddenly a mighty crash was heard in the forest, about ten paces

from them. Both of them were startled and grasped their guns, but they could not see anything ; they could only hear the breaking of branches. The swift, even thud of a gallop could be heard for a moment ; then the crackling passed into a hollow din, farther and farther away, and reechoing farther and farther through the quiet forest. Olénin felt as though something was breaking in his heart. He gazed in vain into the green thicket, and finally looked at the old man. Uncle Eröshka stood immovable, pressing his gun to his chest; his cap was poised on the back of his head ; his eyes were burning with an uncommon brilliancy ; and his mouth, showing its well-worn yellow teeth, remained open, as though petrified.

" A horned stag ! " he said. He threw his gun down in despair, and began to pull his gray beard. " Here he stood ! I ought to have walked up from the path ! Fool ! Fool !" and he tugged his beard in anger. " Fool ! Hog ! " he repeated, painfully pulling his beard.

It looked as though something were flying by, above the forest, in the mist. Farther and farther away resounded the gallop of the stag.

Olénin and the old man returned at twilight. He was weary, hungry, and full of strength. The dinner was ready. He ate and drank with the old man, and feeling warm and gay, he walked out on the porch. Again the mountains in the west rose before his eyes. Again the old man told his endless stories about hunting, about abröks, and about mistresses, – about a careless, adventurous life. Again fair Maryanka walked in and out, and crossed the yard. Under her shirt was clearly outlined the powerful, virgin body of the fair maiden.

XX.

On the following day Olénin went without the old man to the place where they had scared up the stag. Instead of going through the gate, he climbed over a hedge of brambles, just as everybody else in the village would do. He had not yet got all the thorns out of his mantle, when his dog, which had run ahead, startled two pheasants. The moment he entered into the buckthorn thicket, pheasants flew up at every step. (The old man had not shown him this place the day before, intending to hunt there with snares.) Olénin killed five pheasants out of twelve shots, and, crawling for them under the thorn bushes, grew so fatigued that the perspiration trickled down his face in streams. He called back his dog, uncocked his gun, put the bullets on the shot, and, warding off the gnats with the sleeves of his mantle, slowly walked toward the place where he had been the day before. It was, however, impossible to keep back the dog, which ran upon trails on the path, and he killed two more pheasants ; he lost his time with them, and did not come to the familiar spot before midday.

It was a very clear, quiet, warm day. The morning dampness was dried up even in the forest, and millions of gnats literally covered his

face, back, and hands. The black dog looked gray under a covering of gnats. The mantle, through which the gnats thrust their stings, looked just as gray. Olénin wanted to run away from the pests ; he even thought that it would be impossible to pass a summer in the village. He started homewards ; but considering that people lived there in spite of the gnats, he determined to sutler, and patiently endured the stings. Strange to say, toward midday the sensation began to be agreeable to him. It even seemed to him that if it were not for that atmosphere of the gnats which surrounded him, and for that paste of gnats, which under his hand was smeared over his whole perspiring face, and for that disquieting burning over his whole body, the forest of that region would lose its character and charm for him. These myriads of insects were so appropriate to this wild, desperately rich vegetation, to this endless mass of beasts and birds that filled the woods, to this green foliage, to this redolent, warm air, to these runlets of muddy water which oozed on all sides from the Terek, and which bubbled somewhere under the overhanging branches, that that which before had appeared to him terrible and unbearable, now gave him pleasure.

Having passed by the spot where on the previous day they had seen the stag, and not meeting anything there, he wanted to take a rest. The sun stood straight over the forest, and its direct rays burnt his back and head every time he walked out on a clearing or into the road. Seven heavy pheasants weighed heavily on the small of his back. He found the stag's tracks of the previous day, crawled under the bush in the thicket where the stag had been lying the day before, and lay down near the lair. He examined the dark foliage all around him, the damp place, the dung of the previous day, the imprint of the stag's knees, a clump of black earth which the stag had kicked up, and his own tracks of the day before. He felt cool and comfortable; he thought of nothing, wished for nothing.

And suddenly he was overcome by such a strange feeling of causeless happiness and love for everything that, following an old boyish habit, he began to cross himself and to thank somebody for something. It suddenly passed through his mind with extraordinary clearness that he, Dmitri Olénin, a being apart from all other beings, was sitting all alone, God knew where, in the very spot where there used to live a stag, a beautiful old stag which, perhaps, had never before seen a man, and in a place where, perhaps, no one had been sitting before, or thinking about the same matter.

" I am sitting here, and all about me are young and old trees, and one of these is festooned with wild grape-vines ; near me pheasants are fluttering, driving each other from their hiding-places, and probably scenting their dead brothers." He put his fingers on his pheasants, examined them, and wiped his hand, which was stained by their warm blood, against his mantle. " The jackals are probably scenting them, and with dissatisfied faces turning away in the opposite direction. The gnats fly all around me, passing by leaves that appear to them like so many huge islands, and they hover in the air and buzz : one, two, three, four, one hundred, one thousand, a million gnats, and all of them buzz something, for some reason, all

about me, and every one of them is just such a Dmitri Olénin, apart from all the rest, as I am." He had a clear idea of what the gnats were thinking and buzzing. " Here, boys ! Here is one whom we can eat," they buzzed, and clung to him. And it became clear to him that he was not at all a Russian nobleman, a member of Moscow society, a friend and relative of this or that person, but simply just such a gnat, or pheasant, or stag, as those that now were living all around him. " I shall live and die, just like them, like Uncle Erdshka. And he is telling the truth, * Only grass will grow up !'

" And what of it if the grass will grow up ? " he continued his thought. " Still I must live ; I must be happy, because I wish but for this – happiness. It matters not what I am: such an animal as the rest, over which the grass will grow, and nothing else, or a frame into which a part of the One God has been encased, – I must still live the best way possible. But how must I live in order to be happy, and why have I not been happy before ? " And he began to recall his former life, and he was disgusted with himself. He represented himself as an exacting egoist, whereas in reality he needed very little for himself. And he kept gazing about him : at the foliage checkered by the sunlight, at the declining sun, and at the clear heaven, and he felt himself as happy as before.

" Why am I happy, and why have I lived hitherto ? " he thought. " How exacting I used to be ! How I concocted and caused nothing but shame and woe for myself!" And suddenly it seemed that a new world was open to him. " Happiness is this," he said to himself : " happiness consists in living for others. This is clear. The desire for happiness is inborn in man ; consequently it is legitimate. In attempting to satisfy it in an egoistical manner, that is, by seeking wealth, glory, comforts of life, and love, the circumstances may so arrange themselves that it is impossible to satisfy these desires. Consequently these desires are illegitimate, but the need of happiness is not illegitimate. Now, what desires are these that can always be satisfied, in spite of external conditions ? What desires ? Love, self-sacrifice ! "

He was so rejoiced and excited when he discovered this truth which seemed to be new, that he leaped up and impatiently began to look around for some one to sacrifice himself for, to do good to, and to love. " I do not need anything for myself," he proceeded in his thought, " then why should I not live for others?"

He picked up his gun and walked out of the thicket, with the intention of returning as soon as possible to the house, where he could consider the matter carefully, and would find a chance to do some good. When he walked out into the clearing, he gazed about him : the sun could no longer be seen above the tree-tops; it was growing cooler, and the locality seemed to him quite unfamiliar and not like the one which surrounded the village. Everything was suddenly changed, – both the weather, and the character of the forest. The sky was shrouded by clouds ; the wind rustled in the tree-tops ; all around him could be seen nothing but reeds and old, broken trees. He called his dog, which had run ahead of him in

pursuit of some animal, and his voice reechoed in the wilderness.

And suddenly he felt dreadfully ill at ease. He grew timid. Abréks and murders, of which he had heard, passed through his mind, and he waited for a Chechén to jump out from behind each bush, when he would have to defend his life and die, or like a coward run. He thought of God and of the future life, as he never before had thought of it. And all around him was the same gloomy, severe, wild Nature. " Is it worth while to live for myself," he thought, " when I may die any minute, and die without having done any good, and without any one knowing it ? "

He walked in the direction where he supposed the village to be. He no longer thought of his hunt. He experienced mortal fatigue, and with extraordinary attention, almost with terror, watched every bush and tree, expecting any moment to make his account with life. Having wandered about for quite awhile, he came to a runlet, down which flowed the sandy, cold water of the Térek, and, not to lose his way again, he decided to walk along the brook. He walked, without knowing whither it would take him. Suddenly the reeds behind him rustled. He was startled and grasped his gun. He was ashamed of himself when he saw his panting dog rush into the cold water of the runlet and lap it.

He took a drink himself and walked in the direction of the stream, hoping that it would bring him to the village ; but, in spite of the companionship of his dog, everything around him appeared to him unusually gloomy.

The forest was growing darker, the wind blew ever stronger through the tops of the old broken trees. Some large birds were shrieking and circling about the nests in these trees. The vegetation grew more scanty ; rustling reeds and barren, sandy clearings, tramped down by animal tracks, became more common. To the roar of the wind was added another disagreeable, monotonous roar. He felt altogether melancholy. He put his hand on the pheasants back of him, and he found one missing. The pheasant had broken off and was lost, and only the bloody neck and head remained in the belt. He had never felt so terribly before. He began to pray to God, and he was afraid but of this, that he might die without having done anything good ; and he was so anxious to live, to live, in order to commit an act of self-renunciation.

XXL

Suddenly his soul became illumined as though by the sun. He heard the sounds of Russian speech, and the swift and even flow of the Térek, and two steps in front of him lay the cinnamon-coloured moving surface of the river, with its dark brown wet sand on the banks and shoals, the distant steppe, the watch-tower of the cordon

that stood out above the water, a saddled horse walking hobbled in the buckthorn-bushes, and the mountains. The red sun burst suddenly from behind a cloud, and with its last rays gleamed merrily down the river, over the reeds, on the watch-tower, and on the Cossacks gathered in a group, among whom Lukàshka involuntarily attracted Olénin's attention by his spirited figure.

Olenin again felt, without any apparent cause, quite happy. He had struck the Nizhne-Protok post, on the Térék, opposite the peaceable native village on the other side of the river. He saluted the Cossacks, but finding no chance of doing a good act, walked into the hut. Nor did any chance present itself there. He walked into the clay hut and lighted a cigarette. The Cossacks paid little attention to Olenin, in the first place, because he smoked a cigarette ; in the second, because on that evening they had another attraction.

Some hostile Chechéns, relatives of the dead abrék, had come down from the mountains with a spy, to ransom the body. They were waiting for the Cossack authorities to come from the village. The brother of the killed man, a tall, stately fellow, with a clipped beard painted red,

though wearing a mantle and cap that were all tattered and torn, was as self-possessed and majestic as a king. His face resembled that of the dead abrék very closely. He did not bestow a glance upon any one, not once gazed at the dead man, and, squatting in the shade on liis heels, smoked his pipe and spit, and occasionally uttered a few guttural sounds of command, to which his companion listened respectfully. It was obvious that he was a brave who had more than once seen the Russians, and under different conditions, and that at the present time nothing among the Russians either surprised or interested him.

Olénin went up to the dead man and began to gaze at him, but the brother, casting a calm, contemptuous, supercilious glance upon Olénin, said something abruptly and angrily. The spy hastened to cover the abrék's face with the dead man's mantle. Olénin was impressed by the majesty and austerity of the brave's face. He said something to him, asking him from what village he was, but the Chechén barely looked at him, spit out contemptuously, and turned away his face. Olénin was so much surprised that the mountaineer was not interested in him, that he explained to himself his indifference as arising from mere stupidity, or from an unfamiliarity with the language. He turned to his companion. His companion, the spy and interpreter, was just as ragged, but his hair was black and not red, and he was very agile, and had extremely white teeth and sparkling black eyes. The spy gladly entered into a conversation, and asked for a cigarette.

" There are five brothers," the spy said, in his broken, half-Russian speech. " The Russians have just killed the third brother, and only two are left : he is a brave, a great brave," said the spy, pointing to the Chechén. " When they killed Akhmét-khan " (that was the name of the dead abrék) "he was sitting in the reeds on the

other side of the river; he saw everything, – how they put him in a skiff, and how they took him to the shore. He stayed there until night; he wanted to kill the old man, but the others would not let him."

Lukashka walked up to the speakers and sat down.

" From what village are they ? " he asked.

" There, in those mountains," answered the spy, pointing beyond the Terek to a bluish mist-covered cleft. " Do you know Suyuk-su ? About ten versts beyond it."

" Do you know Giréy-khan in Suyuk-su ? " asked Lukashka, obviously boasting of his friendship. " He is my chum."

" Aly neighbour," answered the spy.

" A fine fellow ! " and Lukashka, apparently much interested, began to speak in Tartar with the interpreter.

The captain and village elder, with a suite of two Cossacks, all mounted, arrived soon after. The captain, a newly created Cossack officer, saluted the Cossacks ; no one answered the salutation with a "We wish you health, well-born sir ! " as army soldiers do, but here and there a Cossack answered by a mere nod. Some, and Lukashka was among their number, rose and stood in a military attitude. The under-officer reported everything in proper condition at the post. All this seemed very ridiculous to Olénin ; it looked as though the Cossacks tried to play soldiers. But the formality soon passed into simple relations, and the captain, who was just such an agile Cossack as the rest, carried on a brisk conversation in Tartar with the interpreter. They wrote up a document which they gave to the spy ; they took money from him, and went up to the dead body.

" Gavrilov Luka, who is he ? " said the captain.

Lukashka took off his cap and stepped up to him.

" I have sent a report about you to the commander. I do not know what will come of it. I have recommended a cross, – it is too early yet for a sergeancy. Can you read and write ? "

" Not at all."

" What a fine-looking fellow you are," said the captain, continuing to play the superior. " Put on your cap ! Of what Gavrilovs is he ? Of the Broad ? "

"His nephew," answered the under-officer.

" I know, I know. Now, come on, give them a lift," he said to the Cossacks.

Lukashka's face was gleaming with joy, and looked more beautiful than ever. Walking away from the underofficer, and donning his cap, he again seated himself near Olénin.

When the body was carried into the skiff, the brother of the Chechen brave walked down to the shore. The Cossacks involuntarily stepped aside, to make way for him. He pushed off the boat with his powerful foot, and leaped into it. Olénin noticed that he now, for the first time, cast a rapid glance upon all the Cossacks, and again abruptly asked his companion something. His companion answered him and pointed to Lukashka. The Chechen gazed at him, and, turning slowly away, began to look at the other shore. Not hatred, but cold contempt, was expressed in this glance. He again said something.

" What did he say ? " asked Olénin, of the mercurial interpreter.

" You strike ours, we kill yours, – all the same," said the spy, obviously lying. He laughed, displaying his white teeth, and jumped into the skiff.

The brother of the dead man sat immovable, and looked steadily at the other bank. He was so full of hatred and contempt that there could be nothing interesting for him on this side. The spy stood at the end of the skiff, and, transferring his oar from one side to the other, skilfully directed the boat. He was talking without cessation. The skiff cut the current in an oblique direction, and looked ever smaller and smaller. Their voices were scarcely audible, and finally they could be seen disembarking where their horses were standing. There they carried the body on shore. Though the horse was restless, they placed the body on its saddle, mounted, and slowly rode along the road past the village, from which a crowd of people came out to look at them. The Cossacks on our side were very contented and happy. Everywhere were heard laughter and jokes. The captain and village elder made themselves comfortable in the clay hut. Lukashka, with happy face, to which he vainly tried to give a staid appearance, sat near Olénin, leaning his elbows on his knees and whittling a stick.

" Why do you smoke ? " he said, as though with curiosity. " Is it good ? "

He said this for no other reason than because he noticed that Olénin did not feel at ease, and was all alone among the Cossacks.

" I am just used to it," answered Olénin. " Why ? "

" Hm ! It would be bad if any of us fellows should smoke ! It is not far to the mountains," said Lukashka, pointing to the cleft, " and yet you won't get there so easily ! How will you get home by yourself ? It is dark. I will take you home if you wish," said Lukashka. "Just ask the under-officer's permission."

" What a fine fellow ! " thought Olénin, watching the Cossack's happy face. He recalled Maryanka and the kiss which he had heard by

the gate, and he was sorry for Lukäshka, sorry for his lack of education.

" What bosh and nonsense ! " he thought. " One man has killed another, and he is happy as though he had committed a most beautiful act. Does nothing tell him that there is no cause here for any great rejoicing ? That happiness does not consist in killing, but in sacrificing yourself ? "

" Now, don't you get in his way, brother ! " said one of the Cossacks who had accompanied the skiff, turning to Lukäshka. " Did you hear him ask about you ? "

Lukashka raised his head.

" You mean the godson ?" said Lukashka, meaning the Chechen.

" The godson will not rise again, but his red-haired brother may be godfather."

" Let him thank God for having escaped with a whole skin ! " said Lukashka, laughing.

" What are you rejoicing at ? " Olénin said to Lukashka. " Would you rejoice if they killed your brother ? "

The Cossack's eyes were smiling, as they looked at Olénin. He evidently understood what the other wanted to say, but he was above such considerations.

« Well ? It does happen ! Do they not kill our brothers ? "

XXII.

The captain and elder rode away. Wishing to give Lukëshka some pleasure and not to walk all alone through the woods, Olénin asked the under-officer to give Lukashka a leave of absence, which was granted. Olénin thought that Lukashka wanted to see Maryänka, and he was in general glad to have the companionship of such an apparently agreeable and talkative Cossack. Lukäshka and Maryanka involuntarily were united in his imagination, and it gave him pleasure to think of them. "He loves Maryanka," Olénin thought, "and I might have loved her." And a strong, novel feeling of humility of spirit took possession of him on his way through the dark forest. Lukashka, too, was light of heart. There was something resembling love between these two so different young people. Every time they looked at each other, they felt like laughing.

" What gate do you go to ? " asked Olénin.

" Into the middle gate. But I will take you to the swamp. There you

need not fear anything."

Olénin laughed.

" Do you think I am afraid ? Go back, I thank you. I will get there myself."

" Never mind ! What else have I to do ? How can you help being afraid ? We are," said Lukashka, also laughing, and assuaging his vanity.

" Come to my house ! We will talk and drink together, and in the morning you can leave."

" Oh, I will find a place where I can pass a night,"

Lukashka laughed, " and the under-officer told me to be back."

" I heard you singing songs last night, and I saw you, too."

" All people – " and Luka shook his head.

" Well, are you going to marry ? Is it true ? " Olénin asked.

" Mother wants to get me married. But I have not yet a horse."

" You are not yet a mounted Cossack ? "

"No, I am just getting ready to be one. I have no horse, and I don't know how to procure one. So they cannot get me married yet."

" How much does a horse cost ? "

" We were chaffering for one the other day across the river. They would not take sixty roubles for him, – and it is a Nogäy horse."

" Will you be my life-guardsman ?" (A life-guardsman was a kind of an orderly to an officer during an expedition.) " I will get that appointment for you, and will give you a horse," Olénin suddenly exclaimed. " Truly ; I have two, and I do not need both."

« Why do you not need them ? " Lukashka said, laughing. " Why give it away ? I will pay you for it, God permitting."

" Truly ! Or will you not be my life-guardsman ? " said Olénin, rejoicing at the thought of giving Lukashka a horse. But, for some reason or other, he felt awkward and ashamed. He was trying to say something, but did not know what.

Lukashka was the first to break the silence.

« Have you a house of your own in Russia ? " he asked.

Olénin could not keep from telling him that he had not only one, but

several houses.

" Are they fine houses ? Larger than ours ? " Lukāshka asked, good-naturedly.

" Much larger, ten times larger ; three stories high," Olénin told him.

" And have you such horses as we have ? "

" I have a hundred head of horses, worth three hundred and four hundred roubles apiece, – only they are not your kind of horses. Three hundred in silver ! They are race-horses, you know – But I love yours better."

"Did you come here of your own will, or not?" asked Lukāshka, as though in ridicule. " You are off your path," he added, pointing to the road near which they were passing. " Keep to the right ! "

"Just of my own free will," answered Olénin. "I wanted to see your country, and take part in expeditions."

" I should like myself to go out with an expedition," said Lukāshka. " Do you hear how the jackals are howling ? " he added, listening attentively.

" Tell me, do you not feel terribly at having killed a man ? " Olénin asked.

" What am I to be afraid of ? I would gladly take part in an expedition ! " Lukāshka repeated. " I am so anxious, so anxious – "

" Maybe we will go together. Our company and yours, too, will move before the holidays."

" What pleasure do you see in coming here ? You have a house, and horses, and slaves. I would be celebrating all the time. Have you any rank ? "

"lama yunker, and recommended for advancement."

" Well, if you are not bragging about the things you possess, I would not have left my home. I would not leave it anyway. Do you like our life ? "

" Yes ; very much," said Olénin.

It was quite dark when they, conversing in this manner, reached the village. The darkness of the forest still surrounded them. The wind howled high in the tree-tops. The jackals, it seemed, suddenly moaned, laughed, and cried near them ; but in front of them, in the village, were heard the talk of women and barking of dogs ; and the outlines of cabins were clearly defined, and lights gleamed, and the air was redolent with the odour, the particular odour, of dung-chip

smoke. Olénin felt, more especially on that evening, that here was his house, his family, all his happiness, and that nowhere had he lived, or ever should live, as happily as in this village. That evening he loved everybody, but particularly Lukashka ! When they arrived home, Olénin, to Lukashka's great astonishment, brought out of the stable a horse which he had bought at Groznaya, – not the one on which he always rode, but another, – not a bad-looking, though not a very young horse, and gave it to him.

" Why should you make a gift to me ? " said Lukashka.

" I have done you no service."

" Truly, it does not cost me anything," replied Olénin. " Take it, and you will make me some gift– We will go into the expedition together."

Lukashka was embarrassed.

" How is that ? A horse costs something," he said, without looking at the horse.

" Take it, do take it ! You will offend me if you do not take it ! Vanyusha, take the gray out to him ! " Lukashka took hold of the bridle.

" I thank you. Well, that was unexpected."

Olénin was as happy as a twelve-year-old boy.

" Tie him up here ! It is a good horse, I bought him in Gréznaya, and he is a fine trotter. Vanyusha, let us have some red wine ! Come into the house ! "

The wine was brought. Lukashka sat down and took the wine-bowl.

" God will give me a chance to do you a good turn," he said, drinking the wine. " What is your name ? "

" Dmitri Andréevich."

" Well, Mîtri Andréevich, God preserve you. We will be chums. Now, you must come to see us sometime. We are not rich people, but will know how to treat a guest. I will tell mother to let you have boiled cream or grapes, or whatever else you may need. And whenever you come to the cordon, I will be your servant, – whether on the hunt, or across the river, or wherever you may wish. A pity I did not know you the other day. I killed a fine boar! I divided him up among the Cossacks, or I would have brought him to you."

" All right, I thank you. Only do not hitch him to a team, for he has never been hitched before."

" Who would hitch a horse ? I will tell you something," Lukashka

said, lowering his head. " I have a chum, Giréy-khan by name. He called me to lie in ambush on the road where people from the mountains pass by ; so we will go together. I will not give you away, I will be your trusty friend."

" We will go there sometime."

Lukāshka seemed to be quite at ease, and to understand Olénin's relations with him. His calm and simplicity of address surprised Olénin and even annoyed him a little. They talked together for quite awhile, and it was late when Lukāshka, not drunk (he never was), but well filled with wine, pressed Olénin's hand and left his room.

Olénin looked out of the window to see what he would do after leaving him. Lukāshka walked slowly, with drooping head. Then, when he had taken the horse outside the gate, he suddenly shook his head, jumped upon him like a cat, threw the reins of the halter over his head, and, shouting, galloped down the street. Olénin had imagined that he would go to share his joy with Maryänka ; but even though Lukāshka had not done so. Olénin felt as happy as never before in his life. He was as joyful as a child, and could not keep from telling Vanyusha, not only about his having given the horse to Lukāshka, but why he had made him that gift, and also about his new theory of happiness. Vanyusha did not approve of this theory, and he explained that L'argent it n'y a pas, and consequently it was all nonsense.

Lukashka rode home, leaped from his horse, and gave it to his mother, with the injunction to let it out to pasture with the Cossack herd ; but he himself had to return that very night to the cordon. The dumb girl promised to take down the horse, and she explained by signs that she would make her low obeisance to the man who had given him the horse, as soon as she should see him. The old woman only shook her head at her son's recital, and in her heart decided that Lukashka had stolen the horse, and so she ordered the dumb girl to take him to pasture before daybreak.

Lukāshka went alone to the cordon, all the time revolving in his mind Olénin's act. Though the horse, in his opinion, was not a good one, yet it was worth at least forty roubles, and Lukashka was very happy with the gift. But he could not understand why this gift was made, and so he did not feel the least gratitude. On the contrary, indistinct suspicions of the yunker's evil intentions disquieted his mind. What these intentions were, he could not make out, but it seemed impossible to him to admit the thought that a stranger would give him a horse worth forty roubles for no reason whatsoever, and just out of kindness. It would be a different matter if he had been intoxicated, and wanted to show off. But the yunker had been sober, consequently he wanted to bribe him for some bad deed.

" That's where you are mistaken ! " thought Lukashka. " I have the horse, and as for the rest, we will see. I am not as stupid as all that. We will see who will cheat whom ! " he thought, feeling the need of being on guard against Olénin, and therefore of arousing in

himself a hostile feeling toward him. He did not tell anybody how he had come by his horse. He told some he had bought

.d gave evasive answers to others. Still the people village soon learned the truth. Lukāshka's mother, Maryanka, Ilya Vasilevich, and other Cossacks, who were informed of Olénin's causeless gift, were perplexed, and began to fear the yunker. In spite of these fears, the deed aroused their great respect for Olénin's simplicity and wealth.

" Listen, the yunker who is lodged at Ilya Vasilevich's gave Lukāshka a horse worth fifty roubles," said one. " He is rich ! "

" I have heard so," answered another, thoughtfully. " He must have done him some service. We shall see, we shall see what he will do ! That's the ' Saver's ' luck ! "

" These yunkers are an awful lot of cheats," said a third. " He'll burn down a house, or do something worse yet."

XXIII.

OLÉNIN's life ran monotonously and smoothly. He had little to do with the authorities or his companions. The position of a rich yunker in the Caucasus is in this respect exceedingly advantageous. He was not sent out to work or to military drill. For his services in an expedition he was recommended for advancement as a regular officer, but in the meantime he was left alone. The officers regarded him as an aristocrat, and therefore were on their dignity in their relations with him. Cardplaying and the carousals of the officers, accompanied by singing, which were common in the army, did not appear attractive to him, and he kept aloof from the society of the officers and from their life in the village.

The life of the officers in the Cossack villages has for a long time had a definite character. Just as every yunker or officer in the fortress regularly drinks porter, gambles at cards, and talks of rewards for services in expeditions, so he in the villages regularly drinks red wine with the landlord, treats the girls to cakes and honey, flirts with the Cossack girls, with whom he falls in love; and sometimes he gets married. Olénin always lived in his own peculiar manner, and had an unconscious aversion for beaten paths. Nor did he follow here the beaten track of the life of an officer in the Caucasus.

Without making any exertion, he woke with the daylight. After drinking his tea and admiring from his T>orch the mountains, the morning, and Marydnka, he put on a torn ox-hide coat, the soaked buckskins, girded on his dagger, took his gun, a pouch with a lunch and tobacco, called his dog, and after five o'clock in the morning walked into the forest back of the village. At about seven o'clock in the evening he returned, tired, famished, with five or six pheasants in his belt, sometimes with a larger animal, while the pouch with the lunch and cigarettes remained untouched. If the

thoughts in his head had remained like the cigarettes in his pouch, it would be easy to see that not one thought had stirred there in the course of these fourteen hours. He returned home morally fresh, strong, and completely happy. It would have been difficult for him to say what he had been thinking about during all that time. Not thoughts, not recollections, not dreams, were rummaging through his brain, – there were only fragments of all these. He sometimes stopped to ask himself what it was he was thinking about, and he discovered himself as a Cossack working with his wife in the gardens, or as an abrék in the mountains, or as a boar running away from himself. And all this time he listened, watched, and waited for a pheasant, boar, or stag.

In the evening Uncle Eroshka was sure to be at his house. Vanyusha brought an eighth measure of wine, and they conversed softly and drank, and separated for the night well contented. On the following day there was again hunting, again healthful fatigue, again the winedinking and chatting, and again the contentment. Sometimes, on a holiday or day of rest, he passed a whole day at home. Then his chief interest was Marydnka, ever)' motion of whom he eagerly watched, without being conscious of it, from his window or from his porch. He gazed at Maryanka, and loved her (so he thought) as he loved the beauty of the mountains and of the sky, and did not think of entering into any relations with her. It seemed to him that between him and her could not exist the relations that were possible between her and Cossack Lukashka, and still less the relations that were possible between a wealthy officer and a Cossack maiden. It appeared to him that if he tried to do what his companions were doing, he would exchange his full enjoyment and contemplation for an abyss of torments, disappointments, and regrets. Besides, in relation to this woman he had already accomplished the feat of self-renunciation, which had allorded him so much pleasure ; but, above all, he was for some reason afraid of Marydnka, and would not dare to utter one word of pleasantry to her.

One summer day Olénin did not go out hunting, and remained at home. Quite unexpectedly a Moscow acquaintance of his, a very young man whom he used to meet in society, entered his room.

"Ah, mon cher, my dear, how happy I was to learn that you were here!" he began, in his Moscow French jargon, and he continued to interlard his speech with French words. "I heard them say 'Olénin.' What Olénin ? I was so rejoiced – So fate has brought us together. Well, how are you ? What are you doing ? And why here ? "

Prince Byelétski told him his whole story : how he had joined the regiment for awhile, how the commanderin-chief had asked him to be his adjutant, and how he would enter his service after the expedition, although he was not in the least interested in the matter.

"If I serve here, in this wilderness, I must at least make a career – a cross – rank – and be transferred to the Guards. All this is necessary, not for my own sake, but for my relatives, for my

friends. The prince has received me very well ; he is a very nice kind of man," said Byelétski, without taking breath. " I have been recommended for an Anna decoration for services in the expedition. Now I am going to stay here to the next campaign. It is superb here. What women ! Well, and how do you pass your time ? Our captain – you know Strätsev, a kind-hearted, stupid creature – told me that you lived here like a terrible savage, that you had nothing to do with anybody. I understand that you do not wish to become closely acquainted with the officers. I am glad we shall be able to see something of each other. I am lodging with the under-officer. What a girl his Ūstenka is ! I tell you she is fine ! "

And more and more French and Russian words from that society which Olénin thought he had for ever abandoned were poured forth by him. The common opinion was that Byelétski was a dear, good-natured fellow. Maybe he really was; but to Olénin he appeared, in spite of his good-natured, handsome face, exceedingly disagreeable ; he brought with him a strong breath of all that loathsomeness which he had renounced. But he was most annoyed because he could not, positively did not, have the strength to push away from himself that man from that society, as though that old past society had some inalienable rights upon him. He was angry at Byelétski and at himself, and against his will mingled French phrases with his conversation, took interest in the commander-in-chief and his Moscow acquaintances, and, on the basis of their speaking a French jargon in a Cossack village, referred with contempt to his fellow officers, and to the Cossacks, and treated Byelétski in a friendly manner, promising to call on him, and asking him to come to see him. However, Olénin never called on Byelétski. Vanyusha approved of Byelétski, saying that he was a real gentleman.

Byelétski at once took up the customary life of a rich Caucasus officer in the village. Olénin could see his rapid evolution : in one month he appeared to be an old inhabitant of the village ; he treated the old men, gave evening parties, and himself went to girls' evening parties, boasted

of his conquests, and even went so far that the girls and women for some reason called him little grandfather, while the Cossacks, who had formed a clear idea about the man who was fond of wine and women, became accustomed to him, and even liked him better than Olénin, who remained a puzzle to them.

XXIV.

It was five o'clock in the morning. Vanyusha was on the porch, fanning the samovär with his bootleg. Olénin had already ridden down to the Térek to bathe. (He had lately discovered a new amusement, to bathe his horse in the Térek.) The landlady was in the dairy, from the chimney of which rose the dense black smoke of the oven in which a fire had just been kindled ; the girl was milking the buffalo cow in the stall. " Stand still, accursed one ! " was heard her

impatient voice, and soon after followed the even sound of milking.

On the street, near the house, was heard the brisk tramp of the horse, and Olénin, on his beautiful, dark gray horse, sinning with wet, rode bareback up to the gate. Maryanka's fair head, wrapped in a red kerchief, stuck out of the stall and again disappeared. Olénin wore a red shirt of Persian silk, a white mantle, girded by a leather strap with a dagger in it, and a tall cap. He sat rather jauntily on the wet back of his well-fed horse, and, holding his gun on Ins back, bent over to open the gate. His hair was still wet, his face was aglow with youth and health.

He thought he was handsome, agile, and resembling a brave ; but that was a mistake. To the eye of every experienced inhabitant of the Caucasus he was still a soldier. When he noticed the girl's head thrust forward, he made a special effort to bend down gracefully, and, opening the gate and holding the bridle, cracked his whip, and rode into the yard.

" Is tea ready, Vanyusha ? " he cried, merrily, without looking at the stall. It gave him pleasure to feel his beautiful horse contracting the crupper, begging for loose reins, and swelling every muscle, ready to leap with all feet at once over the fence, and striking the dried up clay of the yard with his hoofs.

" C'est prêt ! " answered Vanyusha.

Olenin thought that Marydnka's beautiful head was still looking out of the shed, but he did not glance in that direction. Leaping down from Ins horse, Olénin caught his gun in the porch ; he made an awkward motion, and looked in a frightened manner toward the stall, where no one could be seen, though the even sound of milking was still heard.

He walked into the house, and a little later came out again on the porch, and, with a book and a pipe, sat down to drink his tea on the side which was not yet reached by the oblique rays of the sun. He did not expect to go out in the forenoon, and intended to write some long-delayed letters ; but he somehow was loath to leave his snug corner on the porch, and the room appeared like a prison to him. The landlady had built the fire, the girl had driven out the cattle, and, upon returning, began to collect the dung and to sling it against the fence to get it dry.

Olénin was reading, but he did not understand a word of what was said in the book which lay open before him. He kept tearing his eyes away from it, and gazing at the moving figure of the well-built young woman in front of him. Whether she walked into the damp morning shade made by the house, or whether she came out into the middle of the yard, illuminated by the cheerful splendour of the young sun, where her stately figure in the brightly coloured dress gleamed and cast a black shadow, – he was equally afraid of missing even one of her motions. It gave him pleasure to see how freely and gracefully she bent her frame ; how the rose-coloured shirt, which

constituted her only attire, draped itself on her bosom and along her shapely legs ; how she unbent herself, and how under her tightly fitting shirt the firm lines of her heaving breast stood out ; how the narrow soles of her feet, clad in old red shoes, planted themselves on the ground, without changing their form ; how her powerful arms, with sleeves rolled up, contracted their muscles as she wielded the shovel as though in anger; and how her deep black eyes sometimes gazed at him. Though her delicate eyebrows now and then gathered into a frown, her eyes expressed pleasure and consciousness of her beauty.

" Well, Olénin, 'have you been up long ? " said Byelétski, in the coat of an officer of the Caucasus, coming into the yard and turning to Olénin.

" Ah ! Byelétski ! " replied Olénin, extending his hand. " What brings you so early ? "

" What can I do ? They sent me away. There is a party at my house to-night. Maryanka, you will come to Ustenka's ? " he said, turning to the girl.

Olénin was amazed to hear Byelétski address that woman in such a familiar fashion. But Maryanka, as though not hearing what he said, bent her head, and, throwing the shovel across her shoulder, walked to the dairy with her brisk, manly strides.

" She is embarrassed, my friend, she is embarrassed," Byelétski said, as she walked away, " she is embarrassed in your presence," and, smiling cheerfully, he ran up the steps.

" What party is that ? Who has sent you away ? "

" At Ustenka's, my landlady's, there is a party, and you are invited. A party, - that is, cakes and a gathering of girls."

" What are we going to do there ? "

Byelétski smiled slyly, and, winking, pointed with his head to the dairy where Maryanka had disappeared.

Olénin shrugged his shoulders and blushed.

"Upon my word, you are a strange man!" he said. "Well, tell me!"

Olenin scowled. Byelétski noticed this, and smiled, as though begging his pardon. " Really, I pray," he said, " you are living in the same house with her ; and she is such a fine girl, an excellent girl, a perfect beauty - "

" A wonderful beauty ! I have never seen such women before ! " said Olénin.

" Well ? " asked Byelétski, quite perplexed.

" It may be strange," replied Olénin, " but why should I not tell the truth ? Women, it seems, have not existed for me 'ever since I have been living here. And it is good so, really it is ! Well, what can we have in common with these women ? It is different with Eroshka ; we have a common passion – hunting."

" Well, I declare ! What is there in common ? What have I in common with Amalia Ivanovna? It is the same thing. You will say that they are rather dirty. That is another matter. A la guerre, comme à la guerre ! "

" But I have never known any Amalia Ivanovnas, and never could get along with them," replied Olenin. " But one could not respect those women, whereas these here I respect."

" Keep on respecting them ! Nobody prevents you ! "

Olénin did not reply. He evidently wanted to finish what he had begun to say. It lay near to his heart.

" I know that I am an exception." (He was evidently embarrassed.) " My life has arranged itself in such a way that I see no necessity whatsoever of changing my rules ; I could not even live here, let alone live as happily, as I do, if I lived in your fashion. And besides, I am looking for something else, and see something quite different from what you do."

Byelétski raised his brows incredulously.

" All the same, come to my house to-night. Maryanka will be there, and I will make you acquainted. Do come ! Well, if you find it dull you can go away. Will you come ? "

" I would come ; but, to tell you the truth, I am seriously afraid of being carried away."

" Oh, oh, oh ! " cried Byelétski. " Only come, and I will keep you down. Will you come ? Your word of honour ? "

" I would come, but, really, I do not understand what we shall do there, and what part we shall play there."

" Please, I beg you. Will you come ? "

" Yes, I will, perhaps," said Olénin.

" You see for yourself that here are the most charming women in the world, and yet you live like a monk ! Who would ever think of such a thing ? Who would want to spoil his life, and not to make use of what there is ? Have you heard, our company will go to Vozdvizhén-skaya ? "

" Hardly. I was told that Company Eight is going," said Olénin.

" No, I have received a letter from the adjutant. He writes that the prince himself will be in the expedition. I am glad of it, – I shall see him. I am beginning to be bored here."

" They say there will be an incursion soon."

" I have not heard it ; but I have heard that Krinovitsyn got an Anna decoration for services in an excursion. He expected a lieutenancy," said Byelétski, laughing. " That was a disappointment to him. He has gone to see the staff about it – "

It was growing dark, and Olénin began to think of the evening party. The invitation tormented him. He wanted to go, but the thought of what was going to happen there seemed to him strange, preposterous, and a little terrifying. He knew that there would be there no Cossacks, no old women, but only girls. What would happen there ? How was he to conduct himself ? What was he to say ? What would they say ? What relations were there between him and those wild Cossack girls ? Byelétski had been telling him of such strange, cynical, and at the same time strict relations– It was strange to him to think that he would be there in one room with Maryanka, and that, perhaps, he would have to speak to her. This seemed impossible to him whenever he recalled her majestic bearing. Byelétski had told him that all that was quite simple. " Is it possible Byelétski would treat Maryanka in the same manner ? It would be interesting," he thought. « No, I had better not go. All this is vile, and contemptible, and, above all, leads to nothing." But again the question tormented him : " What will it be ? " and he was to a certain extent bound by his promise. He went, still undecided what to do, but upon reaching Byelétski's he stepped in.

The cabin in which Byelétski lived was just like Oléniu's. It was raised on posts about six feet from the ground, and consisted of two rooms. In the first, which Olénin reached by a steep little staircase, lay feather beds, rugs, quilts, and pillows, beautifully and elegantly piled up against each other in Cossack fashion along the front wall. On the side walls hung brass basins and weapons ; under the bench lay watermelons and pumpkins. In the second room was a large oven, a table, benches, and Dissenter images. Here Byelétski had his lodgings, with his folding bed, travelling portmanteaus, nig, on which his weapons were hanging, and with toilet articles and portraits scattered about the table. A silk dressing-gown was flung upon a bench. Byelétski himself, handsome and clean, lay in his underwear on the bed, reading " Les Trois Mousquetaires."

Byelétski jumped up.

" You see how I am fixed ? Fine ? I am glad you have come. They have been working terribly. Do you know what a pie is made of ? Of dough, with lard and grapes. But that is not the point. Just see how busy they are ! "

Indeed, as they looked out of the window, they saw an unusual

turmoil in the landlady's cabin. The girls kept running in and out of the vestibule, with one thing or another.

" Will it be soon ? " cried Byelétski.

" Right away ! Are you starved, grandfather ? " and melodious laughter was heard in the cabin.

Ustenka, plump, red-cheeked, pretty, with rolled up sleeves, ran into Byelétski's room to fetch the plates.

" Keep away ! I almost broke the plates," she shrieked at Byelétski. " You had better go and help us," she cried, laughing, at Olénin. " And get the cakes and candy for the girls."

" Has Maryénka come ? " asked Byelétski.

" Of course. She brought some dough."

" Do you know," said Byelétski, " if one were to dress up this Ustenka, and clean her up a little, and primp her, she would be more beautiful than any of our beauties. Have you seen the Cossack woman Bérshchev? She married a colonel. Superb! What dignité! Where did they get it all - "

" I have not seen Mrs. Borshchev ; but, in my opinion, there can be nothing more beautiful than this attire."

" Ah, I can so easily adapt myself to any life ! " said Byelétski, drawing a sigh of delight. " I will go and take a look at what they are doing."

He put on his dressing-gown, and ran out.

" You take care of the refreshments ! " he cried.

Olénin sent Byelétski's orderly for cake and honey. It seemed so detestable to him to give money, as though he were bribing some one, that he did not give any definite answer to the orderly's question, " How many peppermintcakes, and how many honey-cakes ? "

" I leave it to you."

" For all this money ? " the old soldier asked, significantly. " Peppermint-cakes cost more. They sell them at sixteen kopeks."

" For all the money, for all," said Olénin, sitting down at the window and wondering why it was his heart was fluttering as though he were preparing himself to do something important but bad.

He heard shouting and screaming in the room where the girls were, the moment Byéletski had entered there, and a few minutes later he saw him jump out from it and run down the stairs, accompanied by shrieks, laughter, and a general hubbub.

" They have driven me out," he said.

A few minutes later, Ustenka came into the room and solemnly invited the guests, announcing that everything was ready.

When they entered the room, they really found everything ready, and Ustenka was arranging the feather pillows against the wall. On the table, which was covered with a disproportionately small napkin, stood a decanter of red wine and some dried fish. The room was redolent with pastry and grapes. Some six girls, in holiday halfcoats and with bare heads, contrary to the common rule, were keeping in the corner behind the oven, whispering, laughing, and giggling.

" I beg you humbly to honour my patron saint," said Ustenka, inviting the guests to the table.

Olénin had discovered Maryanka in the crowd of girls, who were all without exception beautiful, and he felt annoyed and pained because he made her closer acquaintance under such awkward and detestable circumstances. He felt foolish and uncomfortable, and decided to follow Byelétski's example. Byelétski went up to the table somewhat solemnly, but with ease and self-confidence, drank a glass to Ustenka's health, and invited the rest to do likewise. Ustenka declared that the girls did not drink.

" With honey we could," said a voice in the crowd of the girls.

The orderly, who had just returned from the shop with the honey and the refreshments, was called in. The orderly glanced with a scowl, partly of envy, and partly of contempt, at the gentlemen, who, in his opinion, were having a celebration, carefully and scrupulously turned over the piece of the honeycomb and the cakes which were wrapped in gray paper, and began to expatiate on the cost of the articles, and the change he had brought back ; but Byelétski drove him away.

After mixing the honey with the wine in the glasses, and lavishly scattering the three pounds of cakes on the table, Byelétski pulled the girls out of the corner by force, put them down at the table, and began to distribute the cakes among them.

Olénin involuntarily noticed how Marydnka's small sunburnt hand took hold of two round peppermint and one honey cake, and how she was in doubt what to do with them. The conversation was constrained and cheerless, in spite of Ustenka's and Byelétski's vivacity, and their attempts to cheer up the company. Olénin was embarrassed, brooded over something to say, and felt that he was rousing their curiosity, perhaps provoking their ridicule, and communicating his bashfulness to the others. He blushed, and it seemed to him that Maryanka in particular was ill at ease.

"No doubt they are waiting for us to give them some money," he

thought. " How are we going to do it ? Let us give it to them as soon as possible and go ! "

XXV.

" How is it you do not know your lodger ? " said Bye-létski, turning to Maryanka.

" How am I to know him if he never comes to see us ? " said Maryanka, casting a glance upon Olénin.

Olénin was startled, and his face was flushed. He answered, without knowing himself what he was saying : " I am afraid of your mother. She scolded me so the first time I called at your house."

Maryanka laughed out loud.

" So you were scared ? " she said, glancing at him, and turning her head away.

That was then the first time Olénin had seen the whole face of the beautiful girl, for heretofore he had seen it only wrapped in a kerchief down to her eyes. There was good reason why she was regarded as the most beautiful girl in the village. Ustenka was a pretty girl, petite, plump, ruddy, with laughing hazel eyes, with an eternal smile on her rosy lips, for ever giggling and prattling. Maryanka, on the contrary, was by no means pretty, she was a beauty ! Her features might have appeared too masculine and almost coarse, had it not been for her tall, stately form, and her powerful chest and shoulders, and chiefly for the stern and yet gentle expression of her wide black eyes, surrounded by a deep shadow beneath black brows, and for the gentle expression of her mouth and of her smile. She rarely smiled, but her smile was so much the more effective. She exhaled virgin strength and health. All the girls were pretty ; but they themselves, and Byelétski, and the orderly who had brought the cakes, all could not help looking at Maryanka, and when they addressed the girls, they turned to her in particular. She appeared as a proud and happy queen among the rest.

Byelétski endeavoured to maintain the decorum of the evening entertainment. He chattered without cessation, urged the girls to pass the wine, joked with them, and continually made improper remarks to Olénin in French about Maryanka's beauty, calling her "yours," la vôtre, and inviting him to follow his example. Olenin felt more oppressed. He was thinking of an excuse to walk out and run away, when Byelétski proclaimed that Ustenka, who was celebrating her name-day, should pass the wine with kisses. She consented, but with the condition that money should be placed on her plate, as tliis is done at weddings.

" The devil has brought me to tliis abominable feast ! " Olénin said to himself, and he arose, intending to leave.

" Where are you going ? "

" I want to fetch the tobacco," he said, intending to run, but Byelétski caught hold of his hand.

" I have some money," he said to him in French.

" There is no getting away ; I shall have to pay," Olénin thought, and he was annoyed at his awkwardness. " Why can't I do the same as Byelétski does ? I ought not to have come ; but having come, I ought not to spoil their pleasure. I must drink in Cossack fashion." Saying this, he seized a wooden bowl that contained about eight glasses, filled it with wine, and almost drained it. The girls looked at him in amazement and almost in terror, while he was drinking. Ustenka passed around one glass more to both of them, and kissed them.

" Girls, we will have a good time now," she said, jingling on her plate the four silver roubles which they had placed there.

Olénin was no longer ill at ease. He became talkative.

" Now, you, Maryanka, pass around the wine with kisses," said Byelétski, seizing her hand.

" That is the kind of kiss I will give you," she said, raising her hand in jest, as though to strike him.

" You may kiss the little grandfather without money," said another girl.

" You are a clever girl ! " said Byelétski, kissing the maiden, who was struggling to get away. " No, you pass the wine," insisted Byelétski, turning to Maryanka. " Pass it to your lodger ! "

He took her hand, led her up to the bench, and seated her at Olénin's side.

" What a beauty ' " he said, turning her head so as to show her profile.

Maryanka made no resistance, but, smiling proudly, surveyed Olenin with her wide eyes.

" She is a beauty ! " repeated Byelétski.

" Am I not a beauty ? " Maryanka's glance seemed to say. Without being conscious of what he was doing, Olénin embraced Maryanka, and was on the point of kissing her. She suddenly tore herself away, tripped up Byelétski, pulled things down from the table, and jumped to the oven. There were shouts and laughter. Byelétski whispered something to the girls, and suddenly they all rushed out of the room into the vestibule, and locked the door.

" Why did you kiss Byelétski, and won't kiss me ? " asked Olénin.

" I just don't want to, and that is all," she answered, twitching her lower lip and her brows. " He is the little grandfather," she added, smiling. She went up to the door and began to knock at it. " What did you lock it for, you devils ? "

" Well, let them be there, and we will stay here," said Olénin, approaching her.

She frowned, and pushed him sternly away from her.

And again she appeared to Olénin so majestic and beautiful that he came to his senses and felt ashamed of what he had done. He walked up to the door and tried to pull it open.

" Byelétski, open the door ! What stupid jokes !" Maryänka again laughed her bright, happy laugh.

" Are you afraid of me ? " she asked.

« You are just as cross as your mother. »

" You ought to sit more with Eroshka, then the girls would like you better," she said, smiling, and, walking up to him, looked him straight in the eyes.

He did not know what to say.

" And if I were to visit you ? " he said, suddenly.

" That would be different," she said, shaking her head.

Just then Byelétski pushed the door open, and Maryanka darted away from Olénin, and in doing so her hip struck his leg.

" It is all rubbish what I have been thinking heretofore about love, and self-renunciation, and Lukâshka. There is but one kind of happiness, and he who is happy is right." This thought flashed through Olénin's mind, and, with a force which he had not suspected in himself, he seized beautiful Maryänka, and kissed her temple and cheek. Maryanka did not become angry, but only burst out laughing, and ran out to the other girls.

The evening party ended with this. The old woman, Ustenka's mother, who had just returned from her field labour, scolded all the girls, and drove them away.

XXVI.

" Yes," thought Olénin, on his way home, " I only need to give myself free rein, in order to be desperately in love with this Cossack girl."

He went to bed with these feelings ; he thought that all this would

pass away, and he would return to his old life. But the old life did not return. His relations to Maryanka were changed. The wall which had separated them before was torn down. Olénin now exchanged greetings with her every time they met.

When the landlord arrived in order to receive the money for the lodgings, and learned of Olénin's wealth and liberality, he invited him to his house. The old woman received him kindly, and since the day of the evening entertainment Oléniu frequently went in to see them, and on these occasions stayed until night. Apparently his life in the village ran as of old, but in his heart everything had completely changed. He passed his days in the forest, but about eight o'clock, when it began to grow dark, he generally went over to the ensign's house, alone, or with Uncle Eroshka. The people became so accustomed to him that they wondered whenever he did not come.

He paid well for his wine, and was a peaceful man. Vanyusha would bring him his tea. He would seat himself in the corner near the oven. The old woman was not embarrassed by his presence, and went on with her work ; and they chatted over their tea and over their wine about Cossack affairs, about their neighbours, and about Russia, of which Olénin told them in reply to their questions.

At times he would take a book and read to himself. Maryanka, as wild as a goat, would draw up her feet and sit on the oven or in a dark corner. She did not take part in the conversation, but Olénin saw her eyes and face, heard her moving, and cracking seeds, and felt that she listened with all her being when he spoke, and he was conscious of her presence when he was reading in silence. At times it seemed to him that her eyes were directed upon him, and when he caught their sparkle, he involuntarily grew silent, and gazed upon her. Then she would hide herself, and he, pretending to be interested in his conversation with the old woman, listened to her breathing, to every motion of hers, and again awaited her glance. In the presence of others she generally was cheerful and pleasant to him, but when she was left alone with him, she grew incommunicative and rude. Sometimes he came to see them when Maryänka had not yet returned from the street ; suddenly her firm steps could be heard, and her blue chintz shirt flashed by the open door. She would walk into the middle of the room and notice his presence, – and a faint smile of recognition would appear on her lips, and he would be overcome by a sensation of happiness and terror.

He asked nothing, wished nothing of her, but with every day her presence became more and more a necessity to him.

Olénin became so accustomed to the life of the village, that the past appeared to him as something quite foreign, and the future, especially outside of the world he lived in, did not interest him at all. When he received letters from home, from relatives and friends, he felt aggrieved because they mourned him as a lost man, whereas he, in his village, regarded those as lost who did not lead the life he was leading. He was convinced that he should never regret his having torn himself away from his former life, and his living this

peculiar life in the seclusion of his village. He was happy in expeditions and in the fortresses ; but only here, under Uncle Erdshka's wing, in his forest, in his cabin on the outskirts of the village, but especially at the thought of Maryanka and Lukashka, he clearly discerned the whole lie of his former life, which had provoked him even there, but which only now appeared inexpressibly contemptible and ridiculous to him.

Here he felt himself each day more and more free, and more a man. The Caucasus presented itself to him quite differently from what he had imagined it to be. He had found nothing resembling all his dreams and all the descriptions of the Caucasus of which he had heard or read.

" There are here no chestnut steeds, no cataracts, no Amalat-beks, no heroes, and no brigands," he thought. " People live here as does Nature ; they die, they are born, they pair, again they are born, they fight, they drink, they eat, they have pleasure, and again they die, and there are no conditions, except those unchangeable ones which Nature has imposed upon the sun, the grass, the beasts, and the trees. They have no other laws."

For this very reason these people appeared to him, compared with himself, so beautiful, strong, and free, and gazing upon them, he felt ashamed of himself and sad. He often seriously considered throwing up everything, enrolling himself as a Cossack, buying a cabin and cattle, and marrying a Cossack maiden, – not Marydnka, whom he had renounced in favour of Lukashka, – and living with Uncle Erdshka, fishing and hunting with liim, and going on expeditions with the Cossacks.

" Why don't I do that ? What am I waiting for ? " he asked himself. And he egged himself on and put himself to shame: "Am I afraid to do that which I myself have found to be sensible and just? Is the desire to be a simple Cossack, to live close to Nature, to do no one any harm, but, on the contrary, to do people some good, – is the dream of all this more stupid than the dreams I used to have, – for example, to be a minister, or a general ? "

But a voice told him to wait, and not to be in a hurry. He was restrained by a dim consciousness that he could not live entirely Eroshka's and Lukashka's life, because his happiness was of a different nature, – he was restrained by the thought that happiness consisted in self-renunciation. His act toward Lukashka did not cease to give him pleasure. He continually searched for opportunities to sacrifice himself for others, but these opportunities did not present themselves. At times he forgot this newly discovered recipe for happiness, and considered himself capable of living entirely Eroshka's life ; but then he would suddenly come to his senses again, and cling once more to the thought of conscious self-renunciation, and on the basis of this thought he would calmly and proudly look upon all people and upon the happiness of others.

XXVII.

Before the vintage, Lukashka came on horseback to see Oldnin. He looked even more dashing than usual.

"Well, are you going to get married?" Olenin asked, giving him a warm reception.

Lukashka gave no direct answer.

" You see, I have swapped off your horse across the river. This is a horse ! It is a Kabarda horse from Lov's stud Tävro. I can tell a good horse."

They examined the new steed, and made him go through various evolutions in the yard. He was indeed an uncommonly good animal ; he was a bay gelding, broad and long, with the glossy hair, bushy tail, and soft, delicate mane and withers of a thoroughbred. He was so plump that one could go to sleep on his back, as Lukashka expressed it. His hoofs, eyes, and teeth were as delicate and sharply outlined as they only are in horses of the purest breed. Oldnin could not help admiring the horse. He had not seen such a beauty in the Caucasus.

" And how he rides ! " said Lukäshka, patting his neck. " What a canter ! And he is so intelligent ! He follows his master."

" Did you give much to boot ? " asked Oldnin.

" I did not count," replied Lukäshka, smiling. " I got it from a chum."

"It is a wonderfully fine horse! How much will you take for it ? " asked Olénin.

" I was offered one hundred and fifty roubles, but I will give him to you for nothing," Lukäshka said, merrily.

« Say the word, and you shall have him. I will take off the saddle, and you may take him."

« No, under no condition."

" Well, then I have brought you a memento," said Lukashka, ungirding himself, and taking down one of the two daggers that were stuck in the belt. « I got it beyond the river."

" Thank you ! "

"Mother told me she would herself bring you some grapes."

" That is not necessary, for we will square up accounts some day. I am not going to give you any money for it."

" How could that be among chums ? Giréy-khan, the one across the river, took me to his house, and told me to select any I pleased. So I took this sabre. Such is the custom among us."

They went into the room and took a drink.

"Well, are you going to stay here awhile?" asked Olénin.

" No, I have come to say farewell. They are sending me away from the cordon to a company beyond the Térék. I am leaving to-day with friend Nazärka."

" And when will the wedding be ? "

" I will soon come down here for the betrothal, and then back again to my duty," Lukashka replied, reluctantly.

" How is that ? Will you not go in to see your bride ? "

" No ! What's the use of looking at her ? When you are out on a campaign, ask at our company for Lukäshka the Broad. There are a lot of wild boars there ! I have killed two myself. I will show you the place."

" Well, good-bye ! Christ preserve you ! "

Lukäshka mounted his horse, and, without showing himself to Maryanka, made some evolutions as he rode out into the street, where Nazärka was already waiting for him.

« Well ? Sha'n't we go in ? " asked Nazarka, winking in the direction where Yamka lived.

"Here," said Lukdshka, "take my horse over to her place, and if I am not back for a long time, give him some hay. In the morning I will be in the company."

" Didn't the yunker give you another present ? "

"No ! I am glad I got off with a dagger, for he was beginning to ask for the horse," said Lukdshka, dismounting and turning the horse over to Nazarka.

He darted into the yard under Olenin's very window, and went up to the window of the ensign's cabin. It was quite dark. Maryanka, in nothing but her shirt, was combing her braid, previous to going to bed.

" It is I," whispered the Cossack.

Marydnka's face bore an austerely indifferent expression, but it suddenly grew animated the moment she heard her name. She raised the window, and leaned out of it, with an expression of fear and joy.

" What is it ? What do you want ? " she said.

" Open the door ! " said Lukashka. " Let me in for a little while! It is dreadfully dull without you!"

He took her head in his arms, through the window, and kissed it.

" Really, open the door ! "

" What is the use of speaking foolish things ! I told you I will not let you in. Are you here for long ? "

He did not answer, and only kept kissing her. And she was satisfied.

" You see, it is not so easy to hug you through the window," said Lukdshka.

" Maryanushka ! " was heard the old woman's voice. " Who is there with von ? "

Lukdshka took off his cap so as not to be recognized, and crouched under the window.

" Begone at once ! " whispered Marydnka.

" Lukashka was here," she replied to her mother. " He was asking for father."

" Well, send him here ! "

" He is gone. He said he had no time."

Indeed, Lukashka, bending down, ran with rapid steps from the window, and out of the yard, and away to Ydmka's; none but Olénin had seen him. After drinking about two bowls of wine, he and Nazdrka rode out of the village. The night was warm, dark, and calm. They rode in silence, and only the thud of the horses' hoofs was heard. Lukdshka started a song about Cossack Mingal, but, without finishing the first verse, he stopped and turned to Nazarka.

" You know she did not let me in ! " he said.

" Oh ! " exclaimed Nazarka. " I knew she would not let you in. Do you know what Ydmka told me ? She said the yunker is now keeping company with her. Uncle Erdshka was bragging that he got a fowling-piece from the yunker for getting him Maryanka."

" He is lying, the devil ! " Lukashka said, angrily. " She is not that kind of girl. But I will smash the ribs of the old devil," and he started his favourite song.

" From the village it was, from Izmâylovo,

From the well-loved garden of the nobleman, There a clear-eyed falcon from the garden flew ; And right after him a young huntsman rode, And the clear-eyed falcon to his right hand he called.

The clear-eyed falcon gave this answer:

' You did not know how to keep me in the golden cage,
Nor knew how to hold me in your right hand,
So now I will fly to the blue sea ;
There I myself will kill the white swan,
And of the swan's sweet flesh I will have my fill.' "

XXVIII.

The ensign was celebrating the betrothal. Lukashka was in the village, but did not call on Olénin. Olénin himself did not go to the celebration, to which the ensign had invited him. He felt sadder than he had felt since his arrival in the village. He saw Lukashka, in his best attire, walk in the evening with his mother to the ensign's, and he was tormented by the thought that Lukashka was cold to him. Olénin shut himself up in his room, and began to write his diary.

" I have thought much and changed much of late," wrote Olénin, "and I have reached the truth which is written in the ABC book. In order to be happy, I must do this one thing, - love, and love with self-renunciation, love all and everything, and spread on all sides the spiderweb of love : I must take all who fall into it. Thus I have taken Vanyusha, Uncle Eroshka, Lukashka, Maryanka."

As Olénin was finishing this sentence, Uncle Eréshka came in to see him. Eroshka was in the happiest frame of mind. When calling upon him one evening a few days before, Olénin found him in his yard engaged, with a happy and proud mien, in deftly flaying the carcass of a wild boar with a small knife. His dogs, and among them his favourite Lyam, were lying about, softly wagging their tails, and looking at his work. The urchins respectfully watched him from over the fence, and did not even tease him, as was their custom. The women of his neighbourhood, who were not as a rule especially kind to him, saluted him, and brought him, one a little jug of red wine, another some boiled cream, and a third some pastry. The next morning Eroshka was sitting in his shed, all covered with blood, and selling wild boar meat by the pound, either for money, or for wine. On his face it was written, " God has given me luck, and I have killed a wild boar; now everybody needs the uncle." In consequence of this he, naturally, took to drinking, and this was the fourth day of his spree, during which he had not left the village. In addition to this, he had been drinking at the betrothal.

Uncle Eréshka came away from the ensign's cabin dead drunk, with a flushed face, and dishevelled beard, but in a new red half-coat, embroidered with galloons, and with a gourd balalayka, which he had brought with him from across the river. He had long ago promised Olénin this pleasure, and was now in the proper mood for it. When he saw that Olénin was busy writing, he was disappointed.

" Write, write, my father," he said, in a whisper, as though supposing that a spirit was sitting between him and the paper, and, fearing to disturb him, he sat down noiselessly and softly on the floor. Olénin cast a look at him, ordered some wine, and continued to write. It was dull for Eréshka to drink alone. He wanted to chat.

" I have been to the betrothal at the ensign's. But they are swine ! I don't want them ! And so I came here."

"Where did you get that balalayka?" asked Olénin, continuing to write.

" I went across the river, my father, and got the balalayka," he said, in just as soft a voice. " I am a great hand at playing. I can play Tartar, Cossack, gentlemen's, soldiers' songs, any you may wish."

Olenin glanced at him a second time, smiled, and continued to write.

His smile encouraged the old man.

" Throw it away, my father ! Throw it away ! " he suddenly exclaimed, resolutely. " Well, suppose they have insulted you ! Give them up, spit at the whole affair ! What are you writing and writing for ? What sense is there ? "

And he mocked Olenin, tapping his stout fingers on the floor, and screwing his puffed-up face into a contemptuous grimace.

" What is the use of writing documents ? Celebrate, and you will be a fine fellow ! "

About writing his head could form no other conception than that it was for some dangerous pettifoggery.

Olénin burst out laughing, and so did Erdshka. He sprang up from the floor, and began to show off his art of playing his balaldyka and singing Tartar songs.

" What is the use writing, my good man ! You will do better to listen to what I will sing to you ! When you are dead, you will not hear any songs. Celebrate ! "

At first he sang a song of his own composition, with dancing accompaniment :

" A di-di-di-di-di-li, Did you see him? Where was he? In the market in a store, Selling pins by the score."

Then he sang a song which his former sergeant had taught him :

" On Monday in love I fell, All Tuesday I suffered woe, On Wednesday I to her did tell, On Thursday was no answer, though. On Friday came her reply, Not to wait for any joy. And on Saturday I swore That oil earth I'd live no more; But on Sunday changed my mind, - Cast my sorrow to the wind."

And again :

" A di-di-di-di-di-li,

Did you see him ? Where was he ? "

Then, winking, twitching his shoulders, and dancing, he sang :

" I will kiss thee, will embrace thee, With red ribbons will I lace thee, Hope I'll name thee, - hope to me ! Dost thou love me faithfully ? "

And he became so excited that he posed in dashing attitudes, playing his instruments all the while, and started whirling over the room.

" Di-di-li," and other gentlemen's songs he sang only for Olénin. Later in the evening, when he had drunk another three glasses of red wine, he recalled bygone days, and sang genuine Cossack and Tartar songs. In the middle of one of his favourite songs, his voice suddenly quivered, and he grew silent, continuing only to strum his balalâyka.

" Ah ! my dear friend ! " he said.

Olénin turned his eyes upon him, when he heard the strange sound of his voice: the old man was weeping. Tears stood in his eyes, and one tear trickled down his cheek.

" Gone is my youth, it will never return," he said, sobbing, and grew silent. " Drink ! Why don't you drink ? " he suddenly shouted, in his deafening voice, without wiping away his tears.

He was stirred more especially by a mountain song. There were but few words in it, and the whole charm consisted in the melancholy refrain, " Ay ! Day ? Dalalay ! " Erdshka translated the words of the song :

" The young brave took his plunder from the village into the mountain ; the Russians came, burnt the village, killed all the men, and took all the women prisoners.

The young brave returned from the mountains : where the village had been was a waste ; his mother was not ; his brothers were not ; his

house was not ; one tree alone was standing. The brave sat down under the tree and wept : ' Alone, like thee, alone am I left ! ' and the brave began to sing, ' Ay ! Day ! Dalalay ! ' "

And this moaning, heartrending refrain the old man repeated several times.

Having finished the last refrain, Eroshka suddenly seized the gun from the wall, darted out into the yard, and fired off both barrels into the air. And he sang again, more mournfully still, "Ay! Day! Dalalay a-a! " and stopped.

Olénin had followed him out on the porch, and was silently gazing at the dark, starry heaven, in the direction where the fire from the gun had flashed. The ensign's house was lighted up, and voices were heard there. In the yard a bevy of girls were crowding near the porch and the windows, and running from the dairy to the vestibule. A few Cossacks rushed out of the vestibule and, unable to restrain themselves, gave the war-cry, to express their approbation of Uncle Erdshka's refrain and shots.

" Why are you not at the betrothal ? " asked Olénin.

" God be with them ! God be with them ! " said the old man, who had evidently been offended there in some manner. " I do not like them ! I do not like them ! Ah, what a people ! Let us go into the room ! They are celebrating by themselves, and we by ourselves."

Olénin returned to his room.

" Well, and is Lukdshka happy ? Will he not come to see me ? " he asked.

" Lukéshka ? People have told him a lie : they have told him that I had brought the girl to you," said the old man, in a whisper. " The girl ? She will be ours, if we want her ; give more money, and she will be ours ! I will do it for you, truly I will."

" No, uncle, money will not accomplish anything, if she does not love. You had better not speak of it."

" We are both disliked, – we are orphans," suddenly said Uncle Eroshka, and again burst into tears.

Olenin drank more than usual, while listening to the old man's stories.

" Now, my Lukäshka is happy," he thought ; but he was sad. The old man was so drunk that evening that he fell down on the floor, and Vanyusha had to call in the aid of some soldiers, and then use all his strength to drag him out. He was so furious at the old man for his bad behaviour that he did not say anything in French.

XXIX.

It was the month of August. For several days in succession there had not been a cloud in the sky. The sun's heat was intolerable, and from early morning blew a hot wind, raising clouds of burning sand from the dunes and the roads, and carrying it in the air over the reeds, trees, and villages. The grass and the leaves of the trees were covered with dust ; the roads and salt marshes were dry, and sounded hollow when trod upon. The water in the Terek had been low for a long time, and it rapidly disappeared and dried up in the ditches. The miry shore of the pond near the village, all trampled up by the cattle, looked bare, and the whole day long could be heard the splashing and shouting of the boys and girls in the water.

In the steppe the dunes and reeds were drying up, and the cattle, lowing during the day, ran away into the fields. The wild animals had wandered away into distant reeds, and into the mountains beyond the Terek. Gnats and little flies hovered in swarms over the lowlands and villages. The snow-capped mountains were shrouded in gray mist. The air was rare and ill-smelling. Abréks were said to have forded the shoaling river, and to be galloping on this side. The sun set each evening in a fiery red glow.

It was the busiest time of the year. The whole population of the villages swarmed in the melon fields and in the vineyards. The gardens were wildly overgrown with twining verdure that afforded a cool, dense shade. From all sides could be seen the heavy clusters of ripe black grapes amidst the broad sunlit leaves. Over the dusty roads, which led to the gardens, slowly proceeded the squeaking ox-carts, loaded to the top with the black grapes. On the dusty road lay clusters that were crushed by the wheels. Little boys and girls, in shirts soiled with grape-juice, ran after their mothers, with bunches in their hands and mouths. On the road one constantly met ragged labourers, carrying on their powerful shoulders wicker baskets full of grapes.

Girls, wrapped in kerchiefs up to the eyes, led the oxen that were hitched to the heavily laden carts. Soldiers, meeting the Cossack girls, asked them for some grapes, and they, climbing upon the carts, while they were in motion, would take large handfuls and throw them into the soldiers' outstretched coat flaps.

In some yards they were already pressing the grapes. The air was redolent with the grape-skins. Blood-red troughs could be seen under the sheds, and Nogay labourers, with their trouser legs rolled up and their calves stained, were to be seen in the yards. The pigs snorted as they feasted on the skins, and wallowed in them. The flat roofs of the dairies were thickly covered with dark, amber clusters drying in the sun. Crows and magpies, picking up the seeds, pressed close to the roofs, and flitted from place to place.

The fruits of the year's labours were joyfully gathered, and the fruit of the year's harvest was uncommonly abundant and good.

In the shady green vineyards, amidst a sea of grapevines, on all sides sounded laughter, songs, merriment, feminine voices, and flashed by the bright, coloured dresses of women.

Precisely at noon, Maryanka was sitting in her garden, in the shade of a peach-tree, and taking out a dinner for the family from the unhitched cart. In front of her, the ensign, who had returned from his school, was sitting on a horse-blanket that was spread on the ground, and washing his hands by pouring water upon them from a small pitcher. Her little brother, who had just come up from the pond, and was wiping his face with his sleeves, was restlessly watching his sister and his mother, in expectation of the dinner, and panting heavily.

The old mother, with sleeves rolled up over her sunburnt arms, was placing grapes, dried fish, boiled cream, and bread on a low, round Tartar table. Having wiped his hands, the ensign doffed his cap, made the sign of the cross, and moved up to the table. The boy grasped the pitcher and began to drink eagerly. The mother and the daughter, drawing their feet under them, sat down at the table.

But the heat was also insufferable in the shade. There was a stench in the air over the garden. The strong, warm wind, which blew through the branches, did not bring any freshness, but only monotonously waved the tops of the pear, peach, and mulberry trees that were scattered through the gardens. The ensign, having said another prayer, brought out from behind his back a jug of red wine that was covered with a grape-vine leaf, and having drunk from the mouth of it, handed it to the old woman. The ensign wore nothing but his shirt, which was open at the neck and disclosed his muscular and hairy chest. His thin, cunning face was cheerful. Neither his attitude nor his speech betrayed his customary shrewdness : he was happy and natural.

" Shall we finish up with the strip behind the shed this evening?" he asked, wiping his wet beard.

" We shall, if only the weather will hold. The Démkins have not yet harvested one-half," she added. " Ūstenka alone is working, and she is killing herself."

" What else did you expect ? " the old man said, proudly.

" Here, take a drink, Maryanushka ! " said the old woman, passing the jug to the girl. " Now, if God will grant it, we shall have the money with which to celebrate your wedding," said the old woman.

" That's ahead yet," said the ensign, slightly frowning.

The girl lowered her head.

" But why not speak of it ? " said the old woman. " The affair has been settled, and the time is not far off."

" Don't talk of the future," again said the ensign. " Now is the time for harvesting."

" Have you seen Lukâshka's new horse ? " asked the old woman. " The one Dmitri Andréévich had given him, he has no longer; he has swapped him off."

" No, I have not seen him. I have been talking today with the lodger's servant," said the ensign. " He says he has again received a thousand roubles."

" A rich man, in short," the old woman confirmed his statement.

The whole family was happy and contented.

The work proceeded satisfactorily. There was a greater abundance of grapes than usual, and they were better than they had expected.

Having eaten her dinner, Maryanka gave the oxen some grass, folded her half-coat under her head, and lay down under the cart, on the trampled, succulent grass. She was clad in nothing but a red silk kerchief on her head, and a faded blue chintz shirt ; but she felt intolerably hot. Her face was burning ; her legs moved restlessly ; her eyes were covered with a film of sleep and weariness; her lips opened involuntarily, and her breast heaved high and heavily.

The harvest-time had begun two weeks ago, and the hard, uninterrupted work had occupied all the life of the young girl. She jumped up from bed with the dawn, washed her face in cold water, wrapped herself with a kerchief, and ran barefooted to the cattle. She hastily put on her shoes and her half-coat, and, tying some bread ju a bundle, hitched the oxen, and went for the whole day to the vineyard. There she rested but one hour; she cut the grapes and carried the baskets, and in the evening, merry and not at all tired, she returned to the village, leading the oxen by a rope, and urging them on with a long stick. After housing the cattle in the twilight, she filled her -wide shirt-sleeve with seeds, and went to the corner to laugh with the girls. But the moment the evening glow gave place to darkness, she walked back to the house, and, having eaten her supper in the dark dairy, with her father, her mother, and her little brother, she walked into the room, free from cares and healthy, and seated herself on the oven and, half-dozing, listened to the lodger's conversation. The moment he left, she threw herself down on the bed, and slept until morning a quiet, sound sleep. The next day was the same. She had not seen Lukashka since the betrothal, and she quietly awaited the day of her wedding. She was now accustomed to the lodger, and it gave her pleasure to feel his steady glance resting upon her.

Though it was impossible to find a comfortable place in the heat, and the gnats were circling in swarms in the cool shade of the cart, and the boy, tossing, kept pushing her, Maryânka drew her kerchief over her head, and was going to sleep, when Ustenka, her neighbour, suddenly came running to her and, darting under the cart, lay down alongside her.

"Now, sleep, girls, sleep!" said Ustenka, finding a place under the cart. "Hold on," she exclaimed, "that will not do ! "

She jumped up, broke off some green branches, placed them against the wheels of the cart, and threw a half-coat over them.

"Let me in," she called out to the little boy, again crawling under the cart. "Cossacks ought not to stay with the girls ! Go ! "

When Ustenka was left all alone with her friend under the cart, she suddenly began to hug Maryanka with both her arms, and, pressing close to her, began to kiss her cheeks and neck.

" My dear one ! My sweetheart ! " she said, breaking out into her delicate, ringing laughter.

" I declare, you have learned this from the little grandfather," replied Maryanka, warding her off. " Come, stop it!"

And both of them burst out laughing so that the mother scolded them.

" Are you jealous ? " Ustenka said, in a whisper.

" Don't talk nonsense ! Let me sleep ! What did you come for ? "

But Ustenka would not quiet down.

" I want to tell you something ! "

Maryanka raised herself on her elbow, and adjusted the kerchief that had slipped down.

" What is it ? "

" I know something about your lodger."

" There is nothing to know," replied Maryanka.

" You are a sly girl ! " said Ustenka, nudging her with her elbow, and laughing. " Won't you tell me anything ? Does he come to see you ? "

" Yes. What of it ? " said Maryanka, suddenly blushing.

" Now, I am a simple girl, and will tell everybody. Why should I hide it?" said Ustenka, and her gay, ruddy face assumed a pensive

expression. " Am I doing anybody any harm ? I love him, that's all !
"

" The little grandfather, you mean ? "

" Yes."

" That is sinful ! " replied Maryanka.

" O Maryanka ! When is one to have a good time, if not while one has a girl's freedom ? When I marry a Cossack, I shall begin bearing children, and know what cares are. Now, you just marry Lukashka, then you won't have joy in your mind ; but there will be children, and work."

" What of it ? Some are quite happy when married. It does not make much difference ! " Maryanka answered, calmly.

" Do tell me, what has there been between you and Lukashka ? "

" What ? He sent go-betweens. Father put it off for a year; but there has been a betrothal, and in the autumn I am to be married."

" What did he say to you ? "

Maryanka smiled.

" What they always say. He said he loved me ! He kept asking me to go to the garden with him."

" Just like pitch ! I guess you did not go ! What a fine fellow he is now ! A first-class brave ! He is all the time celebrating at the company. The other day our Kirka came down, and told me what a horse he had swapped off! I suppose he feels lonely for you. What else did he say ? " Ustenka asked Maryanka.

" You want to know everything," laughed Maryanka. " He once rode up in the night to the window, - he was drunk. He asked me to let him in."

" Well, and you did not let him in ? "

" Let him in ! When I once say no, that's the end of it ! I am as firm as a rock," Maryanka replied, seriously.

" He is a fine fellow ! Let him only want it, and no girl will disdain him ! "

" Let him go to other girls," Maryanka answered, proudly.

" Are you not sorry for him ? "

" I am, but I will commit no folly. That is wrong."

Ûstenka suddenly lowered her head on her friend's breast, embraced her with both her hands, and shook with laughter that was choking her.

" You are a stupid fool ! " she said, out of breath. " You do not want any happiness," and again she began to tickle Maryanka.

" Oh, stop ! " said Marydnka, screaming through her laughter. " You have crushed Lazutka."

" Just look at the devils ! What fun I Stop it ! " was heard the drowsy voice of the old woman beyond the cart.

" You do not want any happiness," repeated Ûstenka, in a whisper, half sitting up. " And you are a lucky girl, upon my word ! How you are loved ! You are pockmarked, but you are loved. Ah, if I were in your place, I would twist that lodger around my little linger ! I watched him when you were at our house ; he looked as though he would eat you with his eyes. My little grandfather has given me a lot of things ! But yours, you know, is the richest among the Russians. His orderly said that they had serfs of their own."

Maryanka arose, and smiled, pensively.

" This is what he, the lodger, once told me," she said, biting a blade of grass. " He said, ' I should like to be Cossack Lukashka, or your little brother, Lazutka.' What did he say that for ? "

« He was just saying anything that came into his head," replied Ustenka. " Mine does say such a lot of things ! Like a crazy man ! "

Maryanka fell with her head on the folded half-coat, threw her arm around Ustenka's shoulder, and closed her eyes.

" He wanted to come to-day to the vineyard to work. Father invited him," she said, after a moment's silence, and fell asleep.

XXXI.

The sun had now come out from behind the pear-tree that shaded the cart, and, with its slanting rays that passed through the arbour which Ustenka had built, burnt the faces of the girls who were sleeping under the cart. Maryanka awoke, and began to arrange her kerchief. As she looked around, she saw the lodger beyond the pear-tree, standing with his gun on his shoulder and speaking with her father. She gave Ustenka a push, and, smiling, pointed silently to him.

" I went out yesterday, but did not find one," said Olénin, restlessly looking all about him, but not discovering Maryanka behind the branches.

"You had better go to that district, which you will reach by going along the circumference ; there, in the neglected garden, which is called a wilderness, you will always find some hares," said the ensign, at once changing his language.

" Who would think of hunting the hare in vintage time ! You would do better if you came to help us ! Come and work with the girls ! " said the old woman. " Come now, girls, get up!" she cried.

Maryanka and Ustenka were whispering to each other, and could not keep from laughing under the cart.

Ever since it had become known that Olénin had presented Lukashka with a horse worth fifty roubles, the ensign and his wife had been more friendly to him ; the ensign, in particular, was pleased with his closer friendship with his daughter.

" I do not know how to work," said Olénin, trying not to look through the green branches under the cart, where he had espied Maryanka's blue shirt and red kerchief.

" Come along, I will give you some peaches," said the old woman.

" As is the old Cossack hospitality, and mere woman's foolishness," said the ensign, explaining and, as it were, correcting the words of the old woman. " In Russia, I suppose, you have eaten for your pleasure not so much peaches as pineapple preserves and jams."

" So there are some hares in the neglected garden ? " asked Olénin. " I will go down there," and, casting a cursory glance through the green branches, he lifted his cap and disappeared between the regular green rows of the vineyard.

The sun was hidden behind the enclosures of the gardens, and its scattered rays were gleaming through the translucent leaves, when Olénin returned to the ensign's vineyard. The wind had subsided, and a fresh coolness was wafted through the vineyards. Even from a distance Olénin instinctively recognized Maryanka's blue shirt through the rows of the grape-vines, and, picking off grapes, he walked up to her. His panting dog also now and then tore off a low hanging bunch with his dripping mouth. With flushed face, rolled up sleeves, and the kerchief falling below her chin, Maryanka deftly cut the heavy clusters and laid them down in wicker baskets. Without letting the vine, which she was holding, out of her hands, she stopped, smiled graciously, and again went to work. Olénin went up to her, and slung his gun over his back, so as to have his hands free.

" Where are your people ? God aid you ! Are you alone ? " was what he wanted to say, but he said nothing, and only raised his cap. He did not feel at ease when he was left alone with Maryanka, but he walked over to her, as though to torment himself.

"You will kill a woman yet, carrying the gun that way," Maryanka said.

"No, I won't ! "

They were both silent.

" You had better help me."

He drew out his pocket-knife and began to cut off the clusters in silence. He fetched out from underneath some leaves a heavy, solid bunch, weighing about three pounds, in which the grapes were crowding each other into flattened shapes, and he showed it to Maryanka.

" Shall I cut them all ? This one is still green."

" Give it to me ! "

Their hands met. Olénin took hers, and she glanced at him, smiling.

" Well, so you are going to get married soon? " he said.

She did not answer, but, turning away from him, gave him a stern look from her eyes.

" Do you love Lukashka ? "

" What is that to you ? "

" I am jealous."

« What of it ? "

" Really, you are such a beauty ! "

And he suddenly had terrible scruples for having said it. His words, he thought, sounded so detestable. He flushed, lost his composure, and took both her hands.

" Such as I am, I am not for you ! What are you laughing about ? " replied Maryanka, but her glance showed conclusively that she knew he was not laughing.

" Laughing ? If you only knew how I - "

His words sounded even more detestable, and less in accord with his feelings ; but he continued, " I can't tell what I should be willing to do for you - "

" Keep away, you stick to me like pitch."

But her face, her sparkling eyes, her swelling bosom, her shapely legs, said something quite different. It seemed to him that she

understood perfectly how detestable every-

thing was that he had said, but that she was above all such considerations ; it seemed to him that she had long known all he wished to say, but could not, and that she only wanted to know how he would say it all. And how could she help knowing it, since he wished to tell her all she herself was ? " She does not want to understand, she does not want to answer," he thought.

" Hallo ! " suddenly was heard, not far beyond the vineyard, Ustenka's thin voice and her delicate laughter. " Come, Dmitri Andréevich, and help me ! I am all alone ! " she cried to Olénin, thrusting her round, naïve little face through the leaves.

Olénin did not answer, nor stir from the spot.

Maryanka continued to cut the clusters, but constantly gazed at the lodger. He began to say something, but stopped, shrugged his shoulders, and, shouldering his gun, walked out of the garden with rapid strides.

XXXII.

Once or twice he stopped to listen to the ringing laughter of Maryanka and Ustenka, who, having come together, were shouting something. Olénin passed the whole evening hunting in the woods. He did not bag anything, and returned home after dark. As he crossed the yard, he noticed the open door of the dairy, and the blue shirt flashing by within. He called unusually loud to Vanyusha, to let his arrival be known, and seated himself in his customary place on the porch. The ensign and his wife had already returned from the vineyard ; they came out of the dairy, walked over to their cabin, but did not invite him in.

Maryanka went twice out of the gate. Once, in a half-light, he thought she looked back at him. He eagerly followed every motion of hers, but could not make up his mind to walk up to her. When she had disappeared in the cabin, he descended from the porch, and began to pace the yard. But Maryanka did not come out again.

Olénin passed a sleepless night in the yard, listening to every sound in the ensign's cabin. He heard them talking in the evening, then eating their supper, and taking out the cushions, and lying down to sleep; he heard Maryanka laughing at something, and then he heard how all the noises died down. The ensign said something in a whisper to his wife, and somebody breathed heavily.

He went to his room. Vanyusha was sleeping, with-

out being undressed. Olénin envied him, and again went out promenading in the yard, all the time waiting for something ; but nobody came, nobody stirred ; he could hear only the even breathing

of three people. He could tell Maryanka's breathing, and he listened to it, and to the thudding of his own heart. Everything was quiet in the village ; the late moon had risen, and he could discern the cattle that were panting in the yards, now lying down, and now slowly getting up.

Olénin asked himself, in anger, " What do I want ? " and could not tear himself away from the enticement of the night. Suddenly he heard distinct steps, and the creaking of the floor in the ensign's cabin. He rushed to the door; and again nothing was heard but the even breathing; and again, after drawing a deep breath, the buffalo turned around, rose on her fore legs, then got completely up, switched her tail, and something splashed evenly on the dry clay of the yard, and again she lay down, with a groan, in the glamour of the moon -

He asked himself, " What am I to do ? " and took his final resolve to go to bed ; but some sounds were heard again, and in his imagination rose the image of Maryänka, walking out into the misty moonlit night, and again he rushed to the window, and again steps were heard. Just before daybreak he walked over to the window, pushed the shutter, ran up to the door, and indeed heard Maryanka's deep breath and steps. He took hold of the latch, and knocked. Cautious, bare feet, hardly causing the deals to creak, approached the door. The latch was moved, the door creaked, an odour of wild marjoram and pumpkins was wafted to him, and Maryanka's whole figure appeared on the threshold. He saw her but a moment in the moonlight. She slammed the door, and, saying something under her breath, ran back with light steps. Olénin began lightly to tap on the door, but there was no answer. He ran up to the window and listened. Suddenly he was struck by a shrill, whining voice.

" Glorious ! " said an undersized Cossack in a white lambskin cap, walking close up to Olénin from the yard. " I have seen it all ! Glorious ! "

Olénin recognized Nazärka and was silent, not knowing what to do, or say.

" Glorious ! I will go to the village office to report the matter, and I will tell her father, too. A fine ensign's daughter ! She is not satisfied with one."

" What do you want of me ? What do you want ? " said Olénin.

" Nothing ! All I mil do is to report at the office."

Nazärka spoke in a very loud voice, evidently on purpose.

" I declare, you are a clever yunker ! "

Olénin trembled and was pale.

" Come here, here ! "

He clutched his hand, and led him up to his cabin.

" There was nothing. She did not let me in, and I did nothing – She is virtuous – "

" Well, let them settle the matter," said Nazärka.

" I will give you something all the same – Just wait ! "

Nazärka was silent. Olénin ran into his cabin, and brought out ten roubles for the Cossack.

" There has been nothing the matter, but I am to blame, nevertheless ; so I give you this ! Only, for God's sake, tell nobody ! Nothing has happened – "

" Farewell," said Nazärka, smiling, and went away.

Nazärka had come that night to the village, by Lu-käshka's order, to find a place for a stolen horse, and, on his way home, heard the sound of steps. He returned the next morning to the company, and, boasting, told Ins chum how cleverly he had procured ten roubles. The next morning Olénin called at the ensign's, and no one knew anything. He did not speak with Maryänka, and she only smiled, looking at him. He again passed a sleepless night, pacing the yard in vain. The following day he purposely passed in the woods hunting, and in the evening he went to Byelétski's, to run away from himself. He was afraid of himself, and swore he would not call again at the ensign's. The following night Olénin was wakened by the sergeant. The company was to make an incursion at once. Olénin was rejoiced at this incident, and was making up his mind never again to return to the village.

The incursion lasted four days. The chief desired to see Olénin, to whom he was related, and offered him a place on the staff. Olénin declined it. He could not live away from the village, and asked to be sent back. For his work during the campaign he received a soldier's cross, for which he had been hankering before ; but now he was quite indifferent to this decoration, and still more indifferent about his advancement to the rank of a regular officer, which was still late in coming. He rode with Vanyusha down to the line, without meeting with any mishap, and by several hours got the start of his company. Olénin passed the whole evening on the porch, looking at Maryanka. The whole night he again aimlessly and thoughtlessly paced the yard.

XXXIII.

The next morning Olénin awoke late. The ensign's family was gone. He did not go hunting ; he now picked up a book, and now walked out on

the porch, and again walked into the room, and lay down on the bed. Vanyusha thought he was ill. In the evening Olénin arose with a full determination, took up a pen, and wrote until late into the night. He wrote a letter, but did not send it off, because no one would have understood what he wanted to say, nor was there any reason why any one but Olénin should have understood it. This is what he wrote :

" I receive from Russia letters of sympathy ; people are afraid that I will perish in the wilderness, where I have buried myself. They say of me : ' He will lose his polish, will fall behind in everything, will take to drinking, and, what is worse, will probably marry a Cossack woman. There was good reason,' they say, ' for Ermolov to have remarked that he who had served ten years in the Caucasus would either become a confirmed drunkard, or would marry a dissolute woman. How terrible ! ' Indeed, they are afraid lest I should ruin myself, whereas it might have been my lot to have the great fortune of becoming the husband of Countess B----, a chamberlain, or a marshal

of the nobility. How contemptible and pitiable you all appear to me! You do not know what happiness nor what life is ! You have first to taste life in all its artless beauty ; you must see and understand what I see before me each day : the eternal, inaccessible snows of the moun-

tains, and majestic woman in her pristine beauty, as the first woman must have issued from the hands of her Creator, - and then it will be clear who it is that is being ruined, and who lives according to the truth, you or I.

" If you only knew how detestable and pitiable you are to me in your delusions ! The moment there rise before me, instead of my cabin, my forest, and my love, those drawing-rooms, those women with pomaded hair, through which the false locks appear, those unnaturally lisping lips, those concealed and distorted limbs, and that prattle of the drawing-rooms, which pretends to be conversation, but has no right to be called so, - an insufferable feeling of disgust comes over me. I see before me those dull faces, those rich, marriageable girls, with an expression on the face which says, ' That's all right, you may - Just come up to me, even though I am a rich, marriageable girl; ' that sitting down and changing of places ; that impudent pairing of people, and that never ending gossip and hypocrisy ; those rules - to this one your hand, to that one a nod, and with that one a chat ; and finally, that eternal ennui in the blood, which passes from generation to generation (and consciously at that, with the conviction of its necessity). You must understand, or believe it. You must see and grasp what truth and beauty are, and everything which you say and think, all your wishes for your own happiness and for mine, will be dispersed to the winds. Happiness consists in being with Nature, in seeing it, and holding converse with it. ' The Lord preserve him, but he will, no doubt, marry a Cossack woman, and will be entirely lost to society,' I imagine them saying about me, with genuine compassion, whereas it is precisely

this that I wish : to be entirely lost, in your sense of the word, and to marry a simple Cossack woman ; I dare not do it, because that would be the acme of happiness, of which I am unworthy.

manner. At times she has been gracious, but for the most part every glance, every word, every motion of hers, has expressed the same, not contemptuous, but repressive and enticing indifference.

" Each day I tried, with a feigning smile on my lips, to dissemble, and, with the torment of passion and of desires in my heart, I spoke jestingly to her. But she saw that I was dissembling, and yet looked gaily and simply at me. This situation grew intolerable to me. I did not wish to lie before her, and wanted to tell her everything I thought and everything I felt. I was very much excited ; that was in the vineyard. I began to tell her of my love, in words that I am ashamed to recall. I am ashamed to think of them, because I ought never to have dared to tell her that, and because she stood immeasurably above the words and above the feeling which I had intended to express to her. I grew silent, and since that day my situation has been insufferable. I did not wish to lower myself, by persisting in the former jocular relations, and I was conscious that I was not yet ripe for straightforward, simple relations with her. I asked myself in despair, ' What shall I do ? '

" In my preposterous dreams I imagined her, now as my mistress, and now as my wife, and I repelled both thoughts in disgust. It would be terrible to make a mis-tress of her. It would be a murder. And it would be still worse to make a lady of her, the wife of Dmitri Andréevich Olénin, as one of our officers has made a lady of a Cossack girl of this place, whom he has married. If I could turn Cossack, become a Lukëshka, steal herds of horses, fill myself with red wine, troll songs, kill people, and when drunk climb through the window to pass the night with her, without asking myself who I am and why I am, – it would be a different matter ; then we could understand each other, and I might be happy.

" I tried to abandon myself to such a life, but it made me only feel more strongly my weakness, my contorted existence. I could not forget myself and my composite, inharmonious, monstrous past. And my future presents itself to me still more disconsolately. Each day the distant snow-capped mountains and that majestic, happy woman are before me. But not for me is the only possible happiness in the world ; not for me is this woman !

" Most terrible and sweetest to me, in my situation, was the consciousness that I understood her, while she would never understand me. She will not understand me, not because she stands below me, but she never ought to understand me. She is happy ; she is like Nature, – even, calm, and herself. But I, weak, contorted creature, want her to understand my unnaturalness and my suffering.

" I have passed sleepless nights, and aimlessly stood under her windows, without giving myself an account of what was going on within me. On the 18th, our company was called out to make an

incursion. I passed three days outside the village. I was melancholy, and nothing interested me. The songs, the card-playing, the drinking bouts, the conversations about rewards in the detachment, were more loathsome to me than ever. I returned home to-day ; I saw her, my cabin, Uncle Eroshka, and the snow-capped mountains from my porch, and I was seized by such a strong and novel feeling of joy, that I understood everything. I love that woman with a real love ; I love for the first and only time in my life. I know what the matter with me is. I am not afraid to lower myself through my sentiment, am not ashamed of my love, but proud of it.

" It is not my fault that I have fallen in love. It happened against my will. I took refuge from my love in self-renunciation ; I made myself believe that I took delight in the love of the Cossack Lukashka for Maryanka, and I only fanned my love and my jealousy. This is not an ideal, a so-called exalted love, which I had experienced heretofore ; not that feeling of transport, when a person contemplates his love, feels within him the source of his sentiment, and does everything himself. I have experienced that also. This is even less a desire for enjoyment,— it is something else. Maybe in her I love Nature, the personification of everything beautiful in Nature ; but I have not my own will, and through me an elementary force loves her, and the whole world, all Nature, impresses this love upon my soul, and says to me, ' Love ! ' I love her not with my mind, not with my imagination, but with my whole being. Loving her, I feel myself an inseparable part of the whole blissful world of the Lord.

" I have written you before about my new convictions, which I had carried away from my solitary life ; but nobody can know with what labour they were worked out within me, with what delight I hailed them, and how happy I was to see the new path of life open to me. There was nothing more precious to me than these convictions — Well — love came, and they are gone, and not even the regrets for them are left ! It is even difficult for me to grasp how I could have been carried away by such a cold, one-sided, mental mood. Beauty came, and all the monumental labour of the mind is scattered to the winds. I have not even any regrets for what has passed away !

" Self-renunciation is nonsense, wild rambling. It is nothing but pride, a refuge from a well-deserved misfortune, a salvation from envying another's happiness. To live for others, to do good ! Wherefore ? When my soul is filled with the one love of myself, and with the one desire to love her, and live with her, to live her life. I now wish happiness, not for others, not for Lukashka. Now I do not love these others. Formerly I should have said that this is bad. I should have tormented myself with the questions, ' What will become of her, of me, of Lukashka ? ' Now it is all the same to me. I live not in myself, but there is something stronger than myself that guides me. I suffer; but formerly I was dead, and now only I live. I will call on them to-day, and will tell her everything."

XXXIV.

Having finished the letter, Olénin went late in the evening to the ensign's cabin. The old woman was sitting on a bench behind the oven, unravelling cocoons. Maryanka, with bared head, was sewing by candle-light. When she saw Olénin, she sprang up, took her kerchief, and went up to the oven.

" Stay with us, Maryanushka," said her mother.

" No, I am bareheaded." And she leaped upon the oven.

Olénin saw only her knees and her shapely legs that were hanging down. He treated the old woman to tea, and she treated her guest to boiled cream, for which she sent Marydnka. Having placed the plate on the table, Maryanka again leaped upon the oven, and Olénin was conscious only of her glance. They were speaking of house matters. Mother Uhtka unbosomed herself, and was in a mood of hospitality. She brought Olénin grape preserves, grape cake, and the best wine, and she began to treat him with that peculiar, plebeian, coarse, and proud hospitality which is found only among people who earn their bread by physical labour. The old woman, who at first had impressed Olénin with her coarseness, now frequently touched him by her simple tenderness in relation to her daughter.

"We need not complain, dear sir! We have everything, thank God ! We have pressed some wine, and have preserved some, and we shall be able to sell three barrels or more of grapes, and there will be enough left to drink. Don't be in a hurry to leave us ! We will have you celebrate with us at the wedding."

« When will the wedding be ? » asked Olénin, feeling all his blood rush to his face, and his heart beating with an' uneven and painful motion.

There was a stir behind the oven, and the cracking of pumpkin seeds was heard.

" Well, we ought to celebrate it next week. We are ready," replied the old woman, in a quiet, straightforward manner, as though Olénin were not there, or had never existed. " I have got everything together for Maryanushka. We will give her a nice trousseau. Only this is bad : our Lukashka has been a little wild of late. He is carrying on too much ! He is wild ! The other day a Cossack returned from the company, and told us that Lukdashka had been to the Nogfiy country."

" He might get caught," said Olénin.

" That's what I say : ' You, Lukashka, don't be so wild ! ' Of course, he is a young fellow, and he wants to show off. But there is a time for everything. Well, suppose he has driven off some cattle, has stolen, has killed an abrék, – a fine fellow ! It is time to

live a peaceable life ; but this will not do."

"Yes, I saw him once or twice at the front, – he is taking it easy. And then he has sold his horse," said Olénin, glancing at the oven.

A pair of large black eyes gleamed at him sternly and malevolently. He was sorry for what he had said.

" Well ! He is doing no one any harm," suddenly said Maryanka. "He is celebrating with his own money," and letting down her feet, she leaped from the oven and went out, slamming the door.

Olénin followed her out with his eyes ; then he looked out into the yard, and waited, not listening to what Mother Ulitka was telling him. A few minutes later guests entered: an old man, Mother Ulitka's brother, Uncle Eréshka, and soon after, Maryanka, with Ūstenka.

" Good evening," Ūstenka squeaked. " Are you still celebrating ? " she said, turning to Olénin.

" Yes, I am," he answered, and for some reason he felt ashamed and ill at ease.

He wanted to go away, and could not. Equally, it seemed impossible to him to keep silent. The old man helped him out: he asked for something to drink, and they drank together. Then Olénin had some wine with Eroshka. Then with the other Cossack. Then again with Erdshka. And the more he drank, the heavier his heart felt. The old men drank without cessation. The two girls climbed on the oven, where they giggled, looking at the men, who drank until late into the night. Olénin did not speak, but drank more than the rest. The Cossacks were getting noisy. The old woman told them to go, and refused to give them more wine. The girls made fun of Uncle Eroshka; it was ten o'clock when they all went out on the porch. The old men invited themselves to end the night in a drinking bout at Olénin's. Ūstenka ran away home. Eréshka took the Cossack over to Vanyusha. The old woman went to straighten out things in the dairy. Maryanka was left alone in the room. Olénin felt fresh and brisk, as though he had just awakened. He took in the situation, and, letting the old men go ahead, returned to the room. Maryanka was getting ready to go to sleep. He went up to her, and wished to say something to her, but his voice broke. She sat down on her bed, drew her feet under her, moved away from him into the corner, and looked at him in silence, with a terrified, wild glance. She was evidently afraid of him. Olénin felt it. He was both sorry and ashamed, but, at the same time, felt a proud pleasure for having evoked in her this feeling, if no other.

" Maryanka ! " he said. " Will you never have pity on me ? I can't tell you how I love you."

She moved away still farther.

" It is the wine that is speaking in you. You will get nothing ! "

" No, not the wine. Do not marry Lukäshka ! I will marry you."

"What am I saying?" he thought, as he pronounced those words. " Will I tell her this to-morrow ? I will, I certainly will, and I will repeat it now," an inner voice answered him.

" Will you marry me ? "

She looked at him earnestly, and her fear seemed to have left her.

" Maryanka ! I shall lose my reason. I am beside myself. I will do whatever you tell me to," and senselessly tender words flowed of their own accord.

" Don't talk such rubbish ! " she interrupted him, suddenly seizing his hand which he had stretched out to her. She did not push it away, but gripped it tightly between her strong, rough fingers. " Do gentlemen marry Cossack girls? Go!"

" Will you marry me ? I will - "

" And what shall we do with Lukdshka ? " she said, smiling.

He tore his hand, which she was holding, out of hers, and firmly clasped her youthful body. But she jumped up like a deer, leaped down with her bare feet, and ran out on the porch. Olénin came to his senses, and was horror-struck at himself. Again he appeared to himself inexpressibly detestable in comparison with her. But, without repenting for a moment what he had said, he went home, and, without paying any attention to the carousing old men, lay down, and slept a sound sleep, such as he had not slept for a long time.

XXXV.

The next day was a holiday. In the evening all the people were in the street displaying their gala attire in the setting sun. More wine than usual had been pressed. The people were through with the harvest. The Cossacks were preparing themselves to leave for an expedition within a month, and many families were getting ready to celebrate weddings.

In the square, in front of the village office, and near two shops, in one of which sweetmeats and pumpkin and melon seeds were sold, and in the other kerchiefs and calico, stood the largest groups. On the mound of the village office stood and sat old men, in simple gray and black coats, without galloons and adornments. The old men were discussing, in quiet, measured voices, the crops and the young children, the village affairs and the olden times, sternly and indifferently looking down upon the younger generation. The women and girls, passing by them, stopped for a moment and lowered their

heads. The young Cossacks deferentially shortened their steps, and, doffing their caps, held them for awhile before their heads. The old men grew silent. They surveyed the passers-by, now sternly, now kindly, and deliberately took off their caps and put them on again.

The Cossack women had not yet begun to lead the khorovod, but, gathering in groups, in their brightly coloured half-coats and white kerchiefs, which covered their heads down to the eyes, sat on the ground and on the mounds, in the shade formed by the slanting rays, and chattered and laughed with their ringing voices. The boys and girls played ball, whirling it high up into the air, and, shouting and piping, ran about the square. The halfgrown girls at the other end of the square were already leading the khorovod, and singing a song in their shrill, timid voices. The scribes, the exempt from service, and the young lads who had come home for the holidays, in white gala mantles and in new red ones embroidered with galloons, with merry holiday faces, walked hand in hand, in groups of two and three, from one circle of women and girls to another, and, stopping, jested and played with the Cossack maidens.

An Armenian shopkeeper, in a blue mantle of fine cloth with galloons, was standing at the open door, through which could be seen shelves with rolled up coloured kerchiefs, and, with the pride of an Eastern merchant and the consciousness of his importance, was waiting for customers. Two red-bearded, barefooted Chechéns, who had come from across the Terek to enjoy the holiday, were sitting on their heels near the house of their acquaintance, and, carelessly smoking their little pipes and continually spitting out, were exchanging rapid guttural sounds, as they were watching the people. Now and then a soldier in an old week-day overcoat hurriedly passed between the variegated groups of the square. Here and there were heard the drunken songs of Cossacks going on a spree.

All the cabins were closed up, and the porches had been washed the evening before. Even the old women were in the streets. Along the roads shells of melon and pumpkin seeds were lying everywhere in the dust. The air was warm and motionless, the clear sky was blue and transparent. The dull white crests of the mountains which could be seen behind the roofs looked as though within a short distance, and as though they were tinged pink by the rays of the declining sun. Occasionally, the distant din of a cannon could be heard from across the river.

But over the village were borne the varied gay holiday sounds, mingling into one.

Olenin had been pacing the yard all the morning, in the hope of seeing Maryanka. But she had gone to mass in the chapel soon after having dressed herself ; then she sat on a mound with the girls, cracking seeds, or with her companions ran into the house, casting merry and kind glances upon the lodger. Olenin was afraid to speak jestingly to her, especially before others. He was waiting for another such moment as on the previous evening ; but that moment did not present itself, and he felt it to be above his strength to

remain any longer in that uncertain situation. She again came out into the street, and a little while later he himself followed her, not knowing whither. He passed by the corner where she was seated, gleaming in her blue velvet half-coat, and with pain in his heart he heard the girls' laughter behind him.

Byelétski's cabin was near the square. As he went past it, he heard Byelétski's voice, " Come in ! " and he walked in.

After a short chat, they sat down at the window. Soon after they were joined by Eroshka in a new half-coat, who sat down on the floor near them.

" That over yonder is an aristocratic group," said Bye-létski, pointing with his cigarette to a variegated crowd on the corner, and smiling. " Mine is there, too, in a new red dress, you see. Why don't the khorovods begin?" exclaimed Byelétski, looking out of the window. " Just wait! As soon as it is dark, we will go out ourselves. Then we will call them to Ustenka's. We must give them a party."

" I will come to Ustenka's, too," said Olénin, resolutely. " Will Maryanka be there ? "

" She will. Do come ! " said Byelétski, not in the least surprised. " Now, this is really very beautiful," he added, pointing to the variegated crowds.

" Yes, very ! " Olénin agreed with him, endeavouring to appear indifferent. " Ou such holidays," he added, " I am always wondering what it is that makes the people suddenly content and gay, simply because there happens to be such and such a date. The holiday is on everything. Their eyes, and faces, and voices, and motions, and clothes, and the air and sun, - everything has a holiday appearance. We are past our holidays."

" Yes," said Byelétski, who was not fond of such reflections.

" Well, why don't you drink, old man ?" he turned to Eroshka.

Eroshka winked to Olénin, as much as to say, " Yes, your chum is a proud fellow! "

Byelétski raised his glass.

« Allah birdy," he said, and emptied it. (Allah birdy means "God has given?" It is a customary salutation of the mountaineers when they drink together.)

"Sau bul (May you be well)," said Eroshka, smiling, and gulping down Iris glass.

" You say it is a holiday ! " he said to Olénin, rising and looking through the window. " This is not much of a holiday ! You ought to

have seen them celebrate in days gone by ! The women used to come out all dressed up in sleeveless cloaks embroidered with galloons. The breast would be festooned with gold lace in two rows. On their heads they wore gold-laced hats. As they walked past, they raised such a noise ! Each woman was a princess. They used to go out, a whole bevy of them, and sing songs enough to deafen you ; they would celebrate all night long. And the Cossacks would roll out kegs into the yards, and sit down and drink until daybreak ; or they would take each other's hands and start on a rush through the village. Whomsoever they met on their way, they would take with them, and so they would go from house to house. Many a time they would celebrate three days in succession. I remember how father used to come home, red and puffed up, without his cap or anything, and throw himself down on the bed. Mother knew what to do : she would bring him some fresh caviar and red wine to sober him up with, and herself would run through the village to look for his cap. Then he would sleep for two days at a time ! That is the kind of people they were then ! But how is it to-day ? "

" Well, how about the girls in their sleeveless cloaks ? Did they keep by themselves ? " asked Byelétski.

« Yes, by themselves ! Then the Cossacks would come, on foot or on horseback, and ' Let us break up their khorovods!' they would say, and the girls would take up oak cudgels. In the Butter-week a young fellow would come dashing along in such a manner, and they would strike out, and beat his horse, and him. But he would break through the wall, and carry off the one he liked best. And his sweetheart would love him to his heart's content. Oh, what girls, what queenly girls they were! "

XXXVI.

Just then two men on horseback rode up from a side street. One of them was Nazàrka, the other Lukàshka. Lukàshka was sitting a little to one side on his well-fed bay Kabarda horse, which stepped lightly on the rough road, and swayed his beautiful head with his shining, delicate withers. The well-adjusted gun in the case, the pistol at his back, and the military mantle rolled up behind the saddle, proved that Lukàshka had not arrived from a peaceful, or near-by place. In his sidewise foppish pose, in the careless motion of his hand, with which he almost inaudibly cracked his whip under the horse's belly, and particularly in his glistening black eyes, with which he, proudly blinking, surveyed everything about him, were expressed the consciousness of strength and the selfconfidence of youth. " Have you seen the dashing fellow ? " his eyes, glancing around him, seemed to say. His shapely horse, the harness and the weapons with silver trimmings, and the handsome Cossack himself, attracted the attention of all the people who were gathered in the square. Nazàrka, spare and undersized, was dressed much worse than Lukashka. Passing by the old men, Lukashka checked his horse, and

raised his white curly cap above his clipped black hair.

"Well, have you driven off many Nogày horses ? " said a haggard old man, with a frowning, gloomy look.

" Have you been counting them, grandfather, that you are asking about it ? " replied Lukàshka, turning away.

" You are not doing well to take the chap with you," said the old niau, more gloomily still.

" See, the devil, he knows everything ! " Lukashka said, under his breath, and his face assumed a careworn expression ; but glancing into the corner where a number of Cossack girls were standing, he wheeled his horse around toward them.

" Good day, girls ! " he shouted, in his strong, ringing voice, and suddenly checked in his horse. " You have grown old without me, hags ! " and he burst out laughing.

" Good day, Lukashka, good day, brother ! " were heard their merry voices. " Have you brought much money with you? Buy the girls some sweetmeats! How long are you going to stay ? We have not seen you for a long time."

" Nazarka and I have run down for the night, to celebrate," answered Lukashka, cracking his whip over the horse, and riding into the throng of girls.

" Why,, Maryanka has entirely forgotten about you," shrieked Ûstenka, nudging Maryanka with her elbow, and bursting forth into a small laugh.

Maryanka moved back from the horse, and, thrusting back her head, calmly gazed at the Cossack with her large sparkling eyes.

" You have not been here for a long time ! Stop crushing us with your horse ! " she said, dryly, and turned away.

Lukdashka was evidently in a very happy frame of mind. His face shone with daring and joy. Maryanka's cold answer obviously startled him. He suddenly scowled.

" Get up on the stirrups, and I will take you into the mountains, my dear!" he suddenly cried, as though to dispel his unpleasant thoughts, and began to make all kinds of daring evolutions among the girls. He bent down to Marydnka. " I will kiss you, I will kiss you hard ! "

Maryanka's eyes and his met, and she suddenly blushed. She stepped aside.

" Stop it ! You are going to crush our feet ! " she said, and, lowering her head, looked at her shapely feet that were clad in blue

stockings with clocks, and in new red shoes, bordered with narrow silver galloons.

Lukdashka turned to Ustenka, and Maryanka sat down alongside a Cossack woman holding a babe in her arms. The child stretched its hands out toward Maryanka, and with its plump little hand seized a thread of the necklace which was hanging down her blue half-coat. Maryanka bent down to the child, and looked askance at Lukashka. In the meantime Lukdashka fetched out from the pocket of his black half-coat, beneath his mantle, a small bundle of sweetmeats and seeds.

" I offer it to the whole crowd," he said, handing the bundle to Ustenka, and smilingly gazing at Maryanka.

There was again an expression of perplexity in the girl's face. Her beautiful eyes looked dim, as though covered with a mist. She lowered the kerchief below her lips, and, suddenly burying her head in the white face of the babe holding her necklace, began to kiss it eagerly. The child pressed its tiny hands against the girl's swelling bosom and cried, opening its toothless mouth.

" You are choking the baby," said the child's mother, taking it away and opening her half-coat, in order to give it the breast. " You had better chat with the young lad."

" As soon as I have housed the horse, I will be back with Nazarka, to carouse all night," said Lukashka, striking the horse with the whip, and riding away from the girls.

Having turned, together with Nazarka, into a side street, they rode up to two cabins standing in a row.

" So here we are, brother ! Come soon ' " Lukdashka cried to his companion, dismounting at the neighbouring yard, and leading his own horse through the wicker gate of his own courtyard. " Good evening, Stépka ! " he turned to the dumb girl, who herself was dressed in holiday attire, and was coming in from the street to take the horse from him. He made signs to her to give the horse some hay, and not to unsaddle him.

The dumb girl made some inarticulate sounds, smacked her lips, pointed to the horse, and kissed his nose. That meant that she liked the horse, and that it was a fine steed.

" Good evening, mother ! Have y Ou not yet been out in the street ? " cried Lukashka, holding his gun and walking up the steps.

His old mother opened the door for him.

" Now, I did not expect you, nor hope for you to come," said the old woman. " Kirka told me you would not be here."

" Let me have a little red wine, mother ! Nazarka will come to see me, and we will drink in honour of the holiday."

" Directly, Lukashka, directly," answered the old woman. " Our women-folk are out strolling. I think our dumb girl has gone out, too."

She picked up her keys and hastened out into the dairy.

Having stabled his horse and taken off his gun, Nazārka went over to Lukāshka's.

XXXVII.

" To your health," said Lukāshka, receiving from his mother a full cup of wine, and cautiously taking it over to Nazārka, who sat with drooping head.

" I declare," said Nazārka, " you heard Grandfather Clodhopper ask, ' Have you stolen many horses ? ' He evidently knows."

" Wizard • " was Lukāshka's curt reply. " What of it ? " he added, shaking his head. " They are now beyond the river. Go and find them ! "

" Still it is not good."

" What is not good ? Take some wine to him to-morrow ! That's what we have to do, and that will be the end of it. Now for the spree ! Drink ! " shouted Lukashka, in the same voice in which old Eroshka pronounced this word. " We will go out to celebrate in the street, with the girls. You go down and fetch some honey, or I will send the dumb girl for it. We will celebrate until morning."

Nazārka smiled.

" Well, shall we stay here long ? " he asked.

" Let us first have a good time ! Run for some brandy ! Here is money ' "

Nazārka obediently ran over to Yāmka's.

Uncle Eroshka and Ergushov, having scented a spree, like some birds of prey, fell, both drunk, one after the other, into the hut.

" Let me have another half-bucket ! " shouted Lukāshka to his mother, in reply to their salutation.

" Now, tell me, you devil, where did you steal ? " shouted Uncle Eréshka. " You are a fine fellow! I love you ! "

" Yes, you love me," answered Lukashka, laughing. " You are carrying sweetmeats from yunkers to girls. What do you say, old man ? "

" It is a lie, yes, it is a lie ! Oh, Marka ! " The old man burst

out laughing. " How that devil did beg me ! ' Go,' says he, ' and try for me ! ' He offered me a fowling-piece. No, God be with him ! I would have done it, but I was sorry for you. Now, tell me, where have you been ? " And the old man started speaking in Tartar.

Lukāshka answered him briskly.

Ergushév, who did not understand Tartar well, now and then threw in a few words in Russian.

" I say, he has driven off some horses. I know for sure," he affirmed.

" Giréyka and I rode out together," Lukashka began to tell. His using the diminutive Giréyka for Giréy-khan heightened his dash to the Cossack's thinking. " On the other side of the river he boasted of knowing the whole steppe, and he said he would take me there straight ; but when we rode out it was dark night, and my Giréyka got all mixed up ; he began to sniff about, and could not make out anything. He could not find the native village, and that was the end of it. We had obviously gone too much to the right. I suppose we must have wandered about until midnight. And then luckily the dogs began to howl."

"Fools," said Uncle Eréshka. "We used to get lost that way in the steppe. The devil can make them out ! Then I would ride on some mound, and howl like a wolf, like this ! " He folded his hands over his mouth, and howled like a pack of wolves, in one long note. " The dogs would always reply. Go, tell the rest ! Well, did you find it ? "

" We at once took to putting the halters on the horses. Nogày women caught Nazàrka, bah !"

" Yes, they did," said Nazarka, who had just returned ; he spoke as though he were offended.

" We rode ahead, and again Giréyka lost his way ; he took us straight to the sand dunes. He kept saying that we were riding in the direction of the Térek, when we were going quite the opposite way."

"You ought to have watched the stars," said Uncle Eréshka.

" That's what I say," Ergushov chimed in.

" But, I tell you it was dreadfully dark. I groped about and about ! I put the halter on one mare, and gave my own horse the rein. I thought he would take me the right way. What do you think he did? He just snorted, and put his nose to the ground. He dashed forward, and brought me straight to the village. And in the meantime it had grown light; we had barely time to hide them in the woods. Nagim came from across the river, and took them away."

Ergushov shook his head. " That's what I say : it was clever. How many did you get ? "

" They are all here," said Lukashka, striking his pocket with his hand.

Just then the old woman entered the room.

" Drink ! " he shouted.

" Once Girchfk and I went out late - " began Eréshka.

" Well, there will be no end to your story," said Lu-késhka. " But I will go." Emptying his wine-bowl and tightening his belt, Lukashka went out into the street.

XXXVIII.

It was late when Lukashka walked out into the street. The autumnal night was fresh and windless. The full golden moon swam out from behind the black poplars that towered on one side of the square. A smoke rose from the chimneys of the dairies, and, mingling with the mist, spread over the village. Here and there a light could be seen in the windows. The odour of the dung chips, of the young wine, and of the mist was borne through the air. The chatting, the laughter, the songs, and the cracking of seeds sounded just as mixed, but more distinct than in the daytime. White kerchiefs and lambskin caps could be seen in small groups in the darkness, along the fences and the houses.

In the square, opposite the opened and illuminated door of the shop, were assembled throngs of Cossacks and girls, looking now black, now white, and there could be heard loud songs, laughter, and chattering. Taking hold of each other's hands, the girls were circling around, tripping gracefully in the dusty square. A haggard and very homely girl sang out :

" Out of the forest, the little dark forest, Ay da lyuli I

Out of the garden, the little green garden, There walked out, came out two fine fellows, Two fine fellows, and both of them unmarried. They walked out, came out, and stood still, They stood still, began to quarrel.

Forth came to them a fair maiden, Came out to them, and spoke to them :

' Now, to one of you I shall be given.' She was given to the fair-faced lad, The fair-faced lad, the fair-haired one. He took her, took her by her right hand, He led her, led her, all around the circle, And he boasted to all his companions :

• Behold, brothers, the wife I have 1 ' "

The old women stood around and listened to the songs. The boys and young girls flitted about in the darkness, trying to catch each other. The Cossacks stood near by, teasing the girls as they passed, and occasionally breaking through the khorovôd, and walking inside the circle. On the dark side of the door stood Byelétski and Olénin, in mantles and lambskin caps, and conversed with each other, not in the Cossack dialect, nor aloud, but audibly enough, and they were conscious of attracting attention. Plump Ustenka, in red half-coat, and the majestic figure of Maryanka, in her new shirt and half-coat, were neighbours in the khorovôd. Olénin was discussing with Byelétski how to get Maryanka and Ustenka away from the khorovôd. Byelétski surmised that Olénin wanted to have some amusement, but Olénin was hoping to have his lot decided. He wanted to see Maryanka by herself that evening, cost what it might, to tell her everything, and to ask her whether she could and would become his wife. Although the question had long ago been answered in the negative, he hoped that he would be able to tell her everything he felt, and that she would understand him.

" Why did you not tell me before ? " said Byelétski. " I would have arranged it for you through Ustenka. You are so strange ' "

" What's to be done ? Some day, very soon, I will tell you everything. But now, for God's sake, arrange it so that she will come to Ustenka's."

« Very well. That is easy. So the fair-faced lad will get you, and not Lukashka ? " said Byelétski, for propriety's sake turning first to Maryanka ; but, without waiting for an answer, he went up to Ustenka, and began to ask her to bring Maryanka with her. He had hardly finished speaking, when the leader started another song, and the girls drew each other around the circle.

They sang :

" Behind the garden, behind the garden, A fellow, her to meet,
Wallied up and down the street.

The first time he walked, His right hand did he flap ; The second
time he walked, He waved his beaver cap ; But the third time he
walked, He stopped in front of her, Stopped in front of her, went
over to her.

' I was going to see thee, Angrily to thee to talk : Why didst thou
not, dear maid, Come in the garden for to walk? Or art thou, my
darling maid, Much too proud for me? Afterward, my darling maid,
Will I settle thee.

I will send the woers to thee,

I will sue for thee :

You will surely be my wife, And will weep through me.'

" Though I knew what to say, I did not dare to answer * Nay ! ' I did not dare to answer ' Nay I ' To the garden I did wend, And saluted there my friend.

'Here this kerchief take from me I 'Tis a gift, my dear, for thee. Into thy white hands 'tis laid, – Take it from me, darling maid ! Into thy white hands, my dove,– Give, oh, give me, dear, thy love ! Maid, I have not, as I live, Other gifts to thee to give.

I shall give my sweetheart dear Nothing but this kerchief here. Take this kerchief, do take this, – And my dear five times I'll kiss I '

Lukashka and Nazdrka broke the klorovod, and walked in among the girls. Lukashka accompanied the song with his shrill voice, and, waving his hands, walked around inside the circle. " Let one of you come out ! " he said. The girls pushed Maryanka ; but she would not go. Amidst the song could be heard a shrill laughter, blows, kisses, and whispers.

Passing by Olénin, Lukashka graciously nodded his head to him.

" Dmitri Andréevich, did you come here to look at it ? " he said.

" Yes," Olénin answered, resolutely and dryly.

Byelétski leaned down to Ustenka's ear, and said something to her. She wanted to reply, but did not get a chance ; when she circled around the second time, she said :

" All right, we will come ! "

" And Maryanka, too ? "

Olénin bent down to Maryanka. " Will you come ? Please do, if only for a minute. I want to talk with you."

" If the girls will go, I will."

" Will you tell me what I asked you about ? " he asked, leaning over to her. " You are happy to-day."

She began to whirl around. He followed her.

" Will you tell me ? "

« What ? "

" What I asked you about two days ago," said Olénin, bending down to her ear. "Will you marry me ? "

« I will tell you," she answered. " I will tell you this evening."

Id the darkness her eyes Hashed gaily and kindly at the young man.

He continued to walk with her. It was a pleasure for him to bend closer to her.

But Lukashka, proceeding with his song, gave her hand a mighty jerk, and pulled her out into the middle of the khorovôd. Oléuin had just time to say, " Do come down to Ustenka's ! " after which he walked back to his companion. The song was ended. Lukashka wiped his lips, Maryanka did the same, and they kissed. " No, five kisses" said Lukashka. Conversation, laughter, running, took the place of the even motion and the even sounds. Lukashka, who seemed to have had a goodly portion of wine, began to distribute sweetmeats to the girls.

" I offer it to all," he said, with proud, tragicomical selfsatisfaction. " And she who will pass her time with soldiers, let her get out of the khorovôd," he suddenly added, looking maliciously at Olenin.

The girls grabbed his sweetmeats, and, laughing, took them away from each other. Byelétski and Oléuin walked over to one side.

Lukashka, as though embarrassed at his liberality, took off his cap and, wiping his brow with his sleeve, walked over to Maryanka and Ustenka.

" Or art thou, my darling maid, much too proud for me ? " he repeated the words of the song which had just been sung, and, turning to Maryanka, " Much too proud for me," he repeated, angrily, once more. " You will surely be my wife, and will weep through me," he added, embracing Ustenka and Marydnka at once.

Ustenka tore herself loose, and, raising her hand, struck him such a blow on his back that it made her hand smart.

" Well, are you going to lead again ?" he asked.

" As the girls wish," answered Ustenka, " but I am going home, and Maryänka wanted to come to our house, too."

" Don't go there, Maryanka ! " he said. " We will pass our time together for the last time. Go home, and I will follow you."

" What should I do at home ? This is what the holiday is for, to have a good time. I am going to Ustenka's," said Maryänka.

" I am going to marry you soon."

" Very well," said Maryanka. " We will see then."

" Well, will you go ? " said Lukashka, sternly, giving her a tight hug, and kissing her cheek.

" Stop ! Don't bother me ! " And Maryanka tore herself loose and walked away from him.

" Oh, girl, it will not be right," reproachfully said Lukashka, stopping and shaking his head. " You will weep through me," and, turning away from her, he shouted to the girls, " Sing a song, won't you ? "

Maryanka seemed to be frightened and annoyed by what he had said. She stopped. " What will not be right ? "

« That."

« What ? "

" Your keeping company with the soldier, your lodger, and because you are not loving me any more."

" If I don't want to love you, I won't. You are not my father or mother. What do you want ? I will love whom I please."

" Well, well ! " said Lukashka. " Only remember it ! " He went up to the shop. " Girls ! " he cried. " Why are you standing there ? Sing another khorovôd. Nazarka, go and fetch us some wine."

" Well, will they come?" Olénin asked Byelétski.

" They will, directly," answered Byelétski. " Come, we must get the entertainment ready."

XXXIX.

It was late in the night when Olénin left Byelétski's cabin, following directly after Maryanka and Ustenka. The girl's white kerchief could be discerned in the dark street. The golden moon was descending toward the steppe. A silvery mist hovered over the village. All was quiet ; there were no lights ; only the steps of the departing women could be heard. Olénin's heart beat strongly. His Hushed face was refreshed in the damp air. He glanced at the sky, and at the cabin from which he had come ; the light in it went out, and again he watched the retiring shadow of the women. The white kerchief disappeared in the mist. He felt terribly to be alone ; he was so happy ! He sprang down from the porch and ran after the girls.

" Come now ! They might see you ! " said Ustenka.

" That's all right ! "

Olénin rushed up to Maryanka and embraced her.

Maryanka did not struggle.

"Have you not kissed her enough?" said Ūstenka. " You will kiss her when you get married, but now you must wait."

" Good-bye, Maryanka ! To-morrow I will call on your father, and will tell him myself. Don't say anything to him ! "

"What should I say, anyway?" answered Marydnka.

The two girls started to run. Olénin walked by himself, trying to recall everything that had taken place. He had passed the whole evening all alone with her, behind the oven. Ūstenka did not leave the room for a minute, and passed her time with the girls and with Byelétski. Olénin had been talking with her in a whisper.

" Will you marry me ? " he had asked her.

" You will deceive me ! You will not take me," she had replied, gaily and calmly.

" But do you love me ? Tell me, for God's sake ! "

" Why should I not love you ? You are not misshapen ! " Maryanka had answered, laughing, and pressing his hand in her own rough hands. " What white, awfully white, hands you have, – just like curds," she had said.

« I am not jesting. Tell me, will you marry me ? "

" Why should I not, if father is willing ? "

" Remember, I shall lose my mind if you deceive me. To-morrow I will tell your parents ; I will come to sue for you."

Maryanka had suddenly burst out laughing.

" What is the matter with you ? "

" Nothing. It is so funny."

" Truly ! I will buy a vineyard and a house, and will enrol myself as a Cossack – "

" Look out ! You must not love any other women ! I am cross when it comes to that – "

Olénin with delight repeated all these words in his imagination. At these recollections he now felt an anguish and now was breathless with happiness. He was depressed, because she had been as calm as ever while speaking with him. This new situation had, apparently, not agitated her in the least. She did not seem to believe him, and was not thinking of the future. It appeared to him that she was loving him only in the present, and that there was no future for her with him. But he was happy, because her words seemed to him to be the truth, and because she had consented to be his.

" Yes," he said to himself, " only then shall we understand each other when she is all mine. For such a love

there are no words, but life, a whole life, is needed. Tomorrow everything will be cleared up. I cannot live thus any longer. Tomorrow I will tell her father, Bye-létski, and the whole village - "

Having previously passed two sleepless nights, and having drunk so much in celebrating the holiday, Lu-kashka was at once taken off his feet, and remained at Yamka's, sleeping.

XL.

On the following day Olénin awoke earlier than usual. In the first moments of his awakening he had a clear recollection of what awaited him, and he joyfully remembered her kisses, the pressure of her rough hands, and her words, " What white hands you have ! " He jumped up, and wanted to go at once to the ensign to sue for Maryanka's hand. The sun had not yet risen, and it seemed to Olénin that there was an uncommon commotion in the street : people were walking, riding, and talking. He threw over him his mantle and sprang out on the porch. The ensign's family was not yet up. Five Cossacks rode by, conversing noisily about something. They were preceded by Lukashka, who rode his broad-shouldered Kabardä horse. The Cossacks were talking and shouting; it was impossible to make out what they were saying.

" Ride out to the upper post ! " cried one.

" Saddle, and be up with us at once ! " said another.

" It will be nearer to go by that gate."

"Nonsense!" cried Lukashka. "We must go through the middle gate."

"From there it is nearer," said one of the Cossacks, dust-covered, and riding a sweaty horse. Lukashka's face was flushed and swollen from the carousal of the night before ; his cap was poised on the back of his head. He shouted in a commanding voice, as though he were the superior.

" What is up ? Whither are you going ? " asked

Olénin, finding it difficult to direct the Cossacks' attention to himself.

" We are going out to catch some abréks. They are sitting on the sand-dunes. We shall ride out at once, but we have not enough people with us."

The Cossacks, continuing to shout and to get ready, passed along the street. It occurred to Olénin that it would not be well if he did not go with them ; besides, he thought he would return soon. He dressed himself, loaded his gun, jumped on his horse, which had been half-saddled by Vanyusha, and caught up with the Cossacks as they were leaving the village. The Cossacks were standing around in a circle, hurrying to be off ; they were pouring some red wine into a wooden bowl from a cask that had just been brought there, and, passing it around, were drinking for a propitious expedition. Among them was also a young foppish ensign, who happened to be in the village, and who had assumed the command of the nine Cossacks present. The Cossacks who had gathered there were of the rank and file, and though the ensign had the appearance of the leader of the expedition, they all obeyed only Lukashka.

The Cossacks did not pay the least attention to Olenin. When they had all mounted their horses and started off, and Olénin, riding up to the ensign, began to inquire about the affair, the ensign, who usually was kindly disposed, looked down upon him from the height of his magnificence. With great difficulty Olénin managed to get some information from him. A patrol, which had been sent out to look for abreks, had discovered some mountaineers about eight versts from the village, on the dunes. The abreks were entrenched in a ditch, and threatened that they would not be taken alive. The under-officer, who was on the patrol with two more Cossacks, remained behind to keep watch on them, and had sent one of the Cossacks to the village to get reë'nforcement.

The sun had just begun to rise. About three versts from the village, the steppe stretched out on all sides, and nothing was to be seen but the monotonous, melancholy, dry plain, with the sand tracked by the cattle, with here and there some withered grass, with low reeds in the lowlands, with now and then barely perceptible paths, and with the Nogay camps that were visible somewhere in the distance along the horizon. The absence of shade and the severe aspect of the locality were very striking.

The sun always rises and sets red in the steppe. The wind, when there is any, moves whole mountains of sand. When the air is calm, as it was on that morning, the quiet, which is broken by neither motion nor sound, is especially impressive. On that morning the steppe was calm and gloomy, even though the sun was up ; the steppe was quite deserted, and the air was mellow. Not a breeze stirred. One could hear only the tramping and snorting of the horses ; but even these sounds were feeble, and soon died away. The Cossacks generally rode in silence. Their weapons are always so adjusted that they shall neither clank nor clatter. A clattering weapon is the greatest disgrace to a Cossack. Two Cossacks from the village caught up with them on the road, and exchanged two or three words with them.

Lukashka's horse either stumbled or caught his foot in the grass, and accelerated his steps. That is a bad omen with the Cossacks. The Cossacks looked around and immediately turned back their faces,

trying not to pay any attention to the incident, which at that moment had a particular significance. Lukashka pulled the reins, frowned severely, clinched his teeth, and cracked his whip overhead. The good Kabarda steed brought all his legs in motion, undecided which one to put down first, and as though desirous of rising on wings ; but Lukashka warmed him up with the whip over his plump flanks, then a second time, and a third, – and the Kabarda steed, showing his teeth, raising his tail, and rearing on his hind legs, fell a few paces behind the other horses.

" Ah, that is a fine steed ! " said the ensign.

His using the word " steed " for " horse " was meant as a special praise of the animal.

" A lion of a horse," affirmed one of the older Cossacks.

The Cossacks rode on in silence, now at a walk, now at a trot, and only that one incident interrupted for a moment the quiet and solemnity of the motion.

In the eight versts of their ride over the steppe, they met no signs of life but a Nogdy tent which, being placed on an ox-cart, was slowly moving about a verst away from them. It was a Nogay who was moving with his family from one camping-ground to another. In a low, marshy place they met two Nogay women with high cheek-bones, who, with wicker baskets on their backs, were collecting the dung of the cattle roving on the steppe, for fuel. The ensign, who spoke poor Kumyk, began to ask something of the Nogay women ; but they did not understand him, and glanced at each other, obviously terrified.

Lukashka rode up, checked in his horse, briskly uttered the customary salutation, and the women were evidently reassured, and spoke with him as with their own.

" Ay, ay, kop abrtk ! " they said, pitifully, pointing in the direction in which the Cossacks were riding. Olénin understood that they were saying "Many abréks!"

Having never taken part in such an affair, and knowing of it only through Uncle Eroshka's recitals, Olénin did not wish to stay away from the Cossacks, but to see it all himself. He admired the Cossacks, watched and listened, and made his observations. Although he had taken with him his sabre and a loaded gun, he, noticing that the Cossacks were keeping aloof from him, decided not to take any part in the action, especially since his courage, to his thinking, had been proved at the frontier, and chiefly because he was so happy now.

Suddenly a shot was heard in the distance.

The ensign was agitated and began to give orders to the Cossacks, how to separate, and from what side to approach them. But the Cossacks obviously did not pay the least attention to his commands,

and listened only to what Lukashka told them, and watched him only. In Lukashka's face and whole figure was expressed calm and solemnity. He made his steed go at an amble, so that the other horses, that were going at a walk, fell behind, and, blinking, kept on looking into the distance.

" Here is one on horseback," he said, checking his horse, and falling in with the others.

Olénin gazed sharply, but could not see anything. The Cossacks soon distinguished two horsemen, and in a quiet walk rode up toward them.

" Are these the abréks ? " asked Olénin.

The Cossacks did not reply to this question, which to them was foolish. The abréks would have been silly to cross on this side of the river with their horses.

" Brother Rodka is waving his hand to us, I think," said Lukashka, pointing to the two men on horseback, who now could be clearly seen. " He is coming up to us."

Indeed, in a few minutes it became obvious that the men on horseback were the Cossacks of the patrol, and soon the under-officer rode up to Lukashka.

XLI.

" Is it far ? " was all Lukashka asked.

At the same time a short report of a gun was heard within thirty paces. The under-officer smiled slightly.

" Our Gurka is firing at them," he said, nodding his head in the direction of the report.

Having ridden a few more steps, they saw Gurka sitting behind a sand-hill and loading his gun. To kill time, Gurka kept on shooting at the abréks, who were sitting behind another sand-hill. A bullet whistled by from there.

The ensign was pale and confused. Lukashka dismounted from his horse, turned him over to a Cossack, and walked over to Gurka. Olénin did the same, and, bending down, followed him. No sooner had they reached the Cossack who was firing than two bullets whistled over their heads. Lukashka smiled and, looking at Olénin, crouched down.

" They will kill you if you don't look out, Andreevich," he said. " You had better go away. You have no business here."

But Olénin was anxious to see the abréks.

He saw behind a mound, about two hundred paces from him, caps and guns. Suddenly a smoke appeared, and another bullet whizzed by. The abréks were sitting below the hill, in a swamp. Olénin was impressed by the place where they were entrenched. The spot was just like the rest of the steppe, but the fact that it was occupied by the abréks somehow separated it from everything else and gave it a special significance. It appeared to him to be just the place for abréks to occupy. Lukashka returned to his horse, and Olénin followed him.

« We must take the ox-cart with the hay,” said Lukdshka, “or else they will kill us all. There, beyond a mound, stands the ox-cart with the hay.”

The ensign listened to him, and the under-officer agreed with him. The hay-wagon was brought up, and the Cossacks, hiding behind it, began to spread the hay as a protection. Olénin rode out on a mound, from which everything could be seen. The hay-wagon moved ahead ; the Cossacks pressed closely together back of it. The Cossacks moved forward ; the Chechéns – there were nine of them – were sitting in a row, knee to knee, and did not shoot.

Everything was quiet. Suddenly on the side of the Chechéns rang out the strange sounds of a weird song, resembling the " Ay dalalay " of Uncle Eroshka. The Chechéns knew that there was no escape for them, and, to free themselves from the temptation of running away, they tied themselves together with leather straps, knee to knee, got their guns ready, and tuned the death-song.

The Cossacks came nearer and nearer to them with the hay-wagon, and Olénin expected to hear a fusilade any moment; but the calm was broken only by the weird song of the abréks. Suddenly the song was ended ; there was heard a short report ; a bullet struck against the cartchain ; Chechén curses and shouts rang out. One shot after another was fired, and one bullet after another struck the wagon. The Cossacks did not shoot, though they were within five steps of the Chechéns.

Another moment passed, and the Cossacks, shouting the war-cry, rushed out on both sides of the wagon. Lukdshka was in the lead. Olénin heard but a few shots fired, then crying and groaning. He saw smoke, and blood, as he thought. He left his horse, and beside himself rushed up to the Cossacks. Terror shrouded his eyes. He could not make out anything, but he understood that everything was ended. Lukâshka, pale as a sheet, was holding a Chechén by his arm, and crying, « Don't kill him ! I will take him alive !” The Chechén was the same red-haired fellow, the brother of the dead abrék, who had come to get his body. Lukâshka was twisting his arms. Suddenly the abrék tore himself loose and shot at him with his pistol. Lukâshka staggered and fell. On his abdomen appeared some blood. He jumped up, but again fell down, cursing in Russian and in Tartar. The blood on him and under him grew ever more abundant. The Cossacks walked over to him, and began to take off his belt. One of them,

Nazârka, before helping him, was for quite awhile unable to sheathe his sabre, as he put it in the wrong way. The blade was all bloody.

The Chechéns, with their hair dyed red, and clipped moustaches, lay dead and hacked to pieces. Only one, the same that had shot Lukâshka, lay alive, though severely wounded. Like a wounded hawk, all drenched with blood (blood was flowing from his right eye), clinching his teeth, pale and gloomy, surveying everything with his large excited eyes, he sat on his heels, holding a dagger, and ready to defend himself again. The ensign walked over to him, and, pretending to make a circuit round him, with a rapid motion fired his pistol at his ear. The Chechén darted forward, but he fell before he could rise.

The Cossacks, out of breath, pulled the dead to one side, and took off their weapons. Each of these red-haired Chechéns was a man ; each had his own peculiar features. Lukâshka was carried to the cart. He kept swearing in Russian and in Tartar.

"You are lying, I will choke you with my hands! You will not get away from my hands! Anna scni!" he cried, making an effort to rush forward. Soon he grew silent from loss of blood.

Olénin rode home. In the evening he was told that Lukâshka was mortally wounded, but that a Tartar from across the river had undertaken to cure him.

The bodies were all dragged to the village office. Women and children ran there to see them.

Olénin returned home at dusk, and could not collect himself for a long time from the horrors which he had witnessed. In the evening the recollections of the day again burst upon him. Maryânka was going to and fro from the house to the shed, attending to her household duties. Her mother had gone to the vineyard. Her father was at the office. Olénin did not wait for her to get through with her work, and walked up to her. She was in the house, standing with her back to him. Olénin thought she was embarrassed.

" Maryânka," he said, " oh, Maryanka ! May I come in?"

Suddenly she turned around. In her eyes stood barely perceptible tears. In her face was fair sorrow. She looked at him silently and majestically.

Olénin repeated :

" Maryânka ! I have come – "

" Leave me," she said. Her face did not change, but tears gushed from her eyes.

" What is it about ? What is the matter ? "

"What?" she repeated, in a coarse and harsh voice.

"Cossacks have been killed, that is the matter."

"Lukâshka?" asked Olénin.

"Go away! What do you want?"

"Maryanka!" said Olénin, walking over to her.

"Never will you get anything from me."

"Maryânka, don't say that," Olénin implored her.

"Go away! I am tired of you!" cried the girl, stamping her foot, and moving toward him with a threatening

mien. Her face expressed such disgust, contempt, and fury, that Olénin suddenly understood that he had nothing to hope for, and that what he had formerly thought of the unapproachability of this woman was an undeniable fact.

XLII.

Olénin did not say anything, and ran out of the room.

After returning home, he lay for two hours motionless on his bed; then he went to the captain, and asked for leave to visit the staff. He did not bid any one farewell, but sent his rent to the ensign through Vanyusha, and got ready to journey to the fortress where the regiment was stationed. Only Uncle Erdshka saw him off. They drank together a glass, and then another, and then again. Just as upon his departure from Moscow, the stage three-span stood at the door. But Olénin did not cast his accounts with himself, as then, and did not say to himself that all he had been thinking and doing here was not that. He did not promise himself a new life. He loved Maryanka more than ever, and he knew that he could never be loved by her.

"Well, good-bye, my father!" said Uncle Eroshka. "If you ever take part in a campaign, be wiser, and listen to the advice of an old man. If you are out on an incursion, or wherever else it may be, — I am an old wolf, and have seen everything, — and there is some firing, don't go into a crowd where there are many people together. For it is the habit of you people, whenever you get scared, to jam together in a throng, thinking that it is merrier where there are a lot of you; but it is worse: the enemy always aims into a crowd. I always used to keep away from people, and to walk by myself, and so I have never been wounded. And I have seen a great deal in my lifetime."

"But you have a bullet in your back!" said Vanyusha, who was

cleaning up the room.

" The Cossacks did that while on a spree," replied Erdshka.

« The Cossacks ? How so ? " asked Olénin.

" Like this ! They were drinking. Yanka Sftkin, a Cossack, was pretty drunk, and he took out his pistol, and bang ! sent a bullet right into this spot."

"Did it pain you?" asked Olénin. "Vanyusha, will you be done soon ? " he added.

" Oh, in what a hurry you are ! Let me tell you – He fired off; the bullet did not break my bone, but stopped right here. And so I told him : ' You have killed me, brother ! Eh ! What have you done to me ? I will not let you off so easily. You will have to treat me to a bucket of wine.' "

" Well, did it hurt you ? " again asked Olénin, scarcely hearing his story.

" Let me tell it to you. He put up the bucket. We drank together. And the blood was running all the time. I soiled the whole room with my blood. Then Grandfather Clodhopper said : ' The fellow will surely die. Let us have another stoup of sweet wine, or else we will have you in court.' They brought some more. And we filled ourselves up– "

" Well, did it hurt you ? " again asked Olénin.

" Did it hurt ? Don't interrupt me ! I don't like that. Let me tell you the rest. We drank, and drank, and celebrated until morning, and I fell asleep on the oven, drunk. When I awoke in the morning, I could not unbend myself."

" Was it very painful ?" repeated Olénin, thinking that now, at last, he would get an answer to his question.

" Did I tell you it hurt ? It did not hurt, only I could not bend, nor walk."

"Well, and it healed up?" said Olénin, not even laughing, his heart was so heavy.

"Yes, but the bullet is still there. Just feel it!" And he rolled up his shirt and showed his broad back, where a bullet was loosely encased near the bone.

" Do you see how it rolls around ? " he said, evidently pleased with the bullet as with a toy. "Now it has rolled over to the back."

" Well, will Lukashka live ? " asked Olénin.

" God knows ! There is no doctor here. They have gone for one."

" Where will they get one ? At Groznaya ? " asked Olénin.

" No, my father, I would long ago have cut the throats of your Kussian doctors, if I were the Tsar. All they know is to cut. They have spoiled our Cossack Baklashev, by taking off his leg. Consequently they are fools. What is Baklashev good for now ? No, my father, in the mountains there are genuine doctors. During an expedition my friend Vorchik was wounded right here, in the chest, and your doctors gave him up, but Saib came down from the mountains and cured him. They know all kinds of herbs, my father."

" Stop talking nonsense," said Olénin. " I had better send the surgeon from the staff."

"Nonsense?" the old man mimicked him. "Fool, fool ! Nonsense ! Send the surgeon ! If your surgeons knew how to cure, the Cossacks and the Chechens would go to get cured by them, whereas, your officers and colonels send for the doctors from the mountains. It is false, all false, with you people."

Olénin did not try to retort. He was too much of the opinion that everything was false in the world in which he used to live, and to which he was now going to return.

"How about Lukäshka? Have you seen him?" he asked.

" He is lying like one dead. He neither eats nor drinks. He won't stand anything but brandy. Well, he is drinking brandy, – that's all right. I am sorry for the fellow. He was a good fellow, a brave, just like myself. I was once on the point of dying, and the women were howling, and howling. My head was hot. They already accounted me a saint. And so I was lying, and right above me, on the oven, tiny little drummers were sounding the reveille. I shouted to them, but they only drummed so much the harder." The old man laughed. " The women brought the chanter to me ; they wanted to bury me, and so they said : ' He has led a worldly life, has kept company with women, has ruined souls, has eaten meat on fast-days, has played the balaläyka. Repent,' they said. And so I began to repent. ' I have sinned,' says I. No matter what the pope said, I repeated, ' I have sinned.' He began to ask me about the balaläyka. ' Where is it, that accursed thing ? ' says he. ' Let me have it, so I may smash it.' And I said I did not have it ; but I had myself hidden it away in the dairy in a net. I knew they would not find it. And they gave me up. And I came to. And again I started to scrape the balaläyka – So, what was I saying ? " he continued. " Take my advice, and keep away from crowds, or you will be killed. I am sorry for you, truly, I am. You are a toper, I like you. The rest of you fellows are fond of riding out to the mounds. There was one of them living here. He had come from Russia, and he had such a passion for mounds ! Every time he saw a mound, he rode out to it. Once he galloped off'. He galloped, and was so happy about it ! And a Chechen shot at him, and killed him. The Chechens are such fine shots with forked supports.

There are better shots than I am. I do not like to see anybody killed in such a bad manner. I used to look at your soldiers, and wonder. What stupidity! My darlings walk together in a mass, and, besides, wear such red collars. How can one help hitting them? They kill one man, and while he is dragged off, another man takes his place. What stupidity!" repeated the old man, shaking his head. "They ought to scatter, and walk one by one. And they ought to walk as if nothing were the matter. Then they would not find you out. That's the way it ought to be done."

"Well, good-bye, uncle! If God will grant it, we shall see each other again," said Olénin, rising and walking out to the vestibule.

The old man was sitting on the floor, and did not get up.

"Is this the way to say farewell? Fool, fool!" he said. "What people they are now! He has kept company with me, a whole year he has kept company, and now, 'Good-bye,' and off he goes. Don't you know, I love you, and am sorry for you? You are so gloomy, so lonely, such a lonely man! You are so shy! Many a time, when I could not sleep, have I thought of you, and felt sorry for you. As the song says:

"'Not so easy, my dear brother, 'Tis in foreign lands to live.'

And so it is with you."

"Well, good-bye," again said Olénin.

The old man got up and gave him his hand. Olénin pressed it, and wanted to leave.

"Your mug, your mug - Let me have it!"

The old man took him by the head with both his fat hands, kissed him three times with his wet moustache and lips, and began to weep.

"I love you, good-bye!"

Olénin seated himself in the vehicle.

"And so you are going! Give me, at least, a memento, my father! Give me a gun. What do you want two for?" said the old man, sobbing, and shedding real tears.

Olénin got the gun and gave it to him.

"What a lot of things you have given that old fellow!" grumbled Vanyusha, "and it is still too little for him! Old beggar! What unreliable people!" he said, wrapping himself up in his overcoat, and taking his seat on the box.

"Shut up, swine!" cried the old man, laughing. "I declare, he is stingy!"

Maryanka came out of the shed, glanced indifferently at the troyka, and, bowing, walked into the cabin.

" La fille ! " said Vanyusha, winking, and giving a dull laugh.

" Go," Olénin cried, angrily.

" Good-bye, father ! Good-bye, I will remember you ! " exclaimed Erdshka.

Oldnin looked back. Uncle Erdshka was talking to Maryanka, apparently about his own affairs, and neither the old man nor the girl was looking at him.