

THE LIGHT THAT SHINES IN DARKNESS

BY
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EDITED BY DR. HAGBERG WRIGHT

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Nicholas Ivanovich Sarintsev.

Marie Ivanovna (Masha), his wife.

their sons.

Vania, J

Mitrofan Dmitrich. Tutor to Vania.

Alexandra Ivanovna. Sister to Marie Ivanovna.

Peter Semenovich Kokhovtsev. Her husband.

Lisa. Their daughter.

Princess Cheremshanov.

Boris. Her son.

Tonia. Her daughter.

Father Vasily (Vasily Ermilovich). A village priest.

Father Gerasim.

Alexis Mikhailovich Starkovsky.

Nurse and Footmen in Sarintsev's house.

Ivan,

Sebastian, _

T- ... Peasants.

Ephraim,

Peter,

A Peasant Woman. Ivan's wife.

Malashka. Ivan's daughter.

Alexander Petrovich. A tramp.

A country Police Sergeant.

Lawyer.

Yakov. Carpenter.

Clerk.

Sentries.

General.

Colonel.

Aide-de-camp.

Soldiers.

Police Officer.

Stenographer.

Chaplain.

Patients in Hospital.

Sick Officer.

Head Physician.

House Surgeon.

Warders.

Countess and other Guests at Sarintsev's dance.

Pianist.

ACT I

The stage represents a covered veranda in a rich country-house. In front of the veranda are a flower garden, a tennis ground, and a croquet lawn. The children with their governess are playing croquet. On the veranda are seated: Marie Ivanovna Sarintsev, a handsome, elegant woman of forty; her sister Alexandra Ivanovna KokhOVTSEV, a fat, positive, and stupid woman of forty-five; and her husband, PETER SEMENOVICH KOKHOVTSEV, a fat, stout, clumsy man of slovenly appearance, wearing a summer suit and eye-glasses. They all sit at a table laid for breakfast with samovar and coffee. All are drinking coffee; PETER SEMENOVICH is smoking.

Alexandra.

If you were not my sister, and Nicholas Ivanovich were not your husband, but merely an acquaintance, I should find all this novel and charming, and should perhaps uphold him. I should have found it very nice. But when I see your husband playing the fool, simply playing the fool, I cannot help telling you what I think of it. And I shall tell him too, that husband of yours. I shall speak straight out to dear Nicholas. I am not afraid of anybody.

Marie.

I do not mind in the least: I see it myself. But I really do not think it is as important as all that.

Alexandra.

You may not think so; but I assure you, if you let it go on, you will all be beggared. That is what will come of this sort of thing. . . .

Peter.

Beggared, indeed! With their fortune!

Alexandra.

Yes, beggared. Don't interrupt me. Of course, you always think that anything a man does is right.

Peter.

I don't know. I only say. . . .

Alexandra.

You never know wh'at you are talking about, and when once you men begin your nonsense, there is no knowing where it will end. All I say

is, that if I were in your place, I should not allow

it. I should have put a stop to all this. I never heard of such a thing. The husband, the head of the family, does nothing, neglects his affairs, gives everything away, and plays the bountiful right and left. I know how it will end. I know all about it.

Peter.

(to Marie Ivanovna.) Do explain to me, Marie, what this new fad of his is. There are Liberals, County Councils, the Constitution Schools, reading-rooms and all the rest of it – I understand all that. Then there are Socialists, strikes, an eight-hour day – I

understand that too. But what is all this? Do explain.

Marie.

He told you all about it yesterday.

Peter.

I own that I could not understand. The Gospel, the Sermon on the Mount, that churches are unnecessary. But where are we to pray, and all that?

Marie.

That is the worst of it. He would destroy everything and put nothing in its place.

Peter.

How did it begin ?

Marie.

It began last year, when his sister died. He became very gloomy, perpetually spoke of death,

and then fell ill, as you know. And after his typhoid fever he changed entirely.

Alexandra.

Still he came to see us in Moscow in the spring, and he was very amiable and played cards. He was very nice and quite normal.

Marie.

Yes, but he was not the same.

Peter.

In what way?

Marie.

He was perfectly indifferent to his family, and the New Testament had become an obsession. He read it all day; at night he got up to read it instead of sleeping, making notes and copying out passages. Then he began to visit bishops and aged monks, to discuss religion.

Alexandra.

Did he go to confession and take the sacrament?

Marie.

Before that he had not done so since his marriage, that is for twenty-five years. But at the time I am speaking of he confessed and took communion at the monastery, and immediately afterward decided it was unnecessary to confess, or even to go to church at all.

Alexandra.

You see how inconsistent he is. A month ago he went to church and kept all the fasts; now suddenly he thinks all that is useless.

Marie.

Well, talk to him yourself.

Alexandra.

I will; indeed I will.

Peter.

All that does not matter much.

Alexandra.

It seems to you that it does not matter, because men have no religion.

Peter.

Do let me speak. I say that that is not the point. If he denies the Church, where does the New Testament come in?

Marie.

He says we are to live in accordance with the Sermon on the Mount, and give everything away.

Peter.

How are we to live ourselves If we give everything away?

Alexandra.

And where does the Sermon on the Mount order us to shake hands with our footmen? It says "blessed are the meek," but there is not a word about shaking hands.

Marie.

Of course he is fanatical in this, as he always is when he takes up anything. At one time it was music, then schools. . . . But that does not make it any easier for me.

Peter.

Why has he gone to town?

Marie.

He did not tell me, but I know he has gone to attend the hearing of the timber-stealing case. The peasants cut down some of our forest.

Peter.

Those big fir-trees ?

Marie.

Yes. They were condemned to pay for them, and sentenced to imprisonment, and their appeal is to be heard to-day. I am sure that is why he went.

Alexandra.

He will forgive them, and to-morrow they will come and chop down all the trees in his park.

Marie.

They seem to be beginning already. All the apple trees are broken, and the fields trampled. He forgives it all.

Peter.

How extraordinary!

Alexandra.

That is exactly why I say that you must interfere. If it continues much longer – everything will go. I think it is your duty as a mother to take some steps.

Marie.

What can I do?

Alexandra.

What can you do, indeed? Put a stop to it, make him understand that it is impossible. You have children. What an example to set them!

Marie.

It is hard, but I try to bear it, and to hope that this will pass as all his other infatuations have done.

Alexandra.

Yes; but God helps those who help themselves. You must make him feel that he is not alone, and that he is not living in the proper way.

Marie.

The worst of it all is that he takes no interest in the children. I have to settle everything by myself. On the one hand I have a baby, and on the other, grown-up children – a girl and a boy – who both need attention and guidance, and I am alone. He used to be such a careful and tender father. Now he does not care about anything. Last night I told him Vania was lazy and had failed again in his examinations, and he said it would be much better for him to leave school altogether.

Peter.

Where would he send him?

Marie.

Nowhere. That is the horrible part of it. Everything is wrong, but he does not say what we are to do.

Peter.

How strange!

Alexandra.

Not at all strange. It is just the usual way you men have of finding fault with everything and doing nothing yourselves.

Marie.

Stephen has finished his studies and must decide what he is going to do, but his father will not say anything to him about it. He wanted to enter the Civil Service – his father said it was useless; he wanted to enter the Horse Guards–Nicholas Ivanovich disapproved. The boy asked what he was to do, and his father asked why he did not go and plough: that would be far better than the Civil Service. What is he to do? He comes to me for advice, and I have to decide. But the means of carrying out any plan are in his father's hands.

Alexandra.

You ought to tell Nicholas so plainly.

Marie.

Yes; I must talk to him.

Alexandra.

Tell him plainly that you cannot stand it: that you do your duty and that he must do his. Otherwise, he had better make the property over to you.

Marie.

Oh ! that is so unpleasant.

Alexandra.

I will tell him, if you like. I will tell him so straight out.

(A young priest enters, somewhat shy and nervous. He carries a book and shakes hands with all present.)

Father Vasily.

I have come to see Nicholas Ivanovich. I've – I've brought back a book.

Marie.

He has gone to town, but he will soon return.

Alexandra.

What book did he lend you?

Father Vasily.

It is Renan—yes – a book – the Life of Jesus.

Peter.

Oh ! what a book for you to read.

Alexandra.

(contemptuously.) Did Nicholas Ivanovich give you that to read? Well, do you agree with Nicholas Ivanovich, and with Monsieur Renan?

Father Vasily.

(excited> lighting a cigarette.) Yes, Nicholas Ivanovich gave it to me to read. Of course I do not agree with it. If I did I should not be, so to speak, a servant of the Church.

Alexandra.

And since you are, so to speak, a true servant of the Church, why don't you convert Nicholas Ivanovich?

Father Vasily.

Everybody, if I may say so, has his own views on these subjects. And Nicholas Ivànovich, if I may say so, says much that is true. But on the main point he is in error concerning er – er – er – the Church.

Alexandra.

And what are the true things that Nicholas Ivanovich says? Is it true that the Sermon on the Mount bids us give away our possessions to strangers, and let our family be beggars?

Father Vasily.

The family is, so to speak, held sacred in the Church, and the fathers of the Church have bestowed their blessing on the family, haven't they? But the highest perfection requires – well, yes, requires renunciation of earthly goods.

Alexandra.

That is all very well for saints, but ordinary mortals ought simply to act like good Christians.

Father Vasily.

Nobody can tell what he was sent to earth for.

Alexandra.

You are married, I suppose?

Father Vasily.

Certainly.

Alexandra.

And have you got any children?

Father Vasily.

Yes, two.

Alexandra.

Then why don't you renounce earthly joys instead of smoking cigarettes?

Father Vasily.

It is, I may say, owing to my weakness and my unworthiness that I do not.

Alexandra.

It seems to me that instead of bringing Nicholas Ivanovich to his senses, you are upholding him. I tell you frankly it is not right.

(Enter Nurse.)

Nurse.

Don't you hear baby crying? Please come to him.

Marie.

I'm coming – I'm coming. (Exit.)

Alexandra.

I am so sorry for my sister. I see how she suffers. It is no easy matter to manage a household – seven children, and one of them a baby at the breast. And he with his new-fangled theories – I really think he is not quite right here (points to her head.) Now tell me truly, what is this new religion you have discovered?

Father Vasily.

I don't quite understand, if I may say so.

Alexandra.

Please do not pretend you do not understand. You know perfectly well what I am asking.

Father Vasily.

But, pardon me –

Alexandra.

I ask you what this creed is, according to which you must shake hands with all peasants, allow them to cut down your forest, give them money for drink, and forsake your own family.

Father Vasily.

I do not know.

Alexandra.

He says it is the Christian teaching. You are a priest of the Orthodox Church. Therefore, you ought to know and ought to say whether the Christian teaching encourages stealing.

Father Vasily.

But I –

Alexandra.

Otherwise, why do you call yourself a priest, and wear long hair and a cassock?

Father Vasily.

But we are never asked such things.

Alexandra.

Really? Well I ask you? Yesterday Nicholas Ivanovich said the Gospel command is: " Give to every man that asks." How is that to be interpreted?

Father Vasily.

I think in the simplest sense.

Alexandra.

I do not think so at all. I think it means, as we were always taught, that everybody has what God has given him.

Father Vasily.

Of course, but still –

Alexandra.

It is quite evident that you are on his side. I was told you were; and it is very wrong of you, I tell you quite frankly. If it were some schoolmistress, or some boy who accepted his every word – but you, in your position, ought to understand what your responsibilities are.

Father Vasily.

I try to.

Alexandra.

How can he be called religious when he does not go to church, and does not recognise the sacraments? And you, instead of bringing him to reason, read Renan with him, and interpret the Gospel as you like.

Father Vasily.

(agitated.) I cannot answer. I am – I am –
amazed, and would rather not say anything.

Alexandra.

Oh ! if I were a bishop I would teach you to read Renan and smoke cigarettes.

Peter.

Stop, for Heaven's sake! By what right – ?

Alexandra.

Please don't lecture me. I am sure Father Vasily does not mind. Well, I have said all I had to say. It would be much worse if I had any ill-feeling. Is not that so?

Father Vasily.

Pardon me if I have expressed myself badly – pardon me. (Awkward silence.)

(Enter Luba and Lisa.)

(Luba, the daughter of Marie Ivanovna, is a –pretty, energetic girl of twenty. Lisa, the daughter of Alexandra Ivanovna, is older. Both wear shawls on their heads, and carry baskets– they are going mushrooming in the woods. They greet Alexandra Ivanovna, Peter Semenovich, and the priest.)

Luba.

Where is mother?

Alexandra.

She has just gone to nurse the baby.

Peter.

Mind you bring back plenty of mushrooms. A village girl brought some beauties this morning. I would go with you, but it is so hot.

Lisa.

Do come, father.

Alexandra.

Yes, do go. You are getting too fat.

Peter.

Very well. But I must get some cigarettes.

(Exit.)

Alexandra.

Where are all the other young people?

Luba.

Stephen has gone to the station on his bicycle; Metrofan Alexandrovich has gone to town with father; the little ones are playing croquet; and Vania is romping with the dogs in the porch.

Alexandra.

Has Stephen come to any decision?

Luba.

Yes, he is going to enlist as a volunteer. He was horribly rude to father yesterday.

Alexandra.

Well, he has a good deal to bear. Even a worm will turn. The boy wants to begin life, and he is told to go and plough.

Luba.

Alexandra.

Alexandra.

Alexandra.

Stephen.

Scene III

Luba.

Father did not say that. He said . . .

Alexandra.

It makes no difference. The boy must make a start, and whatever he

proposes is found fault with. Oh, there he is!

(Enter STEPHEN on bicycle.)

Alexandra.

Talk of an angel and you hear his wings. We were just speaking of you. Luba says that you did not speak nicely to your father yesterday.

Stephen.

Not at all. Nothing particular happened. He expressed his opinion, and I expressed mine. It is not my fault if our views do not agree. Luba understands nothing, and is always ready to criticise.

Alexandra.

What did you decide?

Stephen.

I don't know what father decided. I'm afraid he does not know himself; but I have made up my mind to join the Horse Guards as a volunteer. It is only in our house that difficulties are raised

money, but that he could not participate in a matter that was contrary to all his principles.

Stephen.

Principles have nothing to do with it. I've got to serve, and there's an end of it.

Lisa.

I only said what I heard.

Stephen.

I know. You agree with father in everything. Auntie, did you know that? Lisa is always on father's side.

Lisa.

When it is a question of justice.

Alexandra.

Oh, I know Lisa is always on the side of nonsense. She has a knack of finding it. She scents it from afar.

(Enter Vania. He runs on to the veranda in a red blouse, accompanied by the dogs, with a telegram in his hand.)

Vania.

(to Luba.) Guess who is coming!

Luba.

Why should I guess? Give me the telegram. (Stretches out her hand for it. Vania holds it out of her reach.)

Vania.

I won't give it to you, and I won't tell you. It is some one who will make you blush.

Luba.

Nonsense! Who is it from?

Vania.

Aha! You are blushing, you are! Aunt Aline, isn't it true that she's blushing?

Luba.

What nonsense! Aunt Aline, who is it from?

Alexandra.

The Cheremshanovs.

Luba.

Oh!

Vania.

"Oh!" indeed. Why are you blushing?

Luba.

Auntie, show me the telegram. (Reads.) "Arrive by mail train; all three.— Cheremsha—

novs." That means the princess, Boris, and Tonia. Well, I am very glad.

Vania.

Of course you are very glad. Stephen, see how she's blushing.

Stephen.

Oh, drop it. You keep on saying the same thing over and over again.

Vania.

You say that because you're a bit smitten by Tonia yourself. You'll have to draw lots, because sister and brother may not marry brother and sister.

Stephen.

Don't talk such rubbish. You'd better be careful. I've warned you several times.

Lisa.

If they come by the mail train they ought to be here directly.

Luba.

That's true. Then we had better not go out.

(Enter Peter Semenovich with cigarettes.)

Luba.

Uncle Peter, we are not going.

Peter.

Why?

Luba.

The Cheremshanovs will be here directly. We had better have one set at tennis before they arrive. Stephen, will you play?

Stephen.

All right.

Luba.

Vania and I against you and Lisa. Agreed? Well, then, I'll go and get the balls and call the village children. {Exit.}

Peter.

So much for my walk.

Father Vasily.

{rising to go.) Good-bye.

Alexandra.

Oh, wait a little, Father Vasily. I want to talk to you, and Nicholas Ivanovich will soon be here.

Father Vasily.

(sits down and lights another cigarette.) He may be some time yet.

Alexandra.

A carriage has just driven up; I expect it is he.

Peter.

Which Princess Cheremshanov is it? Is it possible that her maiden name was Golitsine?

Alexandra.

Yes, yes, that nice Princess Cheremshanov who lived in Rome with her aunt.

Peter.

I shall be glad to see her. I have not seen her since the time when we used to sing duets together in Rome. She sang very well. She has two children, I believe.

Alexandra.

Yes, and they are both coming with her.

Peter.

I did not know they were so intimate with the Sarintsevs.

Alexandra.

They are not intimate; but they were abroad together last year, and

I believe that the princess has designs on Luba for her son. She knows a thing or two.

Peter.

The Cheremshanovs were rich themselves.

Alexandra.

They were. The prince is still alive, but he has dissipated his fortune, and has taken to drink. She petitioned the Tsar, saved a few crumbs, and left him. But she brought up her children splendidly. The daughter is an excellent musician, and the son went through the university, and is very nice. Still I do not think Masha is particularly pleased. This is not a time for guests. Ah, there is Nicholas.

(Enter Nicholas Ivanovich.)

Nicholas.

Good morning, Aline. Hallo! Peter Semenov. (To the priest.) How do you do, Vasily Ermilovich. {He shakes hands.}

Alexandra.

There is some coffee here. Shall I pour it out? It is not very hot, but it can be warmed up. (She rings.)

Nicholas.

No, thank you. I have had breakfast. Where is Masha?

Alexandra.

She is nursing the baby.

Nicholas.

Is she well?

Alexandra.

Pretty well. Have you done all your business?

Nicholas.

Yes. I think I will have some tea or some coffee if there is any. (To the priest.) Have you brought the book? Have you read it? I have been thinking about you all the way.

{Enter footman; bows. NICHOLAS shakes hands with him.}

Alexandra.

{shrugging her shoulders, and exchanging glances with her husband.)
Pleat up the samovar, please.

Nicholas.

Never mind, Aline. I do not want anything, and if I do, I can drink
it as it is.

Missie.

{seeing her father, runs from the croquet ground, and clasps her
arms around his neck.) Father, come along.

Nicholas.

{fondling her.) Directly, directly. Let me have something to drink.
Go and play. I will come soon. {Sits down at the table, drinks tea,
and eats.)

Alexandra.

Were they found guilty?

Nicholas.

Yes. They pleaded guilty. {To the priest.) I imagine Renan did not
convince you.

Alexandra.

But you disagreed with the verdict?

Nicholas.

{annoyed.) Of course I did. {To priest.) The main question for you
lies, not in the divinity of Christ, not in the history of
Christianity, but in the Church . . .

Alexandra.

How was that? They confessed themselves: you gave them the lie. They
were not stealing, only taking .

Nicholas.

(begins speaking to the priest, then turning decidedly to Alexandra
Ivanovna.) My dear Aline, do not worry me with innuendos and
pinpricks.

Alexandra.

I am not doing anything of the sort.

Nicholas.

If you really want to know why I cannot prosecute the peasants for cutting down some trees which they badly needed.

Alexandra.

I dare say they need this samovar also.

Nicholas.

Well, if you want me to tell you why I cannot allow men to be imprisoned for felling ten trees in a wood that is considered mine. . . .

Alexandra.

Considered so by every one.

Peter.

There you are, arguing again. I shall go out with the dogs. {He leaves the veranda.}

Nicholas.

Even supposing I were to consider that wood mine—though that is impossible – we have 2,250 acres of forest, with approximately 200 trees on each – I think that makes about 450,000 in all. They felled 10 – that is t* – part. Well, is it worth while, is it possible, to drag a man away from his family and put him in prison for such a thing?

Stephen.

Well, if you don't prosecute for this – part, the rest of the 45,000 will also soon be felled.

Nicholas.

I only gave that answer in reply to your aunt. In reality, I have no right to this forest. The land belongs to all – that is, to no individual – and we personally have never done a stroke of work on it.

Stephen.

Oh, no ! You saved up, and you looked after the land.

Nicholas.

How did I get enough to save up, and when did I ever look after the forest myself? But there ! you can't prove such things to a man who feels no shame in injuring others.

Stephen.

No one is injuring others.

Nicholas.

If he is not ashamed of being idle – of living on the labour of others – it cannot be proved, and all the political economy you learnt at the university only serves to justify your position.

Stephen.

On the contrary, science destroys all prejudices.

Nicholas.

Well, that does not matter. What does matter to me is the fact that if I were in Ephim's place, I should do just what he did; and having done it I should be in despair if I were imprisoned, and therefore, since I would do unto others as I would be done by, I cannot prosecute him, and must do my best to get him oft.

Peter.

But, in that case, it is not possible to own anything.

Alexandra.

S Then it is much more profitable to steal m than to work, o

Stephen.

You never answer one's arguments. I say that he who economises has a right to use his savings.

Nicholas.

(smiling.) I do not know which of you to answer, (to Peter.) It is not possible to own anything.

Alexandra.

If that is so, one cannot have clothes or a crust of bread. One must give up everything, and life becomes impossible.

Nicholas.

It is impossible to live as we live.

Stephen.

Then we must die. Therefore that teaching is no good for life.

Nicholas.

On the contrary, it is given only for life. Yes, we must relinquish everything – not only a forest by which we profit, though we have never seen it, but we should give up our clothes and our bread even.

Alexandra.

And the children's bread also?

Nicholas.

Yes, the children's also – and not bread only – we must give up ourselves. That is the whole teaching of Christ. We must use all our efforts to give up ourselves.

Stephen.

To die, therefore?

Nicholas.

Yes, if you die for others it would be good both for yourself and for others; but the fact remains that man is not simply a spirit, but a spirit in the flesh; and the flesh impels us to live for self, while the enlightened spirit urges us to live for God, for others; and the result of this conflict makes us take a middle course. The nearer we attain to God the better. Therefore the more we try to live for God the better. The flesh will make sufficient efforts on its own account.

Stephen.

Why take a middle course? If such a life is best, then one should give up everything and die.

Nicholas.

It would be splendid. Try to do it, and you will find it good for you as well as for others.

Alexandra.

No, all this is neither clear nor simple. It is dragged in by the hair.

Nicholas.

What am I to do? I cannot make you understand. Enough of this!

Stephen.

Enough, indeed! I do not understand. {Exit.}

Nicholas.

{to the priest.) Well, what did you think of the book?

Father Vasily.

{agitated.) I hardly know what to say. The historical side is sufficiently studied, but it is hardly convincingly or satisfactorily proved – perhaps because the data are insufficient. You cannot prove the divinity or non-divinity of Christ historically. There is only one unanswerable proof. . .

{During the conversation all, one after the other, leave the room ■— first the ladies, then Stephen, and finally Peter SEMENOVICH, leaving the priest and Nicholas alone.)

Nicholas.

You mean the Church?

Father Vasily.

Yes, of course, the Church; the testimony of men – well, of truly holy men, shall we say?

Nicholas.

It would certainly be excellent if such an infallible authority existed which we could trust, and

it is desirable that it should exist. But its desirability is no proof that it does exist.

Father Vasily.

I contend that it does prove it. God could not, as it were, let His law be distorted, be badly interpreted; and He had to institute a – well – a custodian of His truths. He had to, hadn't He, to prevent the distortion of these truths?

Nicholas.

Very well; but you set out to prove the truths themselves, and now you are proving the truth of the custodians.

Father Vasily.

Well, in regard to that, we must, so to speak, believe.

Nicholas.

Believe? We cannot live without belief. We must believe, but not what others tell us; only what we are led to by the course of our own thoughts, our own reason . . . the belief in God, in the true

life everlasting.

Father Vasily.

Reason may deceive you – each man has his

Nicholas.

(warmly.) That is horrible blasphemy! God has given us one holy instrument by which to know the truth – one that can unite us all, and we distrust it!

Father Vasily.

But how can we trust it when there is so much difference of opinion – isn't there?

Nicholas.

Where is there any difference of opinion as to two and two making four; as to our not doing to others what we do not wish to be done to ourselves; as to there being a cause for everything; and such truths as these? We all recognise these truths because they are in accordance with our reason. As to such questions as what God revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai, whether or not Buddha flew away on a sunbeam, or whether Mohammed and Christ flew up to heaven – and things of that sort – we all disagree.

Father Vasily.

No, we do not all disagree. All who have the truth are united in one faith in the God Christ.

Nicholas.

You are not united then because you all differ,

own –

so why should I believe you rather than a Buddhist lama? Simply because I happened to be born in your faith?

(Sounds of dispute from the tennis-court. "Out." "No, it was not." "I saw it.")

During the conversation the Foot-MAN rearranges the table, bringing in fresh tea and coffee.)

Nicholas.

(continuing.) You say the Church gives union. But, on the contrary, the worst differences were always caused by the Church. "How often

would I have gathered Thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.”

Father Vasily.

It was so before Christ. Christ united all.

Nicholas.

Christ united us all, but we became disunited because we understood Him wrongly. He destroyed all Churches.

Father Vasily.

Then what does “ tell the Church ” mean?

Nicholas.

It is not a question of words, nor do these words apply to the Church. The whole thing is the spirit of the teaching. Christ’s teaching is universal, and contains all beliefs, and does not contain anything that is exclusive – neither the resurrection, nor the divinity of Christ, nor the sacraments – indeed, nothing that can disunite.

Father Vasily.

Well, that is your interpretation of the Christian teaching; but the Christian teaching is entirely founded on the divinity of Christ and His resurrection.

Nicholas.

That is why Churches are so horrible. They disunite by declaring that they possess the full, certain, and infallible truth – “ filling us with the Holy Ghost.” It began with the first meeting of the apostles. From that moment they began to affirm that they were possessed of full and exclusive truth. Why, if I say that there is a God, that the world began, all will agree with me, and this recognition of God will unite us; but if I say there is a god Brahma, or a Jewish god, or a Trinity – such a divinity disunites. Men want to unite and invent a means to that end, but they disregard the only certain means of union – an

aspiration after truth. It is as if in a great building, where the light falls from the roof on to the middle of the floor, men were to stand in groups in the corners instead of going into the light. If they went into the light they would, without thinking about it, be united.

Father Vasily.

But how would you guide the people without having, so to speak, a fixed truth?

Nicholas.

That is the horror of it. Each of us has his own soul to save, has God's work to do, and we are all anxious about saving and teaching others. And what do we teach them? It is simply horrible to think that at the end of the nineteenth century we are teaching that God created the world in six days, then sent a flood, putting all the animals into the Ark, and all the absurd nonsense of the Old Testament; and then that Christ ordered us to be baptised in water, or the absurdity of the redemption without which you cannot be saved; then that Christ flew away to skies which do not exist, and there sits at the right hand of God the Father. We are accustomed to all this, but really it is terrible. A pure child, open to good and truth, asks us what the world is, what its law is, and instead of teaching him the love and truth which we have believed, we carefully stuff his head with all sorts of dreadful, absurd lies and horrors, ascribing them all to God. This is awful. It is a crime that nothing can surpass. And we, and you with your Church, do all this. Forgive me.

Father Vasily.

Yes, if you look at Christ's teaching in that way – rationally, so to speak – then it is so.

Nicholas.

It is the same, no matter in what way you look at it.

{Silence, The Priest takes leave of him. Enter Alexandra Ivanovna.}

Alexandra.

Good-bye, Father Vasily. Do not listen to him ; he will lead you astray.

Father Vasily.

Oh no ! One must put the Gospel to the test. It is too important a matter to be neglected, isn't it?

(Exit.)

Alexandra.

Really, Nicholas, you have no pity on him. Though he is a priest, he is little more than a

boy. He cannot have settled convictions; he cannot be steadfast.

Nicholas.

Are we to let him become confirmed in them, to harden in deceit? Why

should we? Ah, he is a good, sincere man.

Alexandra.

Well, what would happen to him were he to believe you ?

Nicholas.

It is not a question of believing me; but if he could see the truth it would be well for him and for every one.

Alexandra.

If it were really well, all would believe you. As it is, we see just the contrary. No one believes you – your wife least of all. She cannot believe you.

Nicholas.

Who told you so?

Alexandra.

Well, explain all this to Masha. She never understood and never will, and no one in the world ever will, understand why you should take care of strangers and neglect your own children. Explain that to Masha.

Nicholas.

Masha is sure to understand. Forgive me, Aline, but if it were not for outside influences, to which she is so susceptible, she would understand me and go hand-in-hand with me.

Alexandra.

To deprive her own children for the drunken Ephim and Co.? Never. As for your being angry with me, you will excuse me, but I cannot help speaking. . . .

Nicholas.

I am not angry. On the contrary, I am very glad that you said all you had to say, and gave me the opportunity of giving all my own views. I thought it over on my way to-day, and I am going to tell her at once, and you will see that she will agree, for she is both wise and good.

Alexandra.

You will allow me to have my doubts.

Nicholas.

Well, I have none. This is no invention of mine: it is what we all know, and what Christ revealed to us.

Alexandra.

You think He revealed this? I think He revealed something quite different.

Nicholas.

There can be nothing different. Just listen. Do not argue; listen to me.

Alexandra.

I am listening.

Nicholas.

You admit that at any minute we may die and return to nothingness or to God, who demands that we should live according to His will.

Alexandra.

Well ?

Nicholas.

Well, what else am I to do in this life but that which the highest Judge that is in my soul – my conscience, God – demands? My conscience, God, demands that I should consider all men equal, should love and serve all.

Alexandra.

Your children among the rest.

Nicholas.

Of course; but I must do everything my conscience dictates. The most important thing of all is to recognise that my life does not belong to me, nor yours to you, but to God, who sent us and requires us to live according to His will. And His will . . .

Alexandra.

And you will convince Masha of this?

Nicholas.

Certainly.

Alexandra.

She will cease to educate her children as she should and will desert them? Never.

Nicholas. •

Not only she; you too will understand that that is the only thing to do.

Alexandra.

Never !

(Enter Marie Ivanovna.)

Nicholas.

Well, Masha, I hope I did not wake you up this morning.

Marie.

No, I was not asleep. Did you have a pleasant journey?

Nicholas.

Yes, very pleasant.

Marie.

Why are you drinking that cold tea? Anyhow, we must have some fresh made for our guests. You know that Princess Cheremshanova is coming with her son and daughter.

Nicholas.

If you are pleased, so am I.

Marie.

Yes. I am very fond of her and of her children, but it is hardly the moment for visitors.

Alexandra.

Well, have a talk with him, and I will go and watch the game.

(A silence, after which Marie Ivanovna and Nicholas Ivanovich both speak at once.)

Marie.

It is hardly the moment, because we must talk things over.

Nicholas.

I was just telling Aline.

Marie.

What?

Nicholas.

No; you speak.

Marie.

Well, I wanted to talk to you about Stephen. Something must be decided. The poor boy is in suspense, does not know what is going to happen, and comes to me; but how can I decide?

Nicholas.

How can any one decide? He can decide for himself.

Marie.

Why, you know he wants to enter the Guards as a volunteer, and he cannot do it without a certificate from you, and he must have money, and you give him nothing (agitated.)

Nicholas.

Masha, for heaven's sake do not get agitated, and listen to me. I neither give nor refuse. To enter the military service voluntarily I consider foolish madness, such as only a savage is capable of. If he does not understand the meanness, the baseness of such an action, or if he does it out of self-interest –

Marie.

Oh, everything seems mad and foolish to you now. He wants to live – you have lived.

Nicholas.

(hotly.) I lived without understanding, with no one to tell me. But it depends on him now – not on me.

Marie.

But it does depend on you, when you give him no money.

Nicholas.

I cannot give what does not belong to me.

Marie.

What do you mean by " does not belong to me" ?

Nicholas.

The labour of others does not belong to me. To give him money, I must take from others. I have no right to; I cannot. So long as I am the master of the estate I cannot dispose of it otherwise than as my conscience dictates. I cannot spend the labour of peasants, which costs them their whole strength, on the drinking-bouts of a hussar. Take the estate from me; then I shall not be responsible.

Marie.

You know I do not want that, and I cannot do it. I have to educate the children, to nurse them, to bring them into the world. It is cruel.

Nicholas.

Dearest Masha, that is not the point. When you began to speak, I began also, and I wanted so to talk frankly to you. All this is impossible. We live together, and do not understand each other; sometimes it seems as though we misunderstood each other on purpose.

Marie.

I want to understand you, but I cannot. I cannot understand what has come over you.

Nicholas.

Then try to understand now. It is hardly the moment, but heaven knows when there will be a moment. Try to understand not only me, but yourself and your own life. We cannot go on living without knowing what we live for.

Marie.

We lived so before, and we lived very well (noting an expression of displeasure on his face.) – All right; I am listening.

Nicholas.

I used to live thus, thus – that is to say, without thinking why I lived; but the time came when I was aghast. We live on the labour of others, we make others work for us, we bring children into the world, and educate them for the same thing. Old age, death, will come, and I shall

ask myself: "What did I live for? To produce parasites like myself?"

Besides, this life is not even amusing. It is only tolerable when one is overflowing with the energy of life, like Vania.

Marie.

Every one lives like that.

Nicholas.

And every one is unhappy.

Marie.

Not at all.

Nicholas.

I, at least, discovered that I was terribly unhappy, and that I was causing you and the children to be unhappy, and I asked myself: "Is it possible that God created you for this?" And directly I thought that, I felt that the answer was "No." Then I asked myself: "What did God create us for?"

(// footman enters. Marie Ivanovna does not listen to her husband, but speaks to the footman.)

Marie.

Bring some hot milk.

Nicholas.

I found the answer in the Gospel: we do not live for ourselves at all. It was revealed to me clearly once when I was thinking over the parable of the labourers in the vineyard. Do you remember it?

Marie.

Yes; I know the labourers.

Nicholas.

Somehow or other that parable showed me my mistake more clearly than anything. I had believed that my life was my own just as those labourers believed that the vineyard was theirs, and everything was terrible to me. But as soon as I realised that my life was not my own, that I was sent into the world to do the work of God –

Marie.

What of that? We all know that.

Nicholas.

Well, if we know it, we cannot continue to live as we do, when we know our whole life is not a fulfilment of this will, but, on the contrary, is in perpetual contradiction to it.

Marie.

In what way is it a contradiction when we do no harm to any one?

Nicholas.

How can you say we do no harm to any one? That is exactly the conception of life that the labourers in the vineyard had. We –

Marie.

Oh, yes; I know the parable. Well, what of it? He gave them all the same portion.

Nicholas.

(after a silence.) No; that is not it. But think of this, Masha; we have only one life, and it is in our power to live it devoutly or to ruin it.

Marie.

I cannot think and discuss. I get no sleep at night; I am nursing baby. I manage the whole household, and instead of helping me you keep on telling me things I do not understand.

Nicholas.

Masha !

Marie.

And now these visitors are arriving.

Nicholas.

But we will talk it out to the end, shall we not? (He kisses her.)
Yes?

Marie.

Yes. But do be your former self.

Nicholas.

That I cannot. But listen to me –

(The sound of approaching car-riage bells and wheels is heard.)

Marie.

There is no time now – they have arrived. I must go to them.

(Disappears round the corner of the house followed by Stephen and Luba. Alexandra Ivanovna and her husband and Lisa come on to the veranda. Nicholas Ivanovich walks about in deep thought.)

Vania.

(jumping over a bench.) I don't give in; we'll finish the game!
Well, Luba?

Luba.

(seriously.) No nonsense, please!

Alexandra.

Well, have you convinced her?

Nicholas.

Aline, what is going on between us now is serious, and jokes are quite out of place. It is not I who am convincing her, but life, truth, God. Therefore she cannot help being convinced – if not to-day, then to-morrow; if not to-morrow – The worst of it all is that no one ever has time. Who has come?

Peter.

The Cheremshanovs—Katia Cheremshanova, whom I have not seen for eighteen years. The last time we met we sang together: " La ei darem la mano." {He sings.)

Alexandra.

{to her husband.) Please do not interfere, and do not imagine that I have quarrelled with Nicholas. I am speaking the truth. {To NICHOLAS.) I was not joking in the least, but it seemed so strange that you wanted to convince Masha at the very moment when she wanted to talk matters over with you.

Nicholas.

Very well, very well. Here they are. Please tell Masha that I am in my room. {Exit.)

ACT II

Scene I

Same place in the country. Time: One week later.

{Scene represents large drawingroom. Table is laid with samovar, tea

and coffee. Piano against the wall, music-rack.

Marie Ivanovna, the Princess, and Peter Semenovich are seated at the table.)

Peter.

Yes, Princess. It does not seem so long ago that you used to sing Eosine, and I . . . Whereas now I should not even do for a Don Basilio.

Princess.

Now the children might sing, but times have altered.

Peter.

Yes, they are positivists. But I hear your daughter is a very serious and excellent musician. Are they still asleep?

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Marie.

Yes, they went out riding by moonlight and returned very late. I was nursing baby and heard them.

Peter.

And when does my better half return? Have you sent the carriage for her?

Marie.

Yes, it went a long time ago. She ought to be here soon.

Princess.

Did Alexandra Ivanovna really go with the sole purpose of fetching Father Gerasim?

Marie.

Yes, the thought suddenly struck her yesterday, and she flew off at once.

Princess.

What energy! I admire it.

Peter.

Oh, as to that, it never fails us. (Takes out a cigar.) Well, I think I'll take a turn in the park with the dogs and smoke while the young people are getting up.

Princess.

I don't know, dear Marie Ivanovna, but I really think you take it too much to heart. I understand him. He is full of such high aspiration. What does it matter if he does give his property away to the poor? It's only too true that we all think too much of ourselves.

Marie.

Oh, if it were only that. But you don't know him – you do not know all. It is not only helping the poor. It is a complete change – the utter wrecking of everything.

Princess.

I certainly do not wish to intrude into your family life, but if you would allow me

Marie.

But I look on you as one of the family, especially now.

Princess.

I should just advise you to put your demands plainly before him, and openly come to some agreement with him as to the limits –

Marie.

(agitated.) There are no limits ! He wishes to

give everything away. He wants me at my age to become a cook – a laundress.

Princess.

Oh, impossible ! How extraordinary !

Marie.

{taking out a letter.} Now we are quite alone; I should like to tell you everything. Yesterday he wrote me this letter. I will read it to you.

Princess.

What! living in the same house with you, he writes you letters? How strange!

Marie.

Oh, no. I quite understand. He gets so excited when he talks I have been feeling anxious about his health lately.

Princess.

Well, what does he write?

Marie.

Listen. (She reads.) " You reproach me for destroying our former life without offering you anything else or saying how I intend to provide for my family. When we begin to talk we both get excited, so I am writing instead. I have told you many times why I can't go on living as I have done. And as for trying to convince you that it-is wrong to live as we have been accustomed to do, that we must lead a Christian life, I cannot do that in a letter. You can do one of two things —either believe in truth and liberty and go with me, or believe in me, give yourself trustfully to me, and follow me." (Stops reading.) But I can do neither of these things! I do not believe that I ought to live as he desires, and moreover I love the children and I cannot trust him. (Continues to read.) " My plan is this. We will give all our land to the peasants, leaving ourselves fifty acres and the kitchen garden and the flooded meadow. We will try to work, but we will not force ourselves or our children to work. What we reserve for ourselves will bring in about five hundred roubles * a year."

Princess.

It is impossible to live on five hundred roubles a year with seven children.

Marie.

Well, and then he goes on to say that we will give up our house for a school and live in the gardener's cottage, in two rooms.

*A rouble = about 28.

Princess.

Yes, I really begin to think that he's not well. What have you answered?

Marie.

I told him I could not agree to it. That, were I alone, I would follow him anywhere. But with the children . . . Just think —I am nursing little Nicholas. I told him it was impossible to break up everything like that. Was this what I married him for? I am already old and feeble. It is not an easy matter to bring nine children into the world and nurse them.

Princess.

I never dreamt it had gone so far!

Marie.

Well, that is how matters stand, and I can't imagine what will become of us. Yesterday he remitted the entire rent of the peasants from Dmitrovka, and he intends to give that land to them outright.

Princess.

I really think you ought not to permit that. It is our duty to protect our children. If he cannot own his estate himself, let him give it to you.

Marie.

I don't want it.

Princess.

But it is your duty to retain it, for the sake of your children. Let him make it over to you.

Marie.

My sister suggested that to him, but he said he had no right to dispose of it, as the land belonged to those who tilled it, and it was his duty to give it to the peasants.

Princess.

Yes, I see it is really much more serious than I thought.

Marie.

And fancy! our priest is on his side.

Princess.

I noticed that yesterday.

Marie.

Now my sister has gone to Moscow to consult a lawyer, and above all to bring Father Gerasim back with her to see if he has any influence with him.

Princess.

I do not think that Christianity consists in ruining one's own family.

Marie.

But he will not trust Father Gerasim. He is too far confirmed in his convictions, and you know when he talks I can find no arguments to use against him. The worst of it is – I believe he is right.

Princess.

That is only because you love him.

Marie.

I do not know why, but it is dreadful, dreadful. Everything remains unsettled. That's what religion does!

(Enter Nurse.)

Nurse.

Please, ma'am, the baby is awake and wants you.

Marie.

I will come in a moment. I am worried, and the baby has colic, you see. I am coming.

(Exit Princess.)

(From the other side enters Nicholas with a paper in his hand.)

Nicholas.

It is incredible !

Marie.

What is the matter?

Nicholas.

The matter is just this, that for a pine tree of ours, Peter is to go to jail.

Marie.

But why?

Nicholas.

Because he felled it. They took the matter to court, and he is sentenced to a month's imprisonment. His wife came to implore me –

Marie.

Well, can't you help her?

Nicholas.

I cannot now. The only thing to do is not to own any forest; and I will not! I will just go and see if I can help in the trouble of which I myself have been the cause.

(Enter Luba and Boris.)

Luba.

Good morning, father. (Kisses him.) Where are you going?

Nicholas.

I have just come from the village and I'm now on my way back. A hungry man is being put in jail for –

Luba.

It's probably Peter.

Nicholas.

Yes – Peter.

{Exeunt Nicholas and Marie Ivanovna.}

Luba.

{sitting down before the samovar.} Will you take coffee or tea?

Boris.

I do not care.

Luba.

Things are just as they were. I cannot see how it will end.

Boris.

I do not quite understand him. I know the peasants are poor and ignorant, that it's our duty to help them. But not by showing favour to thieves.

Luba.

But how?

Boris.

By everything we do. We must dedicate all our knowledge to them, but we cannot give up our life.

Luba.

Father says that Is just what we must do.

Boris.

I do not see why. It is quite possible to help the people without ruining one's own life, and that is what I intend doing myself. If only you –

Luba.

Your wishes are mine. And I am not afraid of anything.

Boris.

But what about your ear-rings, and your dress? Luba.

The ear-rings we can sell, and as for the frock, I might dress differently without being altogether ugly.

Boris.

I want to have another talk with him. Do you think I should be in his way if I went to the village?

Luba.

I'm sure you wouldn't. I can see he is very fond of you. Yesterday he talked to you nearly all the time.

Boris.

Then I'll go.

Luba.

Yes, do. And I'll go and wake up Lisa and Tonia.

{Exit on different sides.}

Scene II

Village street. The peasant I VAN ZLABREV is lying on the ground at a cottage door, with a sheepskin coat over him.

Ivan.

Malashka !

(From behind the cottage comes a little girl with a baby in her

arms. The baby cries.)

I want a drink of water.

(Malashka goes into the cottage. The baby is heard crying still. She brings a jug of water.)

Why do you hit the baby and make him howl? I'll tell your mother.

Malashka.

Do tell mother! Baby's howling because he's hungry.

Ivan.

(drinking.) Why don't you go and get some milk at Demkin's?

Malashka.

I have been. They haven't got any, and there was not a soul at home.

Ivan.

Oh, I wish Death would come quicker. Has the dinner bell rung?

Malashka.

(screaming at the top of her voice.) Yes, it has rung! There's the master coming!

(Enter Nicholas.)

Nicholas.

Why are you lying out here?

Ivan.

There are flies there. And it's too hot.

Nicholas.

Have you got warm then?

Ivan.

I feel as if I were on fire now.

. Nicholas.

Where is Peter? At home?

Ivan.

How could he be, at this hour? He's gone to the fields to bring in the sheaves.

Nicholas.

I was told he had been arrested.

Ivan.

That's quite true. The policeman has gone to the field after him.

(Enter a -pregnant Woman, with a sheaf of oats and a pitchfork, and immediately hits Malashka over the head.)

Woman.

Why did you go away from the baby? Do listen to him screaming. You only think of running out in the road.

Malashka.

(crying loudly.) I just came out to give father a drink of water.

Woman.

I'll give it you. (Sees Nicholas Ivanovich.) Good-day, Nicholas. Ivanovich. You see what they are all bringing me to! There's no one but me to do anything, and I'm worn out. Now they're taking our very last man to jail, and this lazy lout is lying about doing nothing.

Nicholas.

Why do you say that? You can see he is ill.

Woman.

Ill, indeed. What about me? When there's

work to be done then He s sick, uui <*_ _____

go on the spree and knock me about, he's well enough. Let him die like a dog. I don't care.

Nicholas.

How sinful to talk like that !

Woman.

I know it's a sin. But my temper gets the better of me. Look how I am, and I have to work for two. All the others have got their oats in, and a quarter of our field isn't cut yet. I ought not to have stopped, but I had to come home and see after the children.

Nicholas.

I will have your oats cut for you and will send some binders out to your field.

Woman.

Oh, I can manage the binding myself, if we can only get it cut. Oh, Nicholas Ivanovich, do you think he's going to die? He's very low indeed.

Nicholas.

I'm sure I don't know; but he's certainly very weak. I think he had better be taken to the hospital.

Woman.

Oh, my God! (Begins to weep loudly.)

Don't take him away. Let him die here. (To 'j. the husband.) What did you say?

Ivan.

I want to go to hospital. I'm lying here worse than a dog.

Woman.

Oh, I don't know what to do ! I shall go mad ! Malashka, get dinner!

Nicholas.

And what have you got for dinner?

Woman.

Some potatoes and bread. That's all we've got. (Goes into cottage, the sounds of a pig squealing and children crying are heard.)

Ivan.

(groaning.) Oh, God, if Death would come!

(Enter Boris.)

Boris.

Can't I be of any use here!

Nicholas.

No one can be of any use here. The evil is too deeply rooted. We can only be of use to ourselves by realising on what foundations we

build our happiness. Here is a family – five children– the wife pregnant, the husband ill, and nothing in the house to eat but potatoes. And at this moment it is a question whether they will have food for next year. And there is no help for them. How can one help? I am going to hire a man to work for them. But who will that man be? A man as badly off as they are, who has given up tilling his own land through drunkenness or poverty.

Boris.

Excuse me, but if that is the case, why are you here?

Nicholas.

I am trying to ascertain my own position; to know who looks after our gardens, builds our houses, makes our clothes, feeds and dresses us.

(Peasants with scythes and Women with pitchforks pass them. They bow to the master.)

Nicholas.

(stopping one of them.) Ephraim, can you take the job of cutting Ivan's oats for him?

Ephraim.

(shaking his head.) I'd do it gladly, but I can't. I haven't got my own in yet. I'm just hurrying off to do it now. Why? Is Ivan dying?

Another Peasant.

There's old Sebastian. Maybe he can take the job. Sebastian ! They want a man to reap.

Sebastian.

Take the job yourself if you want it. One day may mean the whole year in such weather as this.

Nicholas.

(to Boris.) All those men are half-starved, many of them ill or old, living on bread and water. Look at that old man. He suffers from rupture – and he works from four in the morning till ten at night, and is barely alive. And we – now, is it possible, when we once understand this, to go on living quietly and calling ourselves Christians? Can we call ourselves anything short of beasts?

Boris.

But what are we to do?

Nicholas.

Not be a party to evil. Not possess land. Not feed upon their toil. How this can be managed I do not know. The thing is – at least so it was with me. I lived and did not understand what sort of life I led. I didn't understand that I was a son of God and that we were all sons of God and all brothers. But when I came to understand that, when I saw that all had equal claims on life, my whole life was changed. I cannot explain it very well to you, I can only say that before, I was blind, just as my family still are, but now my eyes are opened I cannot help seeing. And, seeing, I cannot go on living as before. But, of course, for the present we must do as best we can.

(Enter Police-Sergeant, with Peter, and his wife and a boy.)

Peter.

(falling on his knees before Nicholas Ivano- ' vieil.) Forgive me, for Christ's sake. I'm done for! My wife can't get along alone. Can't you let me go on bail?

Nicholas.

I will see about it. I will write. (To the Police-Sergeant.) Couldn't you let him stay here meanwhile?

Sergeant.

I have orders to take him to the police-station. Nicholas.

Go then; I will hire a labourer. I will do all that is possible. This is my fault. How can one live like this?

(Exit.)

Scene III

Same as Scene I. It is raining outside. Drawing-room with a piano. Tonia has just finished playing the Schumann Sonata, and is still sitting at the piano. Stephen stands near the piano. After the music, Luba, Lisa, Anna Ivanovna, Mitrofan Dmitrich and the Priest are all greatly moved.

Luba.

The Andante is so lovely.

Stephen.

No – the Scherzo! But the whole thing is charming.

Lisa.

Beautiful !

Stephen.

{to Tonia.} I had no idea you were such an artist. Your rendering is masterly. Difficulties do not seem to exist for you, you only think of the expression, and it is so exquisitely delicate.

Luba.

So noble, too!

Tonia.

I feel it is not what I want it to be. There's a great deal lacking in my playing.

Lisa.

It could not be better. It is marvellous.

Luba.

Schumann is very great. But I think Chopin appeals to the heart more.

Stephen.

He is more lyrical.

Tonia.

I do not think a comparison is possible.

Luba.

Do you remember that Prelude of his?

Tonia.

Do you mean the so-called George Sand one?

(Begins to play.)

Luba.

No, not that one. That is lovely, but it is hackneyed. Please play this one.

(Tonia tries to play, but breaks off and stops.)

Luba.

No, the one in D minor.

Tonia.

Oh, this one. It is wonderful. It is like chaos before the Creation.

Stephen.

{laughs.} Yes, yes! Do play it. No, better not – you are tired. We have already had a wonderful morning, thanks to you.

(Tonia rises and looks out of the window.)

Tonia.

There are the peasants again.

Luba.

That's what is so precious in music. I understand Saul. I'm not tormented by the devil, but I know how Saul felt. There's no art that can make one forget everything like music.

Tonia.

And yet you are going to marry a man who doesn't understand music.

Luba.

Oh, but – Boris does understand it.

Boris.

(absent-minded.) Music!—Yes, I like music. But it isn't important. And I am rather sorry for the life that people lead who attach so much importance to it.

(There are sweets on the table and they all eat.)

Luba.

How nice to be engaged! Then one always has sweets.

Boris.

Oh, it is not I – it's mother.

Tonia.

Very nice of her. (Goes to the window.) Whom do you want to see? The

peasants have come to see Nicholas Ivanovich.

Luba.

(going to the window.) He is not at home. Wait.

Tonia.

And what about poetry?

Luba.

No, the value of music is that it takes hold of you, and carries you away from reality. We were all so gloomy just now, and when you began to play, everything brightened. It did really. Take the waltzes of Chopin. They're hackneyed, of course, but –

Tonia.

This one? (She plays.)

Scene IV

(Enter Nicholas. He greets Tonia, Luba, Stephen, and Lisa.)

Nicholas.

(to Luba.) Where's Mother?

Luba.

I think she is in the nursery. Father, how wonderfully Tonia plays. Where have you been?

Nicholas.

In the village.

(Stephen calls the footman, who enters.)

Stephen.

Bring another samovar.

Nicholas.

(shakes hands with footman.) Good morning!

(Footman confused. Exit. Exit also Nicholas.)

Stephen.

Poor chap! He's so embarrassed. He doesn't understand. It's as if we were all guilty somehow.

Nicholas.

(re-enters.) I was going to my room without telling you what I felt. I think it was wrong of me. (To Tonia.) If you, who are our guest, are hurt by what I am going to say, please forgive me, as I must speak. You said just now, Luba, that Tonia played well. Here you are, seven or eight healthy young men and women. You slept till ten o'clock. Then you had food and drink, and you are still eating, and you play and discuss music. And there, where I have just come from, the people are up at three in the morning. Some have not slept at all, having watched the cattle all night, and all of them, even the old, the sick, and the children, and the women with babies at the breast and those who are about to have children, work with their utmost strength, that we may enjoy the fruits of their labour. And as if that were not enough, one of them, the only worker in the family, is just now being dragged to prison because in the spring he cut down a pine-tree in the forest which is called mine – one of the hundred thousand that grow there. Here we are, washed and dressed, having left all our uncleanness in the bedrooms for slaves to carry away. Eating, drinking, or discussing, which touches us more – Schumann or Chopin– and which of them drives away our ennui the more effectually.

That is what I thought on seeing you all just now, and so tell you. Just think whether it is possible to go on like that! (Standing in great agitation.)

Lisa.

It is true – quite true.

Luba.

Thinking as you do, life is impossible.

Stephen.

Why is it impossible? I don't see why we shouldn't talk about Schumann even though the peasants are poor. The one doesn't exclude the other. If men –

Nicholas.

(angrily.) If a man has no heart and is made of wood –

Stephen.

Well, I will be silent.

Tonia.

This problem is terrible. And it is the problem of our time. We must not be afraid of it. We must look reality in the face in order to

solve

Nicholas.

There is no time to wait for the problem to be solved by concerted action. Each of us may die to-day or to-morrow. How am I to live without suffering from this inner conflict.

Boris.

Of course the only way is not to share in the evil.

Nicholas.

Well, forgive me if I have hurt you. I could not help saying what I felt. (Exit.)

Stephen.

How could we avoid sharing in it? Our whole life is bound up with it.

Boris.

That is exactly why he says that in the first place one ought not to possess property, and one's whole life should be so altered that one may serve others, and not be served by them.

Tonia.

Oh, I see you are quite on Nicholas Ivanovich's side.

Boris.

Yes, I begin to understand for the first time; and, besides, all I saw in the village. We have only to take off the spectacles through which we are accustomed to view the life of the peasants, to see how their misery is connected with our pleasures, and there you are.

Mitrofan.

But the remedy is not to ruin our own lives.

Stephen.

Isn't it extraordinary how Mitrofan Ermilovich and I, standing at opposite poles, agree on some points? Those are my exact words: not to ruin our own lives.

Boris.

It's perfectly simple. You both want a pleasant life, and so you want to adopt a plan of living that will ensure it. You {turning to Stephen) would like to preserve present conditions, and Mitrofan

Ermilovich wants new ones.

(Luba speaks under her breath to Tonia. Tonia goes to the piano and plays a Chopin Nocturne. All are silent.)

Stephen.

That is beautiful. That solves all problems.

Boris.

It only obscures them, and delays their solution.

(During the music enter silently Marie Ivanovna and the Princess. They sit down and listen. Before the end of the Nocturne carriage bells are heard.)

Luba.

Oh, that is Auntie !

{Goes to meet her. Music continues. Enter Alexandra Ivanovna and a lawyer and Father Gerasim with his pectoral cross. All present rise.}

Father Gerasim.

Pray continue. It is very pleasant.

(The Princess and Father Vasily go up to him and ask his blessing.)

Alexandra.

I have done what I said I would. I found Father Gerasim and persuaded him to come with me. He is going to Kursk. So I have done my part. And here is the lawyer. He has the papers all ready to sign.

Marie.

Would you not like to have some luncheon?

{The Lawyer lays his -papers on the table and goes.}

I am very grateful to Father Gerasim.

Father Gerasim.

What else could I do? It was not on my way, but my Christian duty bade me come.

(Princess whispers to the young people. They all talk among themselves, and go out on the veranda, except Boris. Father Vasily rises to go.)

Father Gerasim.

Stay with us. You as a spiritual father, and the pastor here, may derive some benefit and be of use. Stay, if Marie Ivanovna does not object.

Marie.

Oh, no. Father Vasily is like one of the family to me. I consulted him as well, but being young, he lacks authority.

Father Gerasim.

Undoubtedly, undoubtedly.

Alexandra.

{approaching him.) Now, you see, Father Gerasim, you are the only one that can help us and persuade him to see reason. He is a clever man and a learned man; but you know yourself, learning can only do harm. He does not see clearly somehow. He persists in saying that the Christian command is to have no possessions. But is that possible?

Father Gerasim.

It is all a snare, intellectual pride, self-will. The fathers of the Church have settled that question adequately. But how did it all come about?

Marie.

To be quite frank with you, I must say that when we married he was indifferent to religious questions, and we lived the first twenty years of our life happily. Then he began to think about these things. His sister may, perhaps, have influenced him, or his reading. But at any rate he began to think, to read the Gospel, and then all at once he became very pious, going to church, visiting monks, and then he suddenly stopped all that, and changed his life completely. Now he does everything for himself, he permits none of the servants to do anything for him, and, worst of all, he is giving away all his property.

Yesterday he gave away his forest and the land attached to it. I am afraid. I have seven children. Do talk to him. I'll go and ask whether he will see you. (Exit.)

Father Gerasim.

Yes, nowadays, many are leaving the Church. What about the property? Does it belong to him or his wife?

Alexandra.

It is his own. That is the worst of it.

Father Gerasim.

And what is his rank.

Princess.

Not a high one. I think he is a captain. He has been in the army.

FATHER Gerasim.

Many are leaving the Church nowadays. In Odessa there was a lady who became infatuated with spiritualism, and she began to do a lot of harm. But finally God prevailed, and brought her again within the Church.

Princess.

Now, father, you must understand. My son is going to marry their daughter. I have given my consent. But the girl is used to a life of luxury, and she must have means of her own so that the entire burden may not fall upon my son. I must say he works hard, and he is a remarkable young man.

(Enter Marie Ivanovna and Nicholas Ivanovich.)

Nicholas.

How do you do, Princess? How do you do? Pardon me – I do not know your name. (To Father Gerasim.)

Father Gerasim.

Do you not wish for a blessing?

Nicholas.

No, I do not.

Father Gerasim.

I am Gerasim Feodorovich. Pleased to meet you.

(Footman brings refreshments and wine.)

It is fine weather, and very favourable for harvesting.

Nicholas.

I understand you have come on the invitation of Alexandra Ivanovna to convince me of my

errors, and to lead me into the right way. If that is the case, do not let us beat about the bush. Let us come to the point. I do not deny that I disagree with the teaching of the Church. I used to believe in it, but I have ceased to do so. Nevertheless, I long with my whole soul to be in harmony with the truth, and if you can show it to me, I will accept it without hesitation.

Father Gerasim.

How can you say you do not believe the teaching of the Church? What are we to believe if not the Church?

Nicholas.

God, and his law, given to us in the Gospel.

Father Gerasim.

The Church instructs us in that very law.

Nicholas.

If that were so, I would believe the Church. But the Church teaches the very opposite.

Father Gerasim.

The Church cannot teach the opposite, for it is founded by our Lord. It is said, " I give you the power, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."

Nicholas.

That refers to something quite different. But, supposing that Christ did found a church. How do I know that it is your Church?

Father Gerasim.

Because it is said, " Where two or three are gathered together in My name —"

Nicholas.

That does not apply either, and does not prove anything.

Father Gerasim.

How can you renounce the Church, when the Church alone possesses grace?

Nicholas.

I did not renounce the Church until I was wholly convinced that it supports all that is contrary to Christianity.

Father Gerasim.

The Church cannot err, because she alone possesses the truth. Those err who leave her. The Church is sacred.

Nicholas.

But I have told you I do not admit that, because the Gospel says, "Ye shall know them by

their fruits." And I perceive that the Church gives her sanction to oath-taking and murder and executions.

Father Gerasim.

The Church admits and consecrates the powers instituted by God.

(During the conversation enter one by one Luba, Lisa, Stephen, Tonia, and Boris, who sit or stand and listen.)

Nicholas.

I know that not only killing but anger is forbidden by the Gospel. And the Church gives its blessing to the army. The Gospel says, "Do not swear," and the Church administers oaths. The Gospel says –

Father Gerasim.

Excuse me – when Pilate said, "I ask you in the name of the living God," Christ accepted the oath, and said, "Yes, that I am."

Nicholas.

Oh, what are you saying? That is simply ridiculous !

Father Gerasim.

That is why the Church does not permit individuals to interpret the Gospel. She would preserve men from error, and she cares for them as a mother for her children. She gives them an interpretation befitting the powers of their mind. No! Allow me to finish. The Church does not give her children a burden heavier than they can bear. She requires only that they fulfil the commandments. Love, do not kill, do not steal, do not commit adultery.

Nicholas.

Yes. Do not kill me, do not steal from me what I have stolen. We have all robbed the people, have stolen their land, and then we instituted the law against stealing. And the Church sanctions it all.

Father Gerasim.

That is all a snare, mere spiritual pride speaking in you. You want to show off your intellect.

Nicholas.

Not at all! I merely ask you, how, according to the law of Christ, am I to behave now, when I have recognised the sin of robbing the people and appropriating their land! What must I do? Go on holding my land, exploiting the labour of the starving peasants, just for this? (He points to the servant who is bringing in lunch and wine.) Or am I to give back the land to those who have been robbed by my ancestors?

Father Gerasim.

You must act as a son of the Church should act. You have a family, children, and must bring them up as befits their station.

Nicholas.

Why must I?

Father Gerasim.

Because God has placed you in that station. And if you want to do charitable acts, then perform them by giving away part of your fortune, and by visiting the poor.

Nicholas.

Then why was it said that the rich man could not enter the kingdom of heaven?

Father Gerasim.

It was said, if he desired to be perfect.

Nicholas.

But I do want to be perfect. It is said in the Gospel, " Be ye perfect even as your Father in Heaven is perfect."

Father Gerasim.

But one must understand to what it applies.

Nicholas.

That is exactly what I am trying to understand, and all that was said in the Sermon on the Mount is simple and clear.

Father Gerasim.

It is all spiritual pride.

Nicholas.

Why pride, if it is said that what is hidden from the wise shall be revealed to babes?

Father Gerasim.

It will be revealed to the humble not to the proud.

' Nicholas.

But who is proud? Is it I, who think that I am like the rest, and therefore must live like the rest, live by my labour, and in the same poverty as all my brothers, or is it they who consider themselves apart from the rest, as the priests who think they know the whole truth, and cannot err, and interpret the words of Christ to suit themselves?

Father Gerasim.

(offended.) I beg your pardon, Nicholas Ivanovich, I have not come to argue as to who is right.

I did not come to be lectured. I complied with the wish of Alexandra Ivanovna, and came to have a talk. But you appear to know everything better than I, so the conversation had better cease. But I beseech you for the last time, in the name of God, to reconsider the matter. You are terribly wrong, and will lose your own soul.

Marie.

Won't you come and have something to eat?

Father Gerasim.

Thank you very much. (Accepts.)

(Exit with Anna Ivanovna.)

Marie.

(to Father Vasily.) What is the result of your talk?

Father Vasily.

Well, my opinion is that Nicholas Ivanovich spoke truly, and Father Gerasim brought no arguments against what he said.

Princess.

Fie was not allowed to speak. And then he did not like it. It became a sort of wordy tournament, with everybody listening. He withdrew

out of modesty.

Boris.

It was not at all from modesty. Everything he said was false, and he obviously had nothing more to say.

Princess.

Oh, I see. With your usual fickleness you are beginning to agree with Nicholas Ivanovich. If those are your opinions you ought not to marry.

Boris.

I only say that truth is truth. I cannot help saying it.

Princess.

You are the last person who ought to speak like that.

Boris.

Why?

Princess.

Because you are poor, and have nothing to give away. However, the whole affair is no concern of ours. (Exit.)

(After her all except Nicholas and Marie Ivanovna go out.)

Nicholas.

(sits deep in thought and smiles meditatively.) Masha, what is all this about? Why did you

ask that miserable, misguided man to come here? Why should that noisy woman and this priest take part in the most intimate questions of our life? Couldn't we settle all our affairs between ourselves ?

Marie.

But what can I do if you wish to leave our children with nothing? I cannot sit still and let you do that. You know it is not greed—I do not want anything for myself.

Nicholas.

I know, I know. I trust you. But the misfortune is that you do not believe. I don't mean that you don't believe the truth. I know you see it; but you cannot bring yourself to trust it. You do not trust the truth, and you do not trust me. You would rather trust the crowd — the princess and the rest.

Marie.

I trust you; I have always trusted you. But when you want to make our children beggars –

Nicholas.

That proves that you do not trust me. Do you imagine I have not struggled and have not had fears? But now I am perfectly convinced, not only that it can be done, but must be done, and that this is the only right thing to do for the children. You always say that if it were not for the children you would follow me. And I say that if it were not for the children you might go on living as you do. We should only be injuring ourselves. As it is we injure them.

Marie.

But what can I do if I don't understand?

Nicholas.

And I – what am I to do? I know why you sent for that poor creature dressed up in his cassock and his cross, and I know why Aline brought the lawyer. You want me to transfer the estate to your name. I cannot do that. You know I have loved you during the twenty years we have been married. I love you, and I have every wish for your welfare, and that is why I cannot sign that transfer. If I am to make over the estate, then it must be to those from whom it came – the peasants. I cannot give it to you. I must give it to them. I am glad the lawyer has come. I must do it.

Marie.

This is dreadful! Why are you so cruel? If you think it a sin to hold property, give it to me. ('Weeps.)

Nicholas.

You do not know what you are saying. If I gave it to you I could not go on living with you. I should have to go away. I cannot continue to live in these conditions, and see the peasants squeezed dry, whether it is in your name or mine. I cannot see them put in prison. So choose.

Marie.

How cruel you are! This is not Christianity; it is wicked. I cannot live as you want me to do. I cannot take things from my children to give to strangers, and for that you would forsake me! Well, go. I see that you no longer love me, and, indeed, I know the reason.

Nicholas.

Very well, I will sign it. But, Masha, you are asking the impossible of me. {Goes to the table and signs.} It is you who desired that. I cannot live so. {Rushes away holding his head.}

Marie.

{calling.} Luba! Aline! {They enter.} He has signed – and gone. What am I to do? He said he would go away, and he will. Go to him.

Luba.

He is gone.

ACT III

Scene I

Scene is laid in Moscow. Large room, and in it a carpenter's bench, a table with papers, a bookcase. Boards lean against and cover the mirror and the pictures. Nicholas Ivanovich is working at the bench; a carpenter is planing.

Nicholas.

{taking a finished board from the bench.} Is that all right?

Carpenter.

{adjusts the plane.} It's not up to much. Go at it! Don't be afraid. Like that.

Nicholas.

I wish I could, but I cannot manage it.

Carpenter.

But why do you go in for carpentering, sir? There are so many in our trade now, you can't make a living at it.

Nicholas.

{continues working.} I am ashamed to live in idleness.

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Carpenter.

But that's your lot in life, sir. God has given you property.

Nicholas.

That is just the point. I do not believe God gave anything of the kind. Men have amassed goods that they have taken from their brothers.

Carpenter.

{wondering.} That may all be very true. But still you need not work.

Nicholas.

I understand that it seems strange to you that in this house, where there is so much superfluity, I still wish to earn my living.

Carpenter.

{laughing.} Well, that's just like you gentlemen. There's nothing you don't want to do. Now just smooth off that plank.

Nicholas.

Perhaps you will not believe me and will laugh at me when I say that I used to live that way and was not ashamed of it, but now that I believe the teaching of Christ that we are all brothers, I am ashamed to live that life.

Carpenter.

If you are ashamed give away your property.

Nicholas.

I wanted to, but I did not succeed. I have handed it over to my wife.

A Voice.

{from outside.} Father, may I come in?

Nicholas.

Of course you may! You may always come in.

{Enter. Luba.}

Luba.

Good-morning, Yakov.

Carpenter.

Good-morning, miss.

Luba.

{to her father.) Boris has left for the regiment. I'm so afraid he will do or say something he ought not to. What do you think?

Nicholas.

What can I think? He will act according to his conscience.

Luba.

But that's awful. He has only such a short time to serve now, and he may go and ruin his life.

Nicholas.

He did well in not coming to me. He knows I cannot tell him anything beyond what he knows himself. He told me himself that he asked for his discharge because he saw that there could not be a more lawless, cruel, brutal occupation than that which is based on murder. And that there is nothing more humiliating than to obey implicitly any man who happens to be his superior in rank. He knows all this.

Luba.

That is precisely what I'm afraid of. He knows of all that and he'll be sure to do something.

Nicholas.

His conscience, that God within him, must decide that. If he had come to me I should have advised him only one thing, not to act on the dictates of reason, but only when his whole being demanded it. There's nothing worse than that. There was I, desiring to do Christ's bidding, which is to leave father, wife, children – and follow Him. And I was on the point of going. And how did that end? It ended by my coming back and living in town, with you, in luxury. That was because I wanted to do something beyond my strength, and it ended in placing me in a stupid and humiliating position. I want to live simply – to work – and in these surroundings, with footmen and hall porters, it becomes a pose. There, I see Yakov Nikanorovich is laughing at me.

Carpenter.

Why should I laugh? You pay me – you give me tea – I am very grateful to you.

Luba.

Don't you think I had better go to him, father?

Nicholas.

My darling, I know how hard it is for you – how terrible ! But you ought not to be frightened. I am a man who understands life. No harm

can come of it. All that seems to you bad, really brings joy to the heart. You must understand that a man who chooses that path has had to make a choice. There are circumstances in which the scales balance evenly between God and the devil. And at that moment God's greatest work is being done. Any interference from without is very dangerous, and only brings suffering. It is as

though a man were making a great effort to bear down the scale, and the touch of a finger may break his back.

Luba.

But why suffer?

Nicholas.

It is the same thing as though a mother should say, " Why suffer? " But a child cannot be born without pain. And so it is with spiritual birth. I can only say one thing—Boris is a true Christian, and therefore free. And if you cannot be like him, if you cannot believe God as he does, then believe God through him.

Marie.

(outside the door.) May I come in?

Nicholas.

Certainly — always. Quite a meeting here today.

Marie.

Our priest has come — Vasily Ermilovich. He is on his way to the bishop to resign his cure.

Nicholas.

Not really. Is he here? Luba, call him. He will certainly want to see me.

(Exit Luba.)

Marie.

I came to tell you about Vania. He is behaving so badly and will not study, and I am sure he will not pass. I have tried to talk to him but he is impertinent.

Nicholas.

Masha — you know I do not sympathise with your mode of life and your ideas of education. It is an awful question whether I have the right

to look on and see my children ruined.

Marie.

Then you must offer a definite substitute. What do you propose?

Nicholas.

I cannot say— I can only tell you that the first thing is to get rid of this corrupting luxury.

Marie.

And make peasants of them! That I cannot agree to.

Nicholas.

Then do not ask me. All that upsets you now is inevitable.

(Enter Father Vasily and embraces Nicholas Ivanovich.)

Then you have really done it!

Father Vasily.

I cannot go on any longer!

Nicholas.

I did not expect it would come so soon.

Father Vasily.

It had to come. In my vocation one cannot remain indifferent. I had to confess, to administer the sacrament; how could I, knowing it to be false !

Nicholas.

And what will happen now?

Father Vasily.

I am going to the bishop to be examined. I am afraid I shall be exiled to the Solavetsky Monastery. I thought at one time of running away and going abroad, of asking you to help me, but then I gave up the idea. It would be cowardly. The only thing is — my wife —

Nicholas.

Where is she?

Father Vasily.

She has gone to her father. My mother-in-law came and took away our son. That hurt. I wanted so much— (He slops, hardly restraining his tears.)

Nicholas.

Well, God help you. Are you staying here with us?

(Enter Alexandra Ivanovna with a letter.)

Alexandra.

A special messenger has brought this for you, Nicholas Ivanovich. How do you do, Father Vasily?

Father Vasily.

I am no longer Father Vasily, Alexandra Ivanovna.

Alexandra.

Really? Why?

Father Vasily.

I have discovered that we do not believe in the right way.

Alexandra.

Oh dear, oh dear, how sinful ! You are a good man, but what errors you do fall into. It is all Nicholas Ivanovich's doing.

Father Vasily.

Not Nicholas Ivanovich's, but Christ's.

Alexandra.

Oh, stop, stop! Why leave the fold of the

Orthodox Church? I know you mean well, but you are ruining your own soul.

Nicholas.

{to himself.} I expected this. What am I to do?

Alexandra.

What is it?

Nicholas.

{reading.} It is from the Princess. This is what she writes: " Boris

has refused to serve and has been arrested. You have been his ruin. It is your duty to save him. He is at the Kroutitsk Barracks." Yes, I must go to him, if only they will let me see him. {He takes off his apron, puts his coat on> and goes out.) {Exit all.)

Scene II

Office. A Clerk sitting. Sentry pacing up and down at opposite door. Enter General with his aide-de-camp. Clerk jumps up. Sentry salutes.

General;

Where is the colonel?

Clerk.

He was asked to go to see the recruit, your excellency.

General.

Very well. Ask him to come here.

Clerk.

Yes, your excellency.

.General.

What are you copying there? The deposition of the recruit?

Clerk.

Yes, your excellency.

General.

Give it to me.

(Clerk gives it and goes out.)

General.

{giving paper to Aide-de-camp.) Read it, please.

Aide-de-camp.

{reading.) "To the questions which were put to me: (1) Why I refused to take the oath; (2) Why I refused to carry out the demands of the government; and (3) what made me utter words offensive not only to the military body, but to the highest authority, I answer: to the first question: I will not take the oath because I profess the teaching of Christ. In His teaching Christ clearly forbids it, as in the Gospel, Matt. v. 33-37, and the Epistle of James, v. 12."

General.

There they are, discussing and putting their own interpretations on it.

Aide-de-camp.

{continuing.) " It is said in the Gospel Matt. v. 37, ' Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil,' and James, v. 12: ' But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.'

" But even if there were not such explicit prohibition of swearing in the Gospel, I would not swear to fulfil the will of men, for according to Christ's teaching I am bound to fulfil the will of God, which may not coincide with the will of men."

General.

There they are, discussing! If I had my way, such things would not occur.

Aide-de-camp.

{reading.) "And I refuse to comply with the demands of men calling themselves the government because - "

General.

What impudence !

Aide-de-camp.

" Because these demands are criminal and wicked. I am required to enter the army, to be prepared and instructed how to murder. This is forbidden by the Old as well as by the New Testament, and, moreover, by my conscience. As to the third question - "

{Enter Colonel with Clerk, General shakes hands with him.)

Colonel.

You are reading the deposition?

General.

Yes. Unpardonably impudent. Continue.

Aide-de-camp.

{reading.) " As to the third question, what induced me to speak

offensively to the Council. I answer, that I was led by my desire to serve God and to denounce shams which are perpetrated in His name. This desire I hope to preserve while I live. That is why - "

General.

Oh, enough of that rubbish ! The question is, how to root it all out, and prevent him from corrupting our men. {To Colonel.} Have you spoken to him?

Colonel.

I have been talking to him all this time. I tried to appeal to his conscience, to make him understand that he was only making matters worse for himself and that he would not achieve anything by such methods. I spoke to him about his family. He was very excited, but he stuck to his words.

General'.

It is idle to say much to him. We are soldiers; men of actions, not words. Have him brought here.

(Exit Aide-de-camp and Clerk.)

General.

(sitting down.) No, colonel. You were wrong. Such fellows must be dealt with in quite another fashion. Strong measures are needed to cut off the offending member. One foul sheep ruins the whole flock. Sentimentality has no place here. His being a prince and having a mother and a fiancée does not concern us. There is a soldier before us and we must fulfil the will of the Tsar.

Colonel.

I only thought it would be easier to influence him by persuasion.

General.

Not at all. Firmness, only firmness. I had a case like this once before. He must be made to feel that he is nothing, that he is a grain of sand under the wheel of a chariot, and that he cannot impede its progress.

Colonel.

Well, we can try.

General.

(beginning to get angry.) It is not a question of trying. I have nothing to try. I have served my sovereign for forty-four years, have given and am giving my life to the service, and suddenly a boy

comes and wants to teach me, and quotes Bible texts. Let him talk that nonsense to the priests. To me he is either a soldier, or a prisoner. That's the end of it.

(Enter Boris under escort of two soldiers. Aide-de-camp follows him in.)

General.

(pointing to Boris with his finger.) Place him there.

Boris.

No necessity whatever to " place " me anywhere. I will stand or sit where I please, for as to your authority over me, I do not –

General.

Silence! You don't recognise my authority – I'll make you recognise it!

Boris.

(sits down.) How wrong of you to shout like that!

General.

Lift him up and make him stand!

(Soldiers raise Boris up.)

Boris.

That you can do. You can kill me, but you cannot force me to obey you.

General.

Silence, I say! Listen to what I say to you.

Boris.

I do not in the least wish to hear what you say.

General.

He is mad. He must be sent to the hospital to test his sanity. That's the only thing to do with him.

Colonel.

We have orders to send him to the Gendarmerie Department to be questioned.

General.

Very well – do so. But put him into uniform. Colonel.

He refuses to wear it.

General.

Then tie his hands and feet. (To Boris.) Now listen to what I am going to tell you. It is a matter of perfect indifference to me what becomes of you. But for your own sake I would advise you to think it over. You will only rot in the fortress, and be of no use to any one. Give it up. You were excited, and so was I. (Slapping him on the shoulder.) Go – take your oath and drop all that nonsense. (To the Aide-de-camp.) Is the priest here? (To Boris.) Well? (Boris is silent.) Why don't you answer? I assure you I'm advising you for your own good. The weakest goes to the wall. You can keep your own ideas and merely serve your time. We won't be hard on you. Well?

Boris.

I have nothing more to say. I have said everything.

General*.

Just now you said that there were such and such verses in the Gospel. Surely the priests know

that? You'd better talk that over with the priest, and then think it over. That's surely the best way. Good-bye. I hope to meet you again and be able to congratulate you on your entrance into the service of the Tsar. Send the priest here.

(Exit General with Colonel and Aide-de-camp.)

Boris.

(to soldiers and Clerk.) You see how they talk. They are perfectly aware themselves that they are deceiving you. Don't give in to them. Throw down your arms. Go away. Let them flog you to death in their disciplinary battalions. Even that is better than to be the slaves of these impostors !

Clerk.

No, that's impossible. How can we get on without the army? It is impossible.

Boris.

We must not reason in that way. We must do just as God desires. And God desires us to –

Soldier.

Then why do they call it the " Christ-serving Army? "

Boris.

That is not said anywhere. It's the invention of these impostors.

Soldier.

How so ? The bishops must know.

(Enter Police Officer with
Stenographer.)

Police Officer.

(to Clerk.) Is Prince Cheremshanov the recruit here?

Clerk.

Yes, sir. There he is.

Police Officer.

Please step this way. Are you the Prince Boris Cheremshanov who refused to take the oath?

Boris.

I am he.

(Officer sits down and motions to a seat opposite.)

Police Officer.

Please sit down.

Boris.

I think there's no use in our talking.

Police Officer.

I don't agree. To you at any rate it may be

of advantage. You see, I have been informed that you refused military service and refused to take the oath, which raises the suspicion that you belong to the revolutionary party. And this I have to investigate. If this is true, then we must remove you from military service and either put you in prison or exile you, according to the extent of your participation in the revolutionary movement. Otherwise we leave you to the military authorities. Please note that I have told you everything quite frankly, and I trust you

will show the same confidence in talking to us.

Boris.

In the first place I cannot have any confidence in those who wear that {pointing to the uniform.) In the second place your very office is of such a nature that I cannot respect it, but, on the contrary, despise it from my heart. But I will not refuse to answer your questions. What is it you want to know?

Police Officer.

First, please, your name, rank, and religious faith.

Boris.

You know all that, so that I will not answer. Only one of those questions is of any importance to me. I do not belong to the so-called Orthodox Church.

Police Officer.

Then what is your religion?

Boris.

I cannot define it.

Police Officer.

Still –

Boris.

Let us say Christian, founded on the Sermon on the Mount.

Police Officer.

Take that down.

(Stenographer writes.)

Police Officer.

{to Boris.) But you acknowledge that you belong to some state, some class?

Boris.

I do not admit that. I consider myself a man, a servant of God.

Police Officer.

But why do you not recognise your allegiance to the Russian State?

Boris.

Because I do not recognise the existence of any State.

Police Officer.

What do you mean – when you say you do not recognise it? Do you want to destroy it?

Boris.

Most certainly I do, and I work to that end.

Police Officer.

(to Scribe.) Take that down. (To Boris.) By what means do you work?

Boris.

By denouncing deceit and lies, and by spreading the truth. Just now, the moment before you entered, I was telling these soldiers that they must not believe the deceit in which they are made to share.

Police Officer.

But beside these measures of denunciation and proselytising, do you admit other means?

Boris.

I not only exclude violence, but I consider it the greatest sin, and all underhand actions also.

Police Officer.

(/o Scribe.) Take it down. Very good. Now allow me to ask you about your acquaintances, your friends. Do you know Ivashenkov?

Boris.

No.

– Police Officer.

And Klein?

Boris.

I have heard of him, but I have never seen him.

(Enter Chaplain.)

Police Officer.

Well, I think that is all. I consider that you are not a dangerous person. You do not concern our department. I hope you will soon be released. Good-day. (Shakes hands.)

Boris.

There is one thing I should like to say to you. Excuse me, but I cannot resist saying it. Why have you chosen such a bad and wicked calling? I would advise you to leave it.

Police Officer.

(smiling.) Thank you for your advice: I have my reasons. Now, father, I'll give up my place to you.

(The -priest, an old man with cross and Testament, steps forward. The Scribe advances to receive his blessing.)

Chaplain.

(to Boris.) Why do you grieve your superiors and refuse to perform the duty of a Christian by serving your Tsar and country?

Boris.

(smiling.) It is precisely because I wish to perform the duties of a Christian that I do not wish to be a soldier.

Chaplain.

Why do you not wish it? It is written, " Lay down your life for your friends." That is the part of a true Christian.

Boris.

Yes, to lay down your own, but not take the life of others. To give up my life is just what I wish.

Chaplain.

You judge wrongly, young man. And what did Jesus Christ say to the soldiers?

Boris.

(smiling.) That only proves that even in His time soldiers plundered, and He forbade them to do so.

Chaplain.

Well- why do you refuse to take the oath?

Boris.

You know it is forbidden in the Gospel.

Chaplain.

Not at all. How was it that when Pilate said, " In the name of God I ask you, are you the Christ?" Our Lord Jesus Christ answered, " I am He." That proves an oath is not forbidden.

Boris.

Are you not ashamed to say that, you, an old man?

Chaplain.

I advise you not to be obstinate. It is not for us to change the world. Take the oath, and have done with it. As for what is sin and what is not sin, leave that for the Church to decide.

Boris.

Leave it to you? Are you not afraid to take such a weight of sin upon your soul ?

Chaplain.

What sin? I have always been true to the faith in which I was educated. I have been a priest now for over thirty years; there can be no sin upon my soul.

Boris.

Then whose is the sin of deceiving so many

people? You know what their heads are full of. (Points to the sentry.)

Chaplain.

That, young man, is not for us to judge. Our duty is to obey our superiors.

Boris.

Leave me alone. I pity you, and what you say disgusts me. If you were like that general it would not be so bad. But you come with cross and Bible to try to persuade me in the name of Christ to deny Christ. Go – go! (Excitedly.) Go. Take me away where I shall see no one. I am tired – I am terribly tired.

Chaplain.

Well, good-bye.

(Enter Aide-de-camp. Boris retires to back of scene.)

Aide-de-camp.

Well ?

Chaplain.

Great stubbornness. Great insubordination.

Aide-de-camp.

He has not consented to take the oath and to serve?

Chaplain.

Not in the least.

Aide-de-camp.

Then I shall have to take him to the hospital.

Chaplain.

To make out that he is ill. Of course that's the best way; otherwise his example might be bad for the rest.

Aide-de-camp.

He will be examined in the ward for mental ailments. These are my orders.

Chaplain.

Of course. Good-day. (Exit.)

Aide-de-camp.

(approaching Boris.) Please come with me. I am ordered to escort you.

Boris.

Where to?

Aide-de-camp.

Just for a time, to the hospital, where you will be more comfortable, and will have leisure to think the matter over.

Boris.

I have thought it over for some time. But let us go. (Exeunt.)

Scene III

Reception-room in the Hospital.

(Head Physician and House Surgeon and Patients in hospital dress. Warders in blouses.)

Sick Officer.

I tell you, you simply make me worse. There were times when I felt quite well.

Head Physician.

Don't get so excited. I am quite willing to discharge you, but you know yourself that it is unsafe for you to be at liberty. If I knew that you would be taken care of –

Sick Officer.

You think I shall begin to drink again. Oh no! I've learned my lesson. Every additional day spent here is simply killing me. You do just the contrary to what (over excited) should be done. You are cruel. It is all very well for you –

Head Physician.

Calm yourself. (Makes a sign to WARDERS who approach the Officer from behind.)

Sick Officer.

It's all very well for you to talk when you are free. But how do you think I feel here in the company of lunatics? (To Warders.) Why are you coming so near to me? Get away?

Head Physician.

I beg you to be calm.

Sick Officer.

And I beg, I insist on my discharge. (Shrieks, rushes at doctor. Warders seize him – a struggle– they lead him away.)

House Surgeon.

Same thing all over again. He was on the point of striking you.

Head Physician.

Alcoholic subject, and there's nothing to be done for him. Still there is some improvement.

(Enter Aide-de-camp.)

Aide-de-camp.

Good morning.

Head Physician.

Good morning.

Aide-de-camp.

I have brought you a very interesting case. A certain Prince Cheremshanov was to do his military service, and refused on the ground of the Gospel. He was handed over to the police, but they found him outside their jurisdiction, and decided it was not a political case. The chaplain talked to him, but without the slightest effect.

Head Physician.

(laughing.) And as usual you bring him to us as the last resort. Well, let's have a look at him.

(Exit House Surgeon.)

Aide-de-camp.

They say he is a well-educated fellow, and that he's engaged to a rich girl. It is very strange. I must say the hospital is exactly the right place for him.

Head Physician.

It must be a case of mania –

(Boris is brought in.)

Good morning. Please sit down. We'll have a little talk. (To the others.) Leave us alone.

(Exeunt all save Boris and Physician.)

Boris.

I would like to ask you, if you are going to shut me up somewhere, to do it as quickly as possible and let me have a rest.

Head Physician.

Excuse me: I must comply with the regulations. I will merely put a few questions to you. How do you feel? From what are you suffering?

Boris.

There's nothing the matter with me. I am perfectly well.

Head Physician.

Yes; but your conduct is different from the conduct of others.

Boris.

I am acting according to the dictates of my conscience.

Head Physician.

You have refused to perform your military duty. What is your motive?

Boris.

I am a Christian, and therefore cannot kill.

Head Physician.

But is it not necessary to protect the country

from foreign enemies, and restrain from evil those who disturb the peace within?

Boris.

The country is not attacked by any enemies, and as for disturbers of the peace within her borders, there are more of those within the Government than among the people towards whom the Government uses violence.

Head Physician.

What do you mean by that?

Boris.

I mean that the chief cause of evil – alcohol – is sold by the Government; a false religious creed is spread by the Government; and the very military service, such as I am required to perform, and which is the principal means of corruption in the country, is required by the Government.

Head Physician.

Then, according to your views, Government and State are unnecessary.

Boris.

I do not know; but I am quite sure I must not participate in these evils.

Head Physician.

But what will become of the world? We are given a mind with which to look ahead.

Boris.

Yes, and we are also given common sense to see that the organisation of society shall not be founded on violence, but on love, and that the refusal of one man to participate in evil has nothing dangerous in it –

Head Physician.

Now please let me make an examination. Will you kindly lie down? {Begins to examine him.} Do you feel any pain here?

Boris.

No.

Head Physician.

Nor here?

Boris.

No.

Head Physician.

Breathe. Now don't breathe. Thank you. Now allow me. (Takes out a measure and measures his nose and his forehead.) Now be so kind as to shut your eyes and walk.

Boris.

Aren't you ashamed to do all that?

Head Physician.

What?

Boris.

All these silly things. You know perfectly well that I'm all right, and have been sent here for refusing to take part in their wickedness, and as they had no arguments to offer in opposition to my truth, they pretend that they think me abnormal. And you aid them in that! That is despicable and disgraceful. You'd better stop it.

Head Physician.

Then you do not wish to walk?

Boris.

No, I do not. You may torment me as much as you like. That is your business. But I do not wish to help you in it. (Vehemently.) Stop/it, I say!

(Head Physician presses a button. Two Warders enter.)

Head Physician.

Be calm, please. I quite understand that your nerves are rather over-strained. Would you not like to go to your quarters?

(Enter House Surgeon.)

House Surgeon.

Visitors have come for Cheremshanov.

Boris.

Who are they?

House Surgeon.

Sarintsev and his daughter.

Boris.

I should like to see them.

Head Physician.

I have no objection. Ask them in. You may receive them here.

(Enter Nicholas Ivanovich and Luba. Princess Cheremshanova puts her head into the door, saying, "Go in, Til come later.")

Luba.

{goes straight to Boris, takes his face between her hands, and kisses him.) Poor Boris!

Boris.

No, don't pity me. I feel so well – so happy.

I am so easy in my mind. (To Nicholas Ivanovich.) How do you do? (Embraces him.)

Nicholas.

I came to tell you something important. In the first place, it is worse in such cases to overdo it than to do too little; in the second place, you must act according to the Gospel, taking no thought as to your future words and acts. When taken before the authorities " think not what ye shall say, for the Holy Ghost will teach you in that hour what ye ought to say." The moment to act is not when your reason dictates this or that, but only when your whole being determines your action.

Boris.

That's just what I did. I did not think I should refuse to serve. But when I saw all this falsehood, the emblem of justice, the documents, the police, and the members of the Council smoking- I could not help speaking as I did. It seemed a terrible thing to do, but only till I began. Then all became so simple and delightful.

(Luba sits weeping.)

Nicholas.

Above all, do nothing for the sake of the praise of men, or in order to please those whose esteem you value. As for myself, I tell you honestly that if you took the oath this moment and entered the army, I would love and respect you no less; possibly even more than before, because it is not what is done in the world that is of value, but what is done within the soul.

Boris.

That is certainly so, because if a thing is done within the soul, it will bring about a change in the world.

Nicholas.

Well, I have said what I had to say. Your mother is here, and she is quite broken-hearted. If you can do what she desires, do it. That is what I wanted to tell you.

(In the corridor frightful screaming of the lunatics. One lunatic bursts into the room. Warders follow and drag him away.)

Luba.

This is dreadful! And you will have to be here! (Weeps.)

Boris.

This doesn't frighten me. Nothing frightens me now. I feel at peace. The only thing that I

fear is your attitude to all this. Help me - I'm sure you will help me.

Luba.

How can I be glad?

Nicholas.

Be glad. That is impossible. Neither am I glad. I suffer for him and would willingly take his place. But I am suffering, and yet I know that it is for the best.

Luba.

For the best! When will they let him go?

Boris.

No one knows. I am not thinking about the future; the present is joyful. And you could make it still more so.

(Enter Princess.)

Princess.

I can wait no longer. (To Nicholas Ivanovich.) Well, have you persuaded him? Are you willing, Boris darling? You must know how I have suffered. Thirty years of my life have been given to you. To bring you up and be so proud of you, and then when all is ready and finished, suddenly to give up everything. Prison, disgrace! No, Boris--

Boris.

Listen, mother.

Princess.

{to Nicholas Ivanovich.) Why don't you say something? You have brought about his ruin, and you ought to persuade him. It's all very well for you. Luba, speak to him !

Luba.

What can I do?

Boris.

Mother, try to understand that some things are impossible. Just as it is impossible to fly, so it is impossible for me to serve in the army.

Princess.

You only imagine you cannot! It's all nonsense. Others have served, and are serving now. You and Nicholas Ivanovich have invented a new

'Christian creed that is not Christian at all. It is a diabolical creed, that causes suffering to every one around you.

Boris.

So it is written in the Gospel.

Princess.

Nothing of that sort is said. And if it is, it's

simply stupid. Boris darling, spare me! {Falls on his neck and sobs.) My whole life has been full of sorrow. You have been my only gleam of gladness, and now you turn it into anguish. Boris, have pity!

Boris.

It is very, very painful to me, mother, but I cannot promise you that.

Princess.

Do not refuse. Say you will try!

Nicholas.

Say you will think it over, and do think it over.

Boris.

Very well – I will do that. But have pity on me, also, mother. It is hard for me too.

{Again desperate screams in a corridor.)

I am in a lunatic asylum, you see, and I may lose my reason.

{Enter Head Physician.)

Head Physician.

Madame, this may have the worst results. Your son is in a very excited state. I think we had better consider the visit at an end. The regular visiting day is Thursday before twelve.

Princess.

Well, well, I will go. Good-bye, Boris. Only do think it over. Spare me, and on Thursday meet me with good news. {Kisses him.)

Nicholas.

{shaking hands with him.) Think it over, with God's help, as if to-

morrow you were going to die. That is the only way to make the right decision. Good-bye.

Boris.

{approaching Luba.) What are you going to say to me?

Luba.

What can I say? I cannot be untruthful. I do not understand why you torture yourself and others. I do not understand, and there is nothing I can say. (JKeeps.)

{They all go.)

Boris.

{alone.) Oh, how difficult, how difficult it is! God help me !

{Enter Warders with hospital attire.)

Warder.

Will you please put this on?

Boris.

{begins to change-then.) No, I will not!

{They change his garments by force.)

ACT IV

Scene I

Moscow. A year has passed since the third act. Big drawing-room with piano arranged for dancing party in Sarintsev's house. Footman arranges flowers in front of piano. A Christmas tree.

(Enter Marie Ivanovna in elegant silk dressf with Alexandra Ivanovna.)

Marie.

It isn't a ball. It is only a small dance. A party, as we used to say, for the young people. I can't let my children go out to dances and never give a party myself.

Alexandra.

I'm afraid Nicholas will be displeased.

Marie.

What can I do? (To Footman.) Put it here. Heaven knows I do not want to grieve him. But I think he is less exacting now, on the whole.

Alexandra.

Oh no! Only he does not talk about it. He seemed quite upset when he went to his room after dinner.

Marie.

But what is to be done? what is to be done? We must all live. There are six children, and if I did not provide some amusement for them at home, Heaven knows what they would do. At any rate, I am happy about Luba.

Alexandra.

Has he proposed?

Marie.

Practically. He has spoken to her and she has accepted him.

Alexandra.

That will be another awful blow for him.

Marie.

But he knows. He cannot help knowing.

Alexandra.

He does not like him.

Marie.

(to Footman.) Put the fruit on the side-board. Whom do you mean? Alexis Mikhailovich?

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Of course not, for he is the embodied negation of all his theories – a man of the world, nice, kind, agreeable. Oh, that awful nightmare of Boris Cheremshanov! How is he now?

Alexandra.

Lisa has been to see him. He's still there. She says he has grown very thin, and the doctors are anxious about his life or reason.

Marie.

He is a victim of his dreadful theories. His life ruined – to what end? It certainly was not my wish.

(Enter Pianist.)

You have come to play for the dancing?

Pianist.

Yes, I am the pianist.

Marie.

Please sit down and wait. Will you have some tea?

Pianist.

No, thank you. (Goes to piano.)

Marie.

I never wished it. I was fond of Boris. But of course he was no match for Luba, especially after taking up with Nicholas's ideas.

Alexandra.

Still, his strength of conviction is extraordinary. What agony he has been through ! They tell him that if he will not give in he must stay where he is or else be sent to the fortress, and he gives them but one answer. And Lisa says he's so happy, even merry.

Marie.

Fanatic! Oh, there's Alexis Mikhailovich!

(Enter the brilliant Alexis Mikhailovich Starkovsky in evening dress.)

Starkovsky.

I have come early. (Kisses the hands of both ladies.)

Marie.

So much the better.

Starkovsky.

And Lubov Nicolaevna? She said she was going to dance a lot to make up for what she had missed. I volunteered to help her.

Marie.

She is arranging the favours for the cotillion.

Starkovsky.

I'll go and help her. May I?

Marie.

Certainly.

(Starkovsky turns to go, and « meets Luba coming toward him carrying a cushion on which are stars and ribbons. Luba in evening dress, not low-necked.)

Luba.

Oh, there you are ! That's right. Do help me. There are two more cushions in the drawing-room, bring them here. How do you do! How do you do !

Starkovsky.

I am off! (Goes.)

Marie.

(to Luba.) Listen, Luba. To-night our guests are sure to make insinuations and ask questions. May we announce it?

Luba.

No, mother, no. Why? Let them ask. It would grieve father.

Marie.

But he must know, or at least guess. And we shall have to tell him sooner or later. I really think it is best to announce it to-night. It is a farcical secret.

Luba.

No, no, mother – please! It would spoil the whole evening. No, don't!

Marie.

Very well, as you like.

Luba.

Or, anyhow, not till the end of the evening, just before supper. (Calling out.) Well, are you bringing them?

Marie.

I will go and see to Natasha.

(Exit with Anna Ivanovna.)

Starkovsky.

(brings three cushions, the top one under his chin, and lets something drop.) Don't you trouble, Lubov Nicolaevna. I'll pick them up. I say, what a lot of favours you've got! The thing is to distribute them properly! Vania, come here.

(Enter VANIA, carrying more favours.)

Vania.

That's the last of them. Luba, Alexis Mikhailovich and I have got a bet on as to who will get most favours.

Starkovsky.

It's very easy for you. You know everybody, so you are sure of theirs in advance. I must win the girls before I can get any favours at all. So I have a handicap of forty points, you see.

Vania.

But you are grown up, and I'm only a boy.

Starkovsky.

I'm not very grown up, and so I am worse than a boy.

Luba.

Vania, please go to my room and bring me the paste and my needle-case; they're on the shelf. But for mercy's sake don't break the watch there.

Vania.

(running off.) I'll break everything.

Starkovsky.

(takes Luba's hand.) May I, Luba? I am so happy. (Kisses her hand.) The mazurka is mine, but that isn't enough. There isn't time in the mazurka to say much, and I have a great deal to say. May I telegraph to my people and tell them you have accepted me and how happy I am?

Luba.

Yes, you can do it to-night.

Starkovsky.

One word more. How will Nicholas Ivanovich take the news? Have you told him? Have you told him? Yes?

Luba.

No, I have not, but I will. He will take it just as he takes everything now that concerns his family. He will say, "Do as you like." But in his heart he will be grieved.

Starkovsky.

Because I am not Cheremshanov – because I am a chamberlain, a marshal of nobility?

Luba.

Yes. But I have tried to fight against myself .– to deceive myself for his sake. And it is not because I do not love him that I do not follow his wishes, but because I cannot act a lie. And he says himself that one should not. I long to live my own life !

Starkovsky.

Life is the only truth there is. What has become of Cheremshanov?

Luba.

{agitated.} Do not talk to me about him. I want to find fault with him even when he is suffer- | ing. I know it is because I am to blame about him. But one thing I do know: that there is such a thing as love – real love – and that I never had for him.

Starkovsky.

Do you really mean it, Luba?

Luba.

You want me to say that it is you that I love with a real love? I will not say that. I certainly love you. . . . But it is a different kind of love. Neither of them is the real thing. If I could only put them both together. . . .

STARKOVSKY.

Oh no, I'm quite content with mine. {Kisses her hand.} Luba!

Luba.

{moving from him.} No; we must talk this over. You see, the guests are beginning to arrive.

{Enter Countess with Tonia and a younger girl.)

Mother will be here directly.

Countess.

We are the first then?

Starkovsky.

Somebody must be first. I offered to make an india-rubber lady to be the first arrival.

{Enter Stephen with Vania, who brings the paste and needles.)

Stephen.

{to Tonia.) I hoped to see you last night at the Italian opera.

Tonia.

We were at my aunt's, sewing for the poor.

{Enter Students, Ladies, and Marie Ivanovna.)

Countess.

{to Marie Ivanovna.) Shall we not see Nicholas Ivanovich?

Marie.

No; he never leaves his rooms.

Stephen.

How did Cheremshanov's affair end?

Marie.

He is still in the asylum, poor boy.

Countess.

What obstinacy!

One of the Guests.

What an extraordinary delusion ! What good can come of it?

Student.

Take your partners for the quadrille, please !

{Claps his hands. They take up their positions and dance. Enter

Alexandra Ivanovna, and walks up to her sister.)

Alexandra.

He is frightfully excited. He has been to see Boris, and on returning he saw the dancing going on. He wants to go away. I went up to his door, and heard his conversation with Alexander Petrovich.

Marie.

What did they say?

Voice from the Dance.

Rond des dames. Les cavaliers en avant.

Alexandra.

He has made up his mind that he cannot possibly continue to live here, and he is going away.

Marie.

What a torment that man is !

{Exit Marie Ivanovna.}

Scene II

Nicholas Ivanovich's room. Music is heard from afar. He has his coat on, and puts a letter on the table. With him is a tramp, Alexander Petrovich, in rags.

Alexander.

Don't be uneasy. We can get to the Caucasus without a penny; and when we are once there you can arrange matters.

Nicholas.

We will take the train to Tula, and then we will go on foot. Now, we're ready. {Puts the letter in the middle of the table, and goes towards the door. Meets Marie Ivanovna, who enters.}

Nicholas.

What have you come for?

Marie.

To see what you are doing.

Nicholas.

I am suffering terribly.

Marie.

What have I come for? Not to let you do a cruel thing. Why do you do it? What have I done?

Nicholas.

Why? Because I cannot go on living like this; I cannot endure this horrible life of depravity!

Marie.

But this is awful. You call my life, which I devote to you and to the children, depraved! (Noticing the presence of Alexander Petrovich.) Renvoyez au moins cet homme. Je ne veux pas qu'il soit témoin de cette conversation.

Alexander.

(in broken French.) Comprenez toujours moi parte.

Nicholas.

Wait for me outside, Alexander Petrovich. I will come directly.

(Exit Alexander Petrovich.)

Marie.

What can you have in common with that man? Why he is more to you than your wife passes all comprehension. Where do you intend to go?

Nicholas.

I was leaving a letter for you. I did not want to talk about it. It is too painful. But if you wish I will try to tell you calmly what is in it.

Marie.

No; I absolutely cannot understand why you hate and punish the wife who has given up everything for you. Can you say that I go out into society, that I love dress or flirtations? No! my whole life has been devoted to my family. I nursed all my children myself; I brought them up myself; and during these last years the whole burden of their education and all the management of our affairs has fallen on me.

Nicholas.

(interrupting.) But all the weight of that burden is due to your refusal to lead the life I proposed.

Marie.

But what you proposed was impossible. Ask anybody! I could not let the children grow up

illiterate, as you desired; and I could not do the cooking and the washing with my own hands.

Nicholas.

I never asked you to.

Marie.

Well, something very like it. You call yourself a Christian, and you want to do good in the world. You say you love humanity. Then why do you torment the woman who has given her whole life to you?

Nicholas.

In what way am I tormenting you? I love you, but –

Marie.

Is it not tormenting me to leave me and to go away? What will all the world say? One of the two – either that I am a bad, wicked woman, or that you are mad.

Nicholas.

Let them say I am mad then. I cannot live like this.

Marie.

Why is it so terrible that I should give a party? – the only one during the whole season, for fear of grieving you? I only did it because every one said it was a necessity. Ask Mary, ask Varvara Vasilievna. You treat this as a crime, and make me suffer disgrace for it. It is not so much the disgrace I mind. The worst of it is that you do not love me – you love the whole world, even that drunkard Alexander Petrovich. . . . But I still love you – I cannot live without you. What have I done? what have I done? {She weeps.}

Nicholas.

You will not understand my life – my spiritual life.

Marie.

I do want to, but I can't. I only see that your idea of Christianity makes you hate your family, and hate me. Why, I do not understand.

Nicholas.

But others understand.

Marie.

Who? Alexander Petrovich, who gets money from you?

Nicholas.

He and Ermilovich, Tonia, and Vasily. But that is immaterial. If no one understood, it would alter nothing.

Marie.

Vasily Ermilovich has repented, and has re-
turned to his parish, and at this very moment Tonia is dancing and
flirting with Stephen.

Nicholas.

I am very sorry. But this cannot make black white, nor can it change my life. Masha, you do not need me – let me go ! I have tried to take part in your life – to bring into it the thing that is life to me – but it cannot be done. The only result is that I torture both you and myself; and it is not only torture to me, but it ruins everything I attempt. Everybody – even that very Alexander Petrovich – has the right to say, and does say, that I am an impostor: that I say one thing and do another; that I preach the poverty of Christ and live in luxury, under cover of having given everything to my wife.

Marie.

Then you are ashamed of yourself before the world? Are you not above that?,

Nicholas.

It is not that I am ashamed of myself – though I certainly am – but that I am hindering the work of God.

Marie.

You say yourself that the work of God goes on in spite of all opposition. But leaving that aside, tell me what you want me to do.

Nicholas.

I have told you.

Marie.

But, Nicholas, you know that that is impossible. Think of it. Luba

is just going to be married, Vania has entered the university, and Missie and Katia are at school: how could I interrupt all that?

Nicholas.

But I? What am I to do?

Marie.

Practise what you preach: endure and love. Is that so difficult? Only put up with us – do not deprive us of yourself! What is it that distresses you so?

(Vania rushes in.)

Vania.

Mother, you are wanted.

Marie.

Say I can't come. Go; go away.

Vania.

Please come !

(Exit.)

Nicholas.

You will not see my point of view, and understand me.

Marie.

I only wish I could.

Nicholas.

No, you do not wish to understand; and we are growing further and further apart. Put yourself in my place for a moment and think, and you will understand. In the first place, life here is depraved – such words anger you, but I can use no other when speaking of a life founded on robbery– because the money you live on comes from the land you have stolen from the people. Besides, I see how the children are being corrupted by it. “ Woe to him who offends one of these little ones! ”–and before my very eyes I see my children ruined and corrupted. Nor can I bear to see grown men dressed up in swallow-tailed coats serving us as though they were slaves. Every meal is a misery.

Marie.

But it has always been so. It is so in all houses – abroad and

everywhere.

Nicholas.

Since I have realised that we are all brothers, I cannot look on without pain.

Marie.

It is your own fault. One can imagine anything.

Nicholas.

(hotly.) This want of understanding is awful. To-day I spent the morning among the scavengers in the Rijànov Night Lodgings. I saw a child dying of starvation; a boy that had become a drunkard; a consumptive laundress going to rinse her linen in the river: and I come home and a footman in a white tie opens my front door to me. I hear my son, a young boy, tell that footman to bring him a glass of water, and I see a regiment of servants that work for us. Then I go to Boris, who is giving up his life for the truth, and I see this pure, strong, resolute man deliberately driven to madness and to death in order that they may get rid of him. I know, and they know, that he has organic heart trouble; and they provoke him, and then put him among raving maniacs! Oh, it is awful ! And now I return home to learn that my daughter – the only one of my family who understood not me, but the truth – has

thrown over both the truth and the man she was engaged to, and had promised to love, and is going to marry a flunkey – a liar.

Marie.

What a very Christian sentiment!

Nicholas.

Yes, it is wrong. I am to blame. But I want you to enter into my feeling. I only say that she has repudiated the truth.

Marie.

You say the truth. The rest, the majority, say error. Vasily Ermilovich thought he had gone astray, but now he returned to the Church.

Nicholas.

It is impossible.

Marie.

He wrote all about it to Lisa, and she will show you the letter. These things do not last. It's the same with Tonia, not to mention

Alexander Petrovich, who simply finds it profitable.

Nicholas.

(getting angry.) That is immaterial. I only want you to understand me. I still consider that truth remains truth. It is painful to me to come home and see a Christmas tree, a ball, hundreds squandered when others are dying of hunger. I can not live like this! Have mercy on me! I am worn out. Let me go ! Good-bye.

Marie.

If you go, I go with you; and if not with you, I will throw myself under your train. Let them all perish – all – Missie – Katia – all of them. My God, my God, what anguish! Why is it?

(Sobbing.)

Nicholas.

(calling at the door.) Alexander Petrovich! Go. I shall not go with you. I shall stay. (Takes off his coat.)

Marie.

We have not much longer to live. Do not let us spoil our life after twenty-eight years together. I will not give any more parties, but do not pain me so !

(Vania and Katia rush in.)

Both.

Mother, come quick!

Marie.

I'm coming—I'm coming! Then let us forgive each other.

(Exeunt Marie Ivanovna and Children.)

Nicholas.

(alone.) A child – a perfect child! Or – a cunning woman ! Ah, yes – a cunning child. That is it! O Thou dost not desire me for Thy servant. Thou wouldest humiliate me that all should point at me and say, " He talks but he does not act." I submit. He knows best what He desires. Humility, simplicity. Oh! if I could only raise myself to Him. (Enter Lisa.)

Lisa.

Excuse me: I came to bring you a letter from Vasily Ermilovich. It was written to me, but he wanted me to tell you about it.

Nicholas.

Is it really true then?

Lisa.

Yes. Read what he says.

Nicholas.

Will you read it to me?

Lisa.

(reading.) " I am writing to ask you to communicate this to Nicholas Ivanovich. I profoundly regret the error which made me openly renounce the Holy Orthodox Church, and I rejoice in my return. I wish the same for you and for Nicholas Ivanovich, and I ask your forgiveness."

Nicholas.

They have driven the poor man to this, but still it is terrible.

Lisa.

I wanted to tell you also that the Princess has come. She came into my room in a terrible state of excitement, and says she must see you. She has just come from Boris. I think you had better not see her. What good could it do?

Nicholas.

No, call her in. Evidently this is to be a terrible day of trial.

Lisa.

Then I'll call her. (Exit.)

Nicholas.

(alone.) Oh, just to remember that life consists in serving Thee! To remember that if Thou sendest trials to me, it is that Thou thinkest that I am able to bear them; that they are not above my strength, otherwise it would not be a trial. Father, help me – help me to do Thy will, and not my own.

(Enter Princess.)

Princess.

Oh, so you have admitted me –you have deigned to receive me. I will not shake your hand, because I hate and despise you.

Nicholas.

What has happened?

Princess.

Just this! He is being transferred to the disciplinary battalion, and it is your doing.

Nicholas.

Princess, if you want anything, tell me what it is. If you have only come to abuse me, you are merely doing yourself harm. As for me, you cannot offend me, because I sympathise with you, and pity you with all my soul.

Princess.

How charitable! Sublime Christianity! No, Monsieur Sarintsev, you cannot deceive me. I know you now. It is nothing to you that you have ruined my son, and here you are giving balls. Your daughter, who is engaged to my son, is about to make a match of which you approve, while you pretend to lead the simple life – you play at carpentering. How hateful you are to me, with your pharisaical life!

Nicholas.

Calm yourself, Princess, and tell me what you want. You have not come simply to abuse me.

Princess.

Yes, partly. I had to pour out my anguish. What I want of you is this: they are sending him to the disciplinary battalion, and I cannot bear that. And it is you who have done it – you – you – you !

Nicholas.

Not I – God has done it. And God knows how I pity you. Do not set yourself in opposition to the will of God. He is testing you. Bear it humbly.

Princess.

I cannot bear it humbly. My son is all the world to me, and you have taken him from me and have ruined him. I cannot accept it quietly. I have come to you, and I tell you again, and for the last time, that you have brought about his ruin, and you must save him. Go and obtain his release – go to the authorities, to the Tsar, to whomever you will. It is your duty. If you will not, I know what I shall do. You will answer to me for what you have done.

Nicholas.

Tell me what I am to do. I am willing to do all I can.

Princess.

I repeat once more, you must save him. If you do not – remember.
Good-bye. (Exit.)

(Nicholas lies down on the sofa. Silence. Pause. Music of "Gross-water's Tanz" is distinctly heard.)

Stephen.

Father isn't here. Come on.

(Enter chain of dancers, adults and children.)

Luba.

(seeing her father.) Oh, you are here! I beg your pardon !

Nicholas.

(rising.) Never mind.

(Chain goes through the room and out at the other door.)

(alone.) Vasily Ermilovich has returned to the Church. Boris is ruined through me. Luba will marry. Is it possible that I am mistaken – mistaken in believing Thee? Ah no! Father, help me !

ACT V

Scene I

A cell in the Disciplinary Battalion.– Prisoners sitting or lying about.– Boris reading the Gospel and making comments.

A man who has been flogged led out from this cell.–" Oh, why is there not another Pugachev to avenge us? "

Princess rushes in.– She is turned out.– Struggle with an officer.

Prisoners ordered to prayers.

Boris sent to the dungeon, and sentenced to be flogged.

Scene II

The Czar's Study.– Cigarettes.– Jokes.– Blandishments.– Princess is announced.– Ordered to wait.

Cringing PETITIONERS.

Then enter Princess.— Request refused.

(Exeunt.)

Scene III

Marie Ivanovna.— Speak with doctor of illness of Nicholas Ivanovich.
— He has changed, is very mild, but dejected.

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Nicholas Ivanovich enters with doctor.— Treatment is futile.— The soul is more important, but I consent for the sake of my wife.
(Enter Tonia with Stephen, Luba with Starkovsky.) Talk of the land.
Nicholas Ivanovich tries not to offend the others. {All go.)

Nicholas.

(alone with Lisa.) I am in a state of continual vacillation. Have I done right? I have achieved nothing. I have ruined Boris. Vasily Ermilovich has returned to the Church. I am an example of weakness. I see God did not want me to be His servant. He has many other servants. They will do the right thing without me. To see that clearly is to obtain peace of mind.

(Lisa goes.— He prays.)

Princess dashes in and kills him.—All rush in.— He says he did it himself accidentally.— Writes petition to the Tsar.

Enter Vasily Ermilovich with Dukhobors. — Nicholas Ivanovich dies rejoicing that the falsehoods of the Church are broken down.— He realises the meaning of his life.

Alternative for Last Scene.

Letter from Boris full of desperate agitation.

" I know—I have also passed through that."

Liberals.—A professor from the height of his superiority forgives and explains.

A Liberal society lady, wearing diamonds, present.—

" They are unable to understand. It will take a hundred years for them to do so."