

LINEN-MEASURER  
History of a Horse

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I.

The sky rose higher and higher; the dawn spread farther and farther ; the dull silver of the dew grew whiter ; the sickle of the moon looked ever more lifeless ; the forest resounded more sonorously – People began to get up, and in the manorial horse-yard could be heard ever more frequently snorting, rummaging in the straw, and even the whining neigh of horses crowded together and fussing about something.

" Hold on ! You will have time ! Are you hungry ? " said the old herdman, quickly opening the creaking gates. " Back ! " he shouted, swinging his arm toward the mare that was pushing her way through the gate.

Herdman Néster was dressed in a Cossack short coat, girded with an ornamented leather belt; his whip was swung over his shoulder, and his bread was wrapped in a scarf stuck into his belt. He carried a saddle and a bridle in his hands.

The horses were not in the least frightened and offended

<sup>1</sup> This subject was under consideration by M. A. Stakhovich, and communicated to the author by A. A. Stakhovich. – Author's Note.

by the frivolous tone of the herdman ; they looked as though it did not make much difference to them, and leisurely walked away from the gate ; only one bay, shaggy-maned mare dropped an ear and rapidly turned her back to him. Upon this occasion a young mare, who was standing behind her, and who was not at all concerned in the matter, whined and kicked her hind legs at the first horse she ran across.

" Hoa there ! " the herdman cried out even louder and more threateningly, marching toward the corner of the yard.

Of all the horses that were in the enclosure (there were more than one hundred of them), the least impatience was displayed by a piebald gelding, who was standing alone in the corner under a penthouse, and, blinking with his eyes, was licking the oak bark of the carriage shed.

It is impossible to tell what pleasure the piebald gelding found in

this, but his expression was serious and thoughtful while he was doing it.

" Lazybones ! " the herdman turned to him, again in the same tone, as he walked up toward him and placed the saddle and the glossy saddle-cloth on the manure pile near by.

The piebald gelding stopped licking and, without stirring, for a long time looked at Néster. He did not laugh, nor get angry, nor frown, but only moved his own belly, drawing a very deep breath, and turned away. The herdman put his arm around his neck and put the bridle on him.

" Why are you sighing so ? " said Nester.

The gelding switched his tail, as though to say : " Oh, nothing, Néster."

Nester put the saddle-cloth on him, whereat the horse, evidently to express his dissatisfaction, dropped his ears, for which he was only scolded as a " good-for-nothing " and had his belly-band tightened.

At this the gelding puffed himself up with anger, but Néster put his finger into the horse's mouth, and gave him such a kick in his belly with the foot that he had to let out his breath. And yet, when the girth was tightened on him, he once more dropped his ears and even looked around. Although he knew that it would do him no good, he considered it his duty to show that it was not agreeable to him, and that he would always express his dissatisfaction with it. When he was saddled, he put forth his swollen right leg and began to chew the bit, again for some special reason, for he ought to have known that there could be no taste to a bit.

Néster climbed on the gelding over a short stirrup, unwound his whip, straightened out his coat from under his knee, seated himself in the saddle in a peculiar attitude, such as coachmen, gentlemen riders, and herdmen assume, and pulled the reins. The gelding raised his head, expressing his willingness to proceed when ordered, but he did not stir from the spot. He knew that before starting Néster would make no end of fuss, giving orders to Väska and calling out to the horses. Indeed, Néster began to shout:

"Väska! Oh, Yaska! Have you let out the mares, eh ? Where are you going, devil ? Hoa there ! Are you asleep ? Open the gate ! Let the mares get out first ! " and so forth.

The gate creaked. Väska, angry and sleepy, holding a horse by the bridle, was standing near the gate-post and letting out the horses. The horses began to pass out one after another, cautiously stepping over the straw and sniffing at it : there were fillies, yearling stallions, suckling colts, and mares great with young, cautiously, one by one, carrying their bellies through the gate. The young mares crowded together, sometimes two and three at a time, placing their heads over each other's backs and tripping through the gate, for

which they each time were rebuked by the herdmen. The suckling colts now and then darted under the legs of strange mares, neighing sonorously in response to the short whinny of the mares.

A young playful mare bent her head downward and sidewise the moment she got out of the gate, kicked up with her hind legs and whinnied ; but she did not dare to run ahead of old, dappled gray Zhuldyba, who, as always, was walking cautiously, in a slow and heavy step, at the head of all the horses.

In a few minutes the animated enclosure was sadly deserted ; the pillars towered gloomily under the empty penthouse, and there could be seen nothing but crumpled and dung-covered straw. No matter how familiar this picture of desolation was to the piebald gelding, it must have affected him with melancholy. He slowly lowered and raised his head, as though greeting some one, drew a sigh, as much as the girth permitted him to do so, and, dragging his crooked and stiff legs, shambled after the herd, carrying old Néster on his bony back.

" I know : as soon as we get out on the road, he will strike fire and will light his wooden pipe with the brass trimming and with the little chain," thought the gelding. " I am glad of it, because early in the morning, while the dew is on the ground, this odour is pleasant to me and reminds me of many pleasant things ; the only annoying thing is that the old man with his pipe becomes quite dashing, imagining that he is somebody, and sits down sidewise, by all means sidewise, – and it is there where it pains me. However, God be with him ! It is not the first time I have had to suffer, to afford somebody pleasure ; I have even come to derive a certain equine pleasure from it. Let the poor fellow put on style ! He feels courageous only when nobody sees him. Let him sit sidewise ! " reflected the gelding, as he, stepping cautiously with his crooked legs, walked in the middle of the road.

IL

Having driven the herd to the river, near which the horses were to graze, Néster climbed down from the gelding and unsaddled him. The herd had in the meantime begun to scatter over the untrampled meadow, which was covered with dew and with a mist rising alike from the meadow and the encircling river.

Having taken off the bridle from the piebald gelding, Néster scratched him under his neck, in response to which the gelding, to express his gratefulness and pleasure, closed his eyes.

"He likes it, old dog !" said Néster.

But the gelding did not like that scratching in the least, and only out of delicacy of feeling pretended that it pleased him ; he shook his head in sign of consent.

But suddenly, Néster, entirely unexpectedly and without any cause, perhaps supposing that too great a familiarity might give the

piebald gelding a wrong idea about his importance, – Néster, without any warning, pushed away from him the head of the gelding, and, swinging the bridle, struck the gelding a very painful blow on his lean leg with the buckle of the bridle and, without saying anything, went up a mound to the stump near which he generally sat.

Though this deed grieved the piebald gelding, he did not show it, and, slowly swaying his scanty tail and sniffing at something and browsing just for pastime, walked over to the river.

He paid no attention to what the young mares, yearling stallions, and suckling colts, enjoying the early morning, were doing all around him. Knowing that it was healthiest, especially at his age, first to take a good drink on an empty stomach, and then only to go to eating, he selected a spot near the shore, where it was steepest and clearest, and, wetting his hoofs and fetlocks, dipped his muzzle in the water and began to suck in the water through his torn lips, to expand his full sides, and from pleasure to swing his scanty piebald tail on the bald stump.

A quarrelsome bay mare, who always teased the old fellow and caused him all kinds of annoyances, even now came up to him in the water, as though attending to some affair of hers, but, in reality, only in order to roil the water before his very nose. But the piebald gelding had had his fill and, as though not noticing the intention of the bay mare, one after another drew out his feet which were sunk in the mud, tossed his head, and, walking away from the youthful crowd, began to eat. Sprawling his feet in all kinds of fashion, and trampling down no more grass than was necessary, he, without unbending himself, ate exactly three hours. When he had eaten so much that his belly hung down like a bag from his lean, steep ribs, he balanced himself on his four sore legs so as to experience the least amount of pain, especially in his right fore leg, which was weaker than the rest, and fell asleep.

There is an old age which is majestic, and another which is homely, and another still which is pitiful. And there is also an old age which is both homely and majestic. The old age of the piebald gelding was precisely of that order.

The gelding was tall, not less than two arshins three vershoks<sup>1</sup> in height. His hair was dappled black, that is, it had been, but now the black spots had become of a dirty bay hue. His piebaldness consisted of three spots : one, on the head, extending as a crooked white spot from one side of the nose down to the middle of the neck. His

1 An arshin is about 2 feet, 4 inches ; a vershök is 1-16 arshin. long bur-matted mane was white and brownish in spots. Another spot extended down the right side as far as the middle of his belly; the third, on the crupper, took in the upper part of the tail and went down to the middle of the flanks. The rest of his tail was whitish and checkered.

His large bony head, with deep hollows over the eyes and a pendent, torn, black lower lip, hung low and heavily on his emaciated and bent neck, which looked as though made of wood. Back of the pendent lower lip could be seen a blackish tongue turned to one side and the yellow stumps of the ground-down lower teeth. The ears, of which one was slit, hung low on both sides and lazily moved from time to time, in order to scare away the pestering flies. One tuft of his forelock, which was still long, hung behind his ears ; his open brow was sunken and curly ; on the spacious jowls the skin hung down in bags. On the neck and head the veins were connected in knots, which twitched and trembled at every touch of a fly. The expression of his face was that of austere patience, deep thought, and suffering.

His fore legs were bent archlike at the knee ; both hoofs were swollen, and on one leg, on which the piebald spot reached down to the middle, there was at the knee a swelling of the size of a fist. His hind legs were in a better condition, but the hair was worn off the haunches and refused to grow out again. All the legs looked disproportionately long on account of the thinness of the body.

The ribs, though flat and declivitous, stood out from the body, and were so covered by skin that the skin seemed to have stuck fast to the intervals between the ribs. The withers and the back had a variegated appearance from old blows, and on the back there was a still freshly swollen and festering sore ; the black tail stump, with its clearly defined vertebræ, was long and almost bare. On the bay crupper, near the tail, there was a scar of the size of the palm of the hand, as though from a bite, which was overgrown with white hair. Another scarred sore could be seen on the shoulder.

His hocks and tail were soiled from the chronic disorder of his stomach. The hair, though short, stood in tufts all over his body. And yet, in spite of the hideous old age of this horse, one involuntarily stopped and reflected, looking at him, and a connoisseur would have said at once that he had been a fine horse in his day. A connoisseur would also have said that there was only one stock in Russia which could produce such broad bones, such immense kneepans, such hoofs, such slender leg bones, such a well-built neck, and, above all, such a head bone, such large, black, bright eyes, and such thoroughbred ganglia of veins about the head and neck, and such a thin skin and such hair.

Indeed, there was something majestic in the figure of that horse, and in the terrible combination of the repulsive signs of his decrepitude, which was the more apparent through the variegated colour of his skin, and of his manner and expression of self-confidence and calm, which are peculiar to conscious beauty and strength.

Like a living ruin, he stood alone in the midst of the dew-drenched meadow, while not far from him could be heard the tramping, snorting youthful neighing and whinnying of the scattered herd.

III.

The sun had risen above the forest and now shone brightly on the grass and on the bends of the river. The dew was drying up, collecting in drops ; the last of the morning mist passed away as light smoke. The cloudlets were becoming curly, but there was as yet no wind. Beyond the river stood green rye, curling into pipes, and there was an odour of fresh verdure and of blossoms.

A cuckoo was calling hoarsely in the forest, and Néster, lying on his back, was counting the number of years he was to live yet. The larks rose over the rye and the meadow. A belated hare lost his way among the herd, jumped out into the open, sat down near a bush, and began to listen. Vdska had fallen asleep, with his head in the grass ; the mares made a still larger circle about him and scattered over the meadow. The old mares, snorting, made a bright path over the dew and looked for places where they might remain unmolested ; they no longer ate, but only tasted some choice pieces of grass. The whole herd was imperceptibly moving in one direction.

And again old Zhuldyba, walking with measured step in front of the rest, showed the possibility of going farther. Young black Fly, who had just had her first colt, kept whinnying all the time and, raising her tail, snorted at her lilac colt. Young Atlas, with smooth and glossy hair, lowered her head in such a way that the black, silky forelock covered her brow and eyes ; she was playing with the grass – now biting it off, now throwing it away – and striking the ground with her dew-drenched foot with shaggy fetlock.

One of the older colts, no doubt imagining he was playing some game, was now running around his mother for the twenty-sixth time, raising his short, curly tail in the shape of a panache, while she calmly continued to browse, having become accustomed to her son's character, and only occasionally looking at him awry with her large black eye.

One of the smallest colts, a black, big-headed little fellow, with forelock towering surprised between his ears and a little tail turned to one side, as it had been in his mother's womb, stood with pricked ears and dull glance, without stirring from the spot, looking fixedly at the colt who was frisking and prancing about, – it is hard to tell whether he was envying him or condemning him for what he was doing.

Some of the colts were suckling, hitting their mothers' teats with their noses ; some, without any apparent reason, did not respond to their mothers' calls, but ran in an awkward, mincing trot in this opposite direction, as though looking for something, and then, no one knew why, stopped and neighed in a despairingly penetrating voice ; some lay stretched out in a row ; some were learning to eat grass ; and some again were scratching themselves behind their ears with a hind leg.

Two mares with young were walking apart from the rest and, slowly dragging their legs along, were still eating. It was evident that

their condition was respected by the rest, and none of the younger horses dared to approach and disturb them. If some frisky colts happened, nevertheless, to come near to them, one motion of the ear and tail was sufficient to show them all the indecency of their behaviour.

The yearling stallions and fillies pretended to be grown up and sedate, and but rarely leaped about or joined the jolly company. They ate the grass with all due propriety, stretching out their clipped swanlike necks, and switching their little tufts as though they were tails. Just like the grown-up ones, some of them lay down, rolled, or scratched each other.

The joiiliest company was composed of the two and three-year-old fillies and of the maiden mares. They were going all together as a merry maiden crowd. Among them could be heard tramping, whinnying, neighing, and snorting. They came together, placed their heads over each other's shoulders, sniffed at each other, jumped about, and, now and then raising their tails with a trumpet-like flourish, proudly and coquettishly raced in front of their companions in a half-trot, half-amble.

The first beauty and the first instigator of fun among all this youth was the mischievous bay mare. Whatever she undertook to do, the others did ; wherever she went, a whole crowd of beauties followed her. The mischievous mare was in an unusually playful mood on that morning. The happy mood had come over her, just as it comes over people. Even at the watering-place, when she had played her prank on the old gelding, she ran down in the water, pretending to have been frightened by something, and with a loud snort raced down the field so that Vaska was compelled to gallop after her and after the others that had started off with her. Then, having eaten a bit, she began to roll, and then to tease the old mares by running up in front of them ; then she separated a suckling colt from his mother, as though wishing to bite him. The mother was frightened and stopped eating, while the little colt whinnied in a pitiful voice ; but the mischievous mare did not touch him at all : she only scared him some, thus affording a spectacle to her companions who were looking sympathetically at her tricks. Then she undertook to turn the head of a gray horse which a peasant was driving in a plough over the rye-field, far away on the other side of the river. She took up a proud attitude, somewhat to one side, raised her head, shook herself, and neighed in a sweet, tender, and drawn-out voice. In this neighing there was expressed mischief, and feeling, and a certain sadness. There was in it both the desire and the promise of love, and the pining for it.

There a corn-crake, leaping from place to place in the thick reeds, was passionately calling for his mate ; there the cuckoo and the quail were singing love, and the flowers were sending their fragrant dust over the wind to each other.

" I am young, and beautiful, and strong," said the neighing of the mischievous one, " but I have not been allowed so far to experience

the sweetness of that feeling ; not only have I not been allowed to experience it, but not one lover, not one, has ever seen me."

And the significant neighing resounded sad and full of youth and was borne over the meadow and over the field, and reached the gray horse in the distance. He raised his ears and stopped. The peasant struck him with his bast shoe, but the gray horse was spelled by the silvery sound of the distant neighing, and himself neighed. The peasant grew angry, jerked the lines, and gave him with the bast shoe such a kick in his belly that he stopped in the middle of the neighing and moved on. But the gray horse felt both happy and sad, and from the distant ryefield the sounds of an incipient passionate neighing and of the angry voice of the peasant were for a long time borne to the herd.

If the mere voice could have turned the head of the gray horse so as to make him forget his duty, what would have happened to him if he could have seen the whole beautiful form of the mischievous mare as she, pricking her ears, expanding her nostrils, drawing in the air, ready to run, and trembling with her whole youthful and beautiful body, was calling him.

But the mischievous one did not dwell long on her impressions. When the voice of the gray horse died away, she gave another scornful neigh and, lowering her head, began to paw the earth, and then went away to waken and tease the piebald gelding. The piebald gelding was the constant martyr and butt of this happy youth. He suffered more from this youth than from people. He had done no wrong to either. People needed him, but why did the young horses torment him ?

#### IV.

He was old, they were young ; he was lean, they were plump ; he was sad, they were merry. Consequently he was an entire stranger to them, an entirely different being, and there was no reason for pitying him. Horses pity only themselves and only exceptionally those in whose hide they can imagine themselves. But was it the piebald gelding's fault that he was old and haggard and homely ?

One would think not, but according to equine sense he was blameworthy, and those only were right who were strong, young, and happy, those with whom everything was still ahead, those whose every muscle quivered and whose tails rose up straight from every unnecessary tension. It may be that the piebald gelding himself understood that, and in his quiet moments agreed with them that he was blameworthy for having lived his life and that he had to pay for that life ; but still he was a horse, and so he frequently could not repress a consciousness of insult, sadness, and provocation, whenever he looked at the youth tormenting him for that to which they themselves would be subject at the end of their lives. Another cause of the pitilessness of the horses was an aristocratic feeling. All of them, on their father's or mother's side, derived their genealogy from the famous stud Cream, while the piebald gelding was of an unknown origin, having come from the outside, where three

years before he had been bought in the market-place for eighty roubles in assignats.

The bay mare, pretending to be taking a walk, went up to the very nose of the piebald gelding and pushed him. He knew what it was, and, without opening his eyes, dropped his ears and showed his teeth. The mare turned her back to him and looked as though she was going to kick him. He opened his eyes and went away. He was no longer asleep, and so began to eat. Again the mischief-maker, accompanied by her companions, walked over to the gelding. A two-year-old, white-spotted mare, a very stupid beast, who in everything and always imitated the bay mare, went with her and, as is always the case with imitators, put on too thick that which the mischief-maker had been doing. The bay mare generally walked over to him as though attending to her own business, and passed in front of his nose, without looking at him, so that he was positively unable to tell whether he ought to get angry or not, and so it was really funny.

This she did even now, but the white-spotted mare, who was following her and who was in an unusually frisky mood, struck the gelding with her breast. He again showed his teeth, screeched, and with an agility which one could not have expected of him made for her and bit her in the flank. The white-spotted mare kicked up her hind legs with all her might and gave the old gelding a painful blow on his lean, bare ribs. The gelding groaned and wanted to rush at her once more, but changed his mind and, drawing a deep sigh, went away.

No doubt all the youth of the herd regarded as a personal insult the impudence which the piebald gelding had allowed himself to offer to the white-spotted mare, for they positively gave him no chance to eat the rest of the day, nor did they give him a moment of rest, so that the herdman had to bring them several times to their senses, and he was unable to make out what the matter with them was.

The gelding was so much insulted that he himself went up to Néster when the old man was getting ready to drive the herd home, and felt himself happier and calmer when he was saddled and mounted.

God knows what the old gelding was thinking of as he was carrying old Néster on his back. Whether he was resentfully thinking of the impudent and cruel youth, or whether, with a contemptuous and taciturn pride, characteristic of old persons, he forgave Iris offenders, – he in no way manifested his reflections on Iris whole way home.

That very evening friends had come to see Néster, and, as he was driving the herd past the huts of the manorial servants, he noticed a cart with a horse, tied to his porch. Having driven in the herd, he was in such a hurry that he did not take off the saddle, but let the gelding out into the yard, called out to Vdska to unsaddle the herding\* horse, closed the gate, and went to his friends.

"Whether on account of the insult offered to the white-spotted mare,

Cream's great-grandchild, by the " mangy trash," bought at a horse-market and knowing neither his father nor his mother, and the consequent offended aristocratic feeling of the whole enclosure, or whether the gelding in his high saddle, without the rider, presented an odd and fantastic spectacle to the horses, – certainly something unusual took place that evening in the enclosure. All the horses, young and old, ran after the gelding, with grinning teeth, driving him about the yard; there were heard the sounds of hoofs striking against his lean sides and heavy groans. The gelding could stand it no longer, – he could no longer escape the blows. He stopped in the middle of the yard ; in his face there was expressed the disgusting, feeble fury of impotent old age, then despair ; he dropped his ears, and suddenly something happened which made all the horses grow silent. The eldest of the mares, Vyazopurikha, went up to the gelding, sniffed at him, and drew a sigh. The gelding, too, drew a sigh.

V.

In the middle of the yard lighted up by the moon stood the tall, lean figure of the gelding with the high saddle, with the big knob of its bow. The horses stood motionless and in profound silence all about him, as though they had found out something new and unusual from him. Indeed, they did find out from him something new and unusual.

This is what they learned from him.

#### FIRST NIGHT

" Yes, I am the son of Darling I. and of Baba. My name according to the pedigree is Muzhik I. I am Muzhik I. according to the pedigree, but nicknamed Linen-measurer, called so by the crowd for my long and flowing gait, the like of which there was not in all Russia. There is no more thoroughly bred horse in the whole world than I am. I should never have told you so. What good would it do ? You would never have recognized me, just as Vyazopurikha, who was with me at Khryénov, has not recognized me before this. You would not have believed me even now if Vyazopurikha were not my witness. I should never have told it to you. I do not need your equine compassion. But you asked for it. Yes I am that Linen-measurer whom the connoisseurs of horse-flesh are looking for and cannot find, that Linen-measurer whom the count himself knew and whom he got rid of from his stud for having outrun his favourite, Swan.

" When I was bom, I did not know what ' piebald ' meant, – I thought I was a horse. The first remark about my hair, I remember, startled me and my mother.

" I must have been born at night ; in the morning I was all licked clean by my mother and could stand on my feet. I remember, I was all the time wanting something, and everything seemed exceedingly wonderful and, at the same time, exceedingly simple. Our stalls were in a long, warm corridor, with grated doors, through which

everything could be seen.

" My mother offered me her teats, but I was still so innocent that I nudged her with my nose, now between her forelegs, and now at her udders. Suddenly my mother looked back at the grated door, and, putting her leg over me, stepped aside. The groom of the day was looking at us through the grate.

" ' I declare, Baba has had a colt,' he said, and began to draw back the door-bolt.

" He walked over the fresh bedding and embraced me.

" ' Look here, Taras,' he called out, ' and see how piebald he is, – just like a magpie.'

" I darted away from him and fell on my knees.

" ' What a little devil ! ' he said.

"My mother was anxious, but did not defend me; she only drew a deep, deep breath and walked a little aside. The grooms came to look at me. One ran away to announce the fact to the keeper of the stable.

" All laughed, looking at my piebald spots, and gave me all kinds of names. Neither I nor even my mother understood the meaning of these words. Up till then there had not been among us or among all my relatives a single piebald horse. We did not think there was anything wrong about it. All then praised my build and my strength.

" "See how quick he is!" said a groom. 'You can't hold him.'

"After awhile the keeper came, and he marvelled at my colour ; he even seemed to be aggrieved.

" ' I wonder after whom this monster takes,' he said. 'The general will not leave him in the stud. 0 Baba, you have played me a nice trick.' He turned to my mother. ' If you had had a wliite-spotted one, I should not have minded it so, but no, this one is all piebald ! ' "

"My mother made no reply and, as always in such cases, again drew a sigh.

" ' What devil does he take after ? Just like a muzhik ! ' he continued. ' He can't be left in the stud ! It is a shame ! And yet he is a fine colt, he is fine ! ' said he, and so said all, looking at me.

" A few days later the general himself came ; he looked at me, and again all seemed to be horrified and rebuked me and my mother for the colour of my hair.

" ' And yet he is a fine colt, he is ! ' said all who saw me.

" Until spring we all lived separated in the mare stable, each with his mother ; occasionally, when the snow began to melt in the sun on the roofs of the stables, mother and I were let out in a broad yard bedded with fresh straw. Here I for the first time became acquainted with all my near and distant relatives. Here I saw all the famous mares of that time come out with their young from different doors. Here was old Dutchy, Fly, Cream's daughter, Leddy, riding-horse Complaint, – all the famous mares of that time, all were gathered there with their young, walking about in the sun, rolling on the fresh straw, and sniffing at each other, like any common horses.

" The sight of that enclosure, filled with the beauties of that time, I have never been able to forget. There was . also that very Vyazopurikha, who then was a yearling filly, – a sweet, lively, merry little horse ; but, no insult being meant to her, although now she is regarded by you as a remarkable thoroughbred, she then was only one of the worst horses of that breed. She will herself tell you so.

" My variegated colour, which had so displeased the men, found great favour with the horses ; they all surrounded me, admired me, and played with me. I began to forget the words of the men and felt happy. Soon I learned the first sorrow of my life, and the cause of it was my mother. When it began to melt, and the sparrows twittered under the roofs, and spring could be felt more strongly in the air, my mother began to change her treatment of me.

" All her manner was changed. Now she suddenly without any cause began to play, running about in the yard, which did not at all comport with her respectable age ; now she fell to musing and started to neigh ; now she bit and kicked her sister mares ; now she began to sniff at me and snort out in dissatisfaction ; and now, as she went out into the sun, she put her head over the shoulder of her cousin Tradeswoman, and for a long time scratched her back while lost in thought, and kept driving me away from her teats.

" Once there came the keeper of the stable, who ordered that a halter be put on her and that she be taken out of the stall. She neighed, and I answered her and made a dart for her, but she did not even look back at me. Groom Tards put his arms around me just as they were closing the door after my mother had been led out.

" I bolted and threw the groom down on the straw, but the door was closed, and I only heard the receding neighing of my mother. But in that neigh I no longer heard a call for me, but something different. To her voice there came in response a mighty voice, that of Good I., as I later learned, who, with two grooms by his sides, was going to meet my mother.

" I do not remember how Tards got out of my stall: I was too sad, for I felt that I had for ever lost the love of my mother. And it, was all because I was piebald, I thought, recalling the words of the people about the colour of my hair, and I became so infuriated that

I began to beat my head and my knees against the wall of the stall, and continued doing so until I began to perspire and had to stop from exhaustion.

" After awhile my mother returned to me. I heard her run up the corridor to our stall in a trot, and with an unusual gait. The door was opened for her, and I did not recognize her, – she looked so much younger and prettier. She sniffed at me, snorted, and began to whinny. I could see by her whole expression that she did not love me.

" She told me about Good's beauty and about her love of him. These meetings were continued, and the relations between me and my mother grew colder and colder.

" Soon we were let out to grass. Then I learned new joys, which took the place of my mother's lost love. I had companions and friends. We learned together to eat grass, to neigh like grown horses, and, raising our tails, to gallop in circles about our mothers. That was a happy time. I was forgiven everything; all loved me, admired me, and looked condescendingly at everything I did. That did not last long.

" Soon after something terrible happened to me."

The gelding heaved a terrible sigh, and walked away from the horses.

The dawn had long crimsoned the sky. The gate creaked, and Néster came in. The horses scattered. The herdman fixed the saddle on the gelding and drove out the herd.

VL

## SECOND NIGHT

The moment the horses were all driven home, they again gathered about the piebald gelding.

" In the month of August mother and I were separated," began the gelding, " and I did not experience any special grief. I saw that my mother was heavy with a younger brother, famous IIsan, and I was no longer to her what I had been. I was not jealous, but I felt that I was getting colder toward her. Besides, I knew that, leaving my mother, I was going to enter into the common division of colts, where we were stationed two and three at a time, and whence a whole lot of us young colts were let out into the open. I stood in the same division with Dear. Dear was a riding-horse, and later on the emperor rode him, and he was represented in paintings and in statues. But at that time he was still a simple colt, with soft, glossy hair, a swanlike neck, and legs as straight and thin as strings. He was always jolly, good-natured, and kind ; he was always ready to play, to lick, and to joke either horse or man.

« We involuntarily became friends, living together, and that

friendship lasted during the whole time of our youth.

"He was cheerful and frivolous. He even then began to fall in love and play with the mares, and he laughed at my innocence. To my misfortune, I from egotism began to imitate him, and soon was carried away by love. That early weakness of mine was the cause of the great

est change in my fate. It happened so that I was carried away---- Vyazopurikha was one year older than I ; we

were specially friendly with each other, but toward the end of autumn I noticed that she began to be shy of me.

" But I will not tell all that unfortunate story of my first love ; she herself remembers my senseless transport which ended for me in the most important change in my life.

" The herdmen began to drive her away and to strike me. In the evening I was driven into a special stall, where I neighed all night long as though having a presentiment of what was to happen on the following day.

" In the morning the general, the keeper, the grooms, and the herdmen came to the corridor where my stall was, and there was raised a terrible hubbub. The general shouted to the keeper ; the keeper vindicated himself by saying that he had given no order to let me out, but that the grooms had done so on their own account. The general said that he should have them all flogged, but that the young stallions should not be kept. The keeper promised that everything would be done. They grew quiet and went away. I did not comprehend a thing, but I saw that something was to be done with me.

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" On the following day I for ever stopped neighing, – I became what I now am. The whole world was changed in my eyes. Nothing gave me any pleasure : I pondered over myself and began to brood. At first everything annoyed me. I even ceased to eat, to drink, and to walk, and, of course, play was out of the question. Now and then it would occur to me to give a kick, take a run, start a neigh ; but immediately the terrible question arose before me : What for ? Why ? and my last strength was gone.

" Once I was being led around in the evening, as the herd was driven from the field. At a distance I saw a cloud of dust with the indistinct familiar contours of all our mares. I heard a merry whinnying and tramping. I stopped, although the rope of the halter, by which the groom was pulling me, was cutting the nape of my neck, and began to look at the approaching herd, as one looks at the happiness which is for ever lost and will not return.

" They were coming nearer, and I could tell one after another all the beautiful, majestic, healthy, well-fed horses whom I knew so

well. Some of them also looked at me. I did not feel any pain from the jerking of the groom's halter. I forgot myself and involuntarily neighed from old habit and ran in a trot; but my neighing sounded sad, ridiculous, and insipid.

" They did not laugh in the herd, but I noticed that many of them turned away from me out of politeness. They were obviously disgusted, and sorry, and ashamed, and, above all, I appeared so ridiculous to them. What they found so ridiculous was my thin, inexpressive neck, big head (I had grown lean in the meantime), my long, clumsy legs, and the stupid trotting gait, with which I, from old habit, started to make evolutions about the groom. Nobody replied to my neighing, – all turned away from me. I suddenly understood all ; I understood how I had once and for all become a stranger to them, – I do not remember how I reached home with the groom.

" I had even before begun to show an inclination toward seriousness and reflection, and now a complete transformation took place in me. My piebald spots, which had produced such a strange contempt in people for me, and my peculiar position in the stud, which I began to feel but was quite unable to explain to myself, caused me to brood over myself.

" I pondered on the injustice of men, who condemned me because I was piebald ; I pondered on the inconstancy of maternal and, in general, of woman's love, and its dependence on physical conditions ; and, above all, I pondered on the qualities of that strange race of animals, with whom we are so intimately connected and whom we call men, – those qualities from which sprang that peculiar position of mine in the stud, which I felt but could not understand.

" The meaning of that peculiarity and of the human qualities on which it was based was revealed to me on the following occasion :

" It was in winter, during the holidays. I had not been given anything to eat or drink during the whole day. As I later learned, this was due to the fact that our groom was drunk. On that day the keeper of the stable came in to my stall and, upon seeing that I had no feed, began to call the absent groom all kinds of bad names.

" On the next day the groom came with a companion of his to our stall to give us hay. I saw that he was unusually pale and sad ; especially in the expression of his long back was there something significant and provoking compassion.

« He angrily threw the hay over the railing. I stuck my head over his shoulder, being eager to eat; but he struck me with his fist such a blow on the point of my nose that I jumped away. Then he kicked me in the belly with his boot.

" ' If it had not been for that mangy one,' he said, \* nothing would have happened.'

" ' What is the matter ? ' asked the other.

" < The devil knows whether they have sold him or have given him away. If I had starved the count's horses, it would not have mattered, but how did I dare to give no feed to his colt. " Lie down," says he, and then they started walloping me ! What has become of Christianity ? They pity an animal more than a man. He must be an infidel : he himself did the counting, the barbarian ! The general has never flogged me like that !

He has made swales on my whole hack, – he evidently has no Christian soul ! '

"What they were saying about flogging and Christianity, I understood well, but at that time I could not make out what was meant by the words ' his colt,' from which I saw that people assumed a certain connection between me and the keeper. Wherein this connection consisted I could not understand then. Only much later, when I was separated from the rest of the horses, did I comprehend what it meant. At that time I was absolutely unable to understand what was meant by calling me the property of a man. The words ' my horse ' had reference to me, a living horse, and seemed as strange to me as the words ' my land,' ' my air,' ' my water.'

" But these words had an enormous influence upon me. I never stopped thinking of them, and only much later, after the most varied relations with men, did I finally come to understand the meaning ascribed by people to these strange words. ,

" People are guided in life, not by deeds, but by words. They love not so much the ability to do or not do something, as the ability to apply certain conventional words to all kinds of objects. Such words, which are regarded as very important by them, are ' my, mine,' which they say about different objects, beings, and things, even about the earth, about people, and about horses. About any one thing they have agreed to let just one man call it ' mine.' And he who, according to this game, agreed among them, is able to say ' mine ' about the greatest number of things is regarded as the happiest. Why it is so, I do not know, only it is so. Formerly I used to attempt to explain it by some advantage which they derive from it, but that has proved to be unjust.

" Many of those people who, for example, called me their horse, did not ride on me, but entirely different persons rode on me. Nor did they, but others, feed me.

And again, it was not those who called me their horse who did kindnesses to me, but coachmen, veterinarians, and, in general, strangers.

" Having later expanded the circle of my observations, I convinced myself that even in respect to things other than horses the idea of ' mine ' had no other foundation than a low, animal, human instinct, called by them the feeling or right of property. A man says ' my

house,' and never lives in it, but only cares about the building and the maintenance of the house. A merchant says ' my shop, my draper's shop,' for example, and has not any clothes of the best cloth that there is in his shop.

" There are people who call the land their own, though they have never seen that land, and have never walked over it. There are people who call other people their own, and who have never seen those men ; and the only relation which they bear to these people is to do them harm.

" There are people to call women their own women, or wives ; but these women live with other men. And people strive in life not after doing good, but after calling as many things as possible \* theirs.'

" I am now convinced that in this lies the essential difference between men and us. Therefore, not to mention other advantages which we have over men, we by this alone may say that we stand higher than men in the scale of living beings; the activity of men, at least of those with whom I have had any relations, is guided by words, while ours is guided by deeds.

" It was this right to speak of me as \* my ' horse which the keeper had acquired, and for which he had the groom flogged. That discovery affected me powerfully and, combined with those thoughts and reflections, which my piebald appearance called forth in men, and with the melancholy, called forth in me by the treason of my mother, caused me to become the serious and thoughtful gelding that I am.

" I was thrice unhappy : I was piebald, I was a gelding, and people imagined about me that I did not belong to God and to myself, as is proper for all living beings, but that I belonged to the keeper.

" There were many consequences of this belief of theirs. The first of these was that they kept me separate, fed me better, oftener took me out by the line, and hitched me up much earlier.

" I was hitched up the first time in my third year. I remember how the keeper himself, who imagined that I belonged to him, the first time began to hitch me up with a crowd of grooms, expecting violence or resistance from me. They tied me up with ropes as they took me down between the shafts ; they put on my back a broad cross of leather straps and tied it to the shafts, so as to keep me from kicking, whereas I was only waiting for a chance to show them my willingness and love of work.

" They were surprised to see me go like an old horse. They began to drive me, and I began to exercise trotting. I made ever greater progress with every new day, so that in three months the general himself, and others, praised my gait. But, strange to say, even because they imagined that I was not theirs, but the keeper's, my gait had for them an entirely different meaning.

" My brother colts were driven in races, their records were kept, and people came out to see them, and they were driven in gilt sulkies, and expensive horse blankets were thrown over them. I travelled in the common carts of the keeper to help him attend to his business at Ches-ménka and other hamlets. All that was caused by the fact that I was piebald, and, chiefly, because I was, in their opinion, not the count's, but the keeper's own.

" To-morrow, if we are alive, I will tell you the chief consequence that this right of property, which the keeper imagined he had, had for me."

All that day the horses treated Linen-measurer with respect. But Néster's treatment was as rude as before. The gray horse of the peasant, coming up to the herd, again neighed, and the bay mare again flirted with him.

VII.

### THIRD NIGHT

The moon arose, and its narrow sickle illuminated the figure of Linen-measurer, who was standing in the middle of the yard ; the horses were crowding around him.

" The chief wonderful consequence of my being not the count's or God's, but the keeper's," continued the piebald gelding, "was that that which forms our main desert,— namely our rapid gait, — became the cause of my expulsion. Swan was being driven on the track, as the Ches-inenka keeper drove up to the track with me. Swan went past us. He was a fine trotter, but he was showing off a great deal, and did not have that agility which I had worked out in myself, winch was that at the touch of one foot the other should immediately be lifted, so that not the slightest effort should be lost in vain, but that every exertion should send me ahead.

" ' Well, shall I try my piebald ? ' he called out ; and when Swan came abreast with me he let me go. He had already the impetus ahead of me, and so I fell behind at the first turn; but in the second I began to gain on him, came nearer to his vehicle, came abreast of him, ran ahead, — and outstripped him.

"They tried a second time, — and the same took place. I was even in better trim, and this terrified all. The general asked to have me sold as far from him as possible, so that he might never hear of me.

" ' For if the count finds out, there will be trouble,' he said.

" And so I was sold to a horse dealer as a centre horse. I did not stay long with the horse dealer. A hussar, who came to buy remounts, took me with him. All that was so unfair, so cruel, that I was glad when I was taken away from Khryenov, and when I for ever parted from that which was familiar and dear to me. I felt too painfully my situation among them. For them there was love, honour, freedom ; for

me labour, humiliation, work to the end of my life ! Why ? Because I was piebald, and because for that reason I had to become somebody's horse - "

Linen-measurer was unable to proceed with his story upon that evening. In the enclosure there happened something that stirred up all the horses. Tradeswoman, a mare late with young, who had been listening to the beginning of the story, suddenly turned around and slowly walked over to the shed; there she began to groan so loud that all the horses directed their attention to her ; then she lay down, then rose again, and again lay down. The old mares understood what the matter was, but the young horses were agitated, and, leaving the gelding, surrounded the sick mare.

On the morrow there was a new colt who was quivering on his legs. Néster called the keeper, and the mare with her colt was taken to a stall, while the horses were driven out without them.

vin.

#### FOURTH NIGHT

In the evening, when the gate was closed and all quieted down, the piebald continued as follows :

" I have had opportunity to make many observations, both on men and on horses, during the time that I passed from hand to hand. Longest of all I stayed with two masters, with a prince, an officer of hussars, and later with an old woman who lived near the Church of St. Nicholas, the miracle-worker.

" With the officer of hussars I passed the best time of my life.

" Although he was the cause of my ruin, although he never loved any one or anything, I have always loved him for that very reason.

"What I liked in him was that he was handsome, happy, rich, and therefore loved nobody.

" You must understand that exalted equine feeling of ours ! His coldness, my dependence on him, added special strength to my love for him. ' Kill me, drive me to death,' I used to think in our good days, ' I will only be the happier for it.'

" He had bought me of the horse dealer, to whom the keeper had sold me for eight hundred roubles. He bought me for the reason that nobody had any piebald horses.

« That was my liest time.

" He had a mistress. I knew it because I took him to her every day, and sometimes drove them out together.

" His mistress was a beauty, and he was handsome, and • his coachman was handsome. And I loved them all for it. And I had an easy life with them.

" My Efe passed like tins: In the morning the groom came to groom me – not the coachman, but the groom. The groom was a young boy taken from the village. He opened the door, let the horse evaporations go out, threw out the dung, took off the blankets, and began to curry my body, and to deposit white rows of the dandruff on the deals of the floor, which was all knocked up by my sponges.

" I jestingly bit Ins sleeve and pawed the ground.

« Then we were led, one after another, to a vat filled with cold water, and the lad took delight in his work, in the smooth piebald spots, the leg, as straight as an arrow, with its broad hoof, and the glossy crupper and back, which looked smooth enough to lie down upon.

"Hay was put in behind the high railing, and oats were poured into the oak crib. Then Feofan and the chief coachman came.

" The master and the coachman were very much alike. Neither the one nor the other was afraid of anything nor loved anybody, but himself, and for tins both were loved by all. Feofän wore a red shirt and plush trousers and a sleeveless coat. I used to be glad to see him come into the stable on a holiday, all pomaded and wearing his sleeveless coat, and call out:

" ' Well, beast, have you forgotten me ? ' and he would strike me with the fork-handle on my flank, not painfully, but just as a joke.

" I immediately saw that it was a joke and, dropping my ears, gritted my teeth.

" We had a black stallion who went in a span. At night I was hitched with him. This beast did not know what a joke was and was as mean as a devil. I stood by his side, one stall from him, and he frequently bit me, not in jest. Feofan was not afraid of him. He simply walked up straight to him and shouted so loud that I thought he would kill him, but no, he would go on and would put the halter on him.

, " Once he and I, driving in a span, drove down Blacksmith Bridge. Neither the master nor the coachman was frightened : they laughed, shouted to the people, and checked us in, and turned – and he did not crush any one.

« In their service I lost my best qualities and half of my life. Here they ruined me by watering me too much, and they foundered me. Still, in spite of it all, that was the best part of my life ! They

would come at midnight, harness me up, grease my hoofs, wet my mane and forelock, and put me between the shafts.

« The sleigh was of woven reed with velvet cushions ; the harness had small silver buckles, the leashes were of silk, and so was the netting. The harness was such that when all the traces and straps were in place and hitched, it was impossible to make out where the harness ended and the horse began.

" I was generally harnessed up in the shed. Then Feofan, broader at his hips than at his shoulders, came out, carrying a red belt under his armpit ; he examined the harness, sat down, fixed his caftan, put his foot in the stirrup, made some joke, hung his whip over his wrist, just for appearances, for he never gave me the whip, and said : ' Come now ! '

" Playing at every step, I moved out of the gate ; and the cook, who came out to throw out the swill, stopped on the threshold, and a peasant, who brought wood into the yard, opened wide his eyes. He drove me out and some distance away, and stopped. Then lackeys came out, and other coachmen came up. And they began to chat. There they all waited : we frequently had to stand for three hours at the entrance ; sometimes we would be driven about and brought back to the same place to wait.

. And they began to There they all waited : we frequently had to stand

" Then there was a stir in the vestibule, and gray Tikhon, wearing a dress coat over his paunch, came out and called out : ' The carriage ! ' Then there was not that stupid manner of saying ' Forward ! ' as though I did not know that we drove forward and not backward ; Feofan smacked his tongue and drove up.

" And the prince stepped out leisurely, carelessly, as though there was nothing remarkable in that sleigh, nor in the horse, nor in Feofan, who bent his back and stretched out his arm in an attitude in which he could not, it seemed, persevere long. The prince came out in his helmet and military overcoat with a gray beaver collar, which concealed the ruddy, black-browed, beautiful face that ought never to have been concealed. He came out clattering with his sabre, his spurs, and the brass heels of his galoshes, stepping over the carpet, as though in a hurry and paying no attention to me or to Feofan, though all but him looked at us and admired us.

" Feofan smacked his tongue, I pulled at the traces, and we moved up, as was proper, at an amble, and stopped ; I looked sidewise at the prince, and shook my thoroughbred head and fine forelock.

"The prince was in a good mood; now and then he jested with Feofan. Feofan replied to him, barely turning toward him his handsome head, and, without dropping his hands, made a barely perceptible movement

with the lines, which I understood well, and one, two, three – I ran ahead, quivering with every muscle and throwing up the snow and the mud against the front part of the sleigh.

" They did not have then the stupid manner of calling ' Oh ! ' as though the coachmen were in pain, but they called out the intelligible ' Come now ! Look out ! ' "

" ' Come now ! Look out ! ' Feofan called, and the people stepped aside and stopped, and craned their necks, looking at the beauty of the horse, and at the handsome coachman, and at the handsome master.

" I was particularly fond of running ahead of a trotter. When Feofan and I saw some harness ahead of us, which seemed to be worthy of our effort, we, flying like a whirlwind, began slowly to gain on the vehicle. Already I, throwing the mud on the back of the sleigh, am even with the passenger and snort right over his head, and now I am even with the horse's saddle-cloth, with the arch, and I do not see him and only hear behind me his receding voice.

" And the prince and Feofan and I, we were all silent, and pretended to be simply driving, attending to our business, and not noticing those whom we met on the way driving quiet horses.

" I loved to outstrip a good trotter, but I also liked to meet such a horse. One moment, a sound, a glance, and we were driving in different directions, and again we were off all alone, each attending to his business – "

The gate creaked and the voices of Néster and Vdska were heard.

#### FIFTH NIGHT

The weather began to change. It looked gloomy ; there had been no dew in the morning, and it was hot, and the gnats were very pestering. The moment the herd was driven in, the horses gathered about the piebald gelding, and he finished his story as following :

" My happy life soon came to an end. I lived thus only two years. Toward the end of the second winter there happened the most joyful incident for me, and soon after my greatest misfortune.

" It was during Butter-week. I took the prince to the races. Atlas and Steer were racing. I do not know what they were doing in the booth, only he came out and ordered Feofan to drive into the track.

" I remember I was placed on the track by Atlas's side. Atlas was driving with a sulky, while I was pulling a city sleigh. I outstripped him in turning. Laughter and a roar of applause greeted me.

" When I was led out, a crowd followed me up. Some five men offered the prince thousands for me. He only laughed, displaying his white teeth.

" « No,' he said, \* that is not a horse, but a friend of mine ; I sha'n't take mountains of gold for him. Goodbye, gentlemen ! ' "

" He opened the boot, and seated himself in the sleigh.

" ' To the Ostozhenka ! ' "

" There was the house of his mistress. And we flew – "That was our last happy day. We arrived there. He called her ' his own.' But she loved another, and had gone away with him. He learned that at her house. It was five o'clock, and he, without unhitching me, went after her. They did to me what they had never done before : they gave me the whip, and made me gallop.

" For the first time I took a wrong step, and I felt ashamed and wanted to redeem myself ; but suddenly I heard the prince calling out in a strange voice, ' Go ! ' and the whip swished and struck me, and I darted forward striking my foot against the iron of the sleigh front.

" We caught up with her twenty-five versts away. I brought him there, but I trembled all night long and could not eat anything. In the morning I was given water to drink. I drank it and I ceased for ever to be the horse I had been.

" I was ailing, and they tormented and maimed me, – people call it curing. My hoofs came off, I had swellings, and my legs bent, my chest sank in, and there appeared a weakness and indolence in all my limbs.

" I was sold to a horse dealer. He fed me on carrots and something else, and made something of me which was not like myself, but which could deceive one who was not experienced. I had no longer any strength, and all my trotting qualities were gone.

" Besides, the horse dealer tormented me every time when purchasers came, by coming into my stall and beating me unmercifully with a whip and frightening me, so that he nearly drove me mad. Then he rubbed down the whip-marks and led me out.

"An old woman bought me from the horse dealer. She drove all the time to the Church of St. Nicholas the Miracle-worker, and flogged the coachman. The coachman wept in my stall. And I learned that tears have an agreeable salt taste. Then the old woman died.

"Her clerk took me to the country and sold me to a shopkeeper ; then I ate too much wheat and grew more ailing still.

" Then I was sold to a peasant. There I ploughed, getting hardly anything to eat, and I got my leg hurt by the ploughshare. I was again ill.

" I was swapped off to a gipsy. He tormented me fearfully, and

finally he sold me to the clerk here, and here I am – "

All were silent. It began to sprinkle.

IX.

Upon returning home the next evening, the herd came upon the master with a guest. When near the house Zhuldyba looked askance at two male figures: the one was the young master in a straw hat, – the other, a tall, fat, bloated military. The old mare looked awry at the men and, bearing off to one side, passed by them; the others – the young horses – were confused and at a loss what to do, especially when the master purposely went with his guest among the horses, and they talked and pointed something out to each other.

"This one here I bought of Voéykov, – the dappled gray horse," said the master.

" And this young black mare with the white legs, whose is she ? She is nice," said the guest.

They looked over a number of horses, running ahead of them and stopping them. They also noticed the little bay mare.

"This breed is left with me from the Khryénov riding-horses," said the master.

They were not able to examine all the horses as they walked by. The master called out to Néster, and the old man, hurriedly urging up the piebald gelding by striking his sides with the heels of his boots, galloped forward. The piebald gelding limped on one leg, but he ran in such a way that it was evident that he would under no consideration murmur, even though he should be asked to run to the end of the world with the expenditure of all his strength. He was even ready to gallop at full speed, and made the attempt at it with his right leg.

" Now this mare here, I dare say, is such that you will hardly find a better one in all of Russia," said the master, pointing to one of the mares.

The guest praised her. The master ran in agitation, now ahead of the horses, now to one side of them, pointing all the time to them and telling their story and the pedigree of each horse.

The guest was apparently tired of listening to the host, and he invented questions just to show that he was interested in all such things.

" Yes, yes," he said, absent-mindedly.

" You look at her," said the host, without replying. " Look at her legs ! – She cost me a lot, but I have a three-year-old one from her that is already trotting."

" Does he trot well ? " asked the guest.

In this manner they took up nearly all the horses, and there was nothing more to show.

" Well, shall we go now ? "

" Yes."

They went through the gate. The guest was glad that the show was over and that he was going to the house where there would be something to eat, drink, and smoke, and he looked visibly happier. Passing by Néster, who, sitting on the piebald horse, was still waiting for orders, the guest struck the piebald's crupper with his big fat hand.

" He is a beauty," he said. " I had just such a piebald horse, – do you remember my telling you about him ? "

The host heard that it was not his horse he was talking about, so he paid no attention, and continued to look at his herd.

Suddenly he heard a stupid, weak, old neighing right above his ears. It was the piebald that was neighing ; as though confused, he stopped without finishing his neigh.

Neither the host nor the guest paid any attention to this neighing and they went to the house.

Linen-measurer had in the bloated old man recognized his favourite master, Serpukhovskoy, the one that had been so immensely rich and handsome.

It continued to sprinkle. The enclosure looked gloomy, but in the master's house it was quite different. There the table was set for a luxurious evening tea in a luxurious drawing-room. The host, the hostess, and the guest were sitting at the table.

The hostess was pregnant, which was quite apparent from the size of her abdomen, from her straight and strained attitude, from her fulness, and, especially, from her large eyes, which were meekly and solemnly turned inward. She was sitting at the samovar.

The host held in his hands a box of ten-year-old, extra fine cigars, such as, according to his words, no one else had, and was getting ready to boast of them to his guest.

The host was a handsome man of about twenty-five years, – fresh-looking, well-fed, well-groomed. He was dressed at home in a new, loose, strong suit made in London. Large, expensive trinkets hung down from his watch-chain. The shirt-studs were of massive gold, with turquoises. He wore a beard h la Napoleon III., and the mouse-tails were pomaded and stuck out as well as though they had been

fixed in Paris.

The hostess wore a dress of silk gauze, with large bouquets of various colours ; she had large golden hairpins of a peculiar pattern in her thick, blond, beautiful, though not all her own, hair. On her hands there were many bracelets and rings, all of them expensive ones.

The samovdr was of silver, and the tea service was fine. A lackey, magnificent in his dress coat and white waistcoat and neckerchief, stood like a statue at the door, waiting for orders. The furniture was of bent wood and bright in colouring; the wall-paper was dark, with a large flower design.

Near the table, a remarkably fine greyhound tinkled with his silver collar ; they called him by an uncommonly difficult English name, which was badly pronounced by both, as neither of them knew any English.

In the corner an inlaid piano stood among flowers. Everything gave an impression of novelty, luxury, and rarity. Everything was good, but on every tiling there was an imprint of superabundance, wealth, and absence of spiritual interests.

The host was a high-flier, of an extremely sanguine temperament, one of those who never give out, who travel about in sable fur coats, who throw expensive bouquets to actresses, drink the most expensive wines with the newest labels in the most expensive hotels, offer prizes in their name, and keep the most expensive –

The guest, Nikita Serpukhovskdy, was a man of more than forty years, tall, fat, bald-headed, with large moustache and side-whiskers. He must have been very handsome. Now he seemed to have fallen physically, morally, and monetarily.

He had so many debts that he was compelled to serve, in order not to be put in a hole. He was now on his way to the capital of a Government as a chief of a stud. Distinguished relatives had obtained this place for him.

He was dressed in a military blouse and blue trousers. The blouse and trousers were such as only a rich man would have made for himself ; the same was true of his linen ; his watch was of an English make. His boots had strange soles a finger's width in thickness.

Nikita Serpukhovskoy had in his lifetime squandered a fortune of two millions, and was still 120,000 in debt.

From such a performance there is always left that swing of life which gives one a chance to get things on credit and to pass almost in luxury another ten years.

The ten years were coming to an end, and the buoyancy was giving

out, and Nikita was beginning to find it hard to live. He was beginning to take to drinking, that is, to get drunk on wine, which had never happened to him before. As a matter of fact, he never began or ended drinking. Most perceptible was his fall in the restlessness of his glance (his eyes were beginning to flit unsteadily) and in the lack of firmness in his intonations and movements. This restlessness was the more striking in that it had evidently come to him within a short time, for it was obvious that he had long been accustomed not to be afraid of anybody or anything, and that now he had, within but a very short time, through heavy suffering, reached that dread which was so much out of keeping with his nature.

The host and the hostess noticed it; they exchanged glances which showed that they understood each other and only delayed until bedtime a detailed discussion of the subject, and that they endured poor Nikita. They treated him with great attention.

The sight of the happiness of the young host humbled Nikita and made him morbidly envy the host, as he recalled his irretrievable past.

" Mary, does not the cigar incommode you ? " he said, turning to the lady, in that peculiar tone which is acquired only through experience, that polite, friendly, but not quite respectful tone, which people, who know the world, use toward mistresses in distinction from their wives. He did not exactly want to offend her ; on the contrary, he just now wished rather to curry the favour of the host and the hostess, though he would not have acknowledged the fact to himself. It was simply because he had become accustomed to speak to women in that tone. He knew that she herself would have been surprised, even offended, if he had treated her as a lady. Besides, he had to preserve a certain shade of a respectful tone for the real wife of his equal.

He always treated such women with respect, not because he shared any of those so-called convictions that were preached in periodicals (he never read such trash) about the respect due to the personality of each man, about the meaninglessness of marriage, and so forth, but because all decent people did so, and he was a decent, though a fallen, man.

He took a cigar. But the host awkwardly took a whole handful of cigars and offered them to him.

" No, you take this ! You will see how they are."

Nikita brushed aside the cigars with his hand, and in his eyes there was something like a gleam of offence and shame.

" Thank you." He took out his cigar-holder. " Try mine ! "

The hostess was quick-witted. She noticed it and hastened to talk to him.

" I am very fond of cigars. I should smoke myself, if all about me did not smoke."

And she smiled her beautiful, kindly smile. In response he gave her a weak smile. Two of his teeth were lacking.

" No, you take this one," continued the dull-witted host. " I have others that are weaker. Fritz, bringen Sie noch eine Kasten," he said, " dort zwei."

The German lackey brought him another box.

" What kind do you like ? Big ones ? Strong cigars ? These are very good. Take them all." He kept pushing them into his hand.

He was evidently glad that he had some one to whom he could make a boast of the rare things which he possessed, and he did not notice anything. Serpukhovskoy lighted his cigar and hastened to continue the conversation which they had begun.

" So, how much was it you paid for Atlas ? " he asked.

"He cost me a great deal, – not less than five thousand. At least I am secure on him. What colts he gets, I tell you ! "

" Do they trot? " asked Serpukhovskoy.

" They trot well. His colt took three prizes this year : in Tula, in Moscow, and in St. Petersburg ; he raced with Voéykov's Raven. The rascal of a jockey made four missteps, or else he would have left him behind the flag."

" He is a little raw. There is too much Dutch blood in him, that's what I will tell you," said Serpukhovskoy.

" Well, and what about the mares ? I will show them to you tomorrow. I gave three thousand for Dobrynya. For Amiability I gave two thousand."

The host began once more to figure up his wealth. The hostess saw that it was painful to Serpukhovskoy and that he only feigned to be listening.

" Won't you have another glass of tea ? " asked the hostess.

"No," said the host, continuing to talk. She arose; the host stopped her, and embraced and kissed her.

Serpukhovskoy began to smile as he looked at them with what to them appeared as an unnatural smile, but when the host arose and, embracing her, went with her up to the portière, Nikita's face suddenly changed ; he heaved a deep sigh, and on his puffed-up face there was suddenly expressed despair. Even malice could be seen on it.

The host returned and, smiling, sat down opposite Nikita. They were silent for awhile.

XI.

" Yes, you said you bought it of Voéykov," said Serpukhovskoy, as though carelessly.

" Yes, Atlas, I told you so. I wanted to buy some mares from Dubovftski, but there was nothing but trash left."

" He has gone up the flue," said Serpukhovskoy. He suddenly stopped and looked about him. He recalled that he himself owed twenty thousand to that man who had gone up the flue. And when it came to talking about people who had gone up, he was certainly one of whom they would say that. He laughed.

Both were again silent. The host was rummaging through his brain for something to brag of before his guest ; Serpukhovskoy was trying to say something which would show that he had not yet gone up the flue. But the minds of both were dulled, although they tried to brace themselves with cigars.

" How would it be if I had a drink of something ? " thought Serpukhovskoy. " I must by all means have something to drink, or else the tedium he is causing me will kill me," thought the host.

" Are you going to stay here for a long time yet ? " asked Serpukhovskoy.

" About another month. Well, are we going to have supper, eh ? Fritz, is it ready ? "

They went into the dining-room. Here a table was placed under a hanging lamp. On it stood candles and all kinds of unusual things: siphons, unusual wine in decanters, unusual appetizers, and brandy. They drank and ate, and drank again, and ate again, and then they struck up a conversation. Serpukhovskoy grew red in his face, and began to talk without timidity.

They were talking about women, mentioning the gipsies, ballet-dancers, and French women that this or that one had.

" Well, have you given up Malier ? " asked the host.

" I have not given her up, but she has given me up. Ah, my friend, it makes me feel bad to think what I have spent in my lifetime. Nowadays I am really happy when I have one thousand roubles at a time, and I am really glad to get away from everybody. I can't stand it in Moscow. What is the use of mentioning it ? "

It annoyed the host to hear Serpukhovskoy talk. He wanted to talk about himself and to brag, while Serpukhovskoy wanted to talk about

himself, about his brilliant past. The host filled a glass of wine for him and was waiting for him to finish it, so as to tell him all about himself, about how much better his stud was arranged than anybody else's, and how his Mary loved him not for his money merely, but with her whole heart.

" I wanted to tell you that in my stud – " he began. But Serpukhovskdy interrupted him.

" There was a time, I must say," he began, " when I loved to live well, and when I knew how to do it. You are talking about trotting, – tell me which is your liveliest horse ? "

The host was glad to have an opportunity to tell him something about his stud, and so he began to speak ; but Serpukhovskoy again interrupted him.

"Yes, yes," he said. "You keepers of the stud are doing it all for vanity's sake, and not for pleasure, for life's sake. It was not so with me. I told you to-day that I had a carriage-horse, one that had the same kind of spots that your herdman's piebald horse has. Oh, what a horse he was! You can't possibly know: that was in the year forty-two, – I had just arrived in Moscow ; I went to a horse dealer where I saw the piebald gelding. He had good qualities. I liked him. The price ? One thousand roubles. I liked him, so I took him and began to drive him out. I have never had such a horse, nor will you ever have such a one. I have never known a better horse in size, in strength, and in beauty. You were a boy then, so you cannot have seen him, but you may have heard of him, I suppose. All Moscow knew him."

" Yes, I have heard of him," the host said, unwillingly, " but I wanted to tell you about my – "

"So you have heard. I bought him just as he was, without his pedigree, without his record ; only later I learned what he was. Voéykov and I made it out. He was a colt by Darling I., Linen-measurer, he just measured linen. On account of his piebald spots he was taken out of the Khryénov stud and given to the keeper of the stable, who castrated him and sold him to a horse dealer. There are no such horses nowadays, my friend ! Ah, what a time that was ! Oh, my youth ! " He sang a line of a gipsy song. He was getting under the influence of the liquor. " Ah, it was a fine time ! I was twenty-five years old, had eighty thousand roubles yearly income, not a gray hair on my head, and my teeth like pearls – Whatever I undertook came out well for me, and now all is ended – "

" There was not that mettle then," said the host, making use of the interruption. " Let me tell you that my first horses have begun to trot without – "

" Your horses ! There was more mettle in them in those days – "

" How so ? " \*

"There simply was. I remember how I once drove out to the races with him. I had put up no horses. I did not like trotters, - I had thoroughbreds : Count Cho-let, Mohammed. I drove the piebald gelding. I had a fine lad of a coachman,- I loved him. Well, he has ruined himself by drinking. So I arrived. \* Serpukhov-skoy,' they said, ' when will you provide yourself with trotters ? ' - ' The devil take your lubbers ! I have a carriage piebald that will outrun all your trotters.' - ' No, he won't.' - ' I will wager one thousand roubles.' They took the wager, and we let them run. He beat them by five seconds. I won the one thousand rouble wager. That is nothing ! I once made one hundred versts in three hours with a troyka of thoroughbreds. All Moscow knows about it."

And Serpukbovskdy began to lie so glibly and so uninterruptedly that the host was not able to put in a single word, and remained sitting opposite him with a melancholy countenance ; to divert himself he now and then filled his guest's glass and his own with wine.

Pay was beginning to break. They were still sitting. The host felt unspeakably dull. He arose.

" It is time to go to bed," said Serpukhovskdy, rising and tottering. He went, puffing, into the room set aside for him.

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The host was lying with his mistress.

" No, he is impossible. He is drunk and keeps lying without interruption."

" And he is making court to me."

" I am afraid he will ask me for some money."

Serpukhovskdy was lying undressed on his bed and puffing away.

" It seems to me I have been telling him a lot of lies," he thought. " Well, it does not make much difference ! The wine is good, but he is a big swine. There is something of the merchant in him. I, too, am a big swine," he said to himself, bursting out into a laugh. " First I kept her, now she keeps me. Yes, the Winkler woman keeps me, - I take money from her. Serves him right. Still, I must undress myself. I can't get my boots off."

" Hoa there !" he called out ; but the man who was given him as an attendant had gone to bed long before.

He sat down, pulled off his blouse, his waistcoat, and somehow managed to get his trousers off; but he was for a long time unable to get his boots off, because his soft belly was in his way. Finally he somehow managed to pull one off; on the other he worked and worked, and puffed, and became exhausted. He kept that one boot on

and rolled down on his bed and began to snore, filling the room with the odour of tobacco, wine, and nasty old age.

XII.

If Linen-measurer recalled anything that night, A äska distracted him. He threw a blanket over him, and galloped away. He kept him until morning at the door of a tavern, near a peasant horse. They licked each other. In the morning he went to the herd and kept scratching himself all the while.

« It itches dreadfully," he thought.

Five days passed. The veterinary surgeon was called. He joyfully said :

« The itch, – be pleased to sell him to the gipsies."

" What is the use ? Cut his throat and make an end of him this very day."

It was a calm, clear morning. The herd went into the field. Linen-measurer was left behind. There came a strange, lean, black, dirty man in a black caftan with some kind of stains upon it. It was the flayer. He took hold of the strap of the halter which was on Linen-measurer, and, without looking at him, led him away. Linenmeasurer went calmly, without looking around, dragging his legs along as always, and catching his hind feet in the straw.

Upon emerging from the gate, he wanted to make for the well, but the flayer jerked him by the halter and said : " What is the use ? "

The flayer and Yaska, who was walking behind, came to a ravine back of the brick-kiln and stopped, as though there was anything peculiar in that very common place ; the flayer gave the lines to Yaska, took off his caftan, rolled up his sleeves, and fetched a knife and a whetstone out of his boot-leg.

The gelding turned his head to the halter line, wishing to chew it from tedium, but he could not reach it. He drew a sigh and closed his eyes. His lower lip hung down ; his ground-down yellow teeth could be seen, as he fell asleep under the sound produced by the grinding of the knife. Only his swollen leg, spread sidewise, kept quivering. Suddenly he felt that he was seized by his jowls and that his head was raised up. He opened his eyes. There were two dogs before him. One was sniffing in the direction of the flayer ; the other was sitting and watching the gelding, as though expecting something from him. The gelding looked at them and began to rub his cheek-bone against the hand which was holding him.

"No doubt they want to cure me," he thought. " Let them ! "

And, indeed, he felt that they were doing something to his throat. It pained him; he shuddered and gave a kick with his foot, but

repressed himself and waited to see what was coming –

The next he felt was a liquid mass coming down in a stream over his neck and breast. He heaved a deep sigh and felt better, much better.

The whole weight of his life was taken from him !

He closed his eyes and began to lower his head, – nobody was holding him. Then his feet quivered, his whole body tottered. He was not so much frightened as surprised –

Everything was so new to him. He was surprised, darted forward, upward – But, instead, his legs, moving from the spot, got entangled, – and he began to fall side-wise. He tried to straighten himself, but only rushed forward and fell on his left side.

The flayer waited until the convulsions all stopped ; he drove away the dogs, which had moved up, took hold of the gelding's legs, turned him on his back, and, telling Yaska to hold one leg, began to flay him.

" And it was a horse, too," said Yaska.

" If it had been fed better, the hide would have been all right," said the flayer.

The herd came up hill in the evening, and those who were walking on the left side could see something red down below, and near it the dogs busy about something, and crows and vultures flying about. One dog, pressing its paws against the canon and shaking its head, was with a crackling noise tearing away that which it had taken hold of.

The bay mare stopped, stretched her head and neck, and for a long time kept sniffing the air. It was with difficulty that she was driven away.

At dawn, big-headed wolf cubs howled joyfully in a ravine of the old forest, in an overgrown wold. There were five of them : four of them were of nearly the same size, and one little one had his head larger than his body. A lean, moulting she-wolf, dragging her full belly with the flabby teats on the ground, came out of the bushes and sat down opposite the wolf cubs. The cubs stood in a semicircle around her. She went up to the smallest one and, lowering and bending down her snout, made several convulsive motions and, opening her sharp-toothed jaws, strained herself and vomited up a large piece of horseflesh. The larger cubs rushed up to her, but she moved threateningly toward them and offered everything to the little one. The little one, as though in anger, grabbed the horse-flesh with a growl and, holding it under him, began to devour it. The she-wolf in the same manner vomited up to the second, the third, until all five had some, and then lay down opposite them to rest herself.

A week later only a large skull and two femurs were lying about near the brick-kiln ; everything else had been devoured. In the summer, a

peasant, who collected bones, carried away the bones and the skull and put them to use.

Serpukhovskdy's dead body, which had been walking about and eating and drinking in the world, was put away much later. Neither his skin, nor his flesh, nor his bones were of any use to anybody.

Just as for twenty years Iris walking dead body had been a great burden to everybody, even so the putting away of his body in the earth was only an unnecessary trouble to the people. He had long ceased to be of any use to anybody, and was only a nuisance to everybody ; and yet the dead that bury the dead found it necessary to clothe the puffed-up decaying body in a good uniform and good boots, to place him in a new, good coffin, with new tassels on its four comers, then to put this new coffin in another coffin of lead, and to take him down to Moscow, and there to dig up old human bones, and in that very spot to put away his rotting and worm-eaten body, in the new uniform and clean boots, and to cover all up with earth.

THE END.